With your help, Elk Hill gives these girls a chance to not just to survive, but to shine. How does Spring Garden empower these young women who face so many challenges?

Staff simply meet them where they are. They acknowledge that their experiences are part of their history, but reassure them that their past will not dictate their future. “We teach them how to face adversity and how to overcome it,” says counselor Tiana Wood. “We want them to be the best version of themselves.”

Her transition to residential treatment at Elk Hill Spring Garden was a challenging one. Because of her past behavior, she wasn’t allowed to have a phone, a consequence she saw as terribly unfair. She resorted to manipulating the staff and her peers to try to get the things she wanted.

Through it all, Spring Garden's staff believed she could change, and she did. Anna learned to take responsibility for her actions. She learned to accept the word “No.” She learned to forge respectful relationships with other girls. She maintained straight A’s in school. She diligently saved her money — and once she proved she was able to handle it responsibly, she was allowed once again to have a phone.

Most importantly, through joint family therapy, Anna and her mother repaired their bond. In January 2018, relying on her newfound coping skills to manage family conflicts, Anna was able to return home.
Why I Am Involved in Elk Hill

Alex Dahlgren, Donor and Board Member

My husband Matt and I first became aware of Elk Hill shortly after moving to Goochland in 9 or 10 years ago. We were both very curious to learn more about this local organization that took a deep interest in children struggling with seemingly insurmountable challenges, and gave them the support and guidance they needed to overcome and succeed.

As a veterinarian, I believe we have a responsibility to care for and to protect those who do not have a voice and are the most vulnerable. And I believe our efforts produce the most good through the care we give as a society to our children. Children are both the most vulnerable and the most resilient, and breaking the cycle of abuse, poverty and suffering depends on the kind of care, support and protection we provide to children and youth.

Fourth grade is tough — and it’s especially tough for girls. At that age, they’re beginning to figure out who they are and how they fit into the world. It’s a time of challenges and changing. And many are “carrying so much trauma,” says Joy Schiavone, an Elk Hill therapeutic day treatment counselor. “They’ve already been told so many lies about themselves, that they’re not wanted.”

To combat these feelings of vulnerability and isolation, Schiavone and LATAS founder, insulated City of Promise (a nonprofit that works with the city’s at-risk children) started the Girl Power group for fourth graders at Charlottesville’s Bunrully-Moran Elementary School. This group, which is supported by Elk Hill’s generous donors, is making a lasting difference in how those young girls see themselves.

Twice a month, during the lunch period, a group of about six girls meets with Reginald Schiavone and Elk Hill counselor Tabitha Rebi. They begin by talking about their day — classroom challenges, family strife, playground dramas. They share their hopes and dreams, and they listen to one another. They find each other.

It was Rebecca’s first time singing solo. “And I love it,” she says — especially the thrill of knowing that everybody really enjoyed it. That made me fall in love with performing!”

Her audience was entranced. The performance received a standing ovation.

Music has always been the language of Rebecca’s heart.

“When I would get upset, or when I was angry, or when I was sad, or even when I was happy, and I just couldn’t express it at that time, I would listen to music and I would know I’m not alone — there are other people who feel those things,” she says.

She never took voice lessons; instead she practiced singing on her own, teaching herself how to hold each note. In eighth grade she began to play the piano, first by ear, then with the help of lessons on YouTube.

She kept her tremendous gift to herself, rarely performing in public. Then a school counselor referred Brianna for support in Elk Hill’s community services program, and things slowly began to change for the better. After working with her Elk Hill counselor for over a year, Brianna learned to identify her emotions and the words to express them to coping with them. Her mother later learned how to interact with her in a supportive manner, and she developed strategies for parent- ing a challenging child.

While Brianna is thriving, she is confident in her ability to handle the issues that would have set her off in the past. She still has her moments, although they are much less frequent and shorter in duration. Brianna and her family now have hope for a successful future.

A Young Musician Finds Her Voice

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Almost 50 years ago, on September 12th, 1970, the first young man arrived on the Elk Hill campus. That’s right — in 2020 we’ll be celebrating the half-century mark of helping children and families. During our first three and a half decades, we worked with just 6 boys. In 2007, we opened the Spring Garden campus. That’s right — in 2020 young man arrived on the Elk Hill campus. That’s right — in 2020
Honor a strong woman with a Gift to Elk Hill

All of us can think of one — or several — women who made a lasting difference in our lives. Maybe it was a teacher, like Heather Clinedinst, who made sure you knew YOU mattered. Maybe it was a friend you made in fourth grade who stood up for you when you needed it most. Maybe it’s your mother, your aunt or your sister.

Please consider making a gift to Elk Hill this Spring in honor of a strong woman who has inspired you — and share your story on our Facebook page! Your gift will help us make a difference in the lives of more young women like Rebecca and Anna.

“A woman is like a tea bag — you can’t tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt

“A wise woman wishes to be no one’s enemy; a wise woman refuses to be anyone’s victim.”

– Maya Angelou

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’”

– Mary Anne Radmacher

Planned Giving

Join Elk Hill Society

The Elk Hill Society recognizes individuals whose foresight and generosity ensure the long-term stability of Elk Hill for future generations. We encourage you to consider joining a very special group of Elk Hill supporters – Elk Hill Society members. Society members are those friends who express their support for the future of Elk Hill by including a bequest or other life income gift for the Foundation in their estate plan.

It’s a simple gift that costs nothing during your lifetime – but makes a world of difference in a young person’s lifetime. Let us answer your questions! Contact: Michael Farley, CEO (804) 457-4866 ext. 311 or Mfarley@elkhill.org

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