

## **A Portfolio of Student Projects**

- **Michigan Literacy, Inc.:**  
An Editorial
  - **Whitehills Health Care Center:**  
A Newsletter Article
  - **Catholic Social Services/St. Vincent Home for Children:**  
Two Informational Brochures
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A Pamphlet
- “Ready for the Challenge”: A Student Reflects on the Service-Learning Writing Project**  
by Lashawnda Jackson

Michigan Literacy, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of the literacy skills of Michigan citizenry through the effective efforts of volunteers.

"We wrote an article for a special edition of LITFlash devoted to Women and Literacy.... [Our article] is the first editorial ever ... published in the magazine. It informed readers about relevant Senate and House bills and ... current issues surrounding reforms.

"We were required to interview a senator and a Michigan House representative concerning adult education reforms.

"Writing and revising was fun and enjoyable.... We learned how to interview and quote properly [and] how to write persuasively with direction toward a specific audience ... other than our professor."

## **New Jobs Commission Is Bad News for Adult Education in Michigan**

by Joan Cripe and Lindsay Ferlin

**Shelly, a busy 35 year old wife and dedicated mother of two, never found the time to graduate from high school. Now that both of her children are grown and have moved away, Shelly wants to return to school and earn her diploma. Completing her high school education is a very important goal in her life. Shelly's story is not uncommon in Michigan where adult education programs offer people like her a second chance at educational advancement and career success.**

**Governor John Engler holds a very different view about the importance of adult education in Shelly's life and its place in Michigan's public arena. He sees adult education as a matter of personal enrichment, and not the business of the state or a basic entitlement of citizenship. He believes that state dollars should be allocated for jobs programs, not adult education.**

**Engler proposes new legislation that threatens tested programs used for educating state citizens over the age of 25. Currently, Michigan pays \$3500 per student regardless of age for adult education. Engler's new proposal takes all money from adult education and shifts it over to a new "Jobs Commission." Under Engler's plan, the Jobs Commission will grant money to private companies and corporations to create employee education programs. General Motors, for example, could receive state tax dollars by offering math classes to further develop employees' math skills.**

**But how do citizens enroll in these classes? People over 25 seeking to further their education would already have to be working for a company such as General Motors to even be eligible for Adult Ed classes. Then employees would have to be specially invited to attend an education program offered and approved by the company.**

**What company, one might reasonably ask, would hire a person like Shelly in the first place without a high school diploma? The Jobs Commission plan leaves precious few opportunities for adult citizens without diplomas who still seek to better themselves through education.**

**How do supporters of Engler's new plan justify these new attacks against adult education? Some legislators feel the problem lies with individual school districts that reallocate funds earmarked for Adult Ed. They believe many schools transfer state money purposely targeted for adult education into general funds, which can then be misallocated for anything from textbooks to cheerleading skirts.**

**The majority of Michigan's congressional leaders tentatively support Engler's new Jobs Commission. Many senators, including Senator Leon Stille, endorse Engler's idea; however, the arbitrary cut-off age for earning a diploma still**

troubles them. "What happens to an individual [such as Shelly]," asks Senator Stille, "who has not landed a job? She slips through the cracks and is left with no options. I find that unfair."

So what does the shift of public funds to the private sector mean for volunteers of such organizations as Michigan Literacy, Inc.? The unfortunate result is more adults in need of help. More demands are put on volunteers. Existing programs are stressed. It is difficult to find, train, and keep committed volunteers. Engler's Jobs Commission, as a result, taxes already understaffed non-profit organizations.

Is John Engler's Jobs Commission really an employment boon to the people of Michigan? With the focus on jobs rather than on education, it's hard to escape the irony: illiteracy in Michigan is likely to increase, causing even higher unemployment rates.

[An editorial for LITFlash, 3.3 (Spring 1995), The Newsletter of Michigan Literacy, Inc.]

**AN OPINION TO CONSIDER...**

NEW JOBS COMMISSION IS BAD NEWS FOR ADULT EDUCATION IN MICHIGAN  
BY JOAN CAPR AND LINDSEY PERLIN

Shelly, a busy 35 year old wife and dedicated mother. How do supporters of Engler's new plan justify them?

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A Publication of  
Michigan Literacy Inc.



Celebrating 22 Years of Service  
in Michigan's Volunteer  
Literacy Program

**WOMEN AND LITERACY**

Lynn Blako, Assistant-Treasurer for the Literacy Council of Calhoun County, shares some of her personal thoughts and experiences as a woman who is very involved in the literacy movement. Ms. Blako is also an MLJ Board Member.

Lynn Blako knows first hand that literacy programs and education can be a woman's key to empowerment—she is living proof. She realized that giving herself the gift of reading was something no one could ever take away. Lynn never ceases to remind women that education is their only hope for financial independence, and as a mother, to be a positive role model for her children.

With only a second grade reading level, Lynn had little self respect, self confidence or faith in anything. However, she had a vision—to drop the shackles off the knee she had potential, as do many women with low-level reading skills, but needed the tools and assistance to uncover these latent abilities. Many women do not know they have potential and do not know how much better they would feel about themselves if they could only read.

Lynn also knows first hand how a mother feels inadequate or afraid when she cannot provide for her child due to lack of reading skills. "They have the fear of 'how can I teach the importance of education,'" "how can I give the proper medication" or even "how can I provide a nutritious meal" when she has not finished high school, cannot read the label on a medicine bottle, or cannot read ingredients, nutrition information or a recipe.

Women who cannot read also stay with what is "familiar" even though it is painful. They will not face the challenge of change. Lynn has witnessed women who leave shelters because they cannot cope with "the change." They would rather remain in abusive homes when they know not much is expected of them.

Often times they are asked to leave the shelter for not "bearing in the responsibilities" but the truth is they cannot read what the rules and responsibilities are, not to mention laws about their legal and human rights. The shelter tries to make a woman "independent" but she is actually losing her dignity because she cannot do what is expected. That is why they return home. They return to a place where expectations are low or nonexistent. Once again, home is "familiar"—even though it is painful.

Lynn is quite proud of Michigan's strong lead in the fight against illiteracy. She is also very grateful for all the work done in literacy for women by our state. Lynn believes that women who can read should also reach out to help others to do the same. "It is so rewarding when you pass other women the torch that not only free themselves but free their whole family!"

**To Read by Lynn Blako**  
To read is to really come alive.  
To read is to be empowered  
where I am.  
To read is to be confident  
in the ability that I can  
grow stronger each day.  
To read is to know  
I can make the decisions  
of what direction  
my life shall take.  
The press printed on beautiful parchment  
paper was purchased from MLJ.  
Call (800) 777-4823 to order.

Whitehills Health Care Center is a skilled nursing facility for residents requiring 24 hour care, with a 115 bed capacity offering speech, occupational and physical therapies.

“What I wrote for Whitehills was an article that will be included in their monthly newsletter on the environment at Whitehills and how residents’ rights are maintained. [My goal was] to inform residents and their families, but also people who are looking to put their loved ones in there.... What I found most worthwhile about the project was the fact that I got to meet so many wonderful people. I saw how hard it is for a facility to try and keep everyone happy. One thing I learned was how to form a questionnaire and how to interview to get answers from people.”

## **Whitehills: A Home Away from Home**

by Tommie Cook

As a freshman at MSU, one of my general education requirements is a writing course called American Thought and Language. In this class, I am required to write for an agency in order to experience working with the outside community. When I was assigned to Whitehills Health Care Center I was unsure about my knowledge or experience working with this kind of facility. After my first visit, I was curious how the residents felt about the environment at Whitehills and if their rights were protected and granted. The rights that I was most interested in were privacy, residents voicing their opinions, and the quality of the staff. I finally decided to find the answers by interviewing the residents myself.

In order to research residents’ views, I needed to develop a questionnaire survey that would help me learn how residents perceived the protection of their rights as well as their overall feelings about Whitehills. It was late fall when I sat in the Activities Director’s office, asking one of the residents how they felt about the quality of the staff. Many of the residents shared similar answers. The majority said that the staff was very educated, warm-hearted and they always watch what the residents eat to make sure they’re not jeopardizing their health. One of the residents said, “They won’t let me eat more bacon and sausage than I’m allowed.” Others said the staff were friendly, and are always encouraging them to remain strong and get better. One man told me that he was upset with two of the techs and he let them know. After hearing of his unhappiness, one of the techs attempted to become better friends with him and regain his friendship. This only proved to me that the staff is hard working, and would do almost anything to make the residents happy.

In response to questions about privacy, I was told that there was a lot for a place that was so group oriented and busy. One resident said that the staff usually knows what they have in their rooms, only because health safety laws require them to know. Other examples of privacy were that the staff always knocks before entering the rooms, and the employees will not discuss what’s going on with the other residents’ privacy. After seeing how much activity went on in the center, I was impressed with the amount of privacy the residents received.

The majority of the residents responded to questions about their quality of life by talking about the fact that they must sacrifice the things that mean a lot to them to get the continuous care they need. They also said that they’ve done so many wonderful things in their lives, then all of a sudden they are confined to one place and need everyday care. I couldn’t see how people who have lived full lives and possibly

raised children were now accepting the fact that they have certain restrictions on places they can go. As two residents told me, though, "You have to ask permission because if you can go anywhere, you don't have to be here." Many miss not having their families around, driving their cars, seeing their friends, and having their independence.

I asked each of the residents why they chose Whitehills, and many of them told me that their families traveled to a number of different health care centers and found that Whitehills was the best. The families felt that the rooms were larger, cleaner, odorless, and in a good location. The residents said that even though Whitehills was so big, the center tries to make everyone happy. They try to put people in the rooms they want, and try to offer a variety of activities. I talked to a man who didn't really need to be in Whitehills, but he wanted to be with his wife, so the center allowed it. Another key feature was the Residents' Council, which is there for the residents to change certain things and voice their complaints. The president of the Council told me that they try to solve the problems when they are small so they don't turn into mountains. The advice she gives every resident is that they must accept the things they cannot change, like the rules and regulations, but stay and fight for the things they can.

After my several visits to Whitehills and my experience interviewing the residents and watching the staff work, I have come to the conclusion that Whitehills offers superior care and concern for its residents. They try to accommodate the needs of the residents as well as the staff and try to assure the families that their loved ones will be well cared for. In the state of Michigan, all health care centers must maintain certain rights, such as privacy, religion, room assignments, and the right for residents to voice their opinions. After looking over the law, I feel that Whitehills meets all the standards and needs of its residents. I would be comfortable sending any one of my family members there, and I'm sure they would develop new friendships in a positive environment.

# Golden Moments

W H I T E H I L L S



**ELLEN BROWN**  
 Ellen was born in Flint Michigan in 1914. She graduated from high school in 1932. She worked for many years for the Ford Motor Company. She was married to Fred Brown and they had two children. She has been widowed for many years. She is a member of the United Methodist Church. She enjoys reading and watching television.

**FRANK BROWN**  
 Frank was born in Flint Michigan in 1914. He graduated from high school in 1932. He worked for many years for the Ford Motor Company. He was married to Ellen Brown and they had two children. He has been widowed for many years. He is a member of the United Methodist Church. He enjoys reading and watching television.



Catholic Social Services/St. Vincent Home for Children is a Lansing-based social services agency which sponsors 13 different programs, including services for refugees and children.

“Our task was to create and revise informational brochures with a consistent format for a number of programs under the auspices of Catholic Social Services. This involved contacting program directors, and learning about their services.... All of us had our own creative ideas on formatting, but with our limited time, not all suggested combinations could be tried. Ideas were voted on and compromises were made.... We hope that people in need of services provided by these agencies, after reading the brochures, will not hesitate to seek help.”

—Jeremy Raben, Berna Oszoy, Kim Anderson

## **Ballentine Stepping Stones**

**Helping homeless mothers take a step in a new direction.**

### **Stepping Stones Mission**

**To provide safe, structured transitional housing and social services to assist homeless mothers and their children toward social, emotional, and economic well-being.**

### **A Transition to Independent Living**

**Ballentine Stepping Stones provides transitional housing that leads the way from homelessness to independent living. Programs designed to improve self-esteem and encourage economic self-sufficiency will help break the common cycle of poverty and abuse.**

**Located in Lansing, Stepping Stones has 16 furnished apartments for homeless mothers aged 17 years and older and their children.**

**Families move in for stays of up to two years. During their stay they are involved in various programs designed to help them develop parenting and living skills, further their education, acquire vocational training, home-making and budgeting skills, career planning, marketable job skills and nutritional and personal wellness.**

### **Services Provided**

- Licensed child care on site
- Furnished apartment
- Aid to access other collateral services which may offer assistance
- Case management services on site: Aid in developing and working towards goals
- Training Programs:
  - Vocational Training
  - Parental and living skills
  - Home-making and budgeting skills
  - Career Planning
- Assistance in establishing permanent housing after completion of program.

**An ongoing case management program is available to ensure a new, rewarding and productive life for those who live at Stepping Stones.**

**It is hoped that this experience within a transitional setting fosters a positive family relationship conducive to the personal growth and stability of mother and child.**

### **Admission Criteria**

**The Ballentine Stepping Stones program is open to homeless mothers age 17 and older and their children who:**


- wish to stabilize their lives
- are willing to make plans and achieve goals leading to independent living and stability
- are willing to comply with the programs' structure.

Ballentine Stepping Stones is a coordinated effort by Catholic Social Services/St. Vincent Home for Children, MHT Housing, Inc., The Greater Lansing Housing Coalition, and Junior League of Lansing to provide a secure, wholesome, and motivating environment for homeless mothers and their children.

Three-quarters of the children in single-parent families live in poverty some time during their first 10 years.

For more information:

**Ballentine Stepping Stones**  
825 N. Pennsylvania Avenue  
Suite #1  
Lansing, MI 48906  
517/485-4644  
TDD 800/649-3777



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Stepping Stones**

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## **Pregnancy Counseling Services** Serving People of All Faith, Races and Ages

### **Counseling ...**

Bringing a child into the world is a major task. It is easy to get confused and upset trying to making parenting decisions. Counseling offers assistance in the decision making and planning process for you and your child. For some parents, the choice will be to place their child in an adoptive home. For others, the decision will be to parent. Either way, counseling services are available to assist you.

### **Adoption Plans ...**

Catholic Social Services is a state-licensed child placement agency, able to place children in adoptive homes. The agency maintains a list of approved adoptive families from which you can select or we can work with you on other adoptive options.

The counselor will discuss with you agency adoption procedures and the legal process involved in adoption. In addition, the counselor will help you sort out your thoughts and feelings relative to the adoption process.

### **Parenting Your Child ...**

The counselor will discuss with you the development of your parenting plan for your child and will help identify community resources that can be of assistance to you and your child. The counselor will assist you in sorting out your thoughts and feelings relating to yourself and your child.

### **Our Services Are Offered to ...**

- Mothers—are counseled on their options and are given information on how to access resources for them and their children.
- Fathers—a counselor is available to fathers as well as mothers. Questions can be answered and particular situations will be discussed.
- The couple facing an unplanned pregnancy—options and information on how to proceed with the chosen option are discussed.
- The family—counseling is offered to every member of the family because pregnancy affects the family as a whole.

### **Pregnancy Counseling Is ...**

- A professional and confidential service.
- Counseling designed to assist with decision making.
- Someone trained to listen objectively and assist you in dealing with the stresses and conflicts related to your particular situation.

Whether in or out of marriage, pregnancy can occur when people are least prepared for it. Individuals, their families, and couples can work with a professionally trained counselor who offers support and assistance in coping with the unplanned pregnancy.

**Making an Appointment ...**

Call the agency to make an appointment with a counselor:  
8:30 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

During your scheduled meeting, the counselor assists you in making your own decision.

**We will talk with you about ...**

you, your family, your parenting options, your baby's future, and your feelings. A counselor is available to meet with you on a weekly basis or as needed, both before and after the birth of your child.

**Catholic Social Services/St. Vincent Home for Children  
A Family and Child Welfare Agency  
2800 W. Willow  
Lansing, Michigan 48917  
517/323-4734**

**Pregnancy Counseling is a free and confidential service.**



Older Adult Services, a division of the Clinton-Eaton-Ingham Counties, Michigan, Community Mental Health Board, provides a variety of mental health services to older citizens in the Lansing area.

"We designed a brochure describing programs provided by the Older Adult Services. The brochure [highlights] informative and descriptive qualities which the agency needed for a new cluster of programs called Senior Connections."

"[After] several meetings in which we discussed revisions and ideas for improvement, [we wrote] several different drafts of the brochure, working in the Writing Center."

"The project was a 'hands on' learning writing assignment. We gained better writing skills. Working in a group provided the experience to look at things through different perspectives.... The limited space of the brochure made us condense all our information and word it as efficiently as possible."

—Matt Conley, Dan Lord, Rachelle Munro

## **Senior Connections**

### **Mission Statement**

**We believe that all our clients have the right to personal dignity, independence, and a quality community life. We are dedicated to assisting clients with the enhancement of their mental health and ensuring they maintain connections to community, family, and friends.**

**Senior Connections is a branch of the Clinton-Eaton-Ingham Community Health/Community Support Services/Older Adult Services agency. This program offers a number of different services designed to provide care and support to persons 55 years of age or older who experience more persistent and/or serious mental health conditions. Senior Connections offers the following services:**

### **Case Management and Psychiatric Services**

**The primary focus is to provide case management services to older adults who experience a serious and/or persistent mental illness. Services consist of maintaining clients' overall well being, and linking to other resources and counseling. In addition to a team of social workers, the program also includes a psychiatrist and two psychiatric nurses specialized in geriatric care.**

### **Golden Connection Center**

**This program offers a variety of therapeutic activities to older adults who experience a serious and/or persistent mental illness. The program is offered from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and serves a hot luncheon to the participants. Members in the program actively participate in program planning and offer mutual support. A group of senior volunteers assists the staff with daily activities.**

### **Green Meadows**

**This program is a six bed residential group home that provides 24 hour care for individuals who experience serious mental illness. It offers a full therapeutic program to enable residents to function as independently as possible. A complete staff, including a psychiatrist, nurse, activity therapist, and social worker provides a wide range of services to meet each individual's needs.**

### **Counseling Services for Homebound Persons 55 Years or Older**

**This service provides short term counseling to older homebound adults who experience depression, anxiety, and obsessive/compulsive disorder, or severe loneliness. Self referrals as well as referrals from other agencies are accepted. A face to face assessment is done within two weeks of the referral date. If a client qualifies for counseling services, there may be a short waiting period before services can be rendered on a**

regular basis.

Referrals for these services should be made to:

CSS Senior Connections Program  
Lansing, MI  
phone 347-6000 ext. 551

Fees are assessed on a sliding scale basis. Medicare, Medicaid, and other insurances accepted.

In addition to the described program, the Older Adult Services provides nursing home mental health services. For more information about these programs call: 778-9002.

The logo for Senior Connections features the word "CONNECTIONS" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The word "SENIOR" is positioned vertically below "CONNECTIONS", with each letter of "SENIOR" centered under a letter of "CONNECTIONS".

**CONNECTIONS**  
**SENIOR**

.....  
*We believe that all our clients have the right to personal dignity, independence, and a quality community life. We are dedicated to assisting clients with the enhancement of their mental health and ensuring they maintain connections to community, family, and friends.*  
.....

## **“Ready for the Challenge”: A Student Reflects on the Service-Learning Writing Project**

**By Lashawnda Jackson**

“This project was one of the first ones in which I truly [saw] the value and exact identity of the audience....

I think this project furthered my views about education. The value of open dialogue and multiple viewpoints is quite an important thing to possess....

I learned that by pooling our strong points and de-emphasizing our weaknesses our group could accomplish things that I couldn't do by myself. I also learned that I need to compromise better and listen completely to others' ideas.”

“This project was very helpful because I learned how to work with people and put our differences aside.”

“At first I thought of getting our work published as no big deal, but once I actually saw the newsletter I was very proud of myself and reality really set in that people are actually going to read what I wrote.”

“The SLWP let me take part in the ‘real world,’ writing to please an audience rather than a single ‘authority.’ I am going to expect more out of future writing classes because of this.”

“Involvement with this particular agency, the Black Child and Family Institute, was a definite tool in helping me further explore American culture.”

“This class has given me an idea of community service, and because of it I'm going to continue volunteering.”

“As individuals working together as a group, we share similar views on what we have learned about writing in this classroom. We believe that in a conventional classroom there would be emphasis on essay writing. This ATL section, however, brings out different aspects of writing and learning. Future SLWP student writers should go into the project with the expectation of learning and developing writing skills for a larger and more diverse audience. Future writers should also be reminded not to fear the responsibility, but to learn how to deal with it and realize that as they move through life, future jobs or experiences within and outside the community will be easier to face because of this experience.”

**As we reach the end of this project, a few things come to mind. We really accomplished something! We accomplished a task that seemed so overwhelming when first introduced to the class. Hesitation and intimidation were just a few of the emotions felt regarding this Service-Learning Writing Project. Just the thought of working for an agency is enough to make one question her or his own writing ability. Despite these feelings we were ready for the challenge. What steps were taken that enabled us to successfully complete our writing project? What was the outcome of the collaborative working experience? What was obtained from this overall experience, including the writing that was required for the class?**

**The Youth Development Corporation is an organization designed to help youth obtain jobs. These youths, ranging in age from 10 to 21, receive guidance from counselors whose job is to make sure the clients follow the proper procedures it takes to acquire a job. The clients are given the *Guide to Employment* which explores many areas such as how to format a resume, fill out a job application, what to do at an interview, and many other key factors. Our contact person, John Tucker, assigned us the task to revise the *Guide*. He didn't give us specific criteria for it. We were free to change what we felt needed to be changed. Sounds easy, right? Not at all! This meant that we had to make crucial decisions on our own.**

**The first thing the group did, besides speaking with people from the agency, was to divide the packet amongst the three of us. Each person received a section to revise which was later rotated so that each person had input into the revision of the whole. After this, we made a group presentation to the class in hopes of receiving useful feedback about visuals, organization, and proper structure of a personal data worksheet. Many of the ideas we got from the class became very useful in some of the decision making because it gave us a better understanding of an audience's perspective. Finally we had to put everything together. Although it wasn't required by the agency to have the new packet typed, we thought it would give a more professional look. Now it's up to the agency. Their printers will produce the final copy of the *Guide*.**

**A lot must be emphasized about what we learned through the Service-Learning Writing Project. We felt it was a good experience because we learned about writing to an audience and about collaborative work. It gets difficult, but it pays off in the end. We hope to look back on this experience and see how it has been beneficial for future learning and future careers.**