

## SETUP FOR SUCCESS coaching foster kids for success in college

Nationwide, just one in three foster youth graduates from high school. Less than one percent graduate from secondary education.

This shocking statistic is the reason that, among our programs preparing foster youth for adulthood, we offer Supplemental Education Transition Planning—or SETuP.

When foster youth reach the age of fourteen, SETuP joins their team—working with the youth, his or her foster family or families, school and others to get them through high school and we stay right by their side until they are safely settled and succeeding in college.

“I like to see my role as a coach for the youth I work with,” says SETuP case manager Jermaine Turner (below). “My job

(continued on back cover)



## Farmer's Grill food truck: good-for-you food creates good employment outlook for N. Idaho youth

Work Ready youth employment program is thrilled to announce the opening of its new food truck—The Farmer's Grill.

The truck will travel around Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls, offering good-for-you food—sandwiches and salads crafted from locally-grown, pesticide-free produce and locally-raised meats. But the truck also offers something good for the community—providing job training for local youth who grow both the produce and the business.

That's because the truck is an essential component of Work Ready's employment training program for youth ages 16-21, providing opportunities for real-world work experience with growing and harvesting produce, food preparation, sales, collecting money, clean up and basic marketing.

The truck starts serving food in late June but Work Ready youth and staff have been at work for nearly a year to find funding (thank you Paul Allen Foundation and the Inland NW Community Foundation!), set up the truck and develop menus.

In the first year, as many as 100



youth will work running the Farmers Grill. Each will get the chance to show up on time, report to a manager, maybe even become managers themselves. They will get first-hand experience working with customers and learning what it takes to start and run a small business. All the money raised by the venture goes back into the Work Ready program so it can eventually rely less—or not at all—on grants and donor funding.

*For locations, hours and specials follow us at [www.facebook.com/FarmersGrillTruck](http://www.facebook.com/FarmersGrillTruck) or learn more about our youth employment program at [www.voaspokane.org/WorkReady](http://www.voaspokane.org/WorkReady). ■*



# WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO: JOSIE'S STORY

Former foster youth, Josie, was blindsided by suddenly becoming homeless during her first year of college. Most kids her age would have given up under the pressure. But not Josie: she got a job, and then another, and another. She tirelessly worked three jobs to be able to afford a place to live—and the scholarship you gave her meant she could use her relentless tenacity to continue taking classes and become one of only 2% of foster youth to graduate from college. Find out what's next for Josie...



**This May, Josie graduated from Whitworth University with a bachelor's degree in Social Work—making her one of only 2% of foster youth who graduate from college.**

It was fear of becoming another statistic that got me to try college in the first place. That same fear pushed me to stay in college and get three jobs to climb my way out of homelessness. Giving up and dropping out wasn't an option for me because, even though my heart was broken and numb, I had a burning desire to become someone and succeed.

And I wasn't going down without a fight.

I remember, one day when I was at Spokane Falls Community College, there was a speaker in one of my classes—a Native American professional violinist. He grew up in foster care most of his life. He told me he got through his struggles and hardships because

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## Opportunity Knocks

Your dollars and volunteer hours provide so much more than food and shelter. Our programs offer all kinds of opportunities to learn and advance in ways that prepare people to stand on their own two feet. Here are a few examples:

### EDUCATION

- Access to formal education
- GED programs
- Tutors
- Help finding financial aid
- SETuP (see page 1, left)
- College Scholarships

### HOUSING

- Responsible Renter classes
- Rental assistance
- Help finding an apartment
- Assistance furnishing an apartment

### INCOME

- Employment readiness training (see page 1, right)
- Vocational skill building
- Assistance with legal issues
- Job-search & job-placement assistance
- Job interview preparation
- Financial benefit programs
- Financial education
- Help opening a checking account

### LIFE SKILLS

- Skills training (cooking, grocery shopping, laundry, housekeeping, etc.)
- Gardening experience
- Enrichment opportunities (art therapy, sports, etc.)
- Budgeting & money management
- Chances to develop interests (photography, white-water rafting, car repair, etc.)

### WELLNESS

- Help finding a "medical home"/primary care dr.
- Connections to mental-health and chemical-dependency treatment
- Help finding health insurance
- Nutritional guidance
- Prenatal & early childhood care
- Support from public health nurses
- Family reconciliation
- Spiritual connections
- Parenting training

# Thank you for remembering “I Remember Mama”

*Thanks to your gifts, Mother’s Day was magical for more than 100 low-income senior and disabled women who would have otherwise spent the day alone. This year’s Mamma Mia theme luncheon was a festive and joyful event.*

*Your sponsorships allowed these women the luxury of gifts, companionship, entertainment and a delicious lunch at the Doubletree Hotel. Each woman in attendance was deeply grateful for your generosity.*



**Each woman received the kind of honor, pampering and love we give our own mothers. Thanks to donors like you, these women also enjoyed flowers, entertainment, companionship and a round of Simon Says led by special guest Senator Andy Billig!**



**Your donations made Mother’s Day happy for more than 100 low-income senior and disabled women. Thank you!**



**Each year, the luncheon has a different theme. This year, our guest enjoyed a festive “Mamma Mia” celebration.**

Photos by Tina L. Caldwell

## Thank You! I Remember Mama 2014 Sponsors



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- Alene Alexander • Dorothy Balum • Barb Borgens • Judi Conroy • Mary Daugharty • Patt Earley • Morva Hempel • Scooter Mahoney • Joyce Malone • Annie McKinlay • Donna Roloff • Glenda Steed • Kim Thorburn • Carole Watt • Anne Whigham

## SETuP, cont. from page 1

is to motivate, inform and assist them and to lead the team that will help them finish high school and transition to college and careers.”

Jermaine does lots of things any great coach would do. He spends many hours on the road—traveling wherever needed to rally everyone in the life of a foster youth including teachers, principals, foster parents, counselors and others, to do everything possible to help youth succeed in school.

He calls practice—with handpicked tutors and mentors who help kids keep up with their school work and get the grades they need to progress.

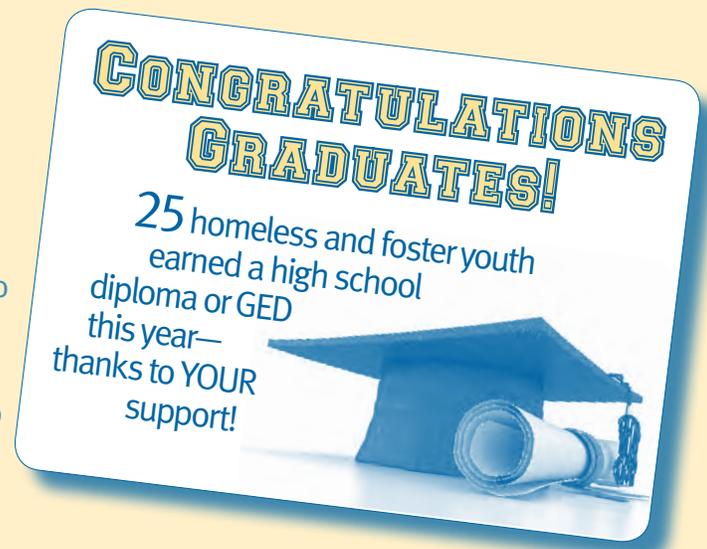
He holds team meetings—checking-in with youth at home, school or anywhere they will meet him and accompanying nervous kids to meetings with school counselors or professors.

He gathers stats—tracking down current grades, getting transcripts, finding lost school credits and meeting with guidance counselors. He gives pep talks to teens who are struggling—whether they are falling behind because they aren’t getting enough sleep, going through something at home or just because they are afraid to ask for help.

But most importantly he works with kids to set and achieve goals—short term, long term, small and large—that will help them reach the Big Leagues of succeeding in college.

“When a kid gets to see the goals, the process, put a plan together and complete it, the results can be pretty rewarding for both the youth and me,” says Jermaine. “When I am enrolling kids, it always startles me that so many youth don’t even know or think college is an option for them. They don’t know where to begin. It’s an honor to be able to change that. Seeing the look on a kid’s face when she gets a scholarship she’s worked so hard to get or seeing a kid raise his grade higher than he thought was possible is pretty amazing. I get to help them experience possibility, feel hope and to see the doors in front of them open.”

*Learn more about all our services for foster youth at [www.voaspokane.org/FosterYouth](http://www.voaspokane.org/FosterYouth). ■*



## Josie, continued from page 2

of his hero; the person he looks up to, who truly cared about him, was there for him and supported him.

Well, I got through my struggles because the Independent Living case managers and SETuP staff were my heroes. I can honestly say I wouldn’t be where I am today if it wasn’t for the Trent-Gillespie scholarship and them taking me under their wing. They changed my life.

Each time I fell (and I fell several times), they were there to bandage me back up and help me get back on my feet. They believed in me when I didn’t even believe in myself. They told me I could succeed in college and in life. They had my back and taught me the skills I needed to become independent. They looked passed the stereotypes and labels. They saw me for who I am as an individual, not just as a foster youth.

Do you know what they call the youth in the program? They call us their kids. When something bad happens to one of us you should see how they react. They’re practically pulling out their hair trying to figure out a solution to help.

After I saw myself through their eyes, going to school wasn’t about fear or beating the statistics anymore. Independent Living and SETuP helped me discover my dreams and identity. When I realized it was my dream to help other foster children and youth, it ignited a passion and love that surpassed all my fears.

I don’t think anyone’s college experience is a walk in the park. But my college experience was such a roller coaster ride. On that ride I learned that getting through college—and life—isn’t about how smart you are. It’s about how much guts you have. It’s about pushing yourself farther than you think you can go. It’s about never giving up on yourself.

I had to throw away the stereotypes of foster kids, the labels and all the negative things people said to me and just keep taking steps forward. Now I know that if I can overcome the challenges of being in foster care, I can overcome anything that comes my way.

*Josie graduated from Whitworth University this May with a bachelor’s degree in Sociology—making her one of the 2% of foster youth who graduate from college. What’s next for her? She wants to pursue a master’s degree and make a career using her education and experiences to help other foster alumni. She loves to volunteer her time in the community and at her church. “My mission in life is to serve others through love, grace and passion,” Josie told us. Her future is bright and beautiful, thanks to you! ■*



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