



**Nexus**  
FAMILY HEALING

# Connection

A Nexus Family Healing Newsletter  
Fall 2024

Nexus-East Bethel • Nexus-FACTS • Nexus-Gerard • Nexus-Indian Oaks • Nexus-Kindred • Nexus-Mille Lacs • Nexus-Onarga • Nexus-PATH • Nexus-Woodbourne • Aspen House • SERCC

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# Bringing Comfort and Belonging to Youth in Need

It's a heartbreaking reality; youth often arrive at Nexus-Woodbourne Family Healing – and other Nexus residential treatment programs – carrying all their possessions in a black trash bag. When Meghan Butterworth, Regional Development Director, learned of this, she knew something had to be done. Driven by compassion, Meghan leapt into action and launched the Comforts of Home Program.

The Comforts of Home Program provides Welcome to Wellness Bags for each youth with items they will take with them once they complete their treatment. Each donated bag includes fluffy towels, cozy sheets, a warm comforter set, a plush blanket, a bedside rug, and a duffel bag. Although the agency provides the essentials, these simple comforts, which most of us take for granted, mean the world to the youth served by Nexus-Woodbourne.

“The youth are astonished and shocked that people outside of Nexus-Woodbourne campus care for them,” Meghan shared. “These kids don't think they deserve things like this. They are coming from very difficult circumstances.”

The resounding success of the Comforts of Home Program has inspired Nexus Family Healing to expand it to several of our residential treatment agencies. “It's a win-win,” Meghan exclaimed. “Supporters of Nexus will have the opportunity to donate something for our youth that will directly impact their feelings of comfort and belonging. That makes my heart happy!”

Make a difference in a youth's life today! Learn how you can donate to the Comforts of Home Program at [www.nexusfamilyhealing.org/comforts-home](http://www.nexusfamilyhealing.org/comforts-home).



## Voices of Inspiration

### A Legacy of Kindness

From childhood, Tere Geckle's life has been shaped by the power of kindness. Inspired by her father's philanthropic spirit, Tere embraced giving back.

Through community service, Tere and Meghan Butterworth's paths crossed. When Meghan, Regional Development Director, launched the Comforts of Home Program featuring Welcome to Wellness Bags - a duffel bag filled with soft sheets, a fuzzy blanket, a comforter, a bedside rug, and fluffy towels - Tere saw an opportunity to make a difference.

Tere made a gift of stock that launched the Welcome to Wellness Bags at Nexus-Woodbourne. However, her kindness didn't stop there. Through coordinated giving campaigns with friends and family, Tere collected winter coats and other needs for Nexus-Woodbourne youth. These acts of kindness showed the youth they were cared for by others and that they matter.

For her 70th birthday, Tere and her family assembled 70 goodie bags for the youth passing on the legacy of giving to her “grandcuties.” Her influence has been so profound that one grandchild now plans a volunteer activity for his own birthday.

Tere's kindness has rippled outward, inspiring the expansion of the Comforts of Home Program to several Nexus agencies' youth residential treatment programs. Her story exemplifies how one person's compassion can transform lives, reminding us of the magic that unfolds when kindness becomes a way of life.

“Every child deserves a good night's sleep with soft sheets and a fuzzy blanket. How are they going to heal if they don't get that?” said Tere.

*Transform lives now through the Comforts of Home Program. Donate Welcome to Wellness Bags or give to the Comforts of Home Program through donor advised funds, stock, or a one-time donation. Learn more: [nexusfamilyhealing.org/comforts-home](http://nexusfamilyhealing.org/comforts-home).*

# A Family's Tough Decision Leads to Transformation

Sara and Mike Schneider's dream of a complete family came true with the adoption of Luke and Bella, followed by the surprise birth of Noah. However, their joy was quickly overshadowed by concern for Luke's behavior.

From infancy, Luke exhibited unusual needs and destructive tendencies. Despite countless doctor visits and therapies, answers remained elusive until age nine when they contacted Luke's birth mother. The devastating truth emerged: Luke had suffered brain damage in utero due to domestic violence and alcohol exposure.

The years leading to this revelation were tumultuous. Luke's unpredictable and often threatening behavior forced the family into survival mode. Sharp objects were removed, siblings' doors were locked, and walls bore the scars of his outbursts.

Exhausted and overwhelmed, Sara and Mike faced a heart-wrenching decision when Luke turned 12. "We felt like we were failing, giving up," Sara admitted. "But we knew this was necessary to save our family."

After a grueling process trying to find the help he needed, Luke entered the residential program at Nexus-Mille Lacs at 13-years-old. The structured environment taught him emotional management and self-regulation. After 11 months, the transformation was remarkable. "He's not that kid anymore," Sara marveled. Luke himself acknowledged the change, realizing there was another way to be.

Luke is now 16 and speaks fondly of his time at Nexus-Mille Lacs. The Schneiders' story is a testament to the power of perseverance, professional intervention, and the unbreakable bonds of family love.



*For parents in this situation, it's scary and dreadful that you have to send your son or daughter away and then to realize that might be the best thing I ever did for him.*

- SARA



Help transform young lives in your community today.

Your gift isn't just a donation - it's a lifeline for youth like Luke. Your generosity fuels vital mental health programs, provides essential personal care items and experiences, and creates safe spaces for learning and healing. Donate today to create brighter futures.

Scan the QR code or visit [nexusfamilyhealing.org/nlgive](https://nexusfamilyhealing.org/nlgive).



## YOUR SUPPORT **Impacts Lives**

### Illinois

The recreation department at **Nexus-Onarga** was awarded funding from **HPS** to fund a water safety program. This program will support staff training and equipment for youth swim instruction and pool safety. Swimming is beneficial for youth to relax and relieve stress and can build confidence and self-esteem.



Thanks to a generous donation from **TurningPoint Energy, Nexus-Indian Oaks** can now provide a refreshed space for youth in residential treatment. The funding will transform an existing area into a vibrant recreation and activity hub, complete with dedicated spaces for movies, video games, board games, fitness, and art. This space will provide an essential outlet for youth to simply be kids and play a critical role in their healing and personal growth.

### Maryland

**The Big Lots Foundation** provided a generous grant to support the Comforts of Home Program for youth in residential care at **Nexus-Woodbourne**. These youth often arrive with few belongings and are provided a “Welcome to Wellness Bag” filled with bedding and towels of their own. These simple yet meaningful gestures can make a profound difference, instilling a sense of dignity, security, and belonging for the youth.

Thanks to the **Charles Crane Family Foundation**, the **Nexus-Woodbourne Youth Work Program** will continue to grow and offer more paid work experiences to youth in our Residential

Treatment Program. Also, the grant will support the creation of a “Mindfulness Meadow” on the campus and fund Dialectical Behavior Therapy training for the youth care team.

Thanks to the support of the **Baltimore Ravens**, youth in Nexus-Woodbourne’s Residential Treatment Program participated in the 2024 Ravens Training Camp at the Under Armour Performance Center and attended a Ravens vs. Atlanta Falcons pre-season game. Additionally, our Treatment Foster Care Program families attended the Ravens vs. Philadelphia Eagles game as the guest of Ravens Linebacker Roquan Smith. Thank you, Ravens, for your continued support!

### Minnesota

Thanks to **Vigilant Cybersecurity, Enterprise Fleet Management, Jonny Pops, the Minnesota Vikings, Nexus-Kindred** board member **Paul Zimmer, and other dedicated community donors**, the annual **Nexus-Kindred Valley Fair Day** was a huge success! Nearly 200 foster families enjoyed a day of laughter, rides, and new memories at Minnesota’s favorite outdoor theme park **Valley Fair**.

Thank you to the **Minnesota Vikings** for their generous support of Nexus Family Healing! Youth from **Nexus-Mille Lacs** and **New Trails Group Home** were invited to the Minnesota Vikings Training Camp Experience in July.



Oct 25 - Night for Nexus  
Metropolitan Ballroom  
Golden Valley, MN

Nov 14 - Building B'more Connections  
CareFirst at Canton Crossing  
Baltimore, MD

Nov 21 - 2024 Give to the Max Day  
Minnesota

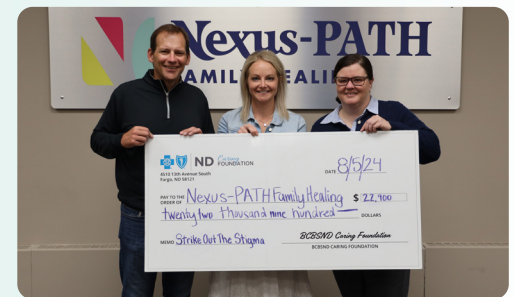
Feb 13 - 2025 Giving Hearts Day  
North Dakota

Visit [NexusFamilyHealing.org/events](https://NexusFamilyHealing.org/events) for more information.

**Think Bank’s** recent donation to the **Southeast Regional Crisis Center (SERCC)** is a lifeline for mental health crisis services in southeastern Minnesota. This funding helps create equitable access so that SERCC can ensure youth and adults receive the vital support they need. This compassionate approach will significantly reduce reliance on law enforcement and emergency rooms in the community.

### North Dakota

Thank you to the **Blue Cross Blue Shield North Dakota Caring Foundation** for the donation to **Nexus-PATH** through their Strike Out the Stigma Campaign in partnership with local baseball teams. The donation will provide wraparound services and enrichment activities for youth.



**United Way of Cass Clay** awarded **Nexus-PATH** a grant for School-Based Mental Health Services in Fargo, West Fargo, and rural Cass County schools. This funding will provide early intervention and access to services to enhance the students functioning in school, home, and community and to connect the family with vital community resources.