

Media Release

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Veterans Organize Holiday Dinner for Youthville Life Skills Young Adults

(Wichita, Kan., Dec. 17, 2008) – Often times the holidays are geared towards meeting the wishes of young children. However, this year the American Veterans Post 47 have organized a holiday dinner to give out essential living gifts including kitchen, office, bath, and home to Youthville young adults on Sunday, December 21 from 2-5 p.m. at AM Post 47, 1827 E. 47th St. South. Approximately 25 young adults, who have been in foster care for a good part of their lives and are working hard to make it on their own through Youthville's Life Skills program, will receive much needed support this holiday season. Additionally, a few area employers will be on hand to speak with them about job and career opportunities.

"We as veterans serve our country and should continue to serve our communities when we come home from a tour of duty," said, Larry Shippee, AM Post 47 Commander."

Youthville's Life Skills program works with young adults ages 17 and older in the foster care system to develop the skills needed to establish a healthy, successful adulthood by teaching them necessary independent living skills.

"It's their future and it's our future. These young adults are fresh, un-molded minds, and we need to get them going in the right direction and help them reach their goals in life," said Shippee.

* (These girls are willing to do interviews before or at the event) *

At 17 years young, Teresa and Alexandra have faced difficult life challenges that lead them to be placed in foster care, but both girls are working hard to overcome them. Teresa went into custody over a year ago because of truancy issues. After being introduced to a Youthville life skills worker, she began working towards achieving her G.E.D., maintaining full-time employment, and living in her own fully furnished apartment. "I'm only 17 years old and I'm on my own," Teresa said. "My grandparents help me out a lot, but whenever I need something, Youthville is always there for me." Teresa says her life skills worker helps her with everything she needs. She helped her find and look at apartments and fill out the lease application. "If I ever just need someone to talk to, they're (Youthville) always there for me," Teresa said. According to her life skills worker, Teresa needed someone in her life that cared about her and didn't give up on her. "She has done a 180 degree turn around and I'm very proud of her," said, Heather Goolsby, Youthville Life skills worker. "She calls me almost every day just to let me know what is going on and how she is doing."

Alexandra entered the foster care system several years ago with her two younger siblings, who have since been adopted. She is living with a foster care family until she graduates high school this spring and moves away to college. "Alexandra puts her whole mind, body and soul into everything she does," Goolsby said. "She has already managed to get her own car and obtain scholarships for college." Alexandra says she would like to become a forensic scientist or work in child welfare as a social worker or child psychologist. "In the distant future, I want to become a foster parent and provide a good stable home for someone who needs it," Alexandra said. When asked if she was scared about living on her own at college, she replied, "I've had to take care of my brother and sister, so I'm confident about running a household. Being in foster care is like a small break for me from adult responsibilities."

Youthville's vision is to provide the best sources of help to children who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected with its mission of **Giving Children Back Their Childhood**. Over 3,000 children are cared for annually by Youthville. To learn more or to get involved with Youthville visit www.youthville.org.

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