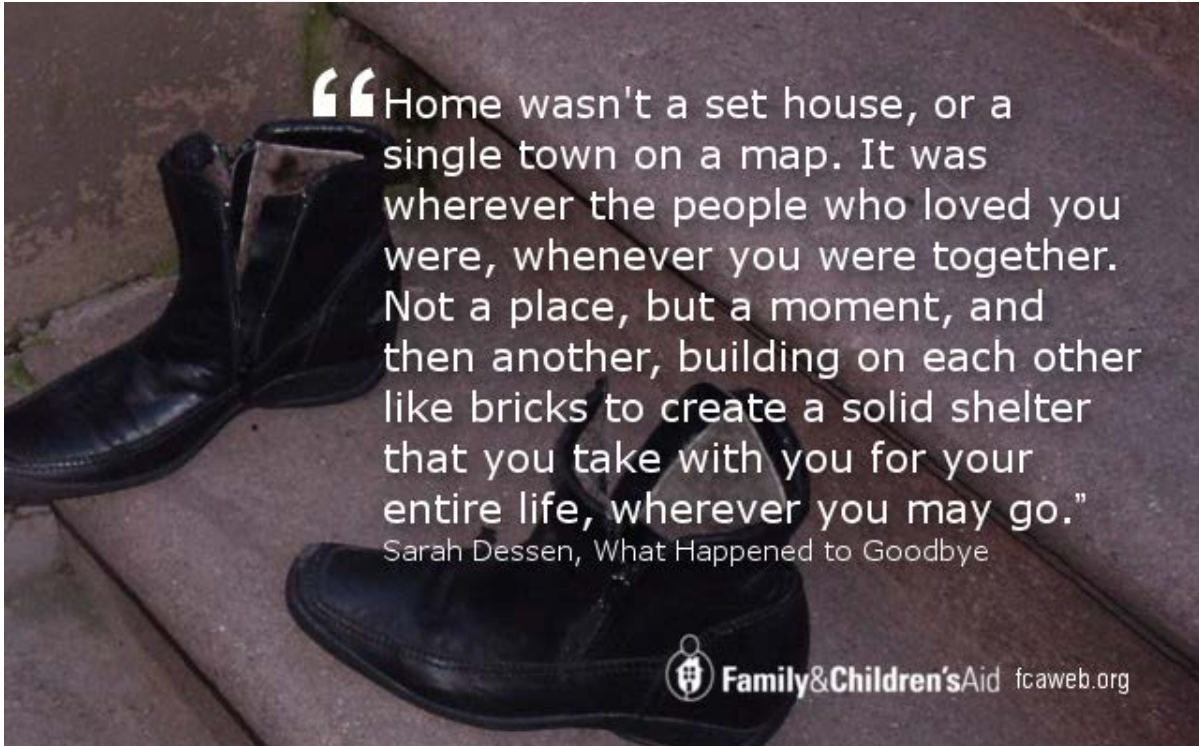





**Family & Children's Aid**  
for every child, a home



“Home wasn't a set house, or a single town on a map. It was wherever the people who loved you were, whenever you were together. Not a place, but a moment, and then another, building on each other like bricks to create a solid shelter that you take with you for your entire life, wherever you may go.”

Sarah Dessen, *What Happened to Goodbye*

 Family & Children's Aid fcaweab.org

## What is a Home?



### For Every Child...A Home

Lynn Michaelson has worked for Family & Children's Aid for nine years. When she started here, she wasn't the mother of twins or the Program Coordinator for Family & Children's Aid Adolescent Girls Therapeutic Group Home like she is now. She was a recent college graduate looking to add some experience to her resume. "I had just finished school, studying sociology and criminal justice. A co-worker where I was working through college told me she heard a new group home was opening and that she was going to apply. I hate

### Make A Paper House

In 1909 children's book Illustrator Patten Beard created a story about a fictional little village called Cut-Out Town with a poem and a paper template about each building in the town.

*Cut-Out Town is made of paper:  
Paper houses, paper trees,  
Paper flowers grown in boxes  
In the windows--where you  
please*

>> [Download House Templates](#)

to say it, but I applied because I thought it would look good on my resume. And I loved it. I just loved it!"

The Therapeutic Group Home currently is home to six teenage girls, ages 14-21. "When I first started, it was hard. I wanted to take all the girls home. Now, I am glad that if they have to be someplace, they are with us and not some other place. I am very bias about FCA --I love the agency. I know we have good staff – we care. When I leave at the end of the day, I leave knowing the girls are with staff who do their best to keep them safe."

The average stay is two years. "You hope that in two years you fill them with enough skills so when they leave they do make the right decisions. You are doing work that parents do in 16 or 17 years and trying to fit it all into two years."

"I think when they all first come to the house, their goal is to get out of the house as soon as they can. But over time, this becomes their home and as the discharge date comes closer and it becomes more real to them, a lot of them don't want to go. They're in a safe place. They've made friends. It's their home. And now they're going to a different place that hasn't been home in forever."

"What the girls need is to feel safe." emphasized Lynn.

"They need structure, consistency. They need to feel like they are wanted where they live. They come from such invalidating environments. They need to believe that we believe that they have a chance."



program." Explains Lynn. "Each girl gets her own room. They are able to pick the color paint they want on the walls to personalize their own rooms. They are definitely teenage rooms!"

"We provide everything they need but what does every girl want? To go shopping! We could take them to the mall every week and they would still want to go... even just to buy nail polish! Retail therapy...it really does work!" Lynn Michaelson.

And what is it like having six teenage girls on your hands? "Just like you'd imagine! Sometimes they fight. Mostly they get along. The GE Women's Group remade an upstairs room into a beauty room. That's where the girls spend a lot

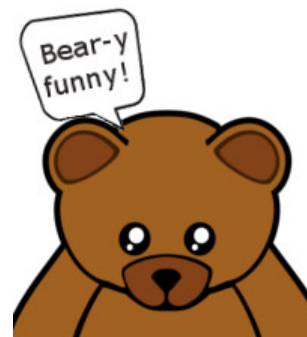


How does a penguin build its house?

Igloos it together!

How do teddy bears keep their house cool in summer?

They use bear conditioning!



## Putting the "Therapy" in our Therapeutic Group Homes

The girls attend:

- Twice daily community meetings to share feelings, state daily goals, solve community problems and find support from peers and staff.
- Weekly group and an individual session with a clinician focused on

of time. They never seem to get tired of it. We have tons of hair stuff, makeup and nail polish. Even the girls who are more tom-boyish love to do their hair and nails. They get so excited doing something crazy with their hair that they think is cute. They are girls. They are just teenage girls.”

The girls are in a therapeutic group home because they have mental health and/or behavioral issues that require more support than they would receive in a non-therapeutic group home. Six teenage girls is tough, but six teenage girls with behavioral issues is even tougher. Lynn says she manages by being consistent and not taking things personally. “I’m very consistent with how I treat each of the girls. I know it’s not me. They are reacting to whatever traumas they have experienced. They are reacting to what they have gone through before they got here. I am glad they are here and they can get it out with us instead of ending up in detention or a hospital.”

Lynn says the best thing about her job is, “...seeing a girl come to the group home in chaos and leave with life skills, a plan, a high school diploma, and no more hospitalizations. They’re kind of just done with that part of their life.”

“What I love about my job is working with the girls... making small differences in their lives. I think when the girls say that they feel safe at the house, that’s really special. It’s probably the only time that they have felt safe in their lives. I mean I have girls who call our house “home”. This is where they grew up. It is their home.”

recovering from traumatic life experiences and how traumatic events impact thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

- Situational, daily, individual and weekly group coaching on mindfulness, emotion regulation, distress tolerance and interpersonal effectiveness.
- Weekly life skills group to learn how to lead healthy, independent lives where skills like good work/study habits, using community resources, budgeting/bill paying and computer literacy are taught.
- Twice weekly individual therapy.
- Family therapy as needed.



## What is Home?

Gladys Hunt, author of *Honey for a Child's Heart* defines home as, "...a safe place, a place where one is free from attack, a place where one experiences secure relationships and affirmation. It's a place where people share and understand each other. Its relationships are nurturing. The people in it do not need to be perfect; instead, they need to be honest, loving, supportive, recognizing a common humanity that makes all of us vulnerable."

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Family & Children's Aid (FCA) provides high quality, innovative and responsive programs focused on emotional and behavioral well being that helps children faced with mental health challenges heal.