



ABBOTT HOUSE

ANNUAL REPORT

2006

ABBOTT HOUSE.....A LEGACY

Within the total scheme of life in the United States, very few people remember one of the country's most noteworthy social reformers and advocates. That started to change several years ago when a group of dedicated and inspired citizens of Grand Island, Nebraska began the Abbott Sisters Project. This grassroots effort was organized to shed light on the accomplishments of two native daughters that literally changed the world we live in.

John Sorensen, founding director of the Abbott Sisters Project and self proclaimed "Abbottonian" turned this project into a crusade that would at the very least bring the attention of Nebraskans to one of the national treasures that sprang from the Nebraska prairie. Of the two sisters, Grace and Edith, it was Grace who gained national recognition as a reformer and it was Grace who became the namesake for the Abbott House in Mitchell. The agency was created as a memorial to Grace Abbott who died in the same year that our Mitchell founders were starting their new mission of help for children. This year is the 129th anniversary of the Grace's birth.

Grace Abbott (1878-1939) – "America's Champion of Children's Rights" – is considered by many to be one of the most influential figures in American political and social history. Her work to end child labor practices, improve health care and education and a hallmark effort that led to the Social Security Act of 1935, portray an influence far beyond a spokesperson for change. She was the first woman nominated to a presidential cabinet post as Secretary of Labor for Herbert Hoover and the first person chosen to represent the United States at the League of Nations. As head of the United States Children's Bureau, Grace Abbott was the highest ranking and most powerful woman in the American government at the time of the Great Depression.

This woman of the plains was said to have changed our country more profoundly than have many Presidents. In her wake came the changes that would protect the rights of immigrants, increase the role of women in government and improve the lives of children from every part of society.

About Abbott House

Abbott House is a private charity that provides residential treatment services to girls between the age of nine and eighteen. Located in Mitchell, South Dakota, the agency was founded in 1939 as a memorial to renowned social activist, Grace Abbott. The agency provides comprehensive services that include not only intensive treatment but also foster care in a therapeutic home. The Abbott House is truly dedicated to providing services to children and families that promote personal development and foster responsible participation with others.

Abbott House is a place where girls get **Another Chance**. For most it is the opportunity to turn the abuse and victimization of the past into an experience they live with but that

does not overwhelm their lives. It is a model of treatment based on the theory that behaviors are learned and therefore it is possible for new behaviors to be taught. It is a **Teaching** program based upon structured teaching interactions with each girl that are based on her individual needs.

Girls between nine and eighteen come to Abbott House by referrals from protective service, correctional and educational agencies. Forty-four girls receive care and treatment in three residential living units and a foster home. The girls live in small groups of six to eight girls.

Abbott House Programs

A living and learning model - Teaching is the primary focus of the program with the assumption clearly understood that new behavior can be learned and old behaviors can be improved. Teaching occurs within clearly defined teaching interactions that emphasize observable and measurable actions. The program is implemented based on:

- Structured positive reinforcement by verbal praise and practice rewards
- Continuous reinforcement following a desired behavior
- Shaping basic skills and then combining skills with successive desired skills
- Generalizing of skills learned to similar situations in the community
- Discrimination of skills from one circumstance to another

The overriding benefit of this approach is that (1) There is absolutely no punishment associated with this model, and (2) It is clearly measurable and sustainable.

Academic Success - Schooling is an essential part of the total program and it is put into practice with an Individual Education Plan for each girl. The student receives an individualized curriculum based upon their needs in the areas of grade placement, skill level and behavioral goals. Many adaptations are made within the education program to address the individual circumstances of each girl. Our teaching staff closely monitors and evaluates each student's performance and testing is used to assure that the girl's achievement level is increasing. This unique school is in session 250 days each year, thereby extending the opportunities for learning and increasing the chances of successful academic performance.

Special Attention - Every girl is assigned an individual mental health therapist to help her in dealing with her unique emotional issues. These individual sessions are augmented with specialized groups that focus on problems these girls share in common. These groups include:

- ◆ **Sexual Abuse Group** for girls who have experienced intra-familial or extra-familial sexual abuse
- ◆ **Mood Management Group** for girls that experience depression as a persistent problem in their lives
- ◆ **Anger Control Training** that helps girls identify emotional triggers and teaches strategies for anger management.
- ◆ **Children of Alcoholics** groups focus on the experience of a child in an alcoholic home and the role that they themselves play in alcoholism.

- ◆ **Intensive Chemical Dependency Treatment** provides the girl that is diagnosed with a substance abuse problem with treatment for her recovery.

And Other Services

In an ongoing basis, the Abbott House has available those services that are necessary to help a girl gain from and use **Another Chance**. This may include some or all of the following services:

- ◆ Registered Nurse
- ◆ Psychological Evaluations
- ◆ Psychiatric Services
- ◆ Group and Family therapy
- ◆ Therapeutic Activities
- ◆ Community Services
- ◆ Full range of medical services
- ◆ Cultural Awareness
- ◆ Foster Care Home
- ◆ Educational Transition

Inquires regarding Abbott House are welcomed and encouraged. Girls may be referred by agencies, professionals, schools or by parents. Visits to the agency are welcomed.

Additional descriptive information and referral applications are available upon request or the agency website AbbottHouse.org

MAKING HISTORY

Abbott House added a former graduate of the program as one of our newest board members. Amanda Fay grew up in the Black Hills of South Dakota. As a teen, Amanda was a resident of the Abbott House where she benefited from individual and family counseling, groups, chemical dependency, and educational programming.

After being discharged from the Abbott House Amanda moved to Armour, South Dakota and graduated from Armour High School in 1997. She enlisted in the Navy and was stationed in San Diego, Ca aboard the USS Bon Homme Richard.

Amanda was honorably discharged after a four year enlistment and returned home to South Dakota to attend Dakota Wesleyan University. While attending college Amanda worked as a staff member at the Abbott House as a teaching counselor.

In 2003 Amanda became a police officer for the City of Wagner South Dakota. She continued to work as a police officer for the remainder of her schooling. She graduated in 2005 from Dakota Wesleyan University with a Bachelor degree in Human Services and Criminal Justice cum laude.

Amanda now resides in Redwood Falls, MN where she works as a child and family counselor. She lives with her boyfriend and dog, Honey. She keeps busy as a member of the National Guard and is currently awaiting foster care licensure.

Year in Review

Number of youth served:	84
Approved Releases	24
Released to a higher level of care	16
Source of Placement	99% Agency 1% Private

FINANCIAL REPORT:

In 2006 Abbott House was asked to adjust our fiscal year to match other providers in the state of South Dakota. We are in the process of adjusting our reporting period. In the past the agency reported information on a 12 month cycle starting in January and ending in December. Due to the request from the Department of Social Services we have adjusted the reporting period from July through June. Our next financial report will be recorded in June of 2007. The report will cover the past 18 months and will be documented and posted to the website.

