



## **The Evolution of St. James Home of Duluth to Woodland Hills**

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St. James Home of Duluth, run by the Catholic Diocese, was a resource to many children during its 70+ years of service. The orphanage began in 1900 and operated out of the former St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth's Lincoln Park area. With the demand for placements increasing, it became clear that they had outgrown the building. In 1909, land was purchased in Duluth's Woodland community and a year-long construction began which resulted in our current building structure. The original tract of land was 45 acres which grew rapidly to nearly 200 acres boasting woodlands, a farm, Amity Creek, high ground, and rich soil which was cultivated to reap crops to feed the children.

St. James became home to thousands of Catholic children over the years with the Benedictine Sisters providing care to the 150 children who lived therein. The reasons prompting placement changed as years went by. In the beginning, involuntary separation due to parental sickness or death of one or both parents prompted placements; by the early 1920s, neglect issues resulted in more children being brought to the home; as divorce became more prevalent in society so did the need for dependent care in the mid 1940s. As society changed, the Sisters noticed that many children came to the home confused, angry and deeply saddened due to the separation from their families. With this change, physical care, academics and religious education were simply not enough. Psychological and behavioral issues also had to be met.

The focus of care transitioned from an orphanage setting to a treatment setting that provided help to youth with behavioral problems, neglect and delinquency. As a result, the staff evolved to those trained in dealing with troubled youth rather than solely staff from the religious community. By 1964, the girls department had closed. A year later, most of the Sisters had left, yet Sr. Paschal Pocta and Sr. Mary Martin Beringer remained and continued their work at the home. (In recognition of Sr. Mary Martin's devotion to the agency, we honor her work with Beringer Guiding Light Awards given annually in her name). By 1971, Catholic Social Services ended their involvement with the facility (though the Catholic Diocese still owned the property until 1993), the name changed to Woodland Hills and a private residential treatment center for boys was established. For the first time in its history, the facility was run by a lay person rather than clergy.

By 1978, a girls program was added back and they initially resided at the Chisholm Home in Duluth's East Hillside neighborhood. With the needs of youth changing, a new principle was adopted in the early 1970s based on the Brendtro/Vorrath book, Positive Peer Culture. The basic premise of this modality was kids helping kids through care and concern. The programs addressed behaviors within a positive peer culture environment. In 1984, Richard Quigley became CEO and under his leadership, the continuum of care at Woodland Hills began to unfold.

Over the course of the next 30 years, Woodland Hills developed a reputation as an innovator and practitioner of the peer group treatment model. Within that time, new programs were added to better suit the varying needs of children in communities. In addition to residential treatment, the following programs were created: (1982) Chisholm House; (1990) Intensive Day Treatment; (1992) Neighborhood Youth Services; (1998) Semi-Independent Living (originally called Community Transition); and most recently, Residential Treatment for Mental Health (2009). With the addition of new programming options, the agency grew in physical structure as well.

## The Progression of Woodland Hills Programs

**Not all children need long-term care.** For this reason, a 30-day consequence program, known as Chisholm House, was started in 1982 by Woodland Hills. Current Woodland Hills' Chief Operations Officer, Steve Mattson, was one of three original staff members responsible for its implementation. In the beginning, the program was based out of on the main campus. Eventually, the program moved to the former Chisholm Family Museum to house adolescents in need of short-term care. One floor housed females and the other two floors were for male residents.

Initially, the goal of the program was simple ~ hold local kids accountable for their actions. The courts sent early offenders to Chisholm House for a quick, intense consequence that included chopping wood. This program was a successful deterrent for early offenders and eventually worked with youth from throughout Minnesota. As years went by and county budgets became tighter, customers were still in need of a consequence program for their clients but also needed intermediate care that was shorter than the average residential placement. In response to customers' needs, Chisholm House added a treatment component, up to 120 days, that still used the principles of "good time" but added several enhanced services. By 1997, the Minnesota Rules Chapter 2960 (Juvenile Out-of-Home Placement Licensing Standards) emerged and gender-responsive programming was gaining popularity among treatment centers which precipitated moving the girls to the main campus. Chisholm House implemented new practices in accordance with the rule. The types of youth sent to the program changed as a result. There were more youth on medications, an increase in the severity of offenses, and staff was ultimately faced with doing more for students within a shorter amount of time. Twenty-seven years later, the Chisholm House program continues to evolve based on the needs of clients and counties it serves.

**Not all children need short-term residential care.** Within the community, there were children in need of a structured day program that offered both education and treatment services. As a result, the Intensive Day Treatment (IDT) program began in 1990 and added a new level of care to the Woodland Hills continuum. The program began in the basement of the main campus building and quickly expanded to serve three groups of adolescents ages 12-17. In 1994, IDT moved its operations to the former Cobb School (now Woodland Hills Academy), where it leased the lower level space for its day programming. The program was a resource to local youth who were having behavioral troubles at home, in the school and community. Initially, youth were court-ordered or placed by social services for truancy issues and other status or petty offenses.

By 2003, economic conditions and budget cuts prompted significant program change. That had a major impact on the IDT program and Woodland Hills was forced to decide whether or not to close the program given the lack of local funding. The decision was made to do what was in the best interest of children and the local community. As a result, IDT transformed its operations and services to a medical model of care in 2004. The program began working with youth diagnosed as needing mental health services in an outpatient setting. IDT continues to evolve in order to meet the needs of clients, families, state regulatory requirements and private insurance carriers. Currently, the health care industry and our state legislature are abundant in change. The IDT program keeps aware of these changes in order to continue meeting the needs of children in need of mental health services.

**Not all children have a place to go after school.** In 1991, a collaboration of ideas between now retired St. Louis County Judge Gerald Martin, then-Duluth Police Chief Scott Lyons, and Woodland Hills staffers Richard Quigley and Steve Mattson, yielded the beginning of a free, voluntary program for youth in the Central Hillside: Neighborhood Youth Services (NYS). Through a community block grant, funds were available for community programming and Judge Martin contacted Woodland Hills. He advocated for an outreach program in the Hillside based on the program model of Harbor Youth Services in Canada, and Woodland Hills agreed to run it.

Finding a suitable location was one issue faced by Woodland Hills. The program started out in a building located just across the street from the Washington Center. It was determined that this was not a suitable space and eventually the program moved to the Washington Center in 1996. With door-to-door promotion of the program, staff built relationships and eventually gained support of this recreational, cultural, educational-focused program. It was intentional not to name the program Woodland Hills for fear of mislabeling children that attended. The kids were not in need of treatment services but services that were preventative in nature. The program, which began under one grant, eventually diversified into multiple funding streams and annually struggles to continue its funding.

NYS, like other programs operated by Woodland Hills, continued to evolve to serve the children in the Duluth community and added new services: diversion through a collaborative with the Duluth Police Department, mentoring through Mentor Duluth, tutoring through Five Points Partnership and most recently, the addition of the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program. NYS is a well-respected, vital resource to the Duluth community and provides a safe place of hope, belonging and opportunity to the 600 youth and families that come through its doors each year.

**Not all children can go home.** Ironically, this wasn't the first time the idea of transition was considered for youth leaving Woodland Hills. With purchase of the Chisholm Home in mid-1970s, the initial plan was to use the site for a six-month semi-independent living program for boys called "On Your Own." The idea was apparently ahead of its time and was unfortunately not supported by potential customers. Nearly 30 years later, the idea of transition took shape and was in demand by customers.

By 1998, Woodland Hills staff again worked to fill a void in its continuum of care and developed a transition program for boys in need of a semi-independent living environment. An apartment above the agency's garage was renovated to house four young men transitioning out of the Residential Treatment Center. There, they learned life skills under the supervision and guidance of 24/7 staff. The demand for this program increased to the point of waiting lists. In response, the Ordean Foundation and an anonymous donor stepped in and helped fulfill a vision of an expanded Community Transition program in 2004. This vision included an adjacent new home for eight young men and extending transitional services to girls in an on-site apartment for four young women. Both units quickly became a resource for many youth graduating from our residential programs, especially those under Extended Juvenile Jurisdiction status. Eventually, youth who did not attend our residential programs were also referred on occasion. The agency continues to find opportunities for program growth and ultimately, residents' success. In order to better reflect the services offered, the program was renamed Semi-Independent Living in 2009.

**Not all children need correctional services.** By 2007, the youth being referred and sent to Woodland Hills again changed. Children and adolescents no longer presented strictly with behavioral issues. They were also in need of treatment for mental health issues. While there are many correctional type programs throughout the state, there are not nearly as many equipped to deal with both behavioral and mental health issues. This awareness prompted the agency to research and eventually embark on a two-year-long process to obtain a certification for mental health residential services through the Department of Human Services. Planning and preparation for this extension of services took place and the agency aligned its practices accordingly. . In addition to staff skilled in behavioral management, our expertise also expanded with a new clinical team. In February 2009, mental health services were extended to girls in a state-of-the-art new girls' dormitory. By September 2009, the same services became available to boys. With this certification, the agency is positioned as a resource to more youth in need of mental health and behavioral treatment.

The addition of mental health services gives Woodland Hills a new look, and ultimately a new brand. We're setting the stage for the future by offering services that meets the complex array of needs of today's youth. By incorporating a multi-modal approach, we're able to empower youth, teach responsibility and heal lives through our community-based and residential programs. As we reflect on our past, we have good reason to celebrate a century of quality children's services and a legacy of success; as we look to the future, we are driven to continue in our belief and mission that there is potential in every child.