

10/29/2019



Red Wing Shoe Company Foundation Members,

Since learning about the approval of the grant request for Red Wing Youth Outreach's Independent Living Skills Program I have sat down about 5 times and started to write a "Thank you" letter. Each time I could not quite put into words exactly how to express the feelings we experienced when we learned about the support- the life line- you offered us.

The first thing I did was jump- literally about 10 times, while yelling in excitement. I was the only one in the office, so it was less embarrassing than it could have been. Then I contacted Jay Tauer, you see he is my good news, bad news, everything news person to contact here at Youth Outreach. Jay is our "level headed, it will be ok, don't stress" leader, while I stress and lose sleep. Then I took a deep breath and thought about how extraordinary this opportunity really was. This grant is about helping the MOST at-risk kids in our community. Kids who don't even have their own parents to rely on when they have a bad day. Kids whose parents have given up custody of them, or have mental or chemical needs so strong that they can't even take care of themselves. We have been consistent for these kids for so many years. Those were the people I wanted to share the joy with. So that's who I contacted. I spent all week reaching out to those kids, to let them know that we are still here, that we are NOT going anywhere. And you know what we did, we cried together, a lot. We talked about relationships, we talked about what family really means, and we talked about how we live in a community where they are truly cared about. We talked about how people they have never met, sitting in offices that they may never visit, working for a company that has impact all over the world decided that THEY were worth it. Getting kids to understand that they are cared about, when people and systems around them have failed them too many times, is tough work. It's work we spend every day trying to undo. You helped us do that.

This grant isn't about 1 of us still having a job at the end of the day, it's about dozens of kids still having a safe place, in the unfortunate chaos that they call life, to come to day after day, year after year, until they decide they don't need us anymore. This grant is about a community coming together to lift up the broken, the ones whose life is hit the hardest.

So thank you, for all of those things. We literally could not do the work we do without everyone in this community.

Sincerely,

Mandy Arden
Director

Making a difference in the lives of youth.