



**YOUTH
OPPORTUNITY
CENTER**
INCORPORATED
Muncie, Indiana

Why the YOC?...the **KIDS**. That's why!

RICK ROWRAY IS THE PROUD AND LONG-SERVING CEO OF THE YOUTH OPPORTUNITY CENTER. BELOW ARE HIS COMMENTS FROM THE 2017 SHAFER GIVING SOCIETY LUNCHEON, WHICH WAS HELD FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6TH 2017:

Greetings and welcome to the 11th Annual Shafer Giving Society Luncheon. It is at this event each year that we say "Thank You" to all of you here today for your support, prayers, and encouragement. On behalf of the YOC Board of Directors, our dedicated staff, and the kids and families that we serve; simply stated, we appreciate all and do not take it for granted.

This year has been special in that the YOC is celebrating our 25th Anniversary. Many of you joined us in June as we honored our past and envisioned the YOC's future. Over the years I have had the role of being on the podium to represent the YOC. Early on, for whatever reason then, Judge Steve Caldemeyer shared his time with me as together we would represent the YOC at a variety of events and functions. Since his retirement he has decided to not be at the forefront, although his watchful eye, support, and counsel are never far away.

I asked Steve in preparation for this message if there was anything he wanted me to say on his behalf. He only wanted to reiterate and join me today in a thank you. Thanks to the entire dedicated Board of Directors of the YOC and the YOC Foundation, thanks to the YOC staff for all you do, and thanks to all those donors here today that support our Mission of helping these kids.

Now will all of you here today join me in acknowledging the key catalyst and visionary that made the YOC a reality? Steve and Carole will you please stand! Steve also wanted to join me in a special thank you to Kelly Stanley for all of his significant and sacrificial efforts for the YOC over these past few years. Words are not enough! Thank you Kelly.

The name of this luncheon today bears the name Shafer. We pause and remember Phyllis and Hamer. Their desire to help the YOC. Their desire to be an example and an encouragement to others in following their lead to support these kids. Their legacy through Muncie Power Products, through their Foundation, and through their team, represented today by Terry Walker and Ken Briner, is a key reason we are here today. Terry and Ken - thank you for continuing the legacy of Phyllis and Hamer in support of our work today and in the future.

Okay, I am going to take a risk here. In a visual image, you may see the process and leadership of Phyllis and Hamer in their support of the YOC. As seeing them walking down a path, with a basket of money, tossing the bills out as rose petals, as YOC staff dutifully walk behind, collecting as much as they can and then putting it to work. Generous, yes. But disconnected and unaware.

Reality was and is much different. My visual image with the Shafer's and now with Terry and Ken. Is them leaning in, hands outstretched, eyes focused. Listening. Relating. Asking. Connecting. Empathizing with these kids. Again leaning in. So the remainder of my time will be a few examples of the work you are leaning in to help.

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Feedback from 2 female residents in our cottage 6, “I can tell the team really cares about me. Coming to the YOC saved my life.” Their parent said about a connection with their child from a Family Night, “a game changer”.

Feedback from a Special Education Coordinator from another county, when working with YOC on a case from their county, “I am personally very familiar with your work, and would recommend your services to anyone needing this type of support!”

Feedback from a parent, “Thank you for the care you have given our daughter these past few months. You have helped her through her crisis. You have been there. No parent would want to go through this but being in your facility where people actually cared made all the difference.”

Feedback from a cottage resident, “Being at the YOC helped me in many ways. One key way was my education. Before I was there, I would always skip school to do some bad things. At YOC I was made to go to school every day. At first I didn’t do so well. But whenever I did not understand, the staff and Educational Assistants would help me with my work. Over time my work and grades got much better. Now I want to be an Occupational Therapist and use my future education to help people.”

Feedback from a cottage resident, “Somehow when I was brought to the YOC, I knew my life would be changing. I was an alcoholic, I skipped school and I wanted to die so badly. My stay here has changed me in wonderful ways. I have been sober for 8 months, am graduating high school, and now have plans for college. I truly have never been happier.”

Feedback from a cottage resident, “Thanks to everyone who has helped me during my treatment. Life has taken on a whole new color. It was like being alive for the first time. The higher I went up in my treatment the more alive I felt. In the future I will always look at this time as the point at which everything changed and took a turn for the better.”

The final life story comes from my wife, Elizabeth. Elizabeth called me one day about 2 weeks ago, and told me that she had ran into a former high school classmate that she had lived in the same neighborhood with during early high school years - had not seen her for 30 years. In the aisle at Fisher Meats, giving each other the cliff notes version of life: education, jobs, old flames, her old friend - I mean former friend - began talking about her kids. She shared that their son was doing fine, but that they had a daughter who had, in her words, given them fits. In a short time she went from straight A’s and a model kid to questionable friends, drugs, and F’s. She volunteered that the only thing that saved them was what she called “services.” Elizabeth thinking the services could have been outpatient, or other help, told her friend that she understood because her husband works at the YOC. It was then that her friend told her, through much emotion, that it was the YOC that saved her daughter’s life, and that she is grateful and indebted to us for her still having her daughter.

As you watch the following video about the programs, people, and services, think about these kid’s stories, and keep leaning in to join us in our work!

