

# The Marsh Messenger

• Winter 2015-16 • [www.marshfoundation.org](http://www.marshfoundation.org)

Serving children and families since 1922

## A Year in Review: 2016 at The Marsh Foundation

2016 was another full and exciting year at The Marsh Foundation. As the organization continues to serve children and families in need, many memories are made.

In February, Major League pitcher Jerry Blevins was on The Marsh Foundation campus to deliver an inspirational message to our youth. He spoke about his upcoming season with the New York Mets, and the determination it's taken to make it to the Big Leagues.

His message of encouragement and perseverance really resonated with the kids. After his talk, he spent time in the library answering questions and signing autographs.

The year was again made special by some fantastic and generous donors. The Shirley Haight family donated Easter baskets, eggs and gifts for all of the youth on campus. This annual event is something that the youth very much look forward to. Project Believe was again very generous, donating school supplies, Valentine's, Christmas presents and gifts to our graduates.

Service is a strong component of The Marsh program that works to instill a sense of stewardship in its youth. Again in 2016, spring break days were spent volunteering at the Humane Society, Lima Rescue



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Mission, Habitat for Humanity and other local organizations.

In October, a public showing of our new, historical documentary was held. The video details the amazing philanthropic influence that the George Marsh family had on the Van Wert community. The narrator, Marsh Foundation Historian, Ron Bagley, highlights

many unknown facts about the Marsh family and their genuine desire to help the less fortunate throughout the documentary. Information on how to purchase the video can be found on [www.marshfoundation.org](http://www.marshfoundation.org).

We hope that 2016 was a wonderful year for you and yours, and we look forward to what 2017 has in store!



**THE MARSH**  
FOUNDATION

### Please Share

Please pass The Marsh Messenger along to others in your office or family who would like to read it. Thank you!

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### Leadership

#### The Marsh Foundation Board of Trustees:

Gary Clay  
Gary Corcoran  
Robert Gamble

#### The Marsh Foundation Executive Team:

Robbie Breese  
Kim Mullins  
Jeff Grothouse

*The Marsh Foundation*  
1229 Lincoln Highway P.O. Box 150  
Van Wert, Ohio 45891

## From the executive's desk ...

For many children, Christmas represents the gift of joy, warmth and the happiness which come from belonging to a family. It is a gift which is taken for granted by many of us. This Christmas I would like to share the story of a young girl who was placed in one of our foster homes several years ago. She worked through many challenges and was able stay with her loving foster family until she was ready to live independently.

Fifteen-year-old Katie was struggling with very aggressive behaviors. She had been in five different foster homes prior to her admission to a Marsh Foundation foster home. She suffered from both physical and sexual abuse and was traumatized as a result. She had low self-esteem, was defiant toward adults, and showed a serious lack of impulse control. Her foster mother described her as "completely lost." Katie's behavior problems occurred both in the foster home and at school. Everyone expected Katie to disrupt from her foster home and be forced to move into a more restrictive placement.

Katie did everything she could to prove everyone correct through having several major episodes in which she threatened her foster parents. Her language was disrespectful and often vulgar. When limits were



**Kim Mullins, L.P.C.C.**

set and the foster parents followed through with correcting her behavior, Katie would have an emotional outburst, scream, cry and destroy her bedroom.

In their attempt to recognize the good in her, her foster parents would say, "Well, she hasn't hit me yet." After several family counseling sessions and consistent work in the foster home, Katie's relationships began to improve. She started to shed negative behaviors. For example, she would cry instead of engage in emotionally violent outbursts.

She once said to her foster parent, "Why do you care about me when I have been so mean to you?"

The foster parent responded, "I'm glad you know that we care about you. We are determined to help you get through this so that you can make better choices and be happy." According to her counselor, one of Katie's

biggest obstacles was learning to realize that she must learn to trust others and ask for help when needed. Historically, Katie would use aggressive behavior as a means of coping or getting her needs met.

Through patience and understanding on the part of The Marsh staff and foster parents, Katie learned more effective ways to be heard, to cope with her problems, and to meet her own needs. She continued counseling services while in foster care until she was confident enough to discontinue. Though there were times in which she would have difficulties, she was able to overcome through the support and encouragement from Marsh staff and her foster family.

Katie said, "I want to tell the other kids at Marsh to stop fighting and accept the help they are offering. I wish I had done it a lot sooner." Katie eventually graduated from high school and is married with a new baby. She stays in touch with her foster family and celebrates holidays and special times with them. They have become her forever family.

This Christmas, let us all be more aware of the gift of family and celebrate those precious relationships.

*Kim Mullins*

*Executive Director, Child & Family Services*

## Marsh Seeks Prom Donations

For the third consecutive year, The Marsh Foundation will be hosting a spring formal for its high school aged youth. This year's theme is 'Under the Sea.' Each year, staff volunteer their time and many of their own resources to create a fun and enjoyable event for the youth. This year, we are hopeful that alumni and community members will step forward and help us create an even more spectacular event.

Because of the theme, committee members are seeking items that are royal blue, turquoise and/or sea foam in color. Items needed include plastic cutlery, plates, napkins, cups, crepe paper, balloons and other craft supplies. If you have questions, please contact Pamela Reagan, prom committee chairperson at 419.238.1695 ext. 301.

Donations of bottled water, soda pop and pretzel rods are also needed. If you are interested in donating, but unsure of what to purchase, cash donations will also be accepted and earmarked for this specific purpose.

The spring formal is scheduled for Saturday, May 13, 2017. It will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church on Walnut Street in Van Wert. An open house and promenade is planned. If you would like more information on how to help create a memorable evening for our youth, please call Reagan at the above number or e-mail [preagan@marshfoundation.org](mailto:preagan@marshfoundation.org).

A commitment to excellence

## From the Alumni Association President: Mabel Johnson

Dear Alumni,

I want you to know that I was so pleased when, instead of the 20 names of alumni veterans we had guess-timated, we had more than five times that. Thus, the alumni veteran's plaque originally sized for 50, and budgeted for, had to be increased by three times that...and the certificates, and their frame, and etc... I was so excited and thrilled expecting a large turn out at our Memorial Day Veteran's event. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

And, I was over the moon when at last Christmas time our postal mailing list went from 20 to well over 125. Unfortunately, I had not been prepared for that big jump, but enthusiastically recovered.

We have had several alumni pass and I felt honored to attend their viewing and speak with family members about the alumni's time at The Marsh. I've been fortunate to have found lovely memorial gifts within the \$30 limit I had set.

However, I was heartbroken that only 21 alumni wanted to be an active member of our association. People have always asked, what does this membership card get me; nothing. So, I tried attaching benefits to our new

cards, discounts and privileges. People decided they didn't want or need them. The card was never meant to be a purchase. It was to be a source of pride that you are a Marsh Alumni and a current active member. The discounts were to be just a perk.

It has been over a year since I took office. I remember well the excitement in the air with the promise that the Marsh Alumni would once again be active and fun. Since then, my vice president has moved to another state. My treasurer is still in the UK. So, I am flying solo. I can't continue this way. Think back, why did the majority of the alumni want the association to continue? History can not be undone. Whether there is an association or not, we are Marsh Foundation Alumni and will always be even after we pass on.

What do you want? And why? What do you want the association to be doing? Is there any need for a meeting/luncheon? If your answer is that you want the association to continue but you want to do NOTHING, then I am the wrong person for this job. I welcome all feedback.

*Mabel C. (Trindle) Johnson*  
*Marsh Foundation School Alumni*

## Deceased Marsh Foundation Alumni and Former Employees

### Alumni:

Willis Miller Deceased: 02/16/1999  
Notified: 08/26/16

Fern Doris Harpster Horne Deceased: 02/11/2005  
Notified: 04/21/2016

Lois Miller Engelter Deceased: 04/06/2009  
Notified 08/26/2016

Faith Miller Wetheroldt Deceased: 03/19/2011  
Notified 08/26/2016

Maxine Halverson Morgan Deceased: 02/27/2014  
Notified 01/06/2016

Barbara Ladd Shufeldt Deceased: 04/24/2014  
Notified 01/2016

Robert Brenneman Deceased: 12/30/2015

Michael G. Bowers Deceased: 01/22/2016

Mildred "Millie" A. Beemer Burkett Deceased: 03/17/2016

Elizabeth "Betty" Frick LeClair Deceased: 04/17/2016

Daniel "Dan" J. Gorman Deceased: 07/03/2016

Romona "Monie" A. Grimes Shaffer Deceased: 10/12/2016

Fred E. Sargent Sr. Deceased: 11/12/2016

Michael E. Grubb Deceased: 11/17/2016

### Former Staff:

Anne Barnhart Deceased: 11/23/2015

Ingrid Stoller Deceased: 01/25/2016  
Former Staff & Foster Parent

Shirley Harter Deceased: 03/21/2016

Paul Nicholas Grilliot Deceased: 09/15/2016







### Clymer Chat

Clymer Hall is currently full with 10 girls. As the holidays near, the girls have been keeping busy with various projects and activities. Recently, two girls and one staff member were baptized at their church, Lima Community Church. They all were very excited about this moment and several of the other girls attended the service to show their support and celebrate with them.

The girls very much enjoyed the Fall Festival held on campus at the end of October. Many of them dressed in costume and decorated pumpkins for the contests.



### Marsh Matters

Marsh Hall currently has a couple of openings. The JSO program at Marsh Hall is geared toward boys with sexual offending or sexually reactive behaviors. If you are interested in making a referral, please contact Kelly Gross at 419.238.1696 ext. 360.

The boys at Marsh Hall enjoyed participating in SPIRIT Week this fall. They enjoyed crazy hair day, hippy day, mismatch and crazy sock day as well as hat and favorite sports team day. Each day staff and youth voted on the best dressed and awarded prizes accordingly.



### Senior Stuff

Senior Hall currently has one opening. The program at Senior Hall is specific to boys over age 15 that are in need of independent living skills. If you would like to make a referral, please contact Kelly Gross at 419.238.1696 ext. 360.

Senior Hall is anxiously awaiting the holiday program in December. Two boys will be receiving their high school diploma. The other boys are looking forward to participating in the talent show.

They have also been very busy selling poinsettias for the garden crew's winter fundraiser.



### Vance Voice

Vance Hall is currently full with 10 boys. The home is always active and busy.

As the weather has begun to change, their focus has switched to mostly indoor activities. Many of them enjoy art class and have participated in several recent projects. They completed spray paint art, decorated cookies for Day of the Dead, created Steampunk pieces and entered several projects in the local Apple Festival art competition.

There were a total of eight ribbons awarded to Marsh students, including some from Vance Hall.

## Thanksgiving Poem and Essay Contest

Each year, The Marsh Foundation School has an acrostic poem and essay writing contest at Thanksgiving time. Below is this year's poem winner and at right is an excerpt from the winning essay.

**T**oday is Thanksgiving  
**H**ome is where it's at  
**A**pple pie on my plate  
**N**ephews and nieces acting bratty  
**K**inda starting to feel dizzy  
**S**weets in my stomach  
**G**randpa in the living room  
**I** think he gets it from me now it's time to go eat  
**V**egetables on my plate you already know my dog's fixin' to eat  
**I**ced tea in my cup  
**N**ow I'm feeling sleepy so  
**G**OOD NIGHT AND HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

*"Why do we only appreciate what we have once we've lost it? It's like we can never see it in the moment and by the time we figure out how lucky we are, we're grabbing at shreds of what we once had. I'm one of the lucky ones, lucky enough to screw up everything in my life and still have some things to look forward to, some light at the end of my tunnel. Even what I have now is a blessing though I may feel like I'm in the dark. If there's one thing I've learned, it's that it can always get worse. Life is full of problems. It's hectic and anxious, but it's also beautiful if you'll just stop to see it. You have to look at the things you have not the things you've lost or the things you want."*



Clockwise from the top left: During October, a Fall Festival was held. It included a costume contest, chili cook-off and pumpkin decorating contest. Here, the lunch ladies appear in costume. This fall, the art department was very busy under the direction of Karla Hoying. They completed spray paint art, decorate cookies for Day of the Dead and submitted artwork to the local Apple Festival competition. Pictured is a first place steampunk project. Staff enjoyed participating in SPIRIT week. Bottom left are Joy Caldwell and Holly Meyers in their mis-matched outfits. And, above them, is Mr. Robbie Breese, school principal, on hippy day.





## Marsh Hires New Foster Care Supervisor

The Marsh Foundation has hired Melissa Gearhart, LSW, as the agency's new supervisor of its foster care division. Gearhart will oversee consultation, recruitment, licensing and maintenance of The Marsh's foster care program.

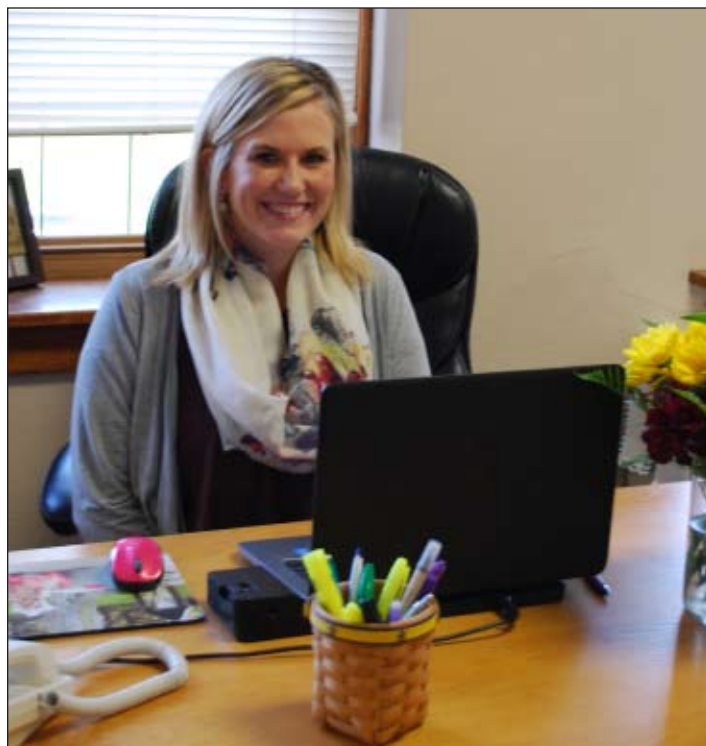
Gearhart holds a bachelor's degree in social work from Defiance College and is a Licensed Social Worker. After beginning her career at The Marsh as a family teacher in the residential group home program, she went on to serve as a foster care consultant at Adriel for nearly five years.

"Over the past several years, foster care has been my passion. I love connecting kids to families as well as connecting these families to kids. I am so

excited to be able to do this back in my hometown," Gearhart said.

She said that she is looking forward to her new position. "My goal here at The Marsh Foundation is to grow our foster program to not only be able to help a wider variety of kids, but also to be able to offer our foster families a bigger network of support and services. We already have many exciting things in the works for the foster program and I can't wait to see them take shape," Gearhart added.

Originally from the Van Wert area, Gearhart is a Lincolnview High School graduate. She enjoys spending her time away from work with her two-year-old daughter, Elliot.



Melissa Gearhart was recently hired by The Marsh Foundation as their new supervisor of foster care.

## Clinical Stakeholder Annual Satisfaction Survey Report Compiled

Each year, The Marsh Foundation conducts a survey of its stakeholders about the clinical (counseling) services that clients are receiving. Results from the 2016 fiscal year survey were compiled this fall.

These surveys are conducted to measure performance improvement and gather input. The rating scale is 5 - 1, with 5 being very satisfied and one being very dissatisfied. Any question's total average rating that is below 4.00 indicates an area needs improvement. Clients, parents and treatment team members are all surveyed.

When all respondents were

averaged, they answered a 4.3 to the question regarding how satisfied they are that the clinical services provided are helping to meet their treatment goals?

Clients were asked questions about whether they feel respected, safe and have input in their own treatment. Client parents were surveyed about things such as communication, cooperation and respect. There were no areas on the survey that averaged below a 4 response.

Treatment team members had the highest responses of the groups surveyed. They were asked similar questions to ensure

the youth are receiving appropriate services to help them reach their goals. The average of all responses was above 4.38.

Many respondents left comments in the space available. Several expressed gratitude for the helpfulness of services and staff was complimented on their dedication and commitment to youth.

One treatment team member stated, "The counselors and CPST workers are willing to work on youth issues and are willing to take on tasks to get youth treatment completed."

Another commented on the

level of respect that staff and clinicians have for youth. "I have watched many people deal with behaviors that most people could not tolerate, and still treat the youth with respect in the moment, then recognize the progress of the youth the very next day! It is amazing!"

Overall, comments were positive. The clinical department takes into consideration all feedback and works to improve processes when needed. Communication and scheduling are areas that they continually try to improve.

## Family Becomes Complete Just in Time for the Holidays

In 2014, Rob and Jennifer Sniegowski decided to pursue a foster care license with The Marsh Foundation. They were interested in growing their family and giving their daughter, Abigail, a younger sibling.

After months of waiting, they were blessed two-fold with what has turned out to be a perfect match. In October of 2014, Kali and Allen were placed in their home as foster children. Excited beyond belief, the family immediately bonded and accepted the two children, then ages 4 and 3, as their own.

It was determined that the two would not be able to return to their biological home and were made available for adoption. The Sniegowskis didn't hesitate and began preparation to adopt the children.

Two years later, on October 4, 2016, Kali and Allen, ages 6 and 5, were officially adopted by Rob and Jennifer and found their forever family.

Congratulations and best wishes to the Sniegowski family! It will certainly be a wonderful holiday season in their home this year!

Because of this story, and others like it, The Marsh Foundation has pursued the ability to license homes with a dual foster care and adoption license. This means that families that may be interested adopting their foster children in the future, can simplify the process with The Marsh Foundation.

"Now, when we conduct our home studies, we have



**Rob and Jennifer Sniegowski took in Kali and Allen as foster children in 2015. On October 4, 2016, the two officially became members of their family when their adoption was finalized.**

the ability to give a home two licenses; one for fostering and one for adoption," said Melissa Gearhart, foster care supervisor. This simplifies the process, allowing The Marsh's home study assessors to conduct adoption home studies and complete the necessary paperwork. Before, those things had to be done by an outside agency. Now, the process is simplified because The Marsh can facilitate the entire adoption process.

"This definitely allows us to provide additional support to our families," Gearhart said. Families that think they may be interested in adoption can complete the necessary steps up front, with very little additional work. If they decide to adopt in

the future, much of the process is already done. If they don't ever decide to adopt, there is no harm in having the dual license.

Many families that are interested in becoming foster families are interested in accepting young children that may be available for adoption in the future; just as in the Sniegowskis case. It is the hope of The Marsh Foundation that providing these dual licenses will allow them to serve more children and families.

"This is really an asset to our foster care division," Gearhart stated. "It dramatically increases the number of children we can help to find forever families."

## Marsh Foundation Produces Historical Documentary

The Marsh Foundation recently completed production of a historical documentary, "The Marsh Homestead: The Historic Tour." The video details the amazing philanthropic influence that the George Marsh family had on the Van Wert community.

The narrator, Marsh Foundation Historian, Ron Bagley, highlights many unknown facts about the Marsh family and their genuine desire to help the less fortunate throughout the documentary. "If I didn't know this working here 29 years intimately with the program and with the students; nobody in the community would know. And, when I talk with some of the employees that are now retired, they didn't know either because nobody told the story. And it needs to be told," Bagley said.

The historic home where George Marsh and his family lived is located on the west side of The Marsh Foundation campus and is often made available for tours. The video works to capture the tour for those who haven't been able to attend in person.

To view a trailer sneak peak of the documentary, visit The Marsh Foundation's website at [www.marshfoundation.org](http://www.marshfoundation.org), or their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/MarshFoundation](http://www.facebook.com/MarshFoundation). Copies of the full-length video are also available for purchase online or by contacting Dawn Berryman at 419.238.1695 ext. 233 or at [dberryman@marshfoundation.org](mailto:dberryman@marshfoundation.org).

**The Marsh Foundation**  
**1229 Lincoln Highway**  
**P.O. Box 150**  
**Van Wert, Ohio 45891**

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## Have You Liked Us Yet?

Did you know that The Marsh has its own Facebook page? Have you liked us yet? You can stay atop of current happenings, get updates about events, or connect with friends you used to live with.



We regularly post information about happenings on campus, upcoming events and opportunities to help youth in need.

Please, visit our page at [www.facebook.com/Marsh-Foundation](http://www.facebook.com/Marsh-Foundation) and give us a 'like.' Then, encourage your friends to do the same!

*The mission of The Marsh Foundation is to inspire hope, to teach and to care for children and families.*

## Calendar of Events

December 2016~ April 2017

- December 21 - January 2 - Marsh Foundation School winter break.
- No School Monday, January 16 in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- February 2, 7 p.m. - The Van Wert County Spelling Bee will be held in our auditorium.
- No School Friday or Monday, February 17 or 20 because of staff in-service and President's Day.
- March 20 - 24 - Marsh Foundation School Spring break.
- No School April 14 & 17 - Good Friday and Easter break.
- Saturday, April 22 - Parent Teacher Conferences
- April 7, 7 p.m. - Peony Pageant in The Marsh Auditorium.



For more information about any event, visit [www.marshfoundation.org](http://www.marshfoundation.org).

## Attention Marsh Foundation Alumni

Are you an alumnus of The Marsh Foundation? Did you know that on our website, [www.marshfoundation.org](http://www.marshfoundation.org), we have a directory of alumni? To view the directory, or sign up yourself, visit the Alumni page online at [www.marshfoundation.org](http://www.marshfoundation.org).