

AGENCY NARRATIVES

The following two narratives were part of the Church Mutual Insurance Campaign video.

**Lee Shipway, Executive Director, Peaceful Solutions, Inc.**

We serve about 75 people in a year's time whether it's an individual or family. One of the stories that really sticks out in my mind over the last year was a woman who had an issue with drug abuse and as a result of that had some criminal activity. She has three small children who had been taken away by the Dept. of Social Services because of the criminal activity and because of the drug use. She came to us for counseling with one of our alcohol and drug abuse therapists who worked with her for six months. She was able to regain custody of her children and the children were safe in the home and she now continues to work with her for another six months, and actually she is still in therapy to help maintain her sobriety. So it made a really big difference but also for her children. I think the one thing I want the community to know is that what we provide for the community in terms of alcohol and drug abuse counseling and mental health therapy is something that no one should be afraid of. All of us have trouble at different times in our life. Going to see a professional shouldn't be any different than going to see your dentist if you have a toothache, or going to a medical doctor if you have a problem with your body. You know we always say good health doesn't end at the neck. It goes above as well. So mental health and alcohol and drug support is nothing to be ashamed of and it's really important for people to get help and the earlier the better. If we didn't have United Way funding we wouldn't be able to provide this service for the community. It's essential to have those United Way Funds.

**Paula Koelsch, Administrator, Parkside Preschool Centers**

Here in Merrill, Parkside Preschool is an early childhood care and education facility serving children ages 2 through 13. We offer 6 different programs. Preschool based Child Care and two sessions of Merrill Area Public Schools 4-k school-age summer program as well as before and after school programming. We have so many stories to share about the ways we help people in the community. Currently we are working with a father and son, both with learning disabilities and when they came to us they had a very hard time communicating and telling us what they actually needed. We just developed a close, supportive relationship with them overtime. Starting with those basic needs, we helped with care pay; we helped with necessary laundering of clothing and sent dad special reminders to help bridge that gap between home and school. I've helped him set up his child care assistance payments online. Things like that, and now when we see them come through the door they are smiling, happy, and communicative with everybody. I think it's so important to share that just by hanging out and showing somebody that you care, just that little bit gave them the trust and self-confidence they needed to blossom. United Way monies are used to offset the co-pays of a low income families. None of the money is going toward the operational needs of the center at all. YOUNG Star is Wisconsin's quality rating system and we are a 5 Star provider and that means we are also on our communities highest Young Star State license group, early childhood program. Without being a Young Star provider we could not take children on income assistance from Wisconsin Shares. So that is very significant. Thank you United Way.

All of the United Way programs support impact in the areas of health, education and financial well-being. For more information about the Merrill Area United Way visit our website at [merrillareaunitedway.org](http://merrillareaunitedway.org); or contact us at P. O. Box 813, Merrill; or email [united813@frontier.com](mailto:united813@frontier.com); or call our part-time office at 715-536-2016.