



# Hillcrest Calling

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Hillcrest operates three transitional residential rehabilitation homes for adults diagnosed with a serious mental illness. Participants of Hillcrest's adult residential homes are involved in all aspects of programming and day-to-day operation of the house. Length of stay is determined by individual needs. The program encourages participants to develop attainable goals, with emphasis placed on skill building and environmental resource development. Trained and caring personnel staff programs 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

#### THOSE HOMES ARE:

##### **Birch House**

745 Pepper Drive, Iowa City

##### **Marywood**

2671 Marywood, Dubuque

##### **Vizaleea**

1785 Vizaleea, Dubuque ■

## Growing with Hillcrest

BY MINDY STILES

*Caring Adults, Safe Places, Healthy Starts, Effective Education... these are more than just catchy phrases at Hillcrest, they are a way of life.*

It may seem obvious to state that many of the youth that we serve in our residential education homes and our special education classrooms have not grown up in conditions that many of us are familiar with. Just last year, I overheard a 10-year-old girl saying, as she washed dishes, that this was her first time washing dishes because her mother had not let her do that simple home activity before.

Early this year, while the snow was still on the ground, John Bellini, residential education director, decided he wanted the kids in our Residential Education program to experience one more part of a life that many of us would call normal. John decided that our residential education kids should learn about gardening. From that initial dream of bringing a "normal" part of life to a group of kids that have not experienced "normal", a whole series of events has transpired to bring us to where we are now.

Currently, vegetables are growing on a plot of land a little smaller than an acre, on land that is owned by Richard Henkels in Dubuque, Iowa. Every Saturday morning, a small contingency of kids from Hillcrest picks the ripest vegetables from the garden and makes the early morning trek to the Dubuque Farmers' Market, to set up a stand by 7 a.m., quite an accomplishment for a group of kids who have no gardening experience.

However, the end of the story is only a part of the story.

Early in the week of April 20, Paul Ehrlich of Dubuque drove his tractor and soil finisher down to the small plot of land to tear up the sod and grass that had grown in that area for several years. Paul ended up coming down a second time, to work the then dead grass into the soil. On April 24, a group of wonderful men from the local John Deere factory descended upon the garden to put up a fence that will keep the wild animals out.

This group of men also used three garden tillers to prepare the ground from its initial run through with the big tractor and soil finisher. After that work, the ground was then ready for planting.

During a couple days in May, tomato plants, green bean, radish and carrot seeds joined onion sets in neat rows up and down the garden. The youth that worked hard at that task, then began what always seems like a long time while seeds germinate and plants start pushing through the ground.

Many people have memories of the large gardens of their childhood. The garden on the farm I grew up on in Iowa was about half the size of the Hillcrest garden. I have memories of pulling weeds and running down to get something fresh for the table at dinnertime. I also have memories of helping my mom can vegetables from that garden. John is working to bring those same kinds of memories to the kids at Hillcrest.

Providing an experience such as gardening ties in with our Six Promises:

- Caring adults work side-by-side with kids weeding, harvesting and selling produce at the Farmer's Market
- Fresh vegetables, supplementing canned or frozen vegetables, provide a healthy alternative during lunch and dinnertime meals
- Learning about the process of growing plants from germination to harvest, provides an effective education in the gardening process

The Hillcrest Residential Education program provides caring adults in the lives of kids whose histories most of us cannot fathom. The kids in the residential education program at Hillcrest are growing into greater relationship with themselves, their peers, they are grow into knowledge of life and forming memories to share in the future. ■

### RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION AT DUBUQUE FARMER'S MARKET

The Dubuque Farmer's Market runs May 1, 2009 through October 31, 2009 in the 13th and Iowa Street area of Dubuque from 7 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Look for the Hillcrest Residential Education booth when purchasing your home-grown produce and handmade arts and crafts.



Jennifer Maki has spent the last few years becoming trained as a Drama Therapist. Writing and putting on a full production is only a fraction of what drama therapy is about. Writing the plays allows her the opportunity to approach a production with a therapeutic focus. She recently completed her training and applied to the National Association of Drama Therapy to become a Registered Drama therapist. If accepted, she would be the second practitioner in the state of Iowa.

# Drama, Drama, Drama



During the school year, springtime brings school plays. Cold winter months bring youngsters memorizing lines, where to stand and exit stage left or right. Several years ago, Jennifer Maki, a teacher at the Hillcrest School, decided kids at Hillcrest needed to have that experience also. She set to work, writing a play of a reasonable length and connected to a universal truth or experience many people have. Ms. Maki chooses to write her own plays for the kids to perform because she has a better understanding of the abilities of the kids attending the Hillcrest school.

The focus of this year's play is the fact that everyone loses something at one time. How that loss affects people and what that loss means is a different experience for each person. Ms. Maki says the play is about our connection to objects, and our different reactions to losing something with a symbolic meaning.

This year's play tells the story of a young girl named Jorinda. The opening scene is the funeral of Meredith (Jorinda's grandmother). We hear Jorinda's inner thoughts during the service and the voices of a memory from when she received a locket from her Grandmother. After the funeral, Jorinda meets a strange man, who tells her that he finds lost things, and then he disappears. In the days after the funeral, she becomes withdrawn and does nothing but write. The night of what was her annual trip to the theater with her Grandmother comes and she has lost her locket. As a result, she ends up in the land called *Somewhere Else* and meets a variety of characters that are lost in their own way. In her quest to find her locket, she finds something greater, her gift to help others by helping them listen to themselves.

In order to get the production off the ground, rehearsals take place during and after school. Students from all the residential programs and grades in school participate. This requires flexibility of classroom schedules and evening residential schedules. Many times, because of kids' choices during the process: excessive absences, being discharged, etc., individuals have to be replaced. This was also the first year that elementary students were involved, bringing new dynamics and supervision needs. What is beautiful, is how a diverse group comes together with a common purpose and is successful.

The countdown to show time begins in February. A different group of students practices for 55 minutes, four days a week. As the performance

draws closer, it is time to start putting the show together chronologically.

The actors only have a limited amount of time to rehearse in the actual theater space, so most of the rehearsals are in Ms. Maki's classroom, which is limited in size. Nerves are another interesting piece of producing a play at Hillcrest. When students perform in class, there does not seem to be near the amount of anxiety. Yet when they are on stage, in front of peers and parents, they are often very nervous. Laughter is a common occurrence during rehearsals. The first time the student playing Pens uttered, "Joi de Vivre", (Joy of Living) there was not a straight face in the house.

One remarkable occurrence is to see the reaction of families watching their children perform, for perhaps the first time. The joy in the face of a mother or father is truly a celebration of their child's achievement, and it is so moving to see these connections between peers, and students and their families.

Of course, the final performance cannot tell the stories that happen before the curtain rises for the first time. One particularly tender moment happened when Ms. Maki's grandparents came to see the performance. The evening before, Ms. Maki's grandma gave her, among other things, a locket of hers to her granddaughter. Ms. Maki introduced her grandparents to her performers and told them about what her grandmother had given to her. The students introduced themselves and Ms. Maki's grandparents marveled at how respectful and polite the kids were. When they left a chorus of "goodbye grandma and grandpa" rang out.

The whole experience is full of touching moments. One student tells that their character was someone with which they were able to connect. This is important when you know that this particular student is someone who is not very energetic and is really taking a risk outside their comfort zone by acting in the play. Even more touching, was the student's mother thanking Ms. Maki for giving her child this opportunity.

Challenges also crop up when performance time looms closer. Stress starts to be more apparent and people get short with one another. However, when the time comes, the problems disappear and the performance is flawless.

Drama allows individuals the ability to step into someone else's shoes, for a while, and gives them permission to look at the world from a different point of view. In many cases, that distance makes drama attractive to our students. It gives them a chance to be someone else. In the end, they often end up learning more about themselves as result. Students are not the only people benefitting from the production. In the past, staff has noted that participating in this project allows them to relate to students on a very different level and opens the doors for valuable relationship building.

We have often said that long before transformation and Forming Promise People were words we used at Hillcrest to describe how we operate, we were Forming Promise People at Hillcrest. Recently, Jennifer became registered as a Drama Therapist by the National Association of Drama Therapy. She is the second practitioner in the state of Iowa achieve this designation. ■



Hillcrest Family Services is a ministry of the Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church and they Sponsor of Least and Prohibit. Presbyterians Church (PCA) is listed in the city directory agency related to both the Iowa Conference and the wider regional of the Synod.

**President/CEO:** Gary Gansemer  
**Editor of Hillcrest Calling:** Mindy Stiles

Hillcrest Calling is the official newsletter of Hillcrest Family Services, and is distributed to donors, volunteers and other supporters. Letters, questions, mailing list corrections or requests for additional information should be sent to:

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2005 Asbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001  
(563)-583-7357  
mindy.stiles@hillcrest-fs.org

**Administrative Offices**  
2005 Asbury Rd., Dubuque, IA 52001

**Area Offices**  
4080 1st Ave. N.E., Cedar Rapids, IA 52402  
449 Highway 1 West, Iowa City, IA 52246

**Hillcrest Highland Place**  
13011 120th Ave., Ottumwa, IA 52501

**Hillcrest Clinic/WIC Office**  
220 West 7th St., Dubuque, IA 52001

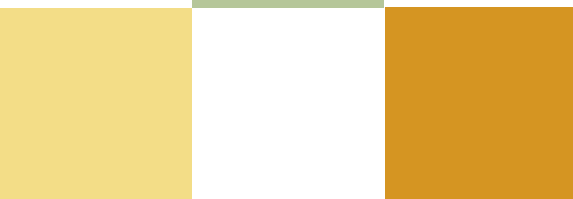
**Washington County Mental Health Center**  
515 6th Ave. S., Washington, IA 52353

**Hillcrest/WIC Office**  
515 6th Ave. S., Clinton, IA 52732

**Jackson County Mental Health Center**  
117 S. Olive, Maquoketa, IA 52060

**Hillcrest Mental Health Center**  
200 Mercy Dr., Ste 200, Dubuque, IA 52001

**Hillcrest Special Education**  
2435 Hillcrest Rd., Dubuque, IA 52001



# FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO

GARY L. GANSEMER



This week, after two conversations with Hillcrest supporters, I realized I had not made the obvious connection between the Forming Promise People initiative at Hillcrest and you. In late 2007, Hillcrest made the commitment to become the Midwest's premier health and education ministry by Forming Promise People. This transformation is closely tied to the America's Promise initiative and the five promises for youth of caring adults, safe places, healthy starts, effective education, and opportunities to serve. In 2008, we added a sixth promise of providing an opportunity for a spiritual connection. We committed ourselves to fulfilling these promises for every child, man, and woman we serve and for every person who serves at Hillcrest.

In the excitement about what this meant for our relationship to clients and staff, I failed to realize the importance of fulfilling these six promises to you. You are the donor, the investor, the prayer partner, the board member, and the stakeholder that wants to see Hillcrest succeed in our ministry and in our promise fulfillment. Our relationship to you is important to this success. A strong relationship comes from meeting mutual needs. You want to support a person or an organization that cares about you, makes you and others feel safe, is concerned about your health, wants to help you learn, gives you opportunities to help others, and helps you grow closer to God.

## Is Hillcrest fulfilling these six promises for you?

I think that we are, otherwise our donor base would not be growing.

I think that we are, otherwise the leaders of the Iowa Conference of United Methodist Church and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church USA would not have supported our plans for a chapel on our Dubuque campus.

I think that we are, otherwise we would not be asked to start additional new services.

Yet, I am not sure.

Please tell me. Are we fulfilling the six promises for you? How is Hillcrest Family Services doing in being a caring adult to you, providing a safer environment in which you live, helping you grow healthy, gaining in knowledge, serving others, and connecting spiritually? I would appreciate your feedback through an email at [gary.gansemer@hillcrest-fs.org](mailto:gary.gansemer@hillcrest-fs.org), our website at [www.hillcrest-fs.org](http://www.hillcrest-fs.org), or at our Dubuque mailing address 2005 Asbury Road Dubuque, Iowa 52001. I promise to respond to each of you. Hillcrest must be Promise People to all including you. ■

## Upcoming Events

### ITALIAN DINNER

This year we will be setting another milestone. For 25 years, Mario, of Mario's Italian Restaurant has been sponsoring and preparing a delicious Italian dinner and raising funds to purchase Christmas gifts for all residential clients at Hillcrest Family Services.

This year's dinner will take place on Tuesday, November 10, serving from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Dubuque Iowa. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$4 for children 12 and under. Join us as we celebrate another milestone!

### 15TH ANNUAL REFLECTIONS IN THE PARK

Gates open November 26 at 5 p.m. and run nightly through January 1, 2010. Celebrate this 15th year of twinkling lights on the bluffs of Dubuque. Sponsorships available, call Mindy at 563-583-7357. ■

## A GIFT THAT GIVES TWICE! INCOME FOR YOU, A GIFT TO HILLCREST

BY REV. DAVID A. SOLBERG



The most popular planned gift is one that really gives twice. The Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) is the oldest, and continues, as the most preferred of planned gifts. A CGA, as the title indicates, is both an annuity and a gift! Meaning you receive income from the gift and we at Hillcrest receive the gift.

Two important characteristics to a CGA make it an attractive giving instrument. First, the donor receives a charitable deduction in the tax year the gift is made. Secondly, part of the annual income the donor receives is tax-free. Most importantly, the gift eventually goes to a favorite charity like Hillcrest.

CGA rates are determined by age. They are higher for a one-life agreement with two income recipients as the maximum. The annuitant or annuitants receive income for life and then the gift is received by Hillcrest. Rates increase with age so CGA's are especially attractive to the senior friends of Hillcrest. Even with a modest reduction in rates earlier this year, a CGA is especially attractive when compared to other investment options. In addition, there is the fulfillment of a gift to a mission like Hillcrest.

As a faith-based organization, Hillcrest Family Services enjoys the services of the related church foundation offices, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodist Church Foundations. We in the Hillcrest Mission Advancement Office stand ready to answer questions or to provide a CGA analysis specific to your interest and situation. Your inquiry is welcome to [david.solberg@hillcrest-fs.org](mailto:david.solberg@hillcrest-fs.org) or 563-583-7357 ext. 280. ■



2005 Asbury Road  
Dubuque, Iowa 52001

# Hillcrest Calling

## Our Vision

Children, families and adults will  
be safe and healthy and will gain  
greater control of their lives.



## Help Hillcrest Go Green!

Hillcrest is striving to become as green as possible by providing several different ways for you to receive information from us.

Our brand-new website is now “live” for internet users. Point your browser to [www.hillcrest-fs.org](http://www.hillcrest-fs.org) to see the new, interactive, information-focused website. We hope the new design makes it easier for people to find the information they need in a short amount of time. The process has taken the better part of a year, but we are happy with the results. Many thanks to NetSmart’s Kevin Lynch, Saskia Melchert and Teresa Fairchild and Jan Powers of The Powers of Communication for their work with us on this project.

The website contains ways for you to sign up to receive our print documents by email rather than in the mail, look for the mailbox icon.

You can also receive up-to-date information by becoming a fan of Hillcrest on Facebook or by following us on Twitter or Linked-In.

You will also find links to our new promotional video, filmed and produced by students from the University of Dubuque under the watchful eye of Jean Holdener. You will find the link to video at [www.hillcrest-fs.org](http://www.hillcrest-fs.org).

This year’s Annual Report will not be printed and distributed with the Hillcrest Calling, as previously. You can have your own copy by clicking “News and Publications” on the left hand side and then clicking “Annual Report” your own Adobe PDF copy of the Annual Report will be available for you to view or save on your own computer and print.

Additionally, if you have driven past 2005 Asbury Road in Dubuque lately and noticed the front yard not in it’s usual stage of grass growing, you probably wondered what was happening. Hillcrest has contracted with a local company to provide geothermal heating and cooling for the Barbara Butler Center on the Family Life Campus. Some day soon, grass will be growing and the ground will be providing cool air in the summer and warm air in the winter.

## ADOPTION HOMECOMING UPDATE

In the Spring 2009 *Hillcrest Calling*, we mentioned that dates had been set for our Second Adoption Homecoming Weekend. In recent conversations with attendees of that first Adoption Homecoming weekend, we have decided on some changes. Rather than having a one city, one weekend event we will now be holding several dinner meetings, at different locations across the state of Iowa.

The Hillcrest Adoption Dinners are an attempt to reconnect with families that have adopted children through Hillcrest. The purpose of the weekend is to update adoptive parents and adoptees on the progress Hillcrest has made throughout the years and to give families the opportunity to meet and visit with other adoptive families.

The weekend is not for reuniting birth parents with children.

Details are still being fine-tuned, but plan for a free evening meal and then time to visit together with other adoptive families and their children from your area. As of this printing of this Calling, three dates have been secured:

- October 22, at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Dubuque
- September 13, at the Presbyterian Camp in Okoboji
- September 9, at First United Methodist Church on Pleasant St, Des Moines

The following cities will also have a dinner and we are working to set the dates. They are: Davenport, Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Waterloo, Mt. Pleasant and Atlantic.

If you did not receive an invitation to the 2007 event, please send your name and address to Hillcrest Family Services, 2005 Asbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001 or [mindy.stiles@hillcrest-fs.org](mailto:mindy.stiles@hillcrest-fs.org). Watch for an invitation to an event close to your hometown. ■