

RockfordMELD



OUR MISSION... "GUIDING YOUNG PARENTS TO BUILD A STRONG FAMILY AND LEAD A RESPONSIBLE LIFE BY PROVIDING SHELTER, EDUCATION AND LIFE SKILLS TRAINING."

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF "GROWING STRONGER FAMILIES"

Rockford MELD is excited to be celebrating 30 Years of "Growing Stronger Families" for the Rockford community. Our mission... "guiding young parents to build a strong family and lead a responsible life by providing shelter, education and life skills training" is exactly what we do at MELD.

It was in 1981 when Fran Middleton, the founder of MELD, worked diligently with community partners to address the needs of teen parents and the services (or then, the lack of services) that were available. Replicating a model of teen parenting support from the national MELD program, Rockford MELD (Mother's and Dads Establishing Life's Direction) began with parenting support groups for many young parents in our community.

The parenting support groups, which started 30 years ago, remain an essential part of MELD today. We recognized the need of shelter and housing for young homeless families and opened our MELD at Trinity House Homeless Shelter that houses and feeds 8 young, pregnant and parenting mothers and their children. Later we added our Transitional Living Program with 22 apartments for young families. We also recognized the need for young dads programs and started

our Young Dads Parenting Support Groups. Our Education and Employment Assistance program assists parents with job skills, education, training and employment; and our Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing program provides case management for those at risk of becoming homeless.

There are many MELD families that attribute their success to the support MELD gave to them when they were young parents struggling to finish high school, go to college and become employed. We have been there for many to give them "a hand up, not a hand out". Now, 30 years later, Rockford MELD remains viable and strong in our community.

On Wednesday, October 12 at Giovanni's from 7:30am-8:30am, MELD will celebrate 30 years of "Growing Stronger Families." Families will share their stories how MELD gave them the support they needed when they were young parents. As one mom said, "MELD helped me to stay on the Yellow Brick Road to get to the Emerald City. I am forever grateful to MELD for being there when I needed support as a young mom." At MELD, THAT is what it is all about!!

For more information about MELD or our "Growing Stronger Families" Breakfast, please contact MELD at 815-633-6353x10.



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

"Blame it on Karen Tilly". That's been my stock answer for years when people ask me why I'm serving on the Rockford MELD board. She knows I'm kidding, but Karen was relentless in her mission to get me to be a member of the board. Many of you know first hand how determined our fund developer can be.

Truth is, in the years I've been associated with MELD I've come to learn the importance of the work we do for the parents we provide stability and direction for, as well as our community. Our dedicated staff serves young women and men who are often in a confused and vulnerable state and guides them to a new life of stability, purpose and worth that benefits all of us.

It's not easy work and neither is finding the resources – financial and otherwise – to make sure this important mission continues. For that I want to offer thanks to our previous Board President Mike Broski for his leadership and steady hand in guiding Rockford MELD through a challenging three years that saw the agency tighten its belt to deal with a shrinking non-profit pie and an uncertain flow of promised funds from the State of Illinois.

As the saying goes "what does not kill us makes us stronger" and Rockford MELD is alive and well, but can always use your help. We invite you to celebrate our 30th year and learn more how Rockford MELD impacts lives, including yours. We invite you to stay in touch by becoming a fan of Rockford MELD on Facebook where you can also get timely updates, special stories and, of course, directions on how to attend one of our fundraising events or make a donation. We look forward to hearing from you.

And when someone asks why you are a fan of Rockford MELD – blame it on Karen Tilly.

Mike Robinson
MELD Board President

MELD 2012 CALENDAR FEATURING ANDERSON JAPANESE GARDENS AVAILABLE SOON!

Photographer Jeff Anderson and Rockford MELD have partnered to create a calendar of photographs that showcases the beauty and tranquility of Anderson Japanese Gardens.



The calendar is 11"x14" with 12 full pages of garden scenes ideal for matting and framing. Calendars are \$15.00 each. Jeff's photography exhibit and calendar will be on display and for sale at ArtScene at Shear Renewal Salon, 2209 E. State St, Friday, October 14, 5-9pm and Saturday, October 15, 3-9pm.

Calendars can also be purchased at the following businesses starting October 6:

- Stone's Hallmark Stores - 2508 S. Alpine Rd. and 5901 E. Riverside Blvd.
- Pepper Creek - 7295 Harrison Ave.
- Annie's Gifts and Home Accents - 1643 N. Alpine Rd.
- Privileges - 2636 McFarland Rd.
- Nihan and Martin - 1660 N. Alpine Rd.
- Poska - 2213 E. State St.
- Crimson Ridge - 735 N. Perryville Rd.
- Porch - 3065 N. Perryville Rd.
- Village Green - 6101 E. Riverside Blvd and 2640 N. Main St.
- Jenny's Gift Shop - Swedish American Hospital - 1401 E. State St.
- Shear Renewal - 2209 E. State St.
- Benson Stone Company – 1100 11th St.
- Katie's Cup - 502 7th St.
- MELD office - 3703 N. Main St. and at www.rockfordmeld.org

Prime sponsor of the calendar is SwedishAmerican Health System. Proceeds from sales will benefit MELD programs for young families.

Purchase a beautiful calendar featuring Anderson Japanese Gardens scenes, display for 12 months then frame the pictures AND support MELD at the same time.

MENTORING MELD FAMILIES

My name is Sharon West. I am a student at Rock Valley Community College working on a Human Services degree and planning to graduate May 2012.

I first heard of the MELD program through our church's Annual Women's Conference. We sponsored five young mothers at MELD with baskets of household items for a couple of years. We hosted an "Expo Night" where women of Rockford gave presentations and I learned more about the MELD programs that we donated to each year.

I was so intrigued by the MELD programs that I had purposed in my heart to do my field placement at the MELD shelter. What a rewarding experience that was for me! I was able to have hands-on exposure to the vision of the MELD for the young mothers. I mentored the mothers, watched their children while they attended group sessions, worked with the MELD Young Moms and Dads Parenting Support Groups, shadowed the staff and attended program meetings.

I would often come home and discuss my day with my husband, expressing my concern for the well-being of the young ladies in the program. What troubled us both is that after the mothers "aged out" of MELD, the support they needed had stopped, and then it would be easy to fall back into the patterns that led them to MELD in the first place. After speaking with the MELD staff, we decided to start a pilot group session for the "aged out" (those that are over 21) mothers at our church, West Side Church of God in Christ.

Our Bravehearts Ladies' Support Group started in March 2011. Our mission statement is "It takes a brave heart to start a new beginning to reach higher grounds". We exist to continue the process that MELD started...encouraging the young mothers to become self-sufficient and confident in their judgment and decision making. We meet weekly and provide transportation, childcare, and food for the families. We have topics that the young ladies are able to relate to; they can speak freely about concerns they have. We provide information for their personal needs as well as information for utility assistance, job fairs or professional assistance.

The Bravehearts Ladies' Support Group is going very well, with the support and love of the members of our West Side Church of God in Christ who volunteer their time and resources to maintain the work of this vision. I regard them highly, and appreciate everything that they do to help us to meet the needs of our community.

MELD UPCOMING DATES AND EVENTS

- OCT 1 MELD 2012 ANDERSON JAPANESE GARDENS CALENDAR SALES BEGIN - October 1 at local business (see listing of locations)
- OCT 12 MELD BREAKFAST - CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF "GROWING STRONGER FAMILIES" Wednesday, October 12, 7:30am-8:30am at Giovanni's

- OCT 14-15 ART SCENE - FEATURING MELD 2012 ANDERSON JAPANESE GARDENS CALENDAR



- Photographer Jeffrey Anderson Art display and 2012 MELD Calendar of Anderson Gardens available for purchase Friday and Saturday, October 14 and 15, Shear Renewal Salon - 2209 E. State St.

- NOV 16 - HOLIDAY GIFT WRAPPING - Every Wednesday starting November 16 thru December 21 at CherryVale Mall, 3-4 hours shifts available for volunteering to wrap gifts.
- DEC 21



MELD HOLIDAY GIFT WRAPPING

We will be wrapping holiday gifts every WEDNESDAY, Nov 16, 23, 30 and Dec. 7, 14 and 21 at CherryVale Mall.

Gift Wrapping location is on the main level of CherryVale Mall by Sears. Remember to stop by on Wednesdays with your holiday gifts and we will wrap them for a donation to support MELD programs.

We also need volunteers to help wrap gifts. We will show you how in one easy WRAPPING 101 lesson!!

Call Karen at 815-633-6353 x11 if you are interested in volunteering at the MELD Gift Wrapping Booth.



Available October 6
2012 MELD Calendar

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3703 N. Main St.
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