

MARCH 10, 2010

Dear Legislators:

My name is Teresa and I am here today to represent Katie Blair House. I was a resident of Katie Blair House about 8 months ago. I grew up in a Roman Catholic, military, youngest of four children family. I am honored to have the chance to speak on behalf of Katie Blair House.

Let me begin now with who I am and how important I have become to my family, friends, and community. The last 3 years I have spent learning and growing into the woman I am today. Because of the help and enormous support of this program that is funded by the State of CT DSS.

Never in a million years would I think I would require help like Katie Blair House provides. However I did, and because of this continued funding we must have, many other woman will succeed as I have.

Tragedy and hardships do not discriminate. Being college educated did not shield me from the nightmares that I have lived through. My father a doctor, my mother an RN and my Aunt who is a nun and also my mentor did not matter when I allowed my life to go out of my control. Five years ago I had no criminal record, no bankruptcy, no addictions, and no idea what was happening to me despite my loved ones worries and warnings.

After becoming a victim of horrific domestic violence, alcohol became my source of escape. Shortly after as a full blown alcoholic I also became a drug addict. Drugs for me were an outlet that I relied on for every part of my life. When I lost my career drugs became my source of income. Never seeing what I had become meant losing my loved ones who could no longer watch my self destruction.

In 2005 I was arrested and sentenced to 10 months in corrections. It took that humiliating experience to learn how broken I had become.

When I was released in 2006 I had so much to deal with. My surroundings had not changed only I had, and trying to survive in the messed up life I was taken from was impossible.

Needy of so many things Katie Blair House came to my rescue. I learned that programs that not only deal with drugs and alcohol but also domestic violence and years of abuse were very few and far between. Katie Blair House can only fit 8 woman at one time so you can imagine the waiting list. The funding we are fighting for today is nothing compared to the many woman who are now productive members of our communities, like myself.

Let me take another moment of your time and tell you what exactly Katie Blair House is.

Katie Blair House is transitional living. For those of you not clear on what that means, woman of all needs are welcome. Woman granted into this program are not all there for substance abuse. This is not a REHAB!!!

When I lived in Katie Blair House we had a resident with learning disabilities who required assistance with housing and employment, but most importantly her self esteem. At Katie Blair House you are

taught to care for yourself and then care for others. Another resident who suffered years of abuse and some how found the strength to run from her situation, she was welcomed with open arms into Katie Blair House. All the very hard soul searching and counseling needed to stay away from the only life she new was given to her at Katie Blair House, which saved her life.

Katie Blair House offers outlets to counseling and medical attention. When you first decide you are ready for the overwhelming amount of courage it will take to become that woman you want to be and will become, you will need to get better physically. Katie Blair House aids in medical referrals and getting you there and back to the appointments you should have received over the years. Next of course is all the counseling that seems terrifying at first but knowing you have Katie Blair House to return to makes this whole process tolerable, and you are never alone. The woman accepted to Katie Blair House are all struggling so hard to become someone and we are able to give our strength to one another.

Next I would like to mention the support given to me and many other woman seeking employment. There was always a cheering section to be found with the staff and the woman in the household. Katie Blair House drove me to and from interviews, hugged me, and encouraged me to forge ahead when I felt like quitting. The faith and hope they had for me became apparent when I did get employment, and needed uniforms. They loaned me the money, took me shopping to purchase the uniforms with the knowledge that I would repay this loan with my first check. That was one of the most earned and memorable bills I ever paid. This was trust given to me by Katie Blair House and I was finally able to repay.

When you vote on cutting funding to Katie Blair House please know because of Katie Blair I am a daughter my mother deserves, I am the mother of 2 exceptional girls, and now a loyal and dependable friend. Most of all vote to continue funding to Katie Blair House for all the woman in the future who will need the opportunity to receive support as I have.

Funding is earned and I can't think of any other program in the world that has earned every penny of your funding. I am alive because of your funding. Please continue your funding because Katie Blair House is successful, and needed by so many women.

Sincerely,

Teresa, Katie Blair House graduate