

Aurora House Program Highlights

1. 14 Carrot Gold Food Safety Excellence Award – Aurora House was named a winner of the “14 Carrot Gold Food Safety Excellence Award for 2017” by the Fairfax County Health Department on December 19, 2017. The award recognizes food service facilities that place high importance on food safety practices and policies and go above and beyond the minimum food safety requirements to safeguard their patrons from the risks of foodborne illness. Aurora House is one of ten recipients of this third annual award, selected from more than 3400 permitted establishments inspected each year by environmental health specialists with the Health Department.
2. Rachel Kindell was named the Aurora House Group Home Manager on October 9, 2017 after serving as Acting Group Home Manager since July 2017. She succeeds Theresa Vaughan. Rachel brings extensive expertise in conducting outreach to the four localities served by Aurora House and providing professional guidance to the girls and staff. In the 7 months since she assumed this role, average house utilization increased from a monthly average of 13% in July 2017 to an average of 64% in December 2017. In taking on this new role, Rachel Kindell has coordinated with Nancy Vincent, officials from the four localities, and related organizations to:

Conduct targeted outreach to boost referrals:

- a. Rachel oversaw the making of a short video about Aurora House, which was posted on the website in October 2017. In addition, she expanded a list of professional contacts, to which this video was distributed in an inaugural Aurora House newsletter.
- b. Earlier this fall, she and other Aurora House staff made presentations to Fairfax and Arlington Counties Departments of Human Services staff to draw attention to the ways in which the program could serve some of their clients.

Seek training opportunities in order to stay abreast of the evolving needs of Aurora House residents:

- a. In November 2017, Aurora House Residential Counselors, Family Therapist, and Group Home Manager completed 48 hours of Trauma Informed Care Specialist training provided by the National Association of Social Workers Virginia Chapter in Richmond. These staff members are all now credentialed Certified Trauma Specialists, and will follow up with annual recertification training.

Continue Aurora House residents' commitment to community service:

- a. Aurora House participated in The Fund for Alexandria's Child annual Holiday Sharing Program, in which individuals and groups sign up to sponsor a family. Aurora House sponsored a family of four this year: a single mother and her three children, ages 7 months, 3 years, and 12 years. Residents wrapped clothing, toys, books, household goods, and gift cards, and delivered them to the family on December 22, 2017.

- b. Aurora House residents completed 68 hours of community service in 2017, with organizations in all four jurisdictions served by our facility, as well as the District of Columbia. Organizations that received our residents' assistance include the Arlington Food Assistance Center, Fairlington Community Center, KEEN (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now) Sports program in Springfield, Reston Community Center's MLK Day of Service, Habitat Restoration in the Cities of Alexandria and Falls Church, Falls Church Parks and Recreation's Farm Day, the Capital Area Food Bank and Martha's Table in DC. In all, about 19 residents participated in these activities over the course of a year.
3. In November 2017, Aurora House submitted a request to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to dedicate two beds to a new Independent Living Program. This would provide a unique opportunity for female youth ages 16-18 to develop the skills and education necessary to become independent and productive members of society. Skills would include obtaining employment, opening a savings account, managing finances, and cooking, among others. We expect to have a decision from DJJ in mid-February.
4. Aurora House became PREA certified in November 2017. PREA stands for the Prison Rape Elimination Act, which was established by Congress in 2003 to provide for the analysis of the incidence and effects of prison rape, as well as to provide resources to protect individuals from prison rape. Staff, volunteers, contractors, and residents are thoroughly trained in detecting sexual misconduct, Aurora House's zero tolerance policy for sexual misconduct, and the options and steps for reporting an alleged occurrence. Aurora House successfully met or surpassed the set of PREA standards for residential group homes.
5. On August 12, 2017, a fundraiser was conducted jointly with South Moon Under supporting the Olom-Porzel Scholarship Fund. Almost \$400 was raised for the scholarship fund, and college care package items were donated.
6. In FY17 and FY18, Aurora House Citizen Advisory Committee awarded four scholarships to former residents who attend the University of Miami, Old Dominion University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Northern Virginia Community College. These students also receive a care package each semester from the Aurora House staff.
7. On November 14, 2017 Aurora House held an open house to thank those who know and support us, while also demonstrating to those unfamiliar with us the good work that is done in and for our communities. Attendees included members of the Arlington Courts, such as the Honorable Judge Robin L. Robb, Court Services Director Earl Conklin, Court Services Deputy Direct Rick Strobach, and numerous Juvenile Probation Officers; members of the Falls Church City Council; CAC members; employees of both Arlington and Fairfax Departments of Human Services, and school personnel who work closely with the residents. Residents were key in engaging attendees at the event. Live music was provided by local musician Nathan Cooper, a door prize went home with one lucky attendee, and fantastic food and an open kitchen provided warmth and a holiday glow. We hope to see you all at our open house event next year.