



IN OUR OWN WORDS

A Call for Help Becomes a “Teachable Moment”

JASON* ARRIVED at Hephzibah's Diagnostic Treatment Center with many reasons to be fearful. Like most of the children who come to our Home, Jason has suffered a history of severe abuse and neglect.

One day shortly after he arrived, Jason pulled one of the fire alarms in the house, sending the full complement of trucks and firefighters in protective gear from the Oak Park firehouse to the Home at 946 North Boulevard.

When it was established that the call was a false alarm, staff and the firefighters patiently (and firmly) explained to Jason that making false alarms is wrong and potentially dangerous. Even though Jason was contrite and wrote an apology letter, a few days later he pulled the alarm again. The situation became dire when Jason pulled the alarm for a third time.

Janet Sullivan, Diagnostic Treatment Center Coordinator recognized the behavior was an anxiety reaction to extreme trauma Jason experienced before coming to Hephzibah. She and the firefighters and Jason's new friends at the DTC came up with an ingenious way to help him learn to manage his anxiety. The children pulled together to reassure Jason that Hephzibah was a very safe place. They even sent letters and a handmade book to the firefighters on his behalf.

Finally, the firefighters invited Jason and the Group Homes children to be guests at Oak Park's Main Station, hoping it would give him and his friends a better understanding of what they do, and to see they are “regular” people – not intimidating strangers in scary uniforms. The visit included pizza making and dinner in the fire house kitchen, a tour of the living space, the fire engine and life saving equipment.

In this case it literally took a village to help a child — caring adults at Hephzibah and the Oak Park Fire Department, new friends, some persistence and creative thinking!

When Childcare Worker Rob Sassetti is asked how Jason is doing a month after the visit, Sassetti notes, “No false alarms ever since!”

*Name Changed



THE GROUP HOMES

- ♥ Bicycle helmets, scooters, bikes, kites
- ♥ Pool & beach supplies: beach towels, sand toys, flip flops, sun glasses, goggles, sunscreen, beach bags, pool toys
- ♥ Used Musical Instruments: please consider giving the gift of music to Hephzibah. Our children participate in lessons and musical enrichment courses.
- ♥ The basics: washcloths, socks for boys and girls, plastic mattress covers and sheet sets for twin beds, hair supplies: barrettes, ponytail holders, brushes and detangler, bath tub toys

FAMILY BASED SERVICES

For our families who are struggling to improve their children's lives, these essentials go a long way to relieve some of the stress of economic hardship.

- ♥ Jewel Gift Cards for food (or similar grocery cards)
- ♥ CTA Monthly Passes or pre-filled transit cards (both student and adult)
- ♥ Bedding
- ♥ Towels

THE DAY CARE PROGRAM

Our program serves families with school age children in Oak Park regardless of income. We always strive to have a rich stock of educational games, crafts and books and imaginary role play items on hand — because curious and engaged students should have the access to high quality resources that allow them to play, create and learn! Due to recent funding cutbacks we are asking for donations of the kids' favorite games and toys to supplement our stock. Some examples:

- ♥ **Board games:** Apples to Apples/Apples to Apples Jr., Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?, Monopoly Jr., Life, checkers & chess sets, Clue/Clue Jr., Candyland
- ♥ **Role play:** pretend food, dishes and place settings for “tea parties,” etc.
- ♥ **Science toys:** butterfly garden, ant farms, books
- ♥ **Miscellaneous:** puzzles, playground items like soccer balls, footballs

