

Open Arms Provides Hope for Kids

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By Jennifer Johnson

Open Arms provides homes, care, and education for children of all ages who have been neglected and abused. Most of all, Open Arms provides hope.

The ministry, located in **Switz City, Indiana**, started as the **Indiana Christian Children's Home** by a **Johnson University** grad named **Bill Tucker** more than 40 years ago. Today, Open Arms not only runs "**The Miriam Home**" for abandoned, abused, and troubled teenagers, but also provides training and support for foster parents and educational opportunities for young adults.



Amber went through the group home and foster care programs at Open Arms, was adopted, then went to college, and is now back with Open Arms where she works as a foster care case manager.

"The core of this ministry has always been the children's home because there's such a need

there,” says **Martin Corey**, executive director. The home primarily serves young women ages 13 to 17, with one staff member for every five girls and rotating staff awake around the clock.

“It’s important to provide this level of care, but it’s expensive,” says **Sheila Corey**, Martin’s wife and the director of development. “We’ve set up a scholarship fund so we can accept more girls, including private placements from churches that call us.”

Even as Miriam House continues to grow, Martin notes that the culture of care has shifted from placing kids in group homes to providing services in individual homes. Open Arms leads awareness events for couples interested in foster parenting and encourages churches to be hubs of support for fostering families.

“Child abuse and neglect was at a record high in Indiana last year,” Sheila says. “We have to turn away about three kids a day because there simply aren’t enough foster families.”

Open Arms also created the **Turning Point Education Center** in 2005 to help young people earn a high school equivalency diploma, improve math and reading skills, or prepare for college and vocational admissions tests.

“Last year for the first time we held a graduation ceremony,” Sheila says. “The kids got to wear caps and gowns, receive a certificate, and celebrate their achievement.” More than 50 teens and adults graduated from the program in 2015, and almost 300 have graduated since the center began.

“According to the Institute of Education Sciences, this means we’ve saved the community over 69 million dollars in terms of higher tax contributions, less reliance on Medicaid, lower rates of criminal activity, and lower reliance on welfare,” Sheila says.

But the overarching goal of every Open Arms program is sharing the love of Christ.

“I come from 25 years of located youth ministry and worship ministry,” Martin says. “So my heart is evangelization and discipleship of these young people. Many of these kids don’t even know who Christ is. We want to create environments where children of all ages, children who have been hurt by others, can get to know Jesus. We emphasize that only he can heal their lives, but we can lead them to him.”

www.openarmschristian.com