DEFINING OUR FUTURE
Letter from Nexus CEO

Nexus has a great history of caring for youth and families who are in need of a little extra help to find stability. Our Corporate office in Plymouth, MN, recently installed the “Nexus History Wall” to formally document the steps in our past that have brought us to where we are today. Our history wall is highlighted on the next page.

This project meant a lot to me because I firmly believe that the history of Nexus is directly tied to the success of our future. This organization has a lot of accomplishments to celebrate. The foundation of Nexus includes resilience through personal struggle; a willingness to help the most compromised individuals; employees and programs that are mission-driven, relationship-focused, responsive, flexible and nimble, have strong values, and an ability to re-innovate and try new things even when we fail; and a culture built on strong symbolism.

While I believe in honoring the past, I also believe that we have to turn our eyes, heart, and head toward the future. We have had a lot of changes over the past few years through new leadership as our former leaders retired and ongoing growth in our programs and partnerships. These changes provide a great opportunity to reinvent ourselves and set a new resolve to demonstrate and live by our shared values.

To be intentional about the future, we must have a very clear strategic direction, which are outlined by four strategic pillars. These pillars will guide our focus and activities over the next five years. We will focus on:
1. Achieving long-term positive outcomes through expertise in trauma and family stability.
2. Continuing program expansion and growth to provide services at all levels of care.
3. Increasing organizational recognition and sustainability.
4. Achieving positive employee experience to include increased staff development.

—Dr. Michelle K. Murray, CEO
1972: Nexus, originally named Port Alpha, is established in Minneapolis serving young adult males from Hennepin County.

1977: Nexus treatment programs are moved to Glen Lake in Minnetonka, MN. Concepts of treatment culture begins as a central philosophy.

1981: Clients begin receiving vocational training through the establishment of Nexus Diversified Community Services.

1990: The Glen Lake programs expand. Onarga Academy opens in Onarga, IL, providing residential treatment for adolescent males.

1991: Nexus reincorporates as a nonprofit. Adolescent male programs at Glen Lake are moved to Onamia, MN, and renamed Mille Lacs Academy.

1993: Indian Oaks Academy opens in Manteno, IL, offering residential treatment for adolescent males.

1995: Two residential treatment programs for adolescent girls open at Indian Oaks Academy.

1998: Nexus earns national accreditation from the Council on Accreditation (COA); Nexus maintains accreditation today.

1999: Onarga Academy opens a group home for males. Nexus purchases Gerard Treatment Programs in Austin, MN, and Mason City, IA, which offer residential treatment and in-home services for male and female youth. (In-home services closes and Gerard Mason City, IA, campus is sold in 2004.)

2000: Grand Seminary Board builds a new dormitory at Onarga Academy, expanding residential treatment programs for adolescent males.

2003: Mille Lacs Academy opens a group home for males. Onarga Academy residential treatment programming expands again with another new dormitory.

2006: A new school is constructed at Gerard Academy.

2008: Gerard Academy adds a residential treatment program for males and females. Onarga Academy opens the Cornerstone Café vocational program and a new Transitional Living Program.

2009: Mille Lacs Academy builds a new campus in Onamia, MN.

2010: Onarga Academy opens a group home. Gerard Academy begins a bridging residential treatment program.


2012: Nexus affiliates with Woodbourne Center (treatment foster care and psychiatric residential treatment facility in Baltimore, MD) and Kindred Family Services (Minnesota foster care and adoption services). Gerard Academy builds a full-sized gym and Onarga Academy builds a school building.

2013: Indian Oaks Academy builds new residential treatment cottages, opens two Transitional Living Programs—one for males and one for females. Onarga Academy opens a vocational program for clients and builds and opens two therapeutic foster care programs. Nexus establishes the Kindred CARES program, a Cash and Respite Enhancement Program for foster parents.

2014: Kindred Family Services and Family Focus merge to create Kindred Family Focus, and expands Certified Therapeutic Support Services (CTSS). A new residential treatment building is constructed at Gerard Academy to serve more clients. Indian Oaks Academy begins a partnership with Starfish Family Services to provide foster care support services.

2015: Gerard Community Mental Health Services opens, providing better access to outpatient services for Southern Minnesota. Nexus Glen Lake opens in Minnetonka, MN, through a partnership with Hennepin County to offer residential treatment for high acuity females. Indian Oaks Academy opens a group home for females.

2016: Onarga Academy launches the Professional Development Institute, offering training to mental health professionals. The Nexus Practice Model is established to enhance treatment focus and consistency across Nexus. CTSS expands mental health services into schools. Indian Oaks Academy opens a new assessment and stabilization program serving adolescent males referred by the Illinois Department of Corrections.

2017: PATH North Dakota affiliates with Nexus, expanding foster care and adoption into North Dakota and Idaho. PATH MN merges under Kindred Family Focus, creating the largest foster care and adoption geographical reach in Minnesota. The PATH Trauma and Stress Clinic opens in Fargo, ND.

2018: Woodbourne Center builds and opens a vocational program on campus. Nexus and Guadelupe Alternative Programs (GAP) form a partnership; GAP takes over management of Kindred Family Focus CTSS and outpatient program.
“Whether you think you can or you think you can’t—You’re right!” – Henry Ford

I often reflect on what a powerful statement this is. It speaks to the enormous influence our mindset can have on our overall success and happiness. Understanding how our minds operate and how we might guide our thinking can influence our overall well-being. It is a natural part of the human condition to make sense of our world by filling in missing details to complete our understanding of a situation. Stop and consider for a moment how often we do this.

Stephen King is a famous author known for his horror novels that take fear and suspense to a whole new level. I’ve had friends who refused to read his books when they were home alone. Mr. King was asked how he makes his books so terrifying and his response was simple: leave out the details. He understood the power of the human mind and its ability to fill in the unique, horrific details that creates our own personal nightmare in the absence of facts.

We all have the power. So the next time an experience has left you questioning or feeling down, think about the facts you know to be true along with those elements you’ve crafted in your mind to fill in “the rest of the story.” Do you like the story you’ve created? Does it benefit you and those around you? Consider editing if it doesn’t. Yes, you have the power to do so.

Eliminate the stinkin’ thinkin’ and I guarantee you’ll notice a positive change in your life. Give it a try. Be sure to share your success with others so they, too, can experience the power of positive thinking.

—Bobbi Kochevar, Chief Officer of Child and Family Services
Mille Lacs Academy: Thanks to Benton Telecommunications Foundation and the supporters of Mille Lacs Academy’s golf event last year, the youth on campus are reaching new heights! After months of anticipation, a team from Everlast Climbing installed three new Headrush TRUBLUE automatic belay systems. These new systems offer more opportunities for youth to climb while reducing costs associated with certifying staff members in rock climbing belaying. The youth were excited to demonstrate proper climbing technique for Mille Lacs Academy’s advisory committee.

Indian Oaks Academy: Thanks to teacher Juli Smith and the dedicated Safe Harbor School staff, Indian Oaks enjoyed the second annual Poetry Slam! Then students from a field of 40 were selected to read their work at the event. It was a great event that highlighted each youth’s strength and insightfulness.

Onarga Academy: When a family comes to visit, it’s nice to have a private and comfortable space for them to sit and catch up with their child. In the past, Onarga Academy relied on conference rooms for these visits. Now, thanks to the maintenance staff, families can lounge in the Family Welcome Center. Onarga’s staff worked hard to transform some old offices into a cozy atmosphere where families can enjoy time together away from the program floor.

Meet our Therapy Dogs: Both Onarga Academy and PATH have added therapy dogs to their staff. Polly at Onarga (pictured left) and Moose at PATH’s Trauma and Stress Clinic (pictured right) provide emotional support and have a calming presence for clients. Polly helps youth on Onarga Academy’s youngest program build empathy, confidence, and positive social skills through learning about animal care and animal behavior. Whether the youth are sick, upset, or experiencing crisis, she instinctively knows when they need her and will be right be their side, licking their hands or laying on their laps. Moose works with children and youth seen for therapy per request and approval. She knows when youth are struggling, as if they connect on a deeper level as Moose experienced foster care herself before being adopted. Clients often pet Moose during their sessions, decreasing their feelings of anxiety and nervousness.
Crisis Nursery serving Wright County: The Minnesota-based Shiggin’ & Grinnin’ Championship BBQ Team chose Crisis Nursery serving Wright County, a Kindred Family Focus program, as the recipient for the $5,000 dollars raised at Big Poppa Smokers Cooking for Kids Children’s Charities 2018 BBQ Championship! This annual event brings together 24 of the nation’s top BBQ cooking teams to compete for children-serving organizations.

Gerard Academy: Thanks to a generous donation from Austin Eagles Lookout 703, Gerard Community Mental Health Services has purchased a light bar that will be used during Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy. EMDR is a mode of therapy that uses the brain’s built-in adaptive processing system to work through difficult past events that people can get “stuck” on. This may present as PTSD, depression, or anxiety, as well as other issues.

Woodbourne Center: The Perry Hall High School Girls Varsity Soccer Team donated over 35 pairs of pajamas for youth coming into Woodbourne’s Treatment Foster Care program. These girls are making a big impact in their community by giving back. They are a team that is awesome on and off the field.

PATH: Silver Line Custom Homes, a home construction company in the Fargo, ND/Moorhead, MN area, is preparing to make a big impact for PATH foster care. Silver Line Custom Homes owners, Jonny and Hannah Ryding, were once foster parents and want to continue to give back to children in need in their area. They have committed to donating $1,000 to PATH from every home that they sell going forward. PATH is extremely grateful for this partnership and is excited to join hands with a company that is passionate about finding great homes for families.
Our employees are changing lives with YouthNOW!

YouthNOW is a Nexus-wide employee giving program where employees can elect to donate a portion of their paycheck directly to youth needs. Many of our staff make contributions to their site’s YouthNOW funds to help with various expenses for the youth in their care. These funds are used for an individual’s specific needs (like eyeglasses, special clothing items, or even tattoo removal) and opportunities for youth in care (like fees for external vocational programs or kitchen utensils for their independent living transition). No matter what these funds are used for, every dollar makes a huge difference to a youth who needs some additional support.

Here are a few recent highlights from our YouthNOW program.

**Cynthia Finds a Fresh Start**

When Cynthia* arrived at Indian Oaks Academy, she had already endured severe trauma and had no family to speak of. At Indian Oaks, she set goals for herself, completed treatment, and learned how to move forward from her horrific past.

As she transitioned out of care, Cynthia hoped to be part of the Job Corps Program to gain work training skills and live in a more independent setting than a traditional group home or transitional living place. This program, unlike other post-placement options, does not offer a monthly stipend to assist the youth with their living expenses. Much like a teen leaving for college, Cynthia needed household items like clothing hangers, storage organizers, and laundry supplies.

The support she received from YouthNOW made a world of difference as she moved into a new environment with the basic apartment necessities. Cynthia has since received her high school diploma, graduated from the Job Corps Program with a certificate in Security, and is employed full-time as a Security Guard at the University of Chicago Hospital.

*Actual name of client is protected for confidentiality.

**Mille Lacs Academy Supports Youth Skills**

Mille Lacs Academy staff have donated enough funds through the YouthNOW program to allow the program to purchase a second Charlie Cart mobile kitchen!

These mobile kitchens allow youth to learn and practice various culinary skills; and now, with a second cart, even more kids can take advantage of these beneficial lessons.

**Indian Oaks Employee makes a Lasting Impact**

Felecia Brown, a senior youth care professional at Indian Oaks Academy, has given to Youth Now since she was first hired. Here is her story:

“I’ve been working with Indian Oaks for 14 years. The most rewarding part of my job is seeing change, supporting and teaching youth. Having them call back years later thanking you, while reminiscing on their experience, things that they’ve learned and now use. Or, just saying how well they are now doing. This reminds me that it’s all worth it.

I have been donating since I first got hired. I was taught to always give to others who may not have what I have. I considered it a blessing to be able to have a job, so I wanted to extend that and help youth who may need a blessing, too. I now work at the boys’ transitional living place, a program that is not funded the same as residential, so it inspires me to continue to support the Youth Now program. To the employees who haven’t considered donating, it doesn’t take a lot to make a difference in someone’s life. Any small amount makes a big difference in the youth’s opportunities and towards their growth.”

Felecia likes to live by this philosophy by Maya Angelou: “The thing to do, is to prepare yourself to be a rainbow in somebody else’s cloud. Be a blessing to somebody. When you learn, teach, when you get, give.”
Trauma may include physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; neglect; or disruptions in caregiving.

After 6 months of being out of Nexus care:
- 82% were employed or in school.
- 85% had not engaged in any criminal activity.
- 80% of youth were in the same placement or had transitioned to an even lower level of care.
- 61% of youth went to a family setting after leaving residential treatment or foster care/adoption.

In 2018, Nexus served over 3,500 children and families!

76% of youth came to Nexus residential treatment having experienced at least 4 traumas in their lifetime.

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2018 SNAPSHOT

- Finalized Adoptions: 110 kids
- Community-Based Services: 1,194 clients served
- Foster Care & Adoption: 1,187 clients served
- Residential Treatment: 1,003 clients served

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Nexus serves children, youth, and families across five states through Community-Based Mental Health Services, Foster Care/Adoption, and Residential Treatment.

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PROGRAMS AND AFFILIATES

IDAHO
PATH Idaho
Throughout ID

MINNESOTA
Gerard Academy
Austin, MN

MARYLAND
Woodbourne Center
Baltimore, MD

ILLINOIS
Indian Oaks Academy
Manteno, IL

Kindred Family Focus
Throughout MN

NORTH DAKOTA
PATH North Dakota
Throughout ND

Onarga Academy
Onarga, IL

Mille Lacs Academy
Onamia, MN

Nexus Glen Lake
Minnetonka, MN

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Nexus is a national nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, that serves children, youth, and families through Community Mental Health Services, Foster Care/Adoption, and Residential Treatment Programs. Nexus, Gerard Treatment Programs, LLC, Kindred Family Focus, Woodbourne Center, Inc., and PATH North Dakota, Inc. are each separate legal entities, organized or treated as nonprofit organizations under their respective State's law, and qualified for state and federal tax exemption under Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status of the Internal Revenue Code. Mille Lacs Academy, Indian Oaks Academy, Onarga Academy, and Nexus Glen Lake programs are not separate entities, but rather programs operated directly by Nexus with an underlying adherence to the Nexus Cornerstone Values and Guiding Principles.