SUCCESS IS never easy to achieve. It’s especially difficult when your life’s circumstances seem to be working against you. And it can seem all but impossible in the face of certain unfortunate decisions you’ve made along the way, especially when they seem to gang up on you and lead you to a state of hopelessness.

But we have good news for those who find themselves in this situation: **You need not despair.** It is never too late to turn your life around.

For more than 100 years, Lad Lake has continually extended itself above and beyond all expectations, paving the way from one success story to another. Our secret is simple: **We simply refuse to give up hope in the face of despair, period.** And we hold strong to our belief that success is always within reach … one need only make the decision to reach for it. That’s what we do.

At Lad Lake, we don’t just help youth, young adults, and families in southeastern Wisconsin make the ever-important decision to reach for success. We help them do the reaching. One way we do this is to make sure we offer the most comprehensive continuum of care imaginable.

That’s why, in July 2010, when Lad Lake recognized a unique opportunity to expand our services, we jumped at the chance to unite forces with St. Rose Youth & Family Center, Wisconsin’s oldest, most historic social service agency. Today, with an unprecendented 270 years of combined experience, Lad Lake and St. Rose act as a single alliance, inspiring significant change in every life we touch. But that’s just one example of many.

Every day, we renew our commitment to propel our mission of Guiding Growth forward into a brightly lit future. And we continue to encourage personal development in every individual we help, fostering success on every level.

When you read the success stories of these inspiring young men and women in this annual report, I ask that you remember this: These are stories of hope. These are stories of courage. These are stories of Lad Lake itself.

*Gary Erdmann, CEO*
CONSIDER the providence: A young man is in the wrong place at the wrong time and, consequentially, is sent to Lad Lake. It’s the last place he wants to be, but he soon comes to understand it’s precisely the place he needs to be: the right place at the right time.

That young man is Joe, and this is actually his second stay at Lad Lake. During his first residency, a youth care worker named Jason took a liking to him, and their relationship has grown all the deeper since Joe’s return. But Jason isn’t your typical Lad Lake staff member. He’s a former resident himself.

“I got into a lot of trouble when I was younger,” admits Jason. “I was oppositional and defiant. I didn’t get along with authority figures whatsoever. So I came to Lad Lake.” And like it’s now doing for Joe, Lad Lake once turned Jason’s life around.

With restored direction, structure, and discipline, Jason enlisted in the United States Army. He served two tours in Iraq, and after four years and nine months on active duty, he came home in June 2009. Four days later, he was employed by Lad Lake.

“The structure and discipline I learned at Lad Lake really prepared me to succeed in the Army.” — Jason, Youth Care Worker

“AT LAD LAKE, I’M OUT OF TROUBLE, I HAVE A JOB, I’M GETTING MY SCHOOL CREDITS ... AND I’M HELPING MYSELF.” — Joe, Resident

Lad Lake’s Residential Programs at the Dousman campus and St. Rose Center offer 24-hour treatment, education, and counseling services to adolescent and young adult males and females (ages 9-21) with psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems.
Lad Lake gives the opportunity to grow, to show respect, to earn respect, and become a leader.”

“I FEEL an obligation to these kids,” says Jason. “I want to show them, just because you’re headed down one path doesn’t mean it’s the path that’s set for you. You can change it. You can change your life anytime.”

For Joe, thanks to Jason and the rest of the Dousman staff, it’s a lesson well learned. In fact, Joe is considering applying the direction, structure, and discipline he gained at Lad Lake toward becoming a soldier like Jason.

“If Joe continues down this positive path,” says Jason, “he’s going to have an exceptional military experience. In fact, I can see him as a lifer.”

It sounds good to Joe, but for the time being, he’s focused on the here and now.

“I learn something new every day at Lad Lake,” Joe says, eager to learn more, optimistic about the man Lad Lake is helping him become, grateful for every moment he’s invested in turning his life around. And he just can’t speak highly enough about Lad Lake.

“There’s nothing I don’t like about this organization,” he says. “Nothing.”

Fifty full- and 20 part-time staff members – including a registered nurse, psychiatrist/medical director, licensed Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse counselor, psychologists, youth care workers, and teachers – attend to issues ranging from physical and mental health to interpersonal skills and emotional stability at our Dousman facility.
"I know, now, that I can do a number of things I didn’t know how to do before coming to Lad Lake."

—Michael, student

NOT EVERY student at Lad Lake struggles academically. Certain students, in fact, are incredibly bright. Take Michael, for example: always a good student, very sharp, intelligent, infatuated with the Titanic (he could probably tell you where every nut and bolt belonged). For Michael, his disabilities have never prevented him from excelling academically. Rather, they stand in the way of his social interaction—especially within the structure of a typical classroom setting.

Diagnosed with Asperger’s, ADHD, mild OCD, and Reactive Attic-Insecure Disorders, Michael has been in and out of special education programs his entire life. And it’s that very word, special, that’s always discouraged him. The truth is, all he’s ever wanted— from teachers and classmates, from everybody, really—is to be treated like a regular kid.

“That was hugely important to Michael,” says his father, Darryl, who admits Michael fixates on how others perceive him. “At previous schools, they didn’t appreciate him as an individual. At Lad Lake, however, they treated him like a normal person. And that’s what really allowed him to excel.”

Continued …

“AT LAD LAKE, THEY GIVE STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND THEMSELVES BEYOND WHAT THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE ACHIEVE. THEY TRUST THE STUDENTS, AND THE STUDENTS EARN RESPECT.”

—Darryl, father
"I hope Michael walks away with the knowledge that there are people out there he can look up to. And I hope he realizes people will look up to him."

- Sam, teacher

Michael’s success is largely due to the hard work and genuine caring nature of his teacher, Sam, who spent three years with Michael.

“When he first came to Lad Lake,” Sam says, “Michael was afraid to try because he lacked self-confidence.” But all it took was a little exposure to certain experiences every kid should have — swinging a hammer, using a wrench, embracing the simple act of failure and knowing it’s okay — and Michael’s confidence and self-image grew.

“I like to call Michael a closet leader,” says Sam. “He doesn’t like to lead or be the decision maker, but he’s so trustworthy and disciplined. Those two characteristics alone set him apart from the pack.”

And that pack is something with which Michael — thanks to Lad Lake — is now able to cope.

“Probably Michael’s biggest lesson gained from Lad Lake is his ability to build relationships, to get to know someone. That’s where he shows his greatest growth. He’s built the skills to build a relationship. He didn’t have those skills before he came to Lad Lake.

But he has them now. And for Michael, it’s the difference between perpetually feeling like an outcast and being just one of the guys.

Lad Lake offers five uniquely specialized academic programs for students who have experienced difficulty succeeding in normal classroom settings: At Dousman, our Lakewood School (residential-based) and Passage Day Education (commuter-based) provide a stable school setting for males (ages 10-21). St. Rose Center’s Therapeutic Day Education does the same for adolescent females (ages 12-18). Synergy Alternative School and ULTRA Day Treatment Center — both headquartered at the Lad Lake Education and Life Skills Development Center — serve males and females (ages 12-21) with a history of truancy, disorderly conduct, and out-of-home placement at a correctional facility (Synergy), or anger, management, drug, and alcohol issues (ULTRA).
One reason Lad Lake’s education program makes such a difference in students’ lives is because we teach them the valuable lesson that who they were yesterday doesn’t have to dictate who they become tomorrow. We instill in them a sense that their future holds great promise, and we commit ourselves to helping them reach their full potential. It’s about turning their new beginnings into well-rounded results every day.

**72%**
**Earned 2.25+ Credits**
While attending Synergy, 57 of 79 students (72%) earned 2.25 credits or more during the 2008 fall semester.

**82%**
**Student Success Rate**
Of the 407 students attending Synergy, 82% succeeded in graduating, staying in school, or attaining a GED/Job Corps degree.

**75%**
**Attendance**
Students in spring 2008 averaged a 66% attendance rate. By fall, that number was up an additional 9%.

Statistics reflect most recent data.

“It’s not enough that our students achieve success while they’re with us at Lad Lake. We work hard to help them develop educational practices and study habits to help them excel for the rest of their academic lives.” — Tom Casper

Director of Education
“Lad Lake helped me realize, if I want to succeed I’m going to have to be grown up about it. I’m going to have to make grown-up decisions.”

IMAGINE yourself at age 13. You don’t know where your mom is or when she might come home. Your sister can’t stay in middle school. You have five younger siblings who need help getting to school every day, getting something to eat every night. You have no way to pay rent, which is due any day. You’re missing school yourself. Things are spinning out of control.

What do you do?

For Tycora, who had only recently made it home after spending nearly eight years in foster care, there was no other option than to call the social worker herself. “It got to the point where I just couldn’t handle it anymore,” she says. “It was hard for me at that age, trying to take care of five kids.”

So she made the call, which was difficult emotionally for Tycora because it meant turning in her own mother, who’s struggled with drug addiction most of her adult life. It also meant going back into foster care for her younger brother and sisters—and for Tycora too. But she knew she couldn’t fail the eighth grade. Failure has never been an option for Tycora.

Now 19, Tycora’s rebuilt a relationship with her mom, who’s been three years clean and working toward reuniting with her three youngest kids. Tycora has also taken advantage of Lad Lake’s Independent Living program, which has played an integral role in helping her transition from foster care to life on her own.

Continued …

“IT’S ALL ABOUT KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT IN LIFE, AND KNOWING YOU HAVE THE POWER TO ACHIEVE IT.” — Tycora

Helping males and females with daily transitional services like subsidies, life skills training, housing placement, and supervision, Lad Lake’s Independent Living program equips young adults (ages 15-21) with support and skills that promote a stable, self-sufficient life within the community.
“I want to recommend Lad Lake every chance I get, because not enough people know about the services they provide. More people need to know. More kids aging out of foster care need to know Lad Lake is the place you go when you need help.” — Tycora

"Lad Lake," has helped me be realistic in my expectations," says Tycora. "They helped me look for housing and talk to landlords. They helped me sign up for different programs that helped me with food and health care. They helped me get furniture. They helped me in so many ways. They even helped me move!"

Just a few credits away from earning a Barber/Cosmetology license, Tycora isn’t interested in opening her own shop. She wants to go into women’s shelters, group homes, and foster homes to help others who might not know how to care for themselves or for those in their care.

“I just want to help people,” she says. “I want to show others going through the kind of stuff I’ve been through that things can get better. Things can change.”

It’ll be a kind of therapy, she says. “Make somebody look good, they feel good.”

If there’s one thing Tycora can feel good about, it’s her future — which includes dreams of returning to college and becoming a motivational speaker, maybe even opening up a group home. And with Lad Lake in her corner, she has the resources to help her on her way.

“Lad Lake has helped me find the resources I need to make my life better,” she says. “That’s invaluable to me.”

Today, not only does Tycora have her dreams set firmly in place, she has the capacity to make every one of them come true.
“Lad Lake’s St. Rose Center is a good place because the staff supports you. They don’t care about what brought you here, they only care about you.”

—Karen, St. Rose Center, group home resident

The Girls at Lad Lake’s St. Rose Center hail from a variety of challenging backgrounds. Some come to St. Rose Center with emotional problems, others with behavioral issues. For Karen, it was the latter.

“I used to talk back a lot,” says Karen, now 17 and looking forward to graduating from the group home at St. Rose Center and high school — to a life of full independence. “I didn’t care about anything then. I’m tired of trying to be someone I’m not, of not showing the caring person I really am inside. Being at the St. Rose Center, now I show how much I care about people.”

When it comes to making a positive impact on girls like Karen, it’s youth care workers like Cindy who make all the difference.

“I love working with these girls,” says Cindy. “Just knowing they’re here, they’re safe, they’re trying to do something with their lives, it validates my being here. It’s what it’s all about.”

Lad Lake’s St. Rose Center is a structured and safe environment for girls in need. Our dedicated staff works hard to promote healing, coping skills, and self-confidence in each young lady we serve, encouraging their successful reintegration into family and community.
Joe, resident Cindy has been a youth care worker for two years now, and has worked closely with Karen during the extent of her stay. The two have naturally grown close. And seeing Karen leave will be a bit bittersweet for Cindy.

“I really hope she calls,” says Cindy, “to let me know how she’s doing.” It’s something Karen promises she’ll do as she pursues a college diploma and ultimately a veterinary career.

“Karen’s a real sweetheart,” adds Cindy. “She’s a good girl, very loving. And she can be very successful if she applies herself. She has a bright future.”

Karen welcomes Cindy’s words with a smile, then grows reflective: “I never thought about achieving anything in life,” she says. “I used to think I was only going to fail. That’s what I was growing up to be: a failure.”

But thanks to Cindy and St. Rose Center, she thinks differently these days: “I realize now,” says Karen, “I can accomplish anything.”

“It’s easy for these girls to give up, given the situation they’re in. Because there are so many issues they have to deal with. Seeing Karen strive to make herself a better person is so rewarding. It makes this all worthwhile.” —Cindy, youth care worker
"YOU’VE HEARD IT SAID THAT NUMBERS NEVER LIE. WHILE THAT MAY BE SO, LAD LAKE DOESN’T JUST RELY UPON STATISTICS TO SPEAK OF OUR SUCCESS. WE RELY ON THE KIDS THEMSELVES. THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WE SERVE. THE STORIES THEY’VE LIVED. THE SUCCESSES THEY CELEBRATE. AND WHEN IT COMES TO THOSE SUCCESSES, WE CELEBRATE WITH THEM." —SAMMY, GRADE 9

EVERY YEAR, Lad Lake hosts Bright Lights, Big Dreams, a scholarship dinner gala at which we single out some of the greatest success stories that have transpired during the course of the year at Lad Lake. Four scholarships are granted—one in every program—to top performers: boys and girls, students, young men and young women who exhibit extraordinary promise and who have turned the hardest of times around. The scholarship dinner also occasionally doubles as a book release of sorts. New Horizons, a collection of poetry written entirely by Lad Lake students, is gifted to those who attend the event. The book serves as a memento of the evening, and also provides a firsthand glimpse into the challenged lives of Wisconsin’s youth … a testament—like this very annual report—to the stories each of our youth has told. Every donation you give helps Lad Lake ensure more success stories.
Support Lad Lake with a generous donation and play an active role in helping at-risk youth and families living in your own community. Every dollar given is devoted to addressing long-term needs that reflect our mission: Guiding Growth.

UNRESTRICTED GIFTS
Your unrestricted gift lends us the flexibility to ensure funding to areas where it is most needed. It goes directly toward enabling Lad Lake’s most pressing needs, bridging the gap between where we are today and where we hope to be tomorrow.

DESIGNATED GIFTS
A designated gift benefits specific programs of your choice, whether you designate it to a particular school within Lad Lake’s educational services or a certain program area as a whole.

CORPORATE MATCHING GIFTS
This is an excellent way to increase your giving potential to Lad Lake. You may work for a company willing to match, or perhaps even double, your donation.

MEMORIAL GIFTS AND HONOR GIFTS
Memorial gifts are made in memory of a loved one, colleague, or friend who has passed away. Honor gifts recognize someone special and pay tribute to him or her. When such gifts are made, special notification is sent to the family or individual being honored.

MAJOR GIFTS
By donating in the form of a major gift, you demonstrate your profound support of Lad Lake and represent a strong commitment to cultivating our future and the futures of the people we serve.

ENDOWMENTS
As a vital part of proper giving to Lad Lake for many years, the endowment gift will create a lasting legacy in your benefactor’s name.

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE
The purchase and donation of furnishings, classroom materials and supplies, computers, and the like, spanning causes, etc. are viable examples of giving. Also planned giving, in the form of gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, or designating Lad Lake in your will, are all also options.

CONTRIBUTING ONLINE
Go to www.ladlake.org. Choose the “Donate Online” button and complete the subsequent pages on our secure server.

For additional information on these and other ways to offer support, please contact the Lad Lake Development Office at 262-965-2131.