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STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

For more than 100 years, Lad Lake has dedicated its services to helping at-risk youth and families in southeastern Wisconsin. Now, in an effort to expand its reach to help an even larger demographic, Lad Lake has joined forces with St. Rose Youth & Family Center, Wisconsin’s oldest social service agency – one that has helped troubled girls, young women, and their families in Milwaukee for more than 150 years.

The two organizations – under the shared leadership of Gary Erdmann, executive director of Lad Lake – will act as a single alliance, drawing from 270 years of collective experience to best serve at-risk youth. Together, they will remain effective in expanding its reach to help at-risk youth and families in southeastern Wisconsin. Joining forces and combining resources, expertise, and passion for helping at-risk youth and families will allow both agencies to collectively focus on what they do best – delivering on the promise of their joint mission, Gaufin Goveff.

“We are excited by the possibilities this partnership creates,” says Erdmann. “Being able to expand our services and compound our expertise with that of St. Rose will strengthen our comprehensive continuum of care and inspire positive change in all those we help. And that’s what really matters most.”

STORIED HISTORY

St. Rose Youth & Family Center was founded in 1848, after Reverend Peter McLaughlin met two newly arrived Irish immigrants – parents stricken with a serious illness. As their dying wish, the parents asked that McLaughlin care for their four-year-old daughter, Katie Collier. Respecting their wishes, Reverend McLaughlin Welcomed young Katie to the Daughters of Charity, then making the birth of the St. Rose residence and their 162-year-old promise: “We will care for your child.” By 1850, just two years later, the Daughters of Charity were caring for 33 girls.

In 1853, the St. Rose Orphan Asylum – as it was then called – moved to Jackson Street, into a two-story building, complete with dormitories, kitchen, schoolroom, dining hall, and washrooms. Here, St. Rose grew and thrived for 35 years until moving to 2321 North Lake Drive in 1888, a new orphanage on three and a half acres of land near Lake Michigan. A better location for the care and nurturing of girls, this facility housed St. Rose for the next 85 years, providing a comfortable environment and excellent medical care through St. Mary’s Hospital, also operated by the Daughters of Charity.

From 1900 to 1930, an average of 166 girls called the facility their home. But as times changed, so did St. Rose. In the 1930s and ’40s, many girls began attending area parochial and public schools. The early ’50s marked renovations on the old building, converting it into four separate apartments, helping the girls transition from dormitory-style living to a more “homelike” environment. At this time, St. Rose’s clientele also changed from the orphans it had served throughout its first 100 years to primarily at-risk youth. This change in clientele prompted St. Rose to consider the necessity of providing additional professional services and counseling.

The next two decades were wrought with significant change at St. Rose. As the Daughters of Charity diminished in numbers, both in Milwaukee and across the country, they largely relied upon lay professional staff to care for the girls and provide therapeutic services. In 1969, St. Rose added a director of treatment services, who developed a psychotherapeutic residential and educational program. Minorities and men were now being served for all positions, encouraging a more diverse experience for the girls.

In 1972, in light of a greater reliance upon governmental funding, the St. Rose board of directors decided it best to separate from the Milwaukee diocese and become an independent, nonsectarian, nonprofit organization. A new building was erected in 1973, offering a modern facility to implement the residential treatment program at the current St. Rose location, 3081 North 86th Street.

Thirty-seven years later, in 2010 – after 162 years of commendable service to more than 14,000 girls in need – St. Rose has opened a new door of opportunity by forming an affiliation with like-minded Lad Lake, an organization that celebrates its own storied history of 108 years.

LOOKING FORWARD

If history is any indication, the future is bright for Lad Lake and St. Rose, and the opportunities are endless.

“The infrastructure at Lad Lake will allow us resources that will help us grow our programs,” says Debbie Zwicky, chief operating officer of St. Rose. “Also, the expertise and longevity of a lot of their staff can really benefit us.” On the flip side, the comprehensive training St. Rose hosts weekly will largely benefit Lad Lake’s own staff.

The partnership promises to be a rewarding one for both organizations. But the main beneficiary will be the young boys and girls, adults, and families they help.

Today, Lad Lake serves an average of 1,500 clients annually, of which, 60 percent are boys and 40 percent are girls, ages 10 to 21. St. Rose serves more than 100 girls annually, mostly aged 12 to 18. Together, the two agencies – acting as one – promise to promote a new standard of success for at-risk youth and families in southeastern Wisconsin. What’s more, they promise to deliver an even greater sense of hope.

“Lad Lake and St. Rose are both really on the same page when it comes to best services for assisting youth,” says Zwicky. “We both focus tremendously on relationships, because the key to doing great work with these very challenging young people is the relationships you build.”

And it couldn’t be more exciting knowing all begins right here and now, with this newfound relationship between two of Wisconsin’s oldest – and most distinguished – social service agencies. ... Lad Lake and St. Rose.