

Yoga brings contentment to teens in foster care

By Janet Begley
Saturday, April 26, 2008

Page A1



Foster care girls in the Girls Group Home are taught how to use yoga to overcome hardships in their lives.

The Children's Home Society of Florida is a private, nonprofit organization that serves more than 9,000 children on the Treasure Coast annually. To volunteer or contribute, contact the Children's Home Society at (772) 489-5601 for additional information or log on to www.chsfl.org.

Photo by Janet Begley

Foster care girls in the Girls Group Home are taught how to use yoga to overcome hardships in their lives.

Every Wednesday night, nine teenage girls get together on 10th Street in Vero Beach to do something they've never done before.

And it's Sebastian resident Dhumavati Horne that leads the activity.

These nine young women are all residents of Baines Hall, the new name for the Girls' Group Home that is run by the Children's Home Society. And it's Horne who volunteers her time each week to teach them yoga, something that she hopes will bring them peace and contentment in their young lives.

"None of them has ever done yoga before but it's really about building their trust," said Horne. "Times can very tough for these young women and I'm hoping that yoga can help them deal with the different stresses in their lives."

Horne also teaches yoga at the Kashi School of Yoga in Sebastian but she said that working with teens is very different. "I am trying to show them the value of non-violence, not only in their actions but in their speech as well."

Lawrence Brooks, executive director of the Children's Home Society Treasure Coast Division, said the greatest challenge for the teens that live at Baines Hall is making interpersonal connections.

"We all need to connect with one another and when that need has been betrayed, it's very hard to re-establish relationships," said Brooks. "For many of our girls, it's the first time they feel they're in a safe environment. The teen years can be challenging even in the best of circumstances."

Baines Hall is the first building on a campus that will eventually include a Youth Transition Center for young adults 18 to 23 who have aged out of the foster care system. A \$5 million capital campaign by the Children's Home Society will begin this summer to raise funds for the new facility.

So far, CHS has raised \$2.1 million for the transition center. The Treasure Coast Homeless Services Council has pledged \$375,000 if CHS can raise an additional \$400,000 to start construction by June.

The Girls' Group Home was opened in May 2006 and serves young women ages 13 to 18 from Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee counties. Two of its nine residents now attend Sebastian River High School.

Carli Caron, 18, is a former resident of the Girls' Group Home and she said that when she first arrived she didn't want to be there. "But as time went on, I truly realized it was better than a lot of things I've had," she said. "The people there really cared about me."

It's that sense of caring that Horne hopes she brings with her every Wednesday night when she teaches yoga. "I feel that they've been more open and receptive to me each week," said Horne. "But I don't push them to participate. I just encourage them to take their time."