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Overcoming Obstacles: A Mother's Journey Through Essential Programs



Ottawa County Community Action Agency (OCCAA) has nominated Carol Charron of Grand Haven as the recipient of the Julie Sandorf Award for outstanding achievements at overcoming multiple barriers during her involvement with OCCAA programs.

The Julie Sandorf Award is being given at the annual Building Michigan Communities conference Tuesday, April 30 in Lansing. Partner agencies throughout the state of Michigan will be attending, of which The Michigan Corporation of Supportive Housing (CSH) is among the sponsors. CSH invited partner agencies to nominate one of its outstanding clients to receive the award at the conference and OCCAA is one of those agencies.

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The Julie Sandorf Award is given to a client who has shown outstanding motivation and ability to overcome difficult obstacles related to finance and housing-related issues. Ms. Charron participated in two programs offered through OCCAA which were the Family Self-Sufficiency and the Housing Choice Voucher programs. Those programs assisted Carol and her three sons with housing and financial independence.

The obstacles she overcame were related to the breakup of her marriage, unexpected severe health issues, both of which led to eventual homelessness.

"I think anyone can be one or two losses away from homelessness," says Carol. "Never lose hope because there is always hope that things will change." Ms. Charron reached out to OCCAA and found she was qualified for two of their programs: Family Self-Sufficiency and Housing Choice Vouchers.

Carol persevered and through her own motivation along with assistance from programs from Ottawa County Community Action Agency managed to achieve:

- A Bachelor's degree from Baker College
- Securing an internship with the City of Grand Haven
- Assisting with the City of Grand Haven's Foreclosure Prevention program
- Being a Consumer Sector representative on the Ottawa County Continuum of Care group

"Carol is a model program participant," says Paula Huyser, Program Supervisor for Ottawa County Community Action Agency. "These programs are meant to assist people in becoming economically self-sufficient and to maintain their independence. Carol has definitely done that and come a long way. We are extremely proud of what Carol has been able to achieve! What makes this even better is that many in the Grand Haven and surrounding community will benefit as Carol shares her knowledge and experiences with them."

Promoting financial independence