

## Turtle Nest Village

On June 20, 2007, Elizabeth Brown, LCSW, Founder and Executive Director of Turtle Nest Village spoke to the Palm Beach County Coalition for Children about the Turtle Nest Program. The Program is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 2001 and serves any child who turns 18 years old and was in foster care at any time in their life. Turtle Nest Village provides a transition to young adulthood by providing a place to live that is safe and that participants can call home. Turtle Nest rents an apartment or home typically in the Lake Worth area where participants can live. Homes are also available in the Boca Raton and Jupiter areas. Each participant in the program is assigned a life coach for their entire stay at Turtle Nest Village up to 2 years.

The assigned life coach will connect the participant with a network of community resources that includes: education, life skills training, work readiness/employment, health care, and counseling. With over 70% of children in the foster care system not receiving a high school diploma, the first goal of the program is either FCAT completion, obtaining a GED, or trade school enrollment. The program has also developed relationships with employers like Sysco where young adult participants in the program can have an opportunity for a career.

Ms. Elizabeth Brown also spoke about the programs understanding that individuals live interdependently, with the support of family, friends, employers, community, health care professionals, etc. There are 2 things that create success. One is opportunity and the second is self effort. Turtle Nest Village provides its participants with the opportunities to be successful by connecting participants to education opportunities, life skills training, linking to employment/career opportunities, health care, and counseling. Then it is up to the participant with the encouragement of their life coach to put forth their efforts to reach success.

Transition from the program is done early during the participants stay at Turtle Nest Village, as graduation begins 6 months prior to the 2 year time frame. The program provides participants with first, last, and security deposit for their new home upon graduation. In addition, graduates of the program will receive assistance up to 4 years after completing their stay at Turtle Nest Village. Any money that participants have placed in savings during their stay is matched up to \$2000.00 upon graduation from the program.

Turtle Nest Village services are provided through partnerships and collaborations with public and private organizations. It is privately funded by individuals and foundations that support the work of the program. There are no fees or costs to participants. At the time of Ms. Elizabeth Brown's presentation there were 26 participants in the program and the program is able to serve a maximum of 30 children.