

FINALIST EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Hope Southern Indiana

When people ask me, “What is Hope Southern Indiana, what do you do?” my simple answer is, “We are a faith based non-profit service organization.” Then I follow up and say, “We serve others. It means offering love and support not only to those people and circumstances that we would like to see more of, but also to those people and circumstances that perhaps make us uncomfortable and that we might prefer to avoid.” Most of our clients are in a temporary crisis of some kind – financial, mental-health related, drug/alcohol related, family related, or just a sense of isolation with no one to whom they can turn. From the moment they enter our doors at Hope SI, they are greeted with a smile and a “Hello, how may we help you?” We seek to serve all, regardless of religion or social status, without judgment or consideration. Hope Southern Indiana is made up of many different dreams, aspirations and collaborations bringing together churches, businesses, individuals, volunteers and staff with one common goal: to make a difference in the lives of others.

Many of our clients are unable to provide enough food for their family, so through our food pantry we help make sure that no one in the household goes hungry. If a client comes to us with a utility disconnection notice or an eviction notice due to a lack of funds, our emergency services director meets with the family one on one to help prevent an interruption in service and/or homelessness. Our homeless clients can come daily for a one-day supply of food. It’s uplifting to see them talking and laughing with our volunteers because they have a relationship, not based on why they are here, but based on who they are. Sometimes I think the food is secondary and the relationship is the primary reason for their daily visit – we may be the only constant people in their lives.

We continue to adapt to the ever-changing community around us to make the best “impact” we can, which is why we are applying for the Impact 100 grant for the Esteem Makeover Bootcamp. Southern Indiana has many resources available to meet people’s most basic immediate needs, including Hope Southern Indiana. However, we also want to help make a lasting difference in people’s long-term circumstances, in the way they see themselves and their world. We host a “Beautiful Girls Club” that meets monthly at Hope SI; and in talking with the group’s leader and consulting with the counselors who work with our Pack the Bus and Clothe-A-Teen programs, it is obvious that there is an issue that we need to face as a community: low self-esteem and self-worth in our young women. We see a real and urgent need for education and prevention services for youth, and we want to help make a difference.

This grant will offer us the opportunity in 2019 and again in 2020 to love, engage, challenge, nurture and inspire 100 young women to do more and be more than they ever thought they could. We will encourage them to love and value themselves, to see in themselves far more than just what can be seen in a mirror. 100 girls, 100 dreams, 100 ways to make positive choices to steer them through this world as strong, confident women.

Together with community support and collaboration, we will bring in experts in teenage crises to educate and inspire these young women in an all-inclusive weekend at Country Lake. We will educate in areas of self-esteem, mental health, social media, hygiene, teen pregnancy prevention, suicide prevention, drug/alcohol/smoking prevention, STD prevention, body safety and human trafficking.

Each area will help empower them to reach higher goals and to create a value system worthy of a young woman. These young women will be the first graduates of the Impact 100 Girls Club that will meet monthly at Hope Southern Indiana. They will be encouraged to reach out within their communities and use what they have learned to make lasting changes not only in their own lives, but also in the lives of those around them.

We will not stop with one weekend retreat. These young women will continue to have access to all the professionals and volunteers from the retreat via a Facebook page, where they can reach out to one another in times of need. This is a sisterhood of the up-and-coming generation of Impact 100 girls! We will positively impact 200 young ladies over the next two years with the Impact 100 grant! Will you be the first one to lead the way?