



# House of Hope

ARTICLE DEBORAH MOWER

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF HOUSE OF HOPE



Marilyn Thomas, Founder

**K**ANSAS CITY HOUSE OF HOPE IS HELPING TEENAGERS REPAIR THEIR LIVES and families. The facility, located in the heart of Merriam, draws girls ages 13-17 from all over the metro, as well as from other states. Thanks to Marilyn Thomas, founder of the faith-based, licensed, residential treatment program, these girls are continuing on in school while taking a healing “time out” from bad influences, or destructive choices they were making.

Since its opening in 2007, Kansas City House of Hope has helped more than 300 teens and parents become healthy, thriving family members where bonds strengthened and lives now flourish.

“These aren’t bad kids, they’re just hurting,” Thomas says. Parents come to House of Hope seeking help with a variety of challenges ranging from online sexual promiscuity, rebellion and defiance, or substance abuse, to family conflict, depression, and low self-esteem.

Early intervention in the lives of hurting teens is key. Intervention can save a life, foster higher educational achievement, prevent crime and delinquency and reduce teen pregnancy. The earlier the intervention, the better the outcome.

Top 6 warning signs that your daughter might need help:

- Self-harming behaviors or suicidal thoughts
- Sexual activity
- Drug or alcohol or prescription drug use
- Anger & rebellion/unwillingness to submit to authority
- Disregards curfew or runs away
- Plummeting grades

These acting-out behaviors are usually indicative of other issues that teens don’t know how to cope with. Often when teens act out, they have pulled away from parents and positive influential friends. Isolated, they turn to destructive vices and dangerous relationships to cope with their struggles.

House of Hope is a respite for exhausted parents who don’t know where to turn for help. What sets their program apart is that it keeps the parents involved and connected to their daughter. House of Hope Kansas City provides outpatient counseling to both teenage boys and girls, along with a residential treatment for girls ages 13-17. It is affiliated with National House of Hope—a



faith-based five-phase program started 28 years ago in Orlando.

Overland Park resident, Rick, said his daughter's House of Hope experience was nothing short of a miracle.

"She was lost and had reached the point where everything suffered—her school, home and spiritual life," Rick says. "House of Hope's disciplined program reconnected my daughter to everything: my wife, myself, her siblings, God, and a new attitude." Rick rejoices that his daughter, now a 20-year-old college sophomore studying business and entrepreneurship, is happy, healthy and alive in every way.

Parents and their daughters must commit to the process, which includes individual and family counseling sessions and parenting classes. The parenting classes provide insight and skills many parents lack. One mother of a 16-year old said the skills she learned in parenting classes helped her listen and talk to her teen differently, treating her as a young adult rather than a child, which instantly helped their relationship. A single father said it has helped him learn how to parent a girl. He said he is closer now to his daughter

than he ever was before.

Martha Comment has been a licensed counselor with House of Hope since 2008. She says they are not a Band-Aid or babysitter.

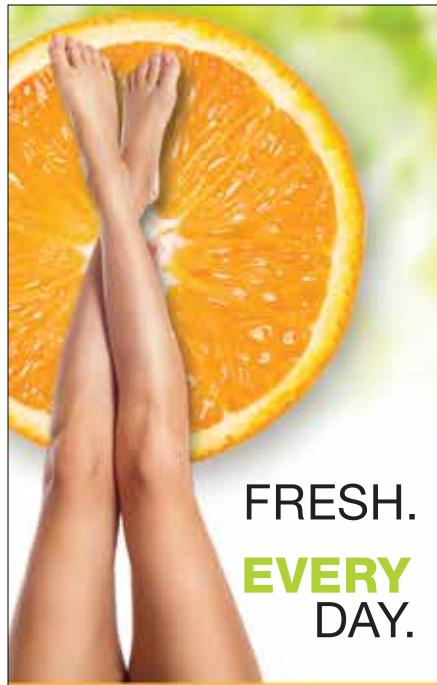
"We help heal fractured relationships, give hope, and offer tools for leading a healthy productive life," Comment says.

Kansas City House of Hope recently broke ground on a new Life Center which will be completed by October 2013. The center will accommodate Hope Academy (the program's school with licensed teachers). Plans also include the addition of an art studio, exercise room, business and counseling offices, and a library.

Kansas City House of Hope is grateful for the community-wide support that is growing daily. Healing the heart of one can impact the lives of many. If you would like to invest in the transformation of teen's lives by donating or volunteering, please contact Kansas City House of Hope at 913.262.8885 or visit [HouseOfHopeKC.net](http://HouseOfHopeKC.net).

Come support them in the Hope Challenge 5-K Walk/Run on Saturday, June 15 at 8 a.m. on the Country Club Plaza in Theis Park. Information is available on their website.

#### Hope Challenge 5K



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