



East Bay Center

...leading lives to hope and recovery

A Christmas Story - The Boy With No Drive

I'd like to introduce you to Jim. This young man entered into services with East Bay Center when he was eleven. Jim was a boy who experienced a great deal of trauma in his early years. He dealt with it by blocking out all emotions. He and his two siblings were eventually adopted by their grandmother. Unfortunately Grandma had her hands full with her own health issues, no income, and was barely scraping by with the small subsidy she received to provide the three grandchildren with food and shelter. Jim struggled with having compassion for others and could not express his feelings or needs to others. Grandma saw a boy who had "no drive". To counselors at the Center she would say: "you'll need to light a torch under that butt of his to get him to care about anything at all".

With the daily financial strain on the family, Christmas time was especially difficult. The family was eventually referred to EBC's CASSP program, which was a program subsidized by the State to provide wraparound services to those suffering from serious social, emotional, behavioral or mental health needs. Case managers worked to provide assistance with school clothes, food, backpacks and supplies for school, and therapeutic camps for the children. Grandma was also referred to Social Security for her own disability income, and various other state agencies for vouchers for Section 8 housing, and heating assistance from local organizations. Each year the CASSP program worked to obtain donations for Christmas gifts for each of their clients, bringing normalcy to children in high risk situations. For as long as the family was in service with EBC, the children were eligible to participate in the Christmas program – sometimes the only presents they received on Christmas morning.

Jim continued to thrive in EBC's therapeutic services. He entered the Young Marines and excelled under the discipline it provided. Unfortunately, as Jim and his siblings began their growth to positive change, the State was going through negative budget changes, and the

CASSP program was eliminated throughout the state. For a couple of years Patricia Arel, the counselor who worked with Jim, struggled to obtain donations to continue the gift program. While she and other staff had some success, they could not reach the same number of children that they could in the past.

Then one day, Pat received a call from a Marine working with Toys for Tots. Someone had sponsored EBC to receive a large donation of toys and gift cards for the children in service. However, the Marine would not divulge the name of the sponsor – Pat just had to come down to pick up the donation as soon as she could.

As she and other staff walked into the pick-up area, there stood a Young Marine with a huge smile on his face. The Young Marine was Jim. He and other Marines carried bag after bag to staff's cars. Over the past several years, with Jim's sponsorship, the program has grown to include not only those in children's services, but children of clients in adult services as well.

Thankfully, Grandma's impression of Jim was premature – the boy DOES have drive! He recognized the positive impact a program within a small mental health organization made on his life and on the lives of his family, and he was inspired to help continue the program to benefit others facing similar obstacles. Pat proudly announced that EBC has renamed the toy collection program "The Toy DRIVE" after Jim. The program's torch briefly flickered, but it now burns brightly as Jim breathed new life into it. Pat is proud to carry it forward in his name.

EBC's mission has remained the same for many years – to improve the lives of individuals and families within our communities by providing a broad range of high quality mental health and addiction services. Especially in the face of adversity, EBC will be here to help you, your family, and your community. We encourage you to visit our website at www.eastbay.org for information regarding services, employment, locations, etc. To speak to someone regarding services or to schedule an appointment, please call 401-246-1195 and ask for "Intake".