

A CHANCE AT A BETTER FUTURE

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Hope is that feeling that makes people think things will turn out for the best.

The 13 girls from age 12 to 18 residing at Hope House in Alpena are given help to turn their lives around so that they may have hope for a better future.

Michelle Grant, now living in Monroe County, had just turned 16 when she moved into Hope House and she said this action has made a great deal of difference in her life now as a stable adult.

"Where I came from was more a detention-like setting and that was what I was so used to," Grant said. "To go from that hard-core setting to a home setting, I was kind of relieved."

Scared and not knowing what to expect, but with experience of being shuffled through institutions in the system, she happily found people who cared and offered stability.

"I would have to say it was one of the best and, I guess, hardest experiences of my life, because they made me face so many issues I didn't know were issues to begin with," she said.

Having growing through her early teen years acting as her family's caretaker and provider, team treatment staff at Hope House showed her how family life was supposed to be so that her recovery could begin.

"I guess it was the first time in my life I was actually standing up for myself. They taught me self-esteem and how to set boundaries, and so it was almost like learning a new life," Grant said.

She spent two years at Hope House and still feels a strong connection to it.

"I still have mementos from when I was at Hope House. They changed my life. They were my saving grace and I tell them that to this day. Without them, I don't think I would have made it," Grant said. "I know that if I ever need them I can call them up and that's a comforting thing to know."

Jane Wood, family worker, and Phyllis Gagnon, treatment supervisor, work with the girls through stays averaging 11 to 14 months.

"It's not unusual for girls who



Residents at Hope House, Michelle, 16, vacuums while Alicia, 14, dusts in the common room as part of their responsibilities while living at the house.

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News Photo by Amy Lisenbe