

40 STORIES

FROM FEAR TO FUTURE



AN UNEXPECTED WELCOME



When Karen came to the Regional Safe School Program in 8th grade, she was expecting a juvenile detention center. She walked in and discovered it was nothing like she imagined. Karen was met with acceptance and support by the Program Director Karen Tiemann, Principal Frank Giosa, and the rest of the staff and students. She even met her best friend there.

ONE STEP BACK, TWO STEPS FORWARD

After graduating 8th grade at the safe school, Karen felt more confident and had a new love for reading. But when she went to Morton West High School, her fear and anxiety led her to struggle with a "bad attitude." An advocate, Francisca Pike, offered Karen support and introduced her to the West40 Tapestry program, which helps students overcome barriers to their success. This dramatically changed Karen's outlook and motivation.



FINDING NEW COURAGE

Sophomore year brought a different kind of challenge.

Karen encountered personal problems that led to her skipping school. That's when her advocate stepped in and encouraged her to return to school and deal with the situation in a healthy and proactive way. Now Karen is on track to graduate next year and plans on continuing on to college with the dream of becoming a pediatric nurse. It's a goal she couldn't have imagined a few years ago, but she saw that others believed in her; now she believes, too.



"THE SAFE SCHOOL GAVE ME NEW CHANCES AND HELPED ME LEARN FROM MY MISTAKES."

-Karen, Morton West High School Student

We love hearing stories of how lives have been changed by what we do here at West40. Want to share your story? Send it our way at amooney@west40.org.

MESSAGE FROM MARK

I am so very thankful for all of you! We are in the process of transforming West Cook County. Please take time to reflect on all we have to be thankful for ... relationships, loved ones, shelter, food, hope and health. Many around us are not so fortunate. I cherish that our organization is focused on making a meaningful difference in people's and family's lives! There isn't much worse than being hungry and cold. Similarly, each year, I spend time volunteering at the Greater Chicago Food Depository. So many of our kids count on us for structure, love and often food and warmth. I so appreciate the many initiatives that we are taking on their behalf, especially over winter break. This holiday season, please spend some additional time thinking about plans, strategies or resources for our struggling families. Thank you and happy holidays!

