

## Sticking Tight

Ozone House performs another rescue.



From a distance Karyn and Jadyn, both wearing jeans and T-shirts, look like peers. Up close, however, even though Jadyn is taller, it's clear she is more recently a child. Even at twenty and with a tall, athletic frame, she still has a soft baby face and giggles from time to time while hanging on to the leash of her dog, Trek.

Jadyn found Trek along the highway last year. He'd been abandoned and was severely malnourished and close to death. Now he's a rock-solid mutt with some boxer traits, at ease with Jadyn and Karyn. Karyn Boyce is Jadyn's social worker at Ozone House, the county's only program for runaway teens. In some ways the journeys of Jadyn and Trek from the highway to shelter are similar: frightening and risky.

When Jadyn (not her real name) was in high school, the state removed her from her abusive family home and placed her with court-approved family friends. She finished her senior year, a sports star with an athletic scholarship to a nearby college. That summer, when her guardians told her they were moving up north, Jadyn assured them she had a place to stay.

In fact, when Jadyn started college, she was living out of her car. Late in the semester, after a sports injury, Jadyn sought help from a counselor and admitted she was homeless. The counselor noticed symptoms of other problems and recommended Ozone House, which offers a wide range of services, including counseling and substance abuse prevention. Three days later, Jadyn came to Ozone, nervous. "I kind of felt like the people I knew were just throwing me away," she recalls.

That night she went to live at Miller House, an extension of Ozone and the only transitional living program for homeless teens in this area. Jadyn wanted to take a walk. She smiles when recalling how a staff person handed her a slip of paper with Miller House's address and phone number and instructed her to hand that to someone in case she got lost. "That made me feel a lot better," she says. The very next morning Jadyn was at the Alano Club raking leaves with other Ozone staff and residents as part of Ozone's YMI (Youth Making an Impact) community service initiative.

"I learned so much at Miller House," says Jadyn, "like cooking, nutrition, how to budget money, how to find an apartment." She also learned the Ann Arbor bus lines and how to find a job.

Like many other victims of abuse, Jadyn is at risk for flashbacks, post-traumatic stress disorder, and self-destructive behavior. After Jadyn found a job, she broke house rules by buying alcohol and had to leave Miller House. But even after she went to live with friends, Karyn remained in close contact. "That was amazing to me," says Jadyn. "They were the first peo-

ple in my life that weren't giving up on me."

And even when her behavior got more self-destructive, Jadyn still felt support from Ozone House. She experienced more dissociative episodes, flashbacks, and depression, and was hospitalized several times. Because her housemates were using alcohol and drugs, she moved back into her car. Once again, Karyn remained in contact.

Jadyn finally joined a support group for her drinking. And then, she says, something "life changing" clicked: she realized that no matter what she did or how low she sank, Ozone stayed with her. "I finally started to replace the negative messages from my past with what Ozone and Karyn had been saying all along," she says. "I wanted to get back to school and have a safe place to live."



**Karyn Boyce (above) broke through to Jadyn, who says the people at Ozone House "were still willing to help me out after all I put them through."**

Last March, Jadyn qualified for long-term housing through an Ozone-sponsored program. Subsidized by the state and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, it offers seventeen-to-twenty-one-year-olds financial assistance for housing, regular home visits by Ozone counselors, and other Ozone services, including crisis intervention and skills training.

Jadyn's one-bedroom apartment is close to the bus line and allows pets, so she can keep Trek. She's active as an Ozone volunteer, serving on the YMI board and planning events. She also meets regularly with Larisa Galnares, an Ozone caseworker, who helps with paperwork, insurance, medical issues, and applying for financial aid to return to college.

"I had a really hard time accepting that I didn't have a family to fall back on like other kids," Jadyn says. "I did a lot of self-sabotaging. But Ozone stuck with me. They were still willing to help me out after all I put them through. . . . I can reach out and get help for big things and little things like 'Hey, I burnt my eggs again. How do you make them?'"

Jadyn remains somewhat fragile. She knows it's critical that she stay with her support group. But she now accepts that she deserves to return to school. And she's ready to do what it takes to reach her goals.

Karyn Boyce will continue her visits with Jadyn, one of her twenty

or so active clients. She also remains in contact with clients from ten years ago. "We're here for the long haul," says Mary Jo Callan, Ozone's director.

It takes tremendous patience and persistence to nurture abused and neglected youth, especially when the road gets bumpy. Like good parents, Ozone teaches its young clients the skills they need to lead healthy and productive lives. By providing consistent support, Ozone House restores hope for these young survivors so that they can learn to trust and love.

—Billie Ochberg