



DENICE SMITH AND ELENA ALVARDO were at an impasse. Good intentions were not overcoming the resentment, anger, and frustration in their relationship.

Like any parent of a teenager, Denice was facing new challenges. But having raised two boys, she knew she was in different territory with Elena. Denice is not Elena's mom — she is her legal guardian and parent since Elena's mother, Sherri, died of ovarian cancer nearly three years ago.

Denice and Sherri had been long-time friends and shared the same faith. With prayer and soul-searching, they decided Denice and her husband would be Elena's new family. When Sherri passed away, Elena was just shy of her twelfth birthday.

"Of course, Elena was struggling with the loss of her mother," says Denice. "There were a lot of tough dynamics between us. We've each seen therapists, but being counseled separately wasn't working. Then it got really awful. She was acting out with self-destructive behaviors, and I didn't handle things well, either. I started to feel she would be better off in another home."

Today, Denice and Elena are happier and hopeful. They learned about the Parent/Teen Solutions programs with Exchange/SCAN and jumped at the chance to have counselor Kendra Edwards work with them in their home in Kernersville each week.

Offering in-home visits and 12 weeks of group sessions for parents and teens satisfied an unmet need, says Cynthia Napoleon-Hanger, Executive Director of Exchange/SCAN.

"We have done lots of work supporting parents and families with newborns and children under 12, but we had nothing to offer families and teens in Forsyth County," she says. "Parents were calling with issues related to their teens, feeling like they've tried everything, and they needed help."

Exchange/SCAN had successfully implemented Parent/Teen Solutions in Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin counties, drawing on evidence-based national models. With a start-up Community Grant from the Foundation, the nonprofit was able to hire Kendra and begin the program in Forsyth County. "Without the Foundation grant, the program would not be in this community," Cynthia adds.

Both the group sessions and home visits focus on issues such as communication, relationships, problem solving, stress and anger management, substance abuse, and self-esteem.

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—CYNTHIA NAPOLEON-HANGER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF EXCHANGE/SCAN

"Visiting with a family, in their home, you see them together and work with them on what's going on with them at that moment," says Kendra. "Elena and Denice are seeing good progress on their goals to work as a team, communicate honestly, and improve self-care."

"We are much better," agree Denice and Elena.

"Kendra is helping us as a family — not just one or the other," says Denice. "She listens to both of us. She isn't judging. And she's reinforcing positive behaviors."

"Kendra has helped me calm down enough so I can see the good in Elena again. And Elena is a good example of forgiveness and compassion and learning to let things go."

EXCHANGE/SCAN, CONTINUED



EXCHANGE/SCAN was established in 1981 and now provides a variety of programs to prevent and treat child abuse across 16 counties in Northwest North Carolina. In 2011, the Foundation began three years of Community Grant support totaling \$76,608 to establish and expand the Parent/Teen Solutions programming in Forsyth County. The grants supported a counselor who works intensively with families on a weekly basis and in a 12-week series of group sessions.

Having demonstrated the ongoing need for and effectiveness of the program, Parent/Teen Solutions in Forsyth County is currently being funded by a grant from the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Left: Elena Alvarado, Kendra Edwards, and Denice Smith

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—KENDRA EDWARDS
COUNSELOR AT EXCHANGE/SCAN

