

Creating Possibilities for the Future

- ▼ In many ways, Esther Mulder is your typical college student.
- ▼ During the day, she immerses herself in political science and environmental studies at Gustavus Adolphus College.
- ▼ At night, her broad interests take on many forms: a fierce rugby player, an accomplished violist in the college orchestra, co-president of an honors society and a determined advocate for social justice.

That's a lot for a young woman who spent her childhood hearing others say she would be lucky to graduate from high school. That's why Esther is anything but your typical college student.

"I feel so blessed and privileged to go to college because it was against my odds," Esther said.

A Thwarted Childhood

Esther is the first to admit that her childhood was thwarted.

When she was 11 years old, she was removed from her mother's care and brought to the emergency shelter at St. Joseph's Home for Children.

It wasn't the first time Esther's life had been uprooted. As a toddler, she was placed in foster care for three years because of her mother's struggle with severe mental illness.

After Esther's mother completed treatment, she regained custody of her daughter, but her continued struggle left the two in unstable housing situations and poverty. The effects on Esther's childhood were undeniable.

"Growing up, I had to be the parent. I had to learn how to be independent," she said.

It was when Esther was removed from her mother's care a second time that she was brought to St. Joe's. Her seven months in St. Joe's Residential Treatment program was, Esther says, "the beginning of my life going in the right direction."

A New Start

Esther welcomed the stability and nurturing environment that St. Joe's provided. She recaptured a little bit of her lost childhood with the support of counselors and therapists. In St. Joe's classrooms, teachers helped

Esther discover something that still helps her today: a desire to learn.

"I struggled a lot in school before I received individualized attention in St. Joe's small classrooms," Esther said. "I started enjoying education. I hated school until then."

St. Joe's partners with the Minneapolis public school system to provide holistic treatment that focuses on each youth's educational, emotional and behavioral needs.

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The seed planted during Esther's time at St. Joe's continued to grow after she left to live with the same foster parents who had cared for her when she was a toddler. With stability, Esther flourished, despite the unfortunate doubts of her foster care social workers. If anything, their doubts made her work even harder.

"I was told I wasn't going to amount to anything as a foster kid," Esther explained. "But, I've always been motivated by people's doubts."

Ranked tenth in her high school class of 726 students, Esther easily proved her doubters wrong. She set her sights on college. This time, it wasn't just a matter of desire; it was a matter of logistics. How would she pay for tuition?

Thankfully, Catholic Charities was once again there to help. She received tuition assistance through a scholarship endowed by a Catholic Charities donor. The Ed Anderson Scholarship was established in memory of a member of Catholic Charities' board of directors who had been a strong supporter of St. Joe's for more than 25 years.

"Helping Esther and others like her is a wonderful way to continue my husband's commitment of providing a better future for young people," said Danese Anderson, Ed Anderson's widow. "Our gift is an



Esther Mulder says her time at St. Joe's was the beginning of her life going in the right direction

investment in their future — and in our community.

"It's imperative that we as a society help the vulnerable children at St. Joe's, to give them an opportunity to have as bright and as successful a future as Esther has in front of her," Anderson said.

Bright and successful are indeed accurate predictions for Esther's future. After graduation next spring, she's applying to several service-based organizations, including the Peace Corps. After all she has experienced, she's determined to give back to the community.

"I feel so propelled to make a difference," Esther explained. "If I'm not making a difference, I'm not benefiting anyone else. Life is too short to only look at myself."♦

Share Your Story

For 137 years, St. Joseph's Home for Children has provided stability for vulnerable youth like Esther — which means thousands of people in our community may have similar stories of how St. Joe's impacted their lives. Help us as we capture St. Joe's history from the perspective of those who lived here. If you or someone you know has a St. Joe's story, please contact Sr. Paulissa Jirik, SSND, at 612-827-9367.



St. Joseph's Home for Children

VOICE

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Rev. John Estrem, Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Charities

St. Joseph's Home for Children, a program of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, is a children's shelter, day treatment and residential treatment center, licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The mission of Catholic Charities is to serve those most in need. We help individuals and families reach their full potential as we call for justice in the community.

For Their Futures

You can help secure the future of St. Joseph's Home for Children by including Catholic Charities in your estate planning. Call 612-664-8518 or visit www.cctwincities.org.

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Calling in to Care

A special thanks to Fox 9 TV for sponsoring "Fox 9 Gives Back," which raised funds to help youth at St. Joseph's Home for Children. The two-day telethon aired on Fox 9 TV in April.

Thanks also to all the viewers who gave so generously to "Fox 9 Gives Back."

Volunteers, Catholic Charities staff and board members answered the phones as compassionate viewers called in to pledge more than \$17,000 for the shelter and treatment center!

Among the hundreds of gifts came one for \$3.80, offered by a young girl who watched the broadcast at home and then went to her room and emptied her piggy bank. She told her mom she wanted to help someone.

We are thankful for the gifts, large and small, that help St. Joe's youth.



Artwork courtesy of children at St. Joe's

from the youth at St. Joseph's Home for Children

Your support makes it possible to provide shelter and comfort to 2,000 youth each year. St. Joe's cares for vulnerable children by addressing immediate needs for shelter and stability and offering long-term solutions to emotional and behavioral issues.

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