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## Nonprofit Profile

# Program helps youth change their lives

**By Carol Wagner**  
*Leader Correspondent*

1 Nestled in western Shawano County, just northwest of Wittenberg, is the [Homme Youth](#) and Family Programs campus, which includes 200 acres of woods, hills, streams and ponds. It is where court-ordered youth can go to change their lives.

2 "The kids appreciate the scenery," said Pam Cotton, director of out-of-home care.

3 Boys and girls ages 10 to 21 are treated for issues such as delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, trauma and victimization.

4 There are four living units with 40 to 44 youth: Pathway, for female adolescents; Nelson Hall, for the males; Journey Quest, for cognitively delayed teenage boys; and Acceptance, for older teenage males and young men.

5 "Their stays vary from six to 12 months," Cotton said.

6 There is also a chapel that Cotton calls "the heart of the campus."

Visions is a fully accredited junior and senior high school, which includes an auto and woodworking shop. All the teachers are certified in special education, and all staff are trained in security measures.

A typical day for residents begins at 7 a.m. Classes are held from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Then the kids go back to their units for recreation or group therapy in the evening.

Classes are held only in the morning during summer.

Nearly all the residents are sent there by court order from counties all over Wisconsin, with 25 percent from Milwaukee. Each county pays its residents' costs to stay at [Homme](#).

"I've always enjoyed the challenge of the work," Cotton said. "You have to be on your toes to build an effective working relationship."

When the kids are discharged they go to a lower level of care or to their homes. The state measures success by where the kids are discharged. Those who don't meet placement go to Lincoln Hills Juvenile Detention Center.

"We're not always successful," Cotton said. "We take tough kids. We have had some pretty challenging youth."

Cotton said things are going well at the facility, but it is really hard work so maintaining staff can be difficult. She said it is a good place for people who are tough, caring and forgiving.

"For people who are interested in work in human services, this is a good place to start," Cotton said. "It's a great place for people to get their feet wet."

The counselors, therapists, advocates and teachers provide care that supports each youth and family throughout treatment. The programs provide structure, sight and sound supervision, individual and group therapy, educational services, spiritual care, if desired, and reintegration into the community.

For information, call 715-253-2116, email [home.admissions@isswis.org](mailto:home.admissions@isswis.org), or visit [isswis.org/homme](http://isswis.org/homme) online.



PHOTO BY CAROL WAGNER

Pam Cotton, right, is the director of out-of-home care for [Homme Youth](#) and Family Programs, and Carrie Miller is the Nelson Hall supervisor.