

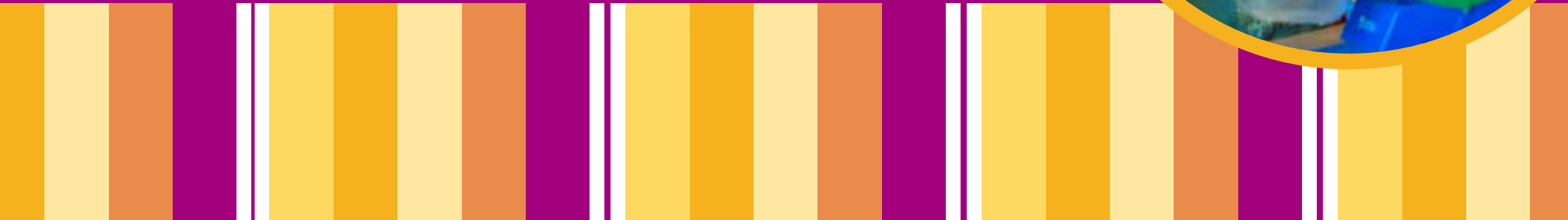


**STARFISH**  
FAMILY SERVICES

Fall 2015 Newsletter



# STARFISH SCOOP



# HAPPY FALL!

**A**note from Ann Kalass

*Starfish friends,*

Here at Starfish we've been enjoying the crisp weather and fall activities like visits to the cider mill and harvest celebrations. Autumn traditions and the approaching Thanksgiving holiday always place me in a contemplative mood. November is a time to reflect on all we have to be grateful for in our life. Thankfully, I've been blessed by a strong family, strong education, and a great career. Witnessing some of the hurdles our low income families face has solidified my belief that most Starfish families indeed work hard every day, they just have not benefited from the same support system and educational opportunities that many of us share.

This newsletter highlights Starfish parents who sought ways to improve the lives of their families, who worked hard and who ultimately succeeded.

We hope you enjoy reading about the wonderful ways your contributions support our work stabilizing and strengthening families.

Thank You.



Ann Kalass  
CEO

**Questions,  
Comments,  
Newsletter Ideas?**

We'd love to hear from you. Contact us at [devdept@sfish.org](mailto:devdept@sfish.org)

**Our Mission:**

Strengthening families to create brighter futures for children.

**Our Philosophy:**

We believe in the potential of all children and the power of healthy caregiver-child relationships to break the cycle of poverty and create long term positive outcomes for children.



Everyone's very excited that Starfish preschool is back in session!



Here's  
the

# STARFISH SCOOP

*Starfish Success Stories*



The Headstart years: Shaina (playing dress up) and Jewell.

Siblings Jewell and Shaina are all grown up.

## Where Are They Now? All Grown Up and Doing Great!

It's a common lament, 'Kids they grow up so quick!' Yes, they do and what a pleasure it is to watch them grow into successful adults. Here at Starfish we are fortunate to witness the benefit that access to quality preschool education has on children and the community.

Siblings Jewell and Shaina Jones are one example. They don't let being full time college students at the University of Michigan-Dearborn prevent them from being active in their community. Shaina is an honors student, and Jewell is in the Reserves Officers' Training Corps. Both are serving at their church and on political campaigns. Jewell is running for Inkster City Council this year. Fifteen years ago, their parents decided their children should attend Starfish preschool. Their mom

Octavia shares, "When you walked into the rooms they were bright and colorful. They had programs not only for the children, but also for me. I was able to take a lot of computer classes," Octavia says. "I also liked the curriculum. I was so glad to find a place where I could drop them off and feel they'd be safe. And it didn't cost me anything- just volunteering, and I do that anyway."

Studies show that Jewell and Shaina's parents made a great decision. Preschool works! It is one of the best investments we can make in our communities. What we learn in preschool is crucial to our future development. Those who attend Head Start preschools have improved math, social, and communication skills. They are much more likely to complete high school and college than their counterparts who don't attend preschool.

**"I was so glad to find a place where I could drop them off and feel they'd be safe. And it didn't cost me anything- just volunteering, and I do that anyway." - Octavia, Starfish Parent**

Now, when Jewell and Shaina visit Starfish it is to give back by volunteering at the place that helped their parents lay a wonderful foundation for their future.



Tina and her daughters Maya, Alayna, Sarah and Diala enjoying the Starfish garden.



## A Support System Makes All the Difference

Tina, a newly minted graduate of the University of Michigan-Dearborn's Psychology program, readily reveals her life was far different seven years ago, "I was living a life splattered with financial hardships, parenting struggles, and marriage troubles. I was looking for a hero to battle my problems. I found Starfish which gave me access to programs to allow me to become my own hero."

Tina enrolled in the Starfish Family Success program with the goal of rescuing her home from foreclosure. Happily it worked. Unfortunately, her initial success was followed by backsliding into the same predicament. With encouragement from Starfish social workers, a new goal was set: purchase a more affordable home and become a college graduate so she could find more gainful employment.

**"I was looking for a hero to battle my problems. I found Starfish which gave me access to programs to allow me to become my own hero."**

Starfish staff members facilitated Tina's enrollment in U-M Dearborn's SOAR program. SOAR, dedicated to helping nontraditional students complete a college degree, was an excellent opportunity however Tina did not have childcare. Who would watch her daughter while she attended class? Enrolling Tina's young daughter into Starfish's preschool program proved to be the answer. "The Starfish Head Start staff not only assisted in the growth of Diala educationally, but also with improving her ability to interact with the other children in a positive manner. Field trips to the apple orchard, skating rink, and Greenfield Village presented opportunities for fun that I would not have been able to provide." Tina says.

Now, according to Tina, "I'm a new woman. My girls and I reside mortgage free in a home I purchased two years ago. I enjoy a beautiful and close relationship with my four daughters who are excelling in school. Life is certain to have new hurdles to leap, but today I have the confidence that they can be overcome. The Starfish mission (Strengthening families to create brighter futures for children) is more than just a mantra for the agency. I am living proof that acts of compassion can offer new life to one destined to darkness." Tina continues, "Nobody wants to feel they have nothing to offer, or that they are alone in this battle against poverty. Agencies like Starfish and (programs such as) SOAR, demonstrate that while low-income families face many obstacles to financial stability these are challenges we don't have to face alone. Volunteering in activities such as the Poverty Simulation, PBS reading advertisement, and food distribution events held at the agency gave me a sense of being part of the community."

Lessons Learned: climbing out of poverty is not a quick and easy fix. Tina's success did not happen overnight, it took several years of determination. Tina, her family and Starfish are very grateful to all the Starfish supporters who contributed to another success story.

**"Nobody wants to feel... that they are alone in this battle against poverty. Agencies like Starfish and (programs such as) SOAR, demonstrate that while low-income families face many obstacles to financial stability these are challenges we don't have to face alone." - Tina, Starfish Client**



Amber, Carmin, and Patrice strike a pose next to their favorite armored knight.

## Starfish Summer, A Review In Photos



Tomlinson Middle School Students and best friends Rashone and Brionna visit the Detroit Institute of Arts as part of the Starfish summer enrichment program for youth. They loved seeing the world famous "Detroit Industry" Diego Rivera mural for the first time. Your support enables Starfish to expose our youth to the joy of art.



## Gifts of Grace

Every family should have a holiday full of cheer. Because of you and your generous support, 853 children from 321 families received gifts of grace through Adopt-A-Family 2014. Many of the gifts requested by families were necessities such as bedding, socks, and toiletries. We are amazed by the generosity that you so graciously shared with our families. You truly touched their hearts and ours. If you would like to participate this year please call Susan Powers at 734.728.3400, ext. 3345 to sign up to Adopt-A-Family for the holidays. Our families thank you.

**“Thank you mostly for opening (my children’s) heart and mind to the meaning of Christmas and the kind of person they can become: kind, loving and giving.”**

***Make a Difference Today!***

## In the Words of our Families

*“You have touched our hearts in the most magical way imaginable... I can only promise to pay it forward.”*

*“Thank you for the clothes, shoes and toys but most importantly the reassurance to my children that good people are still in the world.”*



Please give today to help Starfish continue making a positive difference in the lives of people like Tina, Jewell and Shaina. Empower families to become self-sufficient and help children thrive.

Support our work strengthening families to create brighter futures for children by mailing in your donation or visiting [www.starfishonline.org/donate](http://www.starfishonline.org/donate).

Thank you for your generous support of Starfish.

Starfish Family Services is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax deductible as outlined by IRS tax regulations.