

## College junior is a DCF success story

Future social worker wants to help troubled kids - as she was helped

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Lindsay Thorp spent her childhood bouncing between her parents, caretakers and a group home, listlessly moving through life - until she had an epiphany with the help of a caring social worker from the state Department of Children and Families who made her realize that she wanted to be just like him. Now, a junior in college, she's not far away from the goal.

She began childhood in Meriden with a drug-addicted mother and an alcoholic father until DCF stepped into her life early on. Thorp said. "I was with the Meriden DCF as far back as I can remember.

"I had no hope or outlook at that time," Thorp said, speaking of her life before her sophomore year in high school. She did poorly in her classes and had no drive or ambition, she said. Not long after, Scott Rogers became her social worker.

"Scott actually came to me like he would a real person," she said. "This is what you've got to do." I took everything from that. I listened to his advice. A lot of people never gave me advice. He was a big support system.

"Then I realized that this is not what I wanted to be doing. I want to do better than my parents. They didn't raise me with high self-esteem. Now I look around me and I see a lot of people who are worse off. I want to be the one to change that."

From that point on, her grades improved, she said, and she now has a 3.0 grade point average at Southern Connecticut State University, where she's studying social work. She plans to get a master's degree and eventually a doctorate and go on to help children like the girl she was, through social work.

Victor Bafumi, a social work supervisor with DCF, said Rogers was instrumental in helping Thorp, and that he really deserves the praise. He has since left the organization and was unavailable for comment. "Scott was really the one that worked with her directly," Bafumi said. "He deserves the credit."

Thorp said that she recognizes a good social worker and knows what to aspire toward because she had a few bad ones. While Rogers would meet with her every two weeks and call her frequently on the phone to keep in touch, she's had others who would meet with her the minimum amount required and who did not give her any feedback. It was Roger's ability to inspire and advise that made him different, Thorp said.

Taking advantage of a program available to all DCF children, Thorp has opted to stay under the aegis of the department, receiving a stipend, rent for her apartment, and tuition in excess of her financial aid.

Students who have graduated from high school and wish to pursue college or vocational training can receive money from the department until age 23, Bafumi explained. Thorp is young for a college junior at age 19. She's gotten so far by taking classes all summer long, she said, another piece of advice from Rogers. She hopes to have finished her master's degree before losing funding. DCF helped her find an apartment in Hamden, from which she commutes to SCSU.

Lisa Flower, program director in the DCF office of communications, said Thorp isn't the first child to grow up under DCF and decide that Social work was for them. There are 12 other former wards who are now social workers in Connecticut that she's aware of, she said, and the department is planning to incorporate them into a celebration on March 25 to go along with National Social Work Month.

"It's just a wonder way for them to give back, considering where they came from," Flower said. "It's a proud moment for us at DCF."