

Lighthouse Independent Living Program Receives NILA Award

On August 14, 2003 in Orlando, Florida, Lighthouse Youth Services, Inc. in Cincinnati, Ohio received the National Independent Living Association's (NILA) 2003 Organization of the Year Award for its efforts in the fields of Independent and Transitional Living. Lighthouse is the first private community-based organization to receive the award. Accepting the NILA award on behalf of Lighthouse was ILP Division Director, Mark Kroner and Assistant Director Shahzaade Ali. NILA cited the impact one local agency could have on the national agenda concerning older homeless youth and young adults. NILA stated that the Lighthouses ILP has served as a model for communities all over the country. Lighthouse has served over 1000 youth in Independent Living and another 600-800 in its Transitional Living Program since 1981.

According to ILP Division Director Mark Kroner, "Lighthouse is very proud to be honored and recognized for our efforts. Receiving this award is a great example of public-private collaboration and what can happen when many people are paddling in the same direction "

Lighthouse staff in the Independent and Transitional Living Programs have been regular presenters at dozens of state and national conferences and have been actively involved in advocacy and legislative efforts at all levels. Lighthouse staff and program participants have met with everyone from county commissioners to TV reporters to Governors, Senators, First Ladies and Presidents to speak on behalf of the needs of vulnerable youth. A Lighthouse youth spoke on behalf of the foster youth of America at the signing of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and introduced President Clinton.

The agency's efforts in this area has been cited in the Washington Post, People Magazine, Family Circle Magazine, Youth Today, the LA Times, the Christian Scientist Monitor, the Cincinnati Enquirer and Post and dozens of field journals and national newsletters.

Bob Mecum, Executive Director of Lighthouse Youth Services commented "It has been a privilege for Lighthouse Youth Services to provide an Independent Living Program for older, homeless youth in our community. Receiving the NILA Award makes me feel so proud of Mark Kroner and his entire staff. It is truly a great honor. Our partnership with Hamilton County Children's Services is the envy of many across the country"