

# Epworth History



## Mother's Jewels Home

Epworth Village was founded as Mother's Jewels Home in 1889 by the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Women's Society determined that opening this home would be an effective way to address the need to care for orphaned and abandoned children in the central United States.

Locating the orphanage in York, Nebraska made it particularly helpful to the thousands of orphaned and homeless children brought to the central United States by the orphan trains in the 1880's, 1890's and early 1900's.

The City of York was interested in having the home located in York so much so that they offered a cash gift towards the effort. Dr. W. L. Armstrong and Methodist churches throughout Nebraska and the nation focused on locating the home in York, NE. With the encouragement and leadership of Burwell and Isabella Davis Spurlock of York, the old Munson dairy farm was purchased.

On May 2, 1890, the first children arrived from a failed orphanage in Platte Center, Nebraska. The former owner of the Platte Center orphanage, Dr. Armstrong, joined forces with the Spurlocks to provide housing, food, and education (both academic and vocational) to hundreds of children. Through the years, buildings were added to accommodate more children, house a hospital and a school and to facilitate a full farming, dairy, and hog operation.

By 1900, the school and vocational training program were fully operational at the orphanage. Mothers' Jewels Home served children from across the United States and other countries.

## **Epworth Village**

By 1959, the ministry became more focused on children and youth experiencing family problems. Orphanage style of care was no longer appropriate for the population most in need of services. The agency was renamed Epworth Village to signify the program transformation to services for families and their children who were identified with emotional and behavioral difficulties.

In 1979, Epworth Village implemented an incentive style program. Family reunification became an even more prevalent goal of treatment. Throughout 1981 and 1982, Epworth Village responded to a growing need for services by expanding our scope to include utilizing two homes in the York community which were owned by the Village. Slife Group Home and Coleman Group Home were remodeled to accommodate the youth. Additionally, the two cottages on the main campus were home to youth needing our services.

The Epworth Village Learning Center was established in 1983 on the main Epworth Village campus to address the individual learning needs of children placed at Epworth Village for care as many of our youth did not easily fit into the public school programs. This state approved Level III Special Education Service provides individualized learning experiences for learning disabled and behavior disordered clients. The Learning Center is currently housed at the former Edison Elementary School building. Epworth Village purchased this building in 1995 from York Public Schools. Epworth began holding classes at the site in February 1996. The increased space and ability to have all classrooms in one building has helped our students and teachers approximate a more traditional school setting.

In 1996 Epworth Village opened the first Treatment Group Home in Nebraska. Today, we have three Treatment Group Homes; Slife, Coleman and Mills. Many of our youth require these intermediate steps prior to being discharged to their home, foster home, or other placement.

Late in 1998, Epworth Village was awarded two State of Nebraska contracts. One was to open an Emergency Shelter with space for 10 youth and the other a Traditional Group Home in the Grand Island area with space for 10 males.

The Emergency Shelter was opened in May 1999 in York. This facility was for both males and females ages ranging from infant to 18 who were in crisis. Kruse, the traditional Group Home in the Grand Island area, accepted its first youth in November 1999. This facility serves males ages 12-18 who need out of home placement.

Late in 2001, Epworth Village added yet another type of juvenile service program to our already extensive continuum of care. The Juvenile Holdover Program worked in conjunction with local law enforcement agencies to provide as safe place for youth that need to be detained for minor law violations. Prior to Epworth Village offering this

service, youth were detained up to 150 miles away from their home counties for violations such as truancy and minor in possession of alcohol.

## ***Today . . . More than 120 Years Strong***

### ***“A change for the better”***

Epworth Village provides children and families dealing with severe emotional and behavioral disorders a safe place where change can occur. Epworth, located in York and Grand Island, provides residential, therapeutic, educational, in-home and foster care services. The agency, consisting of more than 200 employees, serves 1,200 people across Nebraska each month. To find out more or to schedule a tour contact Kerry Hoffschneider, Public Relations Director at (402) 362-3353 ext. 1144. email: [kerry@epworthvillage.org](mailto:kerry@epworthvillage.org).

***Since 1994 Epworth Village has proudly been accredited by the Joint Commission.***

