

Paula Conway: Child & Family Volunteer of the Year!

As KVH's New Product Development Manager, Paula Conway spends a lot of time thinking outside the box and finding creative ways to overcome challenges. These skills are invaluable to her efforts with [Child & Family](#), Newport County's oldest, largest, and most comprehensive social service organization. Recently, Child & Family thanked Paula for her diligent and creative efforts in their Supportive Housing program by naming her their Volunteer of the Year.

For the past year or so, Paula has been teaching weekly cooking classes at Child & Family's Supportive Housing facility, showing the women who live there how to cook healthy, inexpensive meals. She provides the ingredients (some even come from a container garden that she started at the facility) and her daughter and a few friends provide free babysitting services while the classes take place.



The Supportive Housing program provides support and low-cost housing to women and their children who have committed themselves to a 2-year contract with Child & Family. The contracts include terms such as finishing their high school education and or job training, attending rehab meetings if necessary, attending parenting seminars, and attending various other counseling sessions, so they can become independent and provide a home for themselves.

"Most of these women have come from backgrounds that were full of broken promises, chaotic family life, loss, drugs, alcohol abuse, and domestic abuse," Paula explains. "Their self-esteem is very low, and they are often defensive and closed when you first meet them. But I have watched some of these women open up over time and start finding confidence from the support they receive. Their relationships improve with their peers, and their children, and they start discovering their talents and strengths."

Paula is constantly driven to make a difference in the community, and she explains why: "I volunteer because I know that we are put on this Earth to make it a better place. Everyone needs help at some point in their lives, at different levels, for different reasons. If you have intelligence, good fortune, and resources, you should share them, without judgment. Writing a check if you can spare it is great, but if you can spare it, it is a very easy thing to do. Sharing your time is a more meaningful gift and involves sacrifice, which is the truest form of giving."

You should not expect anything in return, since this is also counter to sacrifice and giving. But the best surprise is that you do get incredible gifts in return: gratitude, new friendships, watching someone find success, start believing in themselves, or just knowing that you have provided some relief to someone struggling."

Paula has certainly set a high standard for her peers to get out there and make a difference in the community. Please join us here at The News in congratulating her on the honor of being named Child & Family's Volunteer of the Year, and consider taking her advice – "I encourage everyone to find time to share their talents, or just time, with people who need them; what is more important than that?"