



Molly's* visit...

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” —Margaret Mead

JUNE 9, 2009, EAST LYME, CT—It was a day Molly was looking forward to. Living in a shelter and on the streets is brutal and takes its toll on anyone unfortunate enough to experience it, but this day was Molly’s day and she was getting a makeover. Thanks to a local hair salon with an extremely generous owner, Molly was getting her hair done for the first time in years and a new experience of having a manicure and pedicure.

As a member of our Outreach team, I went to the hospitality center to pick up Molly. She wasn’t there. I parked the car and went in to ask about her whereabouts and was told that she was not on the premises. After 15 minutes, I began to wonder if Molly may have gotten cold feet which is not unusual for people in her situation when taken out of their environment, but minutes later she came through the door, white as a ghost. When I asked her how she was, she confided that she was extremely nervous and had come really close to backing out.

On the ride over I explained to Molly that this is the salon I go to and the people are very caring and down-to-earth. She didn’t seem entirely convinced and said she didn’t want to look much different. I told her that she was in charge and that nothing would be done without her approval. She relaxed somewhat, but as we walked through the doors she stiffened up again.

Molly’s first reaction upon entering, was one of surprise and she started to smile. She was thrilled that the salon was an old converted church and took it as a sign from God. I fixed her a cup of coffee while Robin, her hairdresser, scurried her away. Robin couldn’t have been nicer. She had both of us in stitches most of the time, and sensing Molly’s apprehension, she quickly put her at ease. As time went on, Molly became talkative and more comfortable with her surroundings.

After her hair was done, we entered the manicure/pedicure room where we met Myrna—another wonderful woman that immediately put Molly at ease. When asked to pick the colors of nail polish, Molly looked for something neutral and not flashy. For her nails, she chose a pretty light pink color and a “skin” tone for her feet. She didn’t want any reds. I intervened and told her this was her day to go wild and crazy and do something she wouldn’t ordinarily do. I advised her to go with red! She laughed, blushed, giggled, and finally agreed. When Myrna placed Molly’s feet into the foot tub, Molly sighed with sheer pleasure. She told us that she does a lot of walking and the foot bath felt like heaven. When we left, Molly was so grateful and said she loved everything—*especially* the red nailpolish on her toes.

“Molly’s visit” represents just one aspect of the outreach work that we do at the Barnaba Institute. Most of our work with clients consists of helping them find long-term solutions to escape exploitation and the streets, but fun days-out are essential too because it makes them feel good about themselves and it begins to integrate them back into mainstream society in a positive way.

We’re hopeful about Molly and we hope you are too. We’re also hopeful for Beth* and Stacy*, two other young women we’re working with. In order to give them the best start to a new life, we need your help and your financial support. Grant money is down this year and we’re relying on individual donors, such as yourself, to provide services to victims and survivors of exploitation and trafficking.

With your donation, I ask that you sign the enclosed slip and add a word of encouragement. We’ll show Molly, Beth, and Stacy your kind words—words that they’ll remember as they take the next positive step toward building a better life for themselves.

*Names changed