

Portraits of Hope



In this issue . . .



Adopt-a-Family
Learn how families received a special holiday this season. See page 4.



Buffalo's Growing Renaissance

We are witnessing a time of dynamic vitality in the City of Buffalo. Signs of a new Buffalo and a growing renaissance throughout the city are demonstrated in the blossoming waterfront; the innovative, prospering medical campus continues to draw national and worldwide attention; all around us developers are restoring historic buildings, bringing back to life the rich beauty of our city's architecture and reinvigorating a sense of optimism in our culture and community.

I cannot help but draw parallels of the energetic spirit of improving our city to the work we do at Child & Family Services. Over the past year, we have made significant changes to our facilities to improve the quality of services for those we help. Members of our community are the cornerstone of our mission. Services like mediation through the Center of Resolution and Justice offer our community assistance by providing opportunities for peaceful change and resolution. The Employee Assistance Program supports a healthy balanced life at work and home for employers and their employees by providing counseling, training and wellness services. We believe everyone has the right to lead happy, healthy and productive lives. Building stronger communities is an important part of the Agency's mission.

We continue to lead with quality and dedicate ourselves to having a positive impact on the lives of the people we serve. Our shared sense of purpose helps us work effectively as a unified voice of change. Our community is moving in the right direction, and our Agency is proud to support this progress.

Francisco M. Vasquez, Ph.D.
President & CEO

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

#33 Ron Brooks, former Cornerback with the Buffalo Bills, brings awareness and support to domestic violence.

Domestic violence knows no limits. It can affect any person at any time. Former Buffalo Bills Cornerback Ron Brooks experienced this first hand and is using his position to bring awareness.

Last year, Ron's high school friend was killed by her boyfriend during a domestic dispute. Ron was unable to return home upon receiving the news. He felt helpless when other friends admitted to being affected by domestic violence. Realizing just how widespread domestic violence is, he needed to find a way to make a difference and bring awareness to the issue.



RON BROOKS SPEAKING AT THE 9TH ANNUAL LIGHTING NIAGARA FALLS PURPLE PRESS CONFERENCE.

Niagara Falls purple press conference, showing his support for thousands of domestic violence survivors in our community. He also donated movie tickets for survivors at Haven House to enjoy a night out. Ron even asked for a special birthday gift this year, "October is my birthday month, and for my birthday, I want to give back to the women, children and families affected by domestic violence." He began a GoFundMe page where he and members of the community raised \$2,500 for Haven House. When you meet Ron, he's a gentle soul. Being in the National Football League, Ron understands he can make a difference. He has chosen to use his platform to make a difference in a big way.



RON VISITED CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES TO DONATE THE \$2,500 RAISED FROM HIS GOFUNDME CAMPAIGN.

After searching for local agencies that support domestic violence survivors, Ron found Child & Family Services. In October, during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Ron spoke at Child & Family Services' 9th annual lighting



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2015-2016

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SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Francisco M. Vasquez, Ph.D.
President & CEO
FVasquez@cfsbny.org

Teri Byrne-Knell
Superintendent, Stanley G. Falk School
TByrne@falkschool.com

Mary Cornwell
Director, Office of Public Relations and Development
MCornwell@cfsbny.org

William Dimmig
Director, Corporate Integrity
WDimmig@cfsbny.org

Ian Long
Chief Financial Officer
ILong@cfsbny.org

Elizabeth McPartland
Chief Operating Officer
EMcPartland@cfsbny.org

Melissa Royer
Executive Administrative Assistant to the CEO
MRoyer@cfsbny.org

UNDERSTANDING JOY

A foster family shares their story of happiness.



KEVIN AND ROBERTA SEE THE DIFFERENCE THEY CAN MAKE IN THEIR CHILDREN'S LIVES.

Eight months later, and after the completion of multiple pre-certification classes, Roberta and Kevin began their journey as foster parents. It was not without a few bumps in the road. Their initial opportunities to foster sadly fell through. Roberta says, "You cannot understand joy if you do not have disappointment." Today they have two young foster boys in their home where joy and happiness are abundant.

At a crossroads in life, Roberta and her husband Kevin asked themselves, "What should we do from here?" When Roberta and Kevin married five years ago, their family became one – including her three children and his one child. They longed to have more children but learned this was not possible.

Last year, Roberta noticed a flyer for the Foster Family Fair. The Fair provided prospective foster parents an opportunity to meet with current foster parents, learn about the training necessary to become a foster parent and meet representatives from local foster care agencies. Although she and Kevin originally set down the path of adoption, they never considered fostering children until learning about this event. The next weekend they attended the Fair.



ROBERTA AND KEVIN INCLUDED THEIR BIOLOGICAL CHILDREN IN THE PROCESS EVERY STEP OF THE WAY. "KEVIN AND I ARE LEARNING AS WE GO SO THE KIDS ARE LEARNING WITH US. WE'RE A TEAM."

Roberta and Kevin attended the Foster Family Fair this year as Child & Family Services' foster parents. They were at the fair to be a resource for people thinking about fostering children in need of a safe home. They remembered their own fears and excitement

and wanted to show compassion and understanding to other families. The passion they feel for fostering is contagious. Their advice to prospective parents is, "Do not give up on yourself, the process and the children. The rewards are never-ending." c&fs



LEFT TO RIGHT: KEVIN & ROBERTA AT THE FAMILY FOSTER FAIR THIS YEAR WITH MIRANDA AND JILL.

TAKING ACTION: IF YOU HAVE THE ABILITY, YOU DO IT

Board Member John Rodgers Shares His Story




John Rodgers is in his second year serving on the Board of Directors of Child & Family Services. As an executive with Independent Health, he sees the value in the services the Agency provides to the entire community. As a father, he understands the need for those services which knows no boundaries, and he wants to help make sure that need is met. John shares his story of giving back.

“I have four kids and one has passed away, and part of the situation is that we had some challenges with mental health and a need for crisis services. Every family has challenges, and what many people do not realize is that it is not just the poor and underserved, it is every segment of the community.

In my role as Chief Operating Officer at Independent Health, I have a little bit of influence that I can apply. There is the ability of having influence to help getting things done when you are in an organization that touches so many businesses in the community.”

John is not comfortable simply sitting around. In addition to Child & Family Services, he has been involved with the Boy Scouts, children’s soccer and baseball programs and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. It all goes back to an understanding from when he was young that likely came from his parents and grandparents. “You would rather be one of those people that step-up when needed then step back to avoid the extra burden, and it is enriching to provide what services you can.”

John is also on the board of the Stanley G. Falk School and looks forward to the potential for the future. “If you walk through the Stanley Falk School, you have people who may have some challenges, but are given the opportunity to flourish. It is really encouraging. I hope to see that we can increase capacity.”

John may be a top executive at Independent Health, but he has not forgotten his roots in his grandfather’s pharmacy in Alden. He still works weekends to keep up his pharmacy skills. It is another way he shows his commitment to learning and giving to organizations like Child & Family Services. “I want to serve important pieces of the community. This is an important piece of the community.” 

THE ART OF LISTENING

Center for Resolution and Justice Mediator Retires

For 17 years, Nancy Whitelaw served as a volunteer mediator with Child & Family Services’ Center for Resolution and Justice. As a volunteer she helped families that chose to mediate their custody and/or visitation arrangements and strengthen their co-parenting relationships. Nancy assisted 1,425 Chautauqua County families, made up of more than 3,000 parents/caregivers and children.

“All those that have crossed paths with Nancy, including our staff and mediators, will truly miss her,” said Sherry Hayes, who manages mediation programs serving Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany counties. “Although Nancy was technically retired when she began mediating with our programs, she volunteered every week in our local Family Courts where she spent hours helping families develop parenting plans while waiting to make their court appearances.”


Mediation is a voluntary, confidential process in which a neutral

third party, the mediator, facilitates conversations with the parties involved in a dispute so they can discuss and consider settlement options. When the parties are parents and the issues involve the care and support of children, mediation can be challenging. Nancy always remained impartial during mediation. She did not tell people what to do. Instead, she supported the parties in their efforts to communicate, negotiate and come up with a solution they could agree upon.



NANCY WHITELAW, SEEN HERE RETURNING HER BADGE, HAS 17 YEARS OF VOLUNTEER MEDIATION EXPERIENCE.

Chautauqua County Family Court Judge Judith S. Claire describes Nancy’s contributions well. “All these years, Nancy brought her unique blend of talents and strengths to Family Court. She has inspired all of us who had the privilege of working with her. She is a quiet hero in our midst. We will miss her very sly wit!”

Nancy brought a wide range of talents and skills to her work as a family mediator; most prevalent was the ability to really listen to the people. Nancy was known to say, “There is a reason why we have two ears and one mouth, so you hear twice as much as you talk”. 

ADOPT-A-FAMILY EXPANDS COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO MORE THAN 140 FAMILIES

The generosity of the Western New York community helped to alleviate some of the pressure of the holidays for some of the families working with Child & Family Services. One look at Family Counselor Paula Yanello's car, and you can see why - it is full of items donated for a family in our Adopt-a-Family Program. Individuals, organizations or local companies were matched with a family who could not provide gifts for the holidays.

Families can be reluctant to participate in the Adopt-a-Family Program. It is not easy to ask for help, but they most often decide to get involved for their children. The response can be overwhelming. Paula explains the reaction from a mom when the car load of gifts arrived, "She cried. I cried. It took us probably an hour to unload the car. She was just so happy." Families are both grateful and relieved.

It's one of the reasons why donors like UAW – Ford Buffalo Stamping Plant Local 897 partner with Child & Family Services during the holidays. When Jackie Masterson called, she asked to help not one but 20 families. She knew the team at the plant had that much to give, "Because we have an opportunity, and we are doing well. We're prospering."



FAMILY COUNSELOR PAULA YANELLO (LEFT) WITH VOLUNTEER PETER CROWLEY (RIGHT) LOADING DONATIONS FROM ADOPT-A-FAMILY PROGRAM.



UAW – FORD BUFFALO STAMPING PLANT LOCAL 897 (LEFT TO RIGHT) PRESIDENT/CHAIRMAN DALE ROGERS, THERESA DELUCA – CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES CORPORATE & DONOR RELATIONS, JACKIE MASTERSON & DAVE CERRONI, UAW – FORD BUFFALO STAMPING PLANT.

The plant has seen its share of ups and downs with the economy. Jackie explains, "Our workforce got smaller and smaller, and then it started to pick up again." They were in a position to give again. "We thought that with new people coming in, they would appreciate the opportunity to share the wealth."

The plant came together to sponsor so many families. The Women's Committee organized teams, at least 250 people helping, and did the shopping when needed. "We have so many people in the plant who want to volunteer, but they just don't know how or don't have time, and this was an easy way to do that."

we promote the well-being of children and strengthen families. "It's not just a housing program, or treatment or education - there's so much more to it. It's a vast expanse of opportunities that you give people who are having problems in the community."

They also got a glimpse at the depth of the need that some of our families face. Jackie remembers shopping and thinking, "It's Christmas and a child should not have to ask for winter boots. That was partly why we wanted to do it because children should have fun things, and we tried to do both of those things."

Adopt-a-Family helps make the holidays more meaningful for those who choose to partner with us and more joyful for the families we serve. For those of us working at Child & Family Services, the outpouring of support and generosity by the community was inspiring.




THE STANLEY G. FALK SCHOOL GYM WAS HOME BASE FOR THE ADOPT-A-FAMILY DROP OFF. OVER 140 FAMILIES WERE HELPED DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON.

STANLEY G. FALK SCHOOL STUDENTS LEND A HAND

The students in Mr. Frost's woodshop class at the Stanley G. Falk School acquire independence, trust and safety but their scope of learning stretches far beyond the classroom. The students tackle a number of different projects to sharpen their skills including: handmade gumball machines, pens, and clocks. Perhaps the most meaningful and memorable project for the students are the tables and chairs they build to donate to members of the community.

The Falk woodshop class recently partnered with the Western New York Independent Living Center, an organization that helps disabled individuals live free and independent lives. The students donated a handmade coffee table and two end tables to help furnish a new apartment for one of the clients at the Western New York Independent Living Center. Tariq, a junior at the Falk School, helped work on the tables as a part of the woodshop class. He says he enjoys woodshop almost as much as he loves basketball because he is relaxed by the work he does with Mr. Frost. However, for Tariq, the most memorable part of the experience was the chance to meet Helen from the Western New York Independent Living Center. "It was cool to see her reaction and get that warm feeling you get from helping someone," Tariq remembers.

Mr. Frost, the woodshop teacher at the Falk School, says the foundation of the class is to teach students skills they will need to have in life to become successful. As one can easily see through his students' eyes, they are taught far more than woodworking. They are taught compassion, respect and pride - all lessons they can apply to every part of their lives. 



PICTURED (LEFT TO RIGHT), DESIREE SULLIVAN, HELEN DOOLING, TARIQ BELL, ALEXANDER SCHRECK, RUSSELL VINCENT, BRIAN SOLOMAN, AND FALK TEACHER KEITH FROST.


CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES ATTENDS COFCCA'S FIRST ANNUAL LOBBY DAY



DURING THE FIRST ANNUAL LOBBY DAY, THE MORNING BEGAN WITH A DEBRIEFING. THE INFORMATION AND PERSONAL STORIES PROVIDED BY THE AGENCY ARE CRITICAL TO THE DECISION LEGISLATORS MAKE ON CERTAIN POLICIES.

Agency representatives recently visited Albany to advocate and request support for legislation crucial to the families and children in our community. The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) invited Child & Family Services to their first annual Lobby Day at the State Capital. COFCCA represents nearly all voluntary, not-for-profit organizations providing foster care, adoption, family preservation and special education services in New York State.

Child & Family Services, along with COFCCA, continues to seek support for an increase in state aid foster care rates. After six years of stagnant growth compounded with increasing fiscal challenges, the rates jeopardize child welfare agencies' ability to provide and maintain quality services. Kimberly Kadziolka, Director of Residential Services attended Lobby Day and explains, "Agencies continue to be forced to do more and more with less. Everyday expenses increase each year – groceries, utilities, supplies – but the rates do not keep up with these expenses. It is challenging to balance those increasing expenses with the same flat rates and continue to provide quality services."

During this budget session, Child & Family Services was able to sit down and talk with several of our local representatives from the Assembly and Senate, as well as those from across New York State. COFCCA continues to lobby on behalf of more than 100 agencies. 

HOW YOU'VE SUPPORTED CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES



Thank you to our partners for collecting school supplies for children in Residential, Foster Care and Adoption and Stanley G. Falk School programs. Friends at Kulback's, Inc., Cannon Heyman & Weiss, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Ricoh USA, The Bonadio Group, Chicago Title Insurance, C&S Companies, CBRE|Buffalo, APA Solutions, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, The OSC Charitable Foundation, Jacqueline Lo Russo & Tom Barrett are at the top of the class.



Thank you to our friends at Junior League of Buffalo. The Junior League collected toiletries for Haven House at the organization's annual Decorators' Show House. Junior League is an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women and improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers.



As part of Domestic Violence Awareness month in October, Tops Friendly Markets donated more than \$14,000 to Child & Family Services' Haven House to assist victims of domestic abuse. Haven House was the beneficiary of 100% of proceeds made by TOPS at the 2015 Taste of Buffalo.



Thank you Katelyn James from Girl Scout Troop 30865! Katelyn made 80 comfort bags for children at Child & Family Services. Each bag included coloring activities, books, stuffed animals, inspirational messages and more!



To celebrate Halloween at Child & Family Services, Time Warner Cable hosted a Halloween party for the youth in residential care. The staff at Time Warner Cable went above and beyond, throwing a party that brought lots of fun and excitement! Children enjoyed Halloween treats, games and face painting to go with their costumes.





Mediation Settlement Day in October helped to raise awareness of mediation and the number of available resources. The Center for Resolution & Justice (CRJ) was at the Walden Galleria to educate people about the mediation process and promote the services.



Stanley G. Falk School Varsity Basketball team hosted the annual alumni game this winter. Pictured (left to right) are Mark Blesy (Rossier Campus Principal), Unsidadama Adams, Keion McIntyre, Xzavier Ward, Karl Rainey (Head Varsity Basketball coach), and Lisa Dombek (Cambridge Campus Principal).



Child & Family Services' Elizabeth McPartland was chosen as one of Buffalo Business First's 40 Under 40 Honorees of 2015. Elizabeth, Chief Operating Officer, is pictured here with President & CEO of Child & Family Services, Francisco M. Vasquez, Ph.D.



Cynthia Edwards, an employee of the Stanley G. Falk School, received the 2015 Pay it Forward Award presented by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo's Communities of Giving Legacy Initiative. Cynthia (center) is pictured with Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo Board Member, Danis J. Gehl, Ph.D. (left), and Director of the Communities of Giving Legacy Initiative, Landrum Beard (right).



Shea Akers was recognized as an Employee of the Year at the NYS Coalition for Children's Behavioral Health Services. She is a Team Leader in the Residential Treatment Facilities at Child & Family Services. Shea (left) is pictured with Donna Brabury, the Office of Mental Health Associate Commissioner, Division of Integrated Community Services for Children and Families.



Thanksgiving was celebrated at Child & Family Services in our residential program! Thank you to Prentice Office Environments for hosting a party for the children.



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Child & Family Services

Administrative Office
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Buffalo, New York 14202
(716) 842-2750

Center for Resolution & Justice

Tri-Main Center
2495 Main Street, Suite 357
Buffalo, New York 14214
(716) 362-2323

Cheektowaga Counseling

3901 Genesee Street
Cheektowaga, New York 14225
(716) 681-5718

Conners Children's Center

824 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209
(716) 884-3802

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Tri-Main Center
2495 Main Street, Suite 357
Buffalo, New York 14214
(716) 681-4300

Downtown Counseling

330 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14202
(716) 842-2750

Foster Care and Adoption

844 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209
(716) 882-0555

Haven House

Domestic Violence Hotline
(716) 884-6000

Stanley G. Falk School

848 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209
(716) 882-0090



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