

Portraits of Hope



In this issue . . .

Say Yes Buffalo

Learn how Family Support Specialists help provide reinforcement.

See page 4.



Reflecting on 2016...

Imagine the happiness a child feels on the day of her adoption. From that moment on, a family moves forward together, forever. I marvel at the incredible resolve of foster parents who provide shelter and safety when children need it the most.

Imagine the hope a domestic violence survivor has the day he/she leaves Haven House for a life of peace and independence. This past year, we assisted more than 4,000 men, women and children at Haven House through shelter, hotline calls and counseling.

Imagine the support and encouragement felt by a Buffalo Public School student receiving counseling through preventive services provided by our partnership with Say Yes Buffalo.

I cannot imagine any of this happening without our community coming together. Each year, hundreds of people give of their time, talent and resources to change the trajectory of so many lives. We strive to make our mission of strengthening families and promoting the well-being of children through prevention, intervention, education and advocacy a reality by mobilizing our workforce, our volunteers and everyone invested in our efforts.

As I reflect on this past year, I remark at all the accomplishments, struggles – but most importantly - the spirit of giving and goodwill demonstrated by all of you.

Wishing you happiness and health in the new year.

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

ADOPTING: AN ACT OF LOVE

How Tammie & Tim bring joy to numerous foster children

Tammie & Tim are the kind of couple that care about helping others. It is the foundation of who they are. They were married 16 years ago and both became dispatchers with the Lancaster Police Department. Early in Tammie's career she worked at Child & Family Services' Haven House, assisting domestic violence victims. While working there, she learned about the Agency's Foster Care and Adoption Program.



TAMMIE AND TIM'S OLDEST SON, JAYDEN.

A few years after they were married, the couple completed their foster care training and became emergency foster parents. Their home was used as a temporary and safe place for any child who needed it. They fostered six children during a two-year period.

Fourteen years later, with their two adopted children and one foster child in their home, Tammie and Tim now know the joy of having their own family. They acknowledge that there are challenges in the fostering and adoption process, and that as a foster parent, strong will and determination

are required. However, they feel the process is worth it and rewarding. "Once we were fostering, we got hooked," Tammie remembered.

More than 400,000 children are in foster care nationwide and over 1,000 in Erie County waiting for an adoptive home. Are you able to share your heart and home with a child in need? Please consider becoming a foster or adoptive parent with Child & Family Services. For more information, please call (716) 882-0555 or visit www.cfsbny.org.



TAMMIE AND TIM'S SON , TWO YEAR OLD, PATRICK.



Child and Family Services
2016-2017

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LEARNING THROUGH SERVICE

Students at Stanley G. Falk School experience meaningful lessons while delivering Meals on Wheels.

Every month, students from the Stanley G. Falk School deliver meals for Meals on Wheels of WNY. Each student who is working toward a Career Development and Occupational Students (CDOS) high school degree is required to earn a number of work-based learning hours. Ms. Keleher, a counselor at our Cambridge location, began the Meals on Wheels volunteer program to ensure that students had a way to complete their required hours. The skills that Meals on Wheels provides students extend far beyond the fulfillment of the hours. Clients at Meals on Wheels of WNY benefit from Falk students' food delivery. Students learn a certain level of responsibility through this project. Meals and drop off routes need to be planned, organized and communicated. Student volunteers are trained to act as a safety check and provide a peace of mind to their clients.

Jejuan is a student volunteer for the Meals on Wheels program. He describes how excited the elderly clients are when they see the young faces open the



A GROUP OF STUDENTS PACK A VAN WITH MEALS TO DELIVER TO CLIENTS.

door. "It feels good and makes me happy," Jejuan said modestly. Jejuan even gained a bit of entrepreneurial thinking during his delivery experiences. Clients receive one hot meal and one cold meal per delivery. "Couldn't we serve them better by dropping off frozen meals at the delivery too? That way they have food for the whole week, not just one day?" he asked.

Falk students always arrive eager to begin. They start by loading the coolers and ovens into the vehicle, and then check in with the Meals on Wheels Site Manager, John. It is John who informs the team of any changes they might notice when encountering the homebound seniors. John described, "It's great to meet the different students who come in each time- it makes the client's day to see these younger faces at their door." John also added that whenever the Falk students finish their route, he always knows the clients are fed and healthy!



STUDENTS FROM STANLEY G. FALK SCHOOL BRING DINNER TO MEALS ON WHEELS CLIENTS.

A BOARD MEMBER'S LEGACY

Board Member John Spitzmiller Shares His Story and Commitment to the Agency.

When John Spitzmiller joined the board of Child & Family Services, he challenged himself to commit to it 100%. He's lived up to that challenge in many ways. John tells his story of his over 40 years on the board.



JOHN & AMY SPITZMILLER HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR 48 YEARS. JOHN HAS BEEN ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES FOR 40 YEARS.

Years ago, I received a call from Jack Walsh, a family friend, asking if I would be interested in joining the board of Child & Family Services. I

did not know anything about the organization, but my dad always said, 'if you're going to do it, do it right.' I have not regretted a day of it. If I can be a part of getting people to remember what Child & Family Services does for the community, then we all become better people. It is one of the reasons why I have continued to work with Child & Family Services throughout the years.

In 2008, my wife Amy and I combined our passions of bicycling and helping others to turn a once-in-a-lifetime trip into a fundraising mission. While we pedaled and turned the wheels on this exhausting and awe-inspiring cross-country ride, our friends and family showed their support. We raised more than \$11,000,

with \$5,800 designated to Child & Family Services.

Amy and I have always been partners; we mix well together. It really was the best decision I have ever made to marry this woman. She is willing to try anything and makes it fun. Forty-eight years later, we are still at it. Most recently, Amy and I chaired the Agency's premiere fundraiser, the 18th annual Heartlight, a night that helped raise awareness and more for Child & Family Services.

John has served on Child & Family Services' Board of Directors for forty years. He and Amy have two children and four granddaughters.



PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT: JOHN & AMY SPITZMILLER AND DONA & MIKE KING.

ADOPT-A-FAMILY FULFILLS WISHES

Child & Family Services' Caseworkers learn the art of playing Santa's elves.



CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS BROUGHT SANTA CLAUS ALONG TO DELIVER THEIR ADOPT-A-FAMILY GIFTS.

The workers at Child & Family Services saw amazement and wonderment as they delivered gifts that came from the outpouring of support from Adopt-a-Family donors. Their vehicles became the sleighs that transported all the gifts from the Stanley G. Falk School gym to the families. Susan Burney works as a Individual Care Coordinator for Home and Community-Based Service Waiver at Child & Family Services. Adopt-a-Family is her favorite time of year. "It's a good break for me as the Care Coordinator. I like when the children sit down and excitedly show me what gifts they received."

For Susan, choosing which families to refer is the most difficult part. "I look at families who would not be able to have a Christmas without this. I have had families in the past where literally the only gifts they had were the Adopt-a-Family gifts."



ADOPT-A-FAMILY PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS ARE SURROUNDED BY COMMUNITY SUPPORT ON GIFT DROP-OFF DAY.

Continued on page 4

REMOVING BARRIERS TO ACHIEVEMENT

Family Support Specialists of Say Yes Buffalo help school-aged children overcome obstacles that prevent success. Family Support Specialists, like Kari Cunningham, work with students and their families to connect them with healthcare, mental health services, after school programs and other basic needs. They also conduct home visits with students and their families and help them navigate what are often complicated school processes. Kari works primarily with children in grade levels preschool through eighth grade. She stated, “Building trust with the students and families I serve is the ultimate goal. Once that trust is established, parents let down their guard and greatness can be achieved.”

Kari remembered when she was assigned to two brothers with poor attendance. These young boys have another sibling at home with special needs. Kari visited the student’s mother at home. “I like to meet where the parent is comfortable. I visit with the family and speak of their strengths - all the good things they are



STUDENTS FROM BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THEIR FAMILIES BENEFIT FROM THE SAY YES SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTIVE PROGRAM.

doing. Once they are at ease, they let down their guard. Then they begin to be engaged and speak on behalf of their child.”

Before Kari began working with the family, the mother was frustrated with the children’s situations; she thought that each child would end up on the same path. Now, Kari proudly reports, “The mother found her voice and recognizes that each of her children have different strengths and weaknesses.” Kari helped the mother see that not every one of her children will need the same services and is now focused on improving attendance.

Kari has a kind, trusting way about her. It is easy to see how she can be of value to the students and families she supports. Her work empowers families and students. Kari is an example of how Family Support Specialists at Say Yes are making a difference and improving the lives of children and families in our community.



FAMILY SUPPORT SPECIALISTS ARE ASSIGNED TO EVERY BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOL TO HELP FAMILIES OVERCOME OBSTACLES.

Adopt-a-Family...continued from page 3

She works with each family to develop a list that combines what they want with what they need. For many of our families, the relief is overwhelming, often bringing them to tears. Either way, the impact goes well beyond opening gifts on one day. Susan explained, “It gives them hope that there is somebody out there that cares about them. It helps them see that they can get going. They can pull themselves up.”

This year, the Adopt-a-Family program helped more than 220 families. It is a record high with the addition of the Say Yes Buffalo and Child & Family Services collaboration. The program matches individuals, companies or organizations looking to share their resources with families served by Child & Family Services.



ADOPT-A-FAMILY DONORS HAVE FUN AT DROP-OFF DAYS.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Shine the Light on Domestic Violence Awareness

Child & Family Services' Haven House commemorated October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month with the "Shine the Light on Domestic Violence" event. The Peace Bridge was lit with purple lights during the event at Broderick Park on Thursday, October

13, 2016. During the press conference, advocates against domestic violence spoke about their work in the field and shared their personal stories.

"Shine the Light on Domestic Violence" is a statewide initiative aimed at raising awareness of domestic violence prevention. Haven House has been at the forefront of these efforts throughout the past decade. Haven House has worked to prevent domestic violence and promote peace in the home for over 35 years.






THIS YEAR, HAVEN HOUSE BECAME A FULLY-INCLUSIVE SHELTER AND BEGAN SERVING MALE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.



PEACE BRIDGE WAS LIT IN PURPLE THIS OCTOBER FOR THE UNIFYING SYMBOL OF COURAGE, SURVIVAL, HONOR AND DEDICATION TO ENDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

Empowering Victims and Survivors

-  233 adults and 163 children have been sheltered through Haven House this year. Haven House is Erie County's only licensed domestic violence shelter.
-  Almost 4,000 calls were received through Haven House's 24-hour domestic violence hotline. Information can be empowering and for anyone that is feeling unsafe in their relationship, our hotline staff are available 24 hours a day at (716) 884-6000 to provide information and support.
-  1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men have been victims of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. We remember those who have lost their lives due to domestic violence and honor the survivors and those still seeking safety.

EXCITING GRANT NEWS FROM NEW YORK STATE

Dormitory Authority of the State of New York donates \$1 million grant.

The Dormitory Authority of the State of New York recently awarded Child & Family Services a \$1 million grant for capital improvements. The \$1.3 million project will address accessibility concerns at 330 Delaware. The project includes installation of an elevator, interior modifications of hallways and entryways, as well as exterior sidewalks to bring the building up to code with the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as a new HVAC system. "We have had to turn away some clients because they cannot navigate the stairs," Mary Cornwell said. "We have in the past few years increased clients by about 10 percent per year and we hope to further meet the needs of clients," Mary Cornwell, Chief Development Officer explained. The grant comes from the Nonprofit Infrastructure Capital Investment Program provided by the Dormitory Authority.

HAPPENINGS AT CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES



International Interior Design Association of New York – Buffalo City Center (IIDANY-BCC) celebrated Thanksgiving by hosting a party for the children in our residential program. Our friends helped the children decorate cupcakes, play board games and construct with legos.



Employees at Daiichi Sankyo, a pharmaceutical company, spent time with the children in residential care.



The children at the Agency were all geared up for back to school! Donations of school supplies by local businesses benefited students at the Agency.



Santa Claus and volunteers from Enterprise Holdings helped bring holiday cheer at Adopt-a-Family this year.



Our friends at Time Warner Cable hosted a Halloween party for the youth in residential care. The youth were treated to candy, games and crafts to celebrate Halloween.



Children in residential care decorated cookies for City Mission of Buffalo for the holidays.



The Lee Randall Jones Community Residence recently received a new playground for the children at the home. An outdoor gazebo and awning were also added to the home.



Child & Family Services welcomed nearly 300 guests to its 18th annual premier fundraiser, Heartlight at Events at the Foundry. John (far left) and Amy Spitzmiller (far right) were Heartlight Co-Chairs and Teresa Weakley (center) emceed for the night.



The United Way of Buffalo and Erie County sponsored a work and play day at Child & Family Services! Dozens of donors from their leadership society created more than 200 "Birthday in a Box" for our children.



The Agency's Wellness Fair featured fun, easy ways to get fit both mentally and physically with a number of demonstration sessions from yoga to massages.



Buffalo Bills' John Miller #76 (center) and Jordan Mills #79 (far right) along with our friends from Time Warner Cable celebrated the holidays with children in residential care.



Child & Family Services hosted the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies' (COFCCA) regional advocacy meeting in September. Cindy Odom (left), Executive Director, Western Region Hillside Family of Agencies and Kimberly Kadziolka (right), Director of Residential Treatment and Domestic Violence Intervention attended.



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Child & Family Services is a private, not-for-profit organization offering comprehensive programs to strengthen, support and enrich individuals and families. The Agency's mission is to strengthen families and promote the well-being of children through prevention, intervention, education and advocacy. Child & Family Services is accredited by the Council on Accreditation Services for Families and Children, Inc. and is a member agency of the United Way.



CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES FREQUENT PHONE NUMBERS

Child & Family Services

Administrative Office
330 Delaware Avenue
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
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