

Portraits of Hope

Winter 2024 Newsletter

Celebrating 150 years of service to families and people like you.

150 YEARS OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

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A Message From President and CEO, Elizabeth McPartland

“When we’re talking about diversity, it’s not a box to check. It is a reality that should be deeply felt and held and valued by all of us.” – Ava DuVernay



Elizabeth McPartland
President and CEO

Dear Friends,

At its core, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work is about the celebration and recognition of people. It is about ensuring that everyone feels respected, protected and connected, no matter their background. This work lives in our mission and in every facet of our work at Child and Family Services.

The theme of Black History Month this year is “African Americans and The Arts.” We highlighted this theme in several ways. The Office of Equity and Inclusion co-hosted a webinar with the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Rana Ryan, LCSW to discuss “The Art of Radical Self-Care.” This discussion centered on the ways that self-care goes beyond commercialized means and requires authentic boundary setting, self-reflection and building meaningful relationships. Staff enjoyed “Paint and Snack Night,” hosted by Princessa’s Art Gallery and Studio, which provided an evening of fun connectivity while creating personal masterpieces. Each Falk School location hosted a celebration of The Arts through events such as “Wear Your Art” Day, in which students painted t-shirts to wear, while having curriculum supported learning about Black artists. Falk Cambridge hosted a “Falk Family Fun Night” where families of students were invited to engage with local service providers and participate in a gallery walk of student’s art displays.

Our cultural celebrations, trainings and connective opportunities are guided by our DEI committees across the organization, as well as our annual Inclusion Survey. This survey measures how our colleagues experience fairness, belonging and workplace engagement. Equity and Inclusion work helps us to foster the sense of safety necessary to grow and thrive in an organization, and influences everything from recruitment and retention to job performance and client outcomes.



Yvonne DuBois
Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer

We welcome and honor the unique characteristics that each person brings to the rich tapestry of our organization. This month, and every month, we celebrate diversity.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth McPartland, *President and CEO*

Yvonne DuBois, *Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer*

Program Spotlight: Home and Community Support Services



Danelle and her pre-adoptive parents, John and Katy.

Katy and her husband John met 11-year-old Danelle during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Danelle was living in foster care and also happened to be a student at the school where Katy was an Assistant Principal. Katy noticed Danelle would go weeks without being in school and started to fall behind academically due to quarantine requirements. Danelle was also struggling emotionally due to being so isolated.

Katy and John were determined to get Danelle back in school and provide her with any additional support she needed to be successful. They decided to become Danelle's foster parents and eventually, they were introduced to Child and Family Services Home and Community Support Services (HCSS). The HCSS

Program identifies early needs for children and provides support from the comfort of their own homes. Cassandra Dunner, Clinical Supervisor, was assigned to their case and instantly developed a connection with Danelle.

Katy and John consider Cassandra part of their family and a safety network for Danelle. "Often, Danelle would call Cassandra when she was struggling mentally or emotionally," said Katy. "Cassandra was so supportive and helped guide her as she went through the process of returning to school."

Cassandra and Danelle utilized Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EDMR) trauma therapy to determine what Danelle is most interested in and, subsequently, used those interests to navigate her emotional struggles and aide with trauma. Lately, Cassandra and Danelle have been engaging in interventions that provide her with self-confidence and reassurance, so she can overcome any obstacles she may face on her road to recovery. Additionally, Cassandra provided Danelle's family with resources and suggestions for family activities.

"There are so many layers, but with every step along the way, I never felt lost," said Katy. "I think that says a lot about how much Child and Family Services cares about the families they serve."

Not only has Danelle been making progress in school, but she has also been active with helping others. She created an Amazon wish list of games and fun activities for children who are part of the foster care community. Every day, she has received donations of items from her list.

"I want to give back to those who have gone through similar situations and for them to know they're not alone," said Danelle.

Cassandra has seen a significant growth in Danelle and is so proud of what she has accomplished. "This family has been such a delight to work with, even throughout their dark and stormy times," Cassandra said with a smile. "It has been an honor to see how John, Katy and Danelle approach challenges in life and work together as a unit to get through them."

If you would like to learn more about Child and Family Services HCSS program, please visit <https://cfsbny.org/our-services/familysupportservices/home-and-community-support-services/>.

Advocacy Leads to Increase Funding for Domestic Violence Survivors

On January 25, 2024, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul included \$120 million for crime victim service providers, such as Child and Family Services (C+FS) Haven House and Center for Resolution and Justice. Tiffany Pavone, Director of Victim Services at C+FS, has been advocating for this funding for years.

“It goes beyond domestic violence,” emphasized Tiffany. “We had to bring attention to the victims who have been physically, mentally, emotionally and financially devastated by the crimes they’ve experienced and need to be supported.”

In recent years, lack of funding has led to reduced wages and decreased staffing for domestic violence shelters across the state, which is detrimental to agencies that are already facing staffing shortages.

“Last year, we experienced a 30–40% loss in funds,” explained Tiffany. “An additional 10% would mean domestic violence advocate positions would be eliminated and for other agencies, entire programs would be eliminated.”

Tiffany worked with other domestic violence agencies across New York State who wanted to advocate for this funding. Last February, Tiffany spoke at the New York State’s Coalition for



Tiffany Pavone, Assemblywoman Karen McMahon and Cameron Burns of Crisis Services holding a proclamation by Governor Hochul at the Erie County Coalition Against Domestic Violence meeting in July 2023.



Tiffany Pavone, Director of Victim Services, spoke at Child and Family Services’ annual “Shine the Light” press conference.

Domestic Violence’s press conference regarding living wages for domestic violence advocates. It was crucial to make known advocates are excluded from the increases that direct service providers and essential workers receive. Additionally, Tiffany traveled to Albany to testify at a New York State Senate hearing regarding domestic violence services in the State and the need for more funding.

“What started as a downstate funding committee became a statewide advocacy funding committee,” said Tiffany. “We took advantage of any opportunity we had to bring awareness and speak to our government representatives, local media and Governor Kathy Hochul. I want to thank all our local representatives who signed on to the letter raising awareness of the catastrophic cuts to VOCA. The advocacy is not done yet.”

Donor Spotlight



Diane Andriaccio and Fran Romeo at Delta Kappa Gamma's annual holiday luncheon.

The Delta Kappa Gamma (DKG) sorority started as a secret society for key women educators in 1923, when women were not allowed to form clubs. Now, DKG is a nationwide organization that extends beyond retired educators. Diane Andriaccio and Frances (Fran) Romeo are proud members of DKG and through the society, they introduced their passion for Haven House to other members in the Western New York chapter.

"Haven House is our biggest community outreach project," explained Fran. "Our society is dedicated to helping Haven House because of the huge impact our contributions have on survivors."

Throughout the past 20 years, DKG has given over \$8,100 not including gift cards and gift in kind donations. Diane and Fran have led several educational projects for children of domestic violence survivors, including "Mom and Tot Bags," which contain activities such as a dry erase board with markers, books for reading and a mat. The goal was to provide entertainment and educational activities for children so their parent could focus on counseling sessions and other appointments.

In addition to their dedication to children's education, DKG has arranged annual donation drives for collecting school supplies, mitts, hats and scarves. Diane and Fran have also shown their support by volunteering during Toyland, Haven House's annual toy donation drive, and attending Agency events such as Celebration of Friends and Fashion Show with a Twist. One of the events that stood out the most was the art show, which displayed artwork created by survivors of domestic violence.

"I remember attending the art show and seeing this beautiful suitcase created by a survivor," said Diane. "I read this heartbreaking story, and a woman approached me saying 'Don't worry, she's okay... She's my daughter.' I won't ever forget it."

Although DKG is involved with other organizations in Western New York, Haven House has always been a treasured cause and remains at the top of their list. Diane and Fran actively advocate all-year-round for Haven House and are devoted to fulfilling current needs for survivors. Their next project is gathering new purses and filling them with essentials.

"We are always asking if there's anything we can do to help," emphasized Diane. "We want to make a difference."

Thank you Diane, Fran and the members of DKG's Alpha Lamda Chapter for making an incredible difference in the lives of survivors and supporting Haven House! We value your partnership!

Leadership Development Program



(From left to right): Yvonne DuBois, Garrett Chambers, Nicole Luko, Jennifer Schultz, Todd Myers, Samantha Dalka, Brittany Horan, Jessica Gravelle, Demi Morrow, Dianne Biddeman, Sara Moser

Child and Family Services (C+FS) recognizes the client experience and the employee experience are deeply interconnected. In order for our employees to continue serving justice-centered, trauma-informed care to our clients and the community at large, it's vital to provide a strong foundation for ongoing professional growth and development.

The leadership development program is a nine-week, 36-hour course, which focuses on learning new skills, increasing leadership competencies and gaining new perspectives. Additionally, the program seeks to encourage and support cross department communication, knowledge and skill-sharing.

"The leadership team recognized the need for providing professional development opportunities for all leaders and staff throughout the Agency," explained Erica Reger, Chief Human Resources Officer and an organizer of the program.

The overall goal is for all employees (managers and non-managers) to complete the leadership development program to promote personal and professional growth.

"We know people who feel connected to their work are more successful and have greater job satisfaction," stated Megan Andrews, Director of C+FS Employee Assistance Program and an organizer of the program. "Our hope is to create pathways for employees who are interested in leadership positions by providing informative content through the program."

Through this initiative, we hope to strengthen our ability to serve our community and develop leaders who embody the mission of "Nurturing a healthy and more equitable Western New York for the benefit of current and future generations."

Congratulations to the following for completing the Leadership Development Program!

Dianne Biddeman
Garrett Chambers
Samantha Dalka
Brittany Horan
Nicole Luko

Demi Morrow
Sara Moser
Todd Myers
Jennifer Schultz
Santana Swan

In Case You Missed It...



Child and Family Services unveiled a plaque dedicated to the Rachael Warrior Foundation in recognition of their \$125,000 gift for Haven House on Monday, November 20, 2023.



Donors and partners were invited to attend Partner Appreciation Night at the Richmond-Lockwood Mansion for an evening of wine and crudites on Thursday, December 5, 2023.



Amazon presented Child and Family Services with a \$20,000 check for Adopt-a-Family on December 13, 2023.



Volunteers helped greet donors, organize and sort through donations and spread holiday cheer during Adopt-a-Family.



Students at the Stanley G. Falk School put on a musical performance during the holiday season.



The Agency showcased their 716 spirit on Friday, January 19, 2023. Our foster care team dressed in Buffalo Bills attire.

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Center for Resolution and Justice
Tri-Main Center
2495 Main Street
Buffalo, New York 14214
(716) 362-2323

Cheektowaga Counseling
3901 Genesee Street, Suite 110
Cheektowaga, New York 14225
(716) 842-2750

Connors 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
824 1/2 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209
(716) 882-0555

Haven House
Domestic Violence Hotline
(716) 884-6000
www.cfsbny.org/hh-chat/

Stanley G. Falk School
848 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209
(716) 882-0090

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