# Portraits of Hope



In this issue . . .



Win Your Dream Vacation! \$5,000 Travel Card could be yours! See page 2.



### A COMMUNITY OF COMPASSION

During an especially long and grueling winter, we witnessed the amazing strength and

spirit of Western New Yorkers as they assisted their friends and neighbors and came to the aid of strangers in need. This, of course, was of no surprise to us. Every day Child & Family Services is buoyed by your support. You've attended events, made financial gifts and donated your time to make our work possible. Your compassion, commitment and generosity have made life better for children, adults and families in need.

In the Spring, we saw the power of collaboration at our Fashion Show with a Twist. We came together to support what Haven House does for families who rebuild their lives after domestic violence. Participants at the event helped create a public art piece that symbolizes how each of you can make a difference. Each person added just one stroke on the canvas. The final painting (on page 9) is a unique way to demonstrate how one lesson, one breakthrough, one act of compassion can offer new hope that lasts a lifetime.

This summer we renew our search for new homes for children who need them, new hearts to embrace our families with support and opportunities and new ways to collaborate and expand our reach within the community.

> Spinistro M. Virg Francisco M. Vasquez, Ph.D.

President & CEO

### **LEGACY OF LOVE**

### Marjorie Connors Continues to Give to Families

The work of protecting children and helping families is never done. You did not have to tell that to Marjorie Connors. She devoted her life to children. She worked tirelessly as a social worker and as a supervisor of Foster Care and Adoption and the After-Hours Program of Child & Family Services. She retired in 2011 after nearly 50 years of service but she knew that her work would not be her final contribution to the agency.

Marjorie kept a scrapbook dating back to 1946 when Child & Family Services' predecessor, the Children's Aid Society, co-sponsored the Adoption Service Bureau. The scrapbook provides a glimpse at how times have changed. One article recounts Buffalo's connection to the first inter-state



LONGTIME CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES EMPLOYEE AND DONOR, MARJORIE CONNORS, DURING ONE OF HER MANY TRAVELING ADVENTURES.

adoption with the use of videotape. Other clippings show how some things stay the same, such as the need for foster families.

Continued on page 2

### **NEW COURSE**for Daughter of Domestic Violence Survivor

In the crowd of runners at the Buffalo Marathon, Child & Family Services cheered on one very special athlete, Samantha. She ran 26.2 miles to benefit Child & Family Services' Haven House. Sama chose us because sh

Haven House. Samantha chose us because she appreciates how difficult it is to get out of a domestic violence situation.



AN AVID RUNNER SAMANTHA RAN THE BUFFALO MARATHON TO BENEFIT HAVEN HOUSE.

Her family lived through it when she was very young. She hopes the donations given in honor of her mom will aid survivors in finding the help they need.

Samantha is a health and physical education teacher, and she shares her experiences related to domestic violence with her

students because she says, "it could have been a lot different."

Continued on page 5



Child and Family Services 2015-2016

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### Cuddling up in a lodge in the Alps? Dreaming on a sandy beach? Cruising the coastline of Alaska?

Where do your dreams of travel and adventure lead? Heartlight on September 25, 2015 includes a raffle drawing for a \$5,000 AAA travel gift card. Tickets are only \$25 and you don't need to be present to win. So purchase a ticket at www.cfsbny.org, pick your adventure and pack your bags.

#### Legacy of Love continued from page 1

Marjorie Connors not only helped make history in her profession, she stayed connected with the families she helped. She is remembered as a great mentor for employees. She took young workers like Barbara Clawson-Cole under her wing. Barb recalls, "Marge was really a salt of the earth person. She was really genuine and always there to help you."

Marjorie Connors was honored with a Lifetime Service Award by Child & Family Services in 2001. The New York of Social Workers also recognized her Award in 2010.



MARJORIE CONNORS WHEN WORKING FOR THE PREDECESSOR OF CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES, THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY.

State Chapter of the National Association leadership with a Lifetime Achievement

Connors enjoyed celebrating with coworkers and friends and knew how to have fun. If there was a line dance, a friend says Marge was on the dance floor. She also loved to travel. She visited Italy, France, England & Ireland with friend and colleague, Jean McGraw. Jean laughed as she talked about how Marge let her pick the destinations but took care of the plans. "She was a wonderful friend, and I know that all those things wouldn't have happened if I hadn't have known Marge."

Jean also said, "I could really always count on Marge. She never let you down." It's a sentiment colleagues and friends echo. It may have been part of the reason Marjorie almost always had a smile on her face.

In a sense, Marjorie Connors is still a part of Child & Family Services as we continue our work to help children and families. Upon her death, Marjorie bequeathed a generous gift from her estate to the agency, her legacy of love for the children and families of our community. cofs

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# FALK SCHOOL LAUNCHES ATTENDANCE INCENTIVE: ATTEND TODAY~ACHIEVE TOMORROW

The Stanley G. Falk School understands the pivotal role that parents and guardians play in making sure their children attend school on a daily basis. The School's new Attend Today ~ Achieve Tomorrow attendance incentive program recognizes parents who make it happen by ensuring that their children are up and ready to go to school each morning. Research shows that consistent school attendance has a direct link to making a positive impact on a student's future. Whether the absences are due to illness, family matters or truancy, the statistics show that missing two to three days a month is enough to cause children to struggle academically. To break this cycle of chronic absenteeism and to encourage regular attendance, the Falk School recognizes parents who send their children to school on a daily basis. The project which was proposed by Cambridge Principal Lisa Dombek, began in the fall of 2014 and is promoted across all three campuses and satellite locations of the Falk School. The names of all students who have achieved 100% attendance each month are entered into a raffle. On the last day of the month, one student's name is drawn from each location and the parent or guardian is the recipient of a \$50.00 Target gift card.

"The response has been really positive. Parents are very excited when they get the call that they have won the raffle. I have noticed that students who have earned the award remain



NATE GEARY, PIETRA LETTIERI, TERESA BAIR, TRACIE LOPARDI AND TRISTAN HUJER OF HARRIS BEACH, LLP. OUR FRIENDS AT HARRIS BEACH ARE HELPING CHILDREN AT THE STANELY G. FALK SCHOOL SUCCEED IN THE FUTURE BY DONATING FUNDS TO RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING PARENTS WHO ENSURE CONSISTENT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF THEIR CHILDREN.

consistent in their attendance in the months that follow," said Ms. Dombek. The Falk School is grateful for the support from Harris Beach, LLP who graciously donated the funding to support us in our initiative to recognize outstanding parents.











PROUD PARENTS RECEIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND TARGET GIFT CARDS FOR ENSURING THEIR CHILD'S CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE AT THE STANLEY G. FALK SCHOOL.



### FAMILY AND FAITH INSPIRE PHILANTHROPY

### **Board Member Cheryl Fisher Shares Her Story**

Cheryl S. Fisher, Esq. has dedicated years of her leadership, service and talents to Child & Family Services as a board member and volunteer. For nearly 30 years, Cheryl has served on the Agency's Board of Directors, including four years as Chairperson. Cheryl shares how her philanthropy and commitment to charitable giving is deeply rooted in her faith and family values.

Ever since I was a young girl, I was very passionate about wanting to help children. I was born and raised in Corning, NY and I was blessed to have a good life growing up. For this reason, I wanted to be able to help others who were less fortunate. My mother was a housewife and took good care of our family. My father was a technician. My parents instilled strong values in me and helped shape the person I am today. I decided to study law when I went to college with the belief in mind that I wanted to make the world a fairer place.



My religion has also influenced me to give back to the community and others in need. I belong to St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral. This is where I was given my first opportunity to get involved with Child & Family Services. St. Paul's Cathedral was instrumental in bringing Cathedral Park Counseling to Child & Family Services back in 1980. When this program became a part of the Agency, I started volunteering my time and service on the Agency's Board of Directors. Part of the St. Paul's Cathedral culture and mission is to encourage its members to go out in the community, to help others and give back.

My time at Child & Family Services has involved participation in several board committees including Strategic Planning, Finance, Audit, and Conners Campus. As a former Chair of the Board of Directors, I gained a deeper insight in the great impact not-for-profits have on people in our community; that knowledge has allowed me to approach my own life differently. I am proud to be able to say I am a part of an organization that strengthens the wellbeing of children and families.

I had an eye-opening experience when I toured the Cambridge location of the Stanley G. Falk School. It tugged at my heart to see the faces of the children, but what I was truly amazed to see is how these students continue to rise above the struggles they are confronted with on a daily basis. I admire the teachers and staff who go into that line of work to care for children. I want to support them, both the children and adults; that type of work makes life meaningful. The good works of the Agency and commitment to help families is what keeps me going.



Cheryl enjoys travelling and has visited places like Cairo, Egypt and Scandinavia. She looks forward to more adventures across the globe with her partner, Paul, after retirement. Cheryl has one son, Daniel who is an immunologist at Roswell Park Cancer Institute. coffs

### REMEMBERING JAMES BOLDT

Compassion, leadership and dedication were not just qualities James Boldt was known for as a corporate executive. James supported Child & Family Services with the same passion he brought to business. James worked next door to the Conners Children's Center at CTG (Computer Task Group) so he could see the children he worked so diligently to assist.

Since 1989, Boldt contributed financially and volunteered his time and expertise to the Agency. He served on a number of the Agency's committees, as well as the Board of Directors for multiple terms as Board Chair and Vice Chair. As a proactive Board Chair, James assisted in the expansion of the Stanley G. Falk School. James also helped raise the funds needed to build Haven House as a state-of-the-art domestic violence shelter. James was a recipient of Child & Family Services' 2013 Susan T. Siewec Distinguished Donor Award for his acts of altruism.

James recently passed away at age 62. Our hearts are with his family. He will forever be remembered for his unwavering support of Child & Family Services and his devotion to empowering children and enriching communities.



CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES CELEBRATES THE LIFE OF DEDICATED BOARD MEMBER JAMES BOLDT, WHOSE LEGACY INCLUDES THE EXPANSION OF THE STANLEY G. FALK SCHOOL AND HAVEN HOUSE.

New course...continued from page 1

I'm grateful that it ended up the way it did, and I hope people see that the rest of your life doesn't have to have that negativity, and it's ok to talk about it."

Pride does not even begin to describe how her mom Lori feels about her daughter's accomplishments. "I was so honored when Samantha decided to do this. If I can be an example for someone else, that's what I hoped

for." Samantha and her mom chose Haven House because the shelter is a place where women and their children can feel safe and get help. It is the only licensed domestic violence shelter in Erie County. The money raised by Samantha's marathon will go toward much needed technological upgrades for parts of the security system at the shelter.

Katey Joyce, Director of Haven House explains, "budgets are always very tight and this type of fundraising helps to eliminate budget gaps and ensures that our facility is well maintained and equipped to serve hundreds of victims of domestic violence who come through our door every year. Sam ran 26 miles for the cause – she really left her footprint in a big way! She has inspired all of us!"



SAMANTHA (RIGHT) AND MOM LORI AT RACE.

Every race Samantha does, she learns something new about herself. During the Buffalo Marathon, she recalls, "When I hit my wall at about mile 21, I thought about all the people that I was running for - the people who have been affected by domestic violence. I thought of my mom and how she overcame 10 years of abuse; and I can get through these last five miles." When she crossed the finish line, it was very emotional. She felt a sense of victory and triumph unlike any other race she'd run. "I felt like I was running for a bigger purpose."

This act of giving is a gift in itself. Katey Joyce says this type of effort fuels them. "We consider Sam a champion because she is creating a ripple effect – through her marathon and the pledges she raised, hundreds of other people know about domestic violence and Haven House... that is the true mark of a champion."

Samantha knows, without a doubt, that she can do anything in life. She hopes the same for other families dealing with domestic violence. She wants them to know, "You don't have to run a marathon to make a difference. Just show people that there can be greater things after getting out of that situation." coffs

### **HOW YOU'VE SUPPORTED CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES**



Isaac stole the spotlight as he modeled with his mom Jodi at the Fashion Show with a Twist.



Mischa is a pretty princess with her mom and Falk Elementary School Assistant Principal, Mary Beth White. Directly following on the Fashion Show with a Twist runway is longtime volunteer Rosemarie O'Bannion with William Dimmig, Child & Family Services' Director of Corporate Integrity.



Members of The Children's Guild Foundation cheered on our Falk Falcons varsity basketball team.



Board Member Bill Loecher and Children's Guild Foundation
President Cathie Gura at our annual Celebration of Friends event.



Child & Family Services' Isabel Higgins, Home and Community Based Waiver Services Manager, accepts a donation from Pizza Hut's Raising Dough for Kids campaign to support our Wraparound Program.



Jenn Bishara, Chapter President of Buffalo's Pajama Program, donated 260 pairs of cozy pajamas for children in our Foster Care Program.



Kendal Bunkley is recognized for 20 years of service as a resource parent by Linda McCartan, Manager of Child & Family Services' Foster Care & Adoption Program.



Participants in discussion during the 7th Annual Community Dialogue.



Thumbs up to our Falk School Kindergarten Graduates!



Chris Schichtel, Maggie Shea, Lauren Lewis & Stephanie Hobbs with StaffBuffalo show their support for Child & Family Services during a foggy Miss Buffalo cruise.



Tricia S. Jones, Ph.D., CEO and owner of Conflict Coaching Matters, LLC., was hosted at our Center for Resolution and Justice to present a three-day conflict coaching training supported by the First Niagara Foundation.



Heather Chick & Jeremy Beck aboard the Miss Buffalo cruise.



## A SPECIAL THANKS TO CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES' 2014 DONORS

Child & Family Services extends a sincere thank you to the following donors who gave financial contributions totaling \$100 or more during the 2014 calendar year. All efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Please contact Child & Family Services' Development Department at (716) 335-7234 with any questions or corrections.

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### ANSWERING THE CALL TO HELP CHILDREN AND FOSTER HOPE

Who do you call when you need help taking care of your child? For foster families, Child & Family Services often calls on Nadine to help. As a respite foster parent, children come to her anywhere from a few hours to a few days or more when needed. Respite is part of our Foster Care Program that can be critical in meeting the goal of one foster placement for each child.

Most of us can't imagine the anxiety that a child experiences being moved to a new home, even for a short time. Child & Family Services Foster Care and Adoption Program knows Nadine can calm children's fears quickly, but how she does it is a bit of a mystery. Care supervisors don't know what the magic wand is that she waves, but she has a way to make children feel comfortable and want to stay with her. Nadine explains, "once you hug them and they know that you're sincere, then they're okay."



FROM BUFFALO POLICE OFFICER TO LONG-TIME FOSTER PARENT - NADINE ENCOURAGES OTHERS TO BECOME FOSTER PARENTS.
"IT IS SO REWARDING. THERE IS NOTHING LIKE IT."

For Nadine working with foster children is a calling, and she has a lot of experience answering calls for help. Nadine is retired from the Buffalo Police Department after more than 27 years serving on the force. Nadine explains, "it's very seldom as a police officer that I would run into people at their best - it's at their worst. They're going through a crisis or they have a problem, and you have to be able to interact with anybody and bring about calm and bring about peace." Part of her job was to remove children from the home when necessary. Nadine says, "I always wondered where these children went. Did they get a home?" Nadine's training and experience as a police officer taught her compassion that is helpful with the children in her care.

Nadine recalls one placement in particular. Three children were about to be adopted, but something

happened. They ended up with Nadine and were heartbroken that they did not have a forever family. Nadine told them, "we're going to pray every night that God is going to send you a Mommy and a Daddy and everything is going to be okay. So, every night we prayed that this would happen for them."

A few months later, the call came in about a couple interested in adoption. When they met the children, Nadine says, "as soon as they walked in the door, the little boy looked at the gentleman. The man got down on the floor with him, and he came over to him because he was bald and kissed him right on the head. It was so precious. He was like, you know what, these are going to be my kids."

After the adoption, Nadine received a colorful envelope in the mail. The children wrote Nadine a letter to let her know that they were happy and everything was going well. They were

sorry that the postman wouldn't let them send birthday cake in the mail. She still has that letter. "I will never forget them."

Many of the children and families who have worked with Nadine will never forget her. She also wants people to remember the need for foster families. She says the children have taught her patience and keep her young. She reminds people that they have more to offer than they might think.

It seems Nadine's magic wand is the combination of her strong presence and steady voice. She makes you feel like the most important person. She waves a welcoming spirit that understands the gift of answering the call for help for foster families. Nadine sums it up best. "it makes my heart, oh my, it's so rewarding. There's nothing like it." cofs

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# 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



Facebook.com/CFSBNY



### **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

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

#### **Family Mental Health**

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

(710) 884-0000

#### Stanley G. Falk School

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