

Portraits of Hope



Child and Family Services

In this issue . . .



For Our Daughters Inc. presented a two day workshop to young women at Stanley G. Falk School.

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Through the Tears of Others

Why is it that whenever we meet someone, we shake hands and ask that person what he or she does? Are we really interested, or do we value people who we think are productive and successful?

We are a society that embraces the notion that if you really want to achieve success, you can. This notion is so embedded in our psyche that we believe that failure to prosper socially and economically is viewed as one's own doing. In reality, however, most of those who achieve success have depended upon others for support, encouragement, validation, and advocacy. Sadly, not everyone in our society is so blessed.

The people we serve, by some accounts, are viewed as "broken," as burdens on society. Many have mental health challenges and are subjected to stigma that makes them objects of pity, fear, and contempt. Many are children and adults who have experienced abuse, neglect, poverty, disconnectedness, and malaise. Yet each person has a unique story. Many of these stories are not pretty, nonetheless most are hopeful; stories of redemption, of recovered lives because somebody cared.

I am encouraged by the positive impact we make on people's lives, but I am still troubled by the pervasive vilification of those we would rather forget and view as a problem. I cannot imagine that anyone wants to have health challenges; I cannot fathom anyone wanting to be the object of someone's abuse; I cannot grasp the notion of a child who does not want to live in anything but a nurturing home.

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A DECISION TO FOSTER

Foster Parents Jessica and Nick discuss their experience with fostering four refugee children.

When Jessica and Nick got married, they knew they wanted to have their own family. Children were everything to them, whether it be their birth children or others who needed a home. Jessica was always open to the idea of fostering children as her parents had while she was a child. Nick was hesitant about the idea at first, but realized being a foster parent was something they both wanted to do.

Jessica and Nick started their journey with Child & Family Services. They registered for the eight-week foster care certification class, but were scared and uncertain about the road ahead. They were worried about attaching themselves to children that may only be with them for a short amount of time. Jessica was struck by what she learned in the class. "You learn these children



LEFT TO RIGHT: NICK & JESSICA WITH CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES' CASE PLANNER, DANIELLE PEOPLES.

need trust and dependency. The trauma in their life stays with them forever, but all the good stays with them too. I can help them heal. I can be the good in their life." Nick agreed saying, "I was reluctant. I remember feeling that I can help them develop their whole person – what they think of life, their mind and heart."

Jessica and Nick were only planning to foster one child. Yet, when they learned of two young refugee children that needed fostering, the couple quickly decided to take them in. Soon after, Jessica and Nick learned these two young children were part of a sibling group of four. An emergency placed all four siblings together in Jessica and Nick's home for just a night.

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I want to be able to be part of a process that heals the children. I want to help them develop their whole person. - Nick on why he choose to foster.



Child and Family Services

2017-2018

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Through the Tears of Others...continued from page 1.

The people we see every day are our neighbors, friends, families, and loved ones. They come from all walks of life, in all colors, shapes, and sizes. They deserve our humanity, and not to be viewed as objects of misfortune, helplessness or dependency. They are vulnerable beings who are part of the fabric of our community.

Consider for a moment the sudden onset of bodily injury or illness, insufficient health care, victimization due to abuse and neglect, and economic distress; imagine how life could change so very drastically. Any one of us can unexpectedly become the victim of a traumatic, life-altering event for which we require support. It is for this reason that I have come to believe that it is only possible to see life more clearly when you have "lived inside the tears of others." May all of us seek such clarity.

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

CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES HONORS THE REMARKABLE WORK IN OUR COMMUNITY



LEFT TO RIGHT: FELICIA BEARD (ACCEPTED THE AWARD FOR CLOTILDE PEREZ-BODE), FRANCISCO M. VASQUEZ AND ALPHONSO O'NEIL-WHITE.

The Agency's Celebration of Friends event is a true recognition of our friendships that contribute to improving the lives of children and families we serve. This year, we were proud to honor the following individuals:

The **William B. Hoyt Memorial Advocacy Award** recognized individuals in our community who demonstrate their commitment to advocacy. This year, we honored **Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker and Alphonso O'Neil-White** for their work with the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable.

The **John N. Walsh, Jr. Board Appreciation Award** celebrated a Child & Family Services' Board Member whose work and dedication helps make a positive impact on those we serve. **John Rodgers**, Executive Vice President at Independent Health, was honored for his leadership, strategic insight and philanthropic spirit.

The **Susan T. Siewic Distinguished Donor Award** honored those who exemplify the spirit of giving. Recipient **Lauren Jeckovich** from Enterprise Holdings is an engaged member of our Ambassador Committee, organizes monthly activities for children in our care and volunteers with Adopt-a-Family.

The **Stanley G. Falk Memorial Award for Distinguished Educators** recognized **Linda Parr**. Ms. Parr specializes in working with cognitively delayed learners in our vocational education program.

The **Child & Family Services Distinguished Employee Award** recognized commitment, energy and dedication on the part of an outstanding employee. As the Assistant Director of Facilities, **Wayne Koch** consistently goes above and beyond to raise the standard of service quality.

GETTING INVOLVED IS WHAT IS IMPORTANT

Board Member Christine Garvelli Shares Her Story



CHRISTINE IS A VICE PRESIDENT AT WALSH DUFFIELD, INC.

Christine Garvelli has served on Child & Family Services' Board of Directors for seven years. She is currently serving her second term as Secretary. She sees the value in the services the Agency provides to the entire community, both as a mother of three boys and as a community member.

Christine is the Vice President of Dental Practice Insurance Center at Walsh Duffield, Inc. and has experience in all aspects of insurance including rating and underwriting, claims adjustment and marketing. She was first introduced to Child & Family Services through Jack Walsh. Jack and his family have a legacy of giving in our community and have a decades-long relationship with the Agency. Jack was a former Board Member and Christine's former boss at Walsh Duffield, Inc. When he told her about the Agency, in particular our Adopt-a-Family Program, she wanted to get involved. So, Christine helped to organize her colleagues to adopt a family for the holidays. She did this for several years. The Agency, noting her commitment, approached her to

serve on the Board of Directors. "I have been so blessed in my life with a great family, supportive friends and happy, healthy children. I wanted to return some of that. I will always be grateful to Jack for introducing me to the Agency."

The work, the time and the volunteerism that Christine gives back to Child & Family Services far extends her board service. Christine volunteers at every major fundraiser. You can find her decorating or setting up games for Heartlight, or helping set up for Fashion Show with a Twist. Christine served as the 2015 Chairperson for Heartlight and designed a "Wife-Lover Tank Top" for the 2014 Fashion Show with a Twist.

Christine hopes that her work with the Agency will influence the community in some minor way. "I became involved with Child & Family Services with the hope that somehow my service and volunteering will make a small difference in someone's life and have a positive impact on the community we live in." We are lucky to call Christine a board member and a friend to the Agency.



CHRISTINE WAS THE CHAIR OF HEARTLIGHT IN 2014, PICTURED HERE WITH MARY CORNWELL, CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER OF CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES.

A MOTHER'S STORY: ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD

Heather Wood taught herself to advocate for her child, now she is teaching other parents.

Heather Wood's daughter was the top soccer player at her high school just a few years ago. After suffering three concussions, she began getting migraines. As a result, she was unable to participate in soccer and began to show signs of depression and anxiety. She became oppositional and disruptive both at home and at school. She pushed away from her family and her friends. It is an ongoing fight for normalcy but Heather's daughter is on her way to coping with her depression and leading a healthy teenage life.

For Heather, being a Mom is her most important job. Secondary, she is a Family Advocate for Child & Family Services' Home and Community Based Services Waiver Program and has years of professional experience working with people who have special needs. Her experience as a mother has far outweighed anything she has learned in her professional life.

Heather knows that parent and family support can go a long way toward getting your child back on track. She has lived through the challenges of caring for an at-risk child. As a Family Advocate, Heather assists families in accessing and receiving services and support. Family advocates aid and intervene in situations involving families in crisis. Heather uses her experience with her daughter's depression as a way to help other families cope with similar issues. It helps to develop a close bond and trust. "When I was dealing with my daughter's depression, I felt like I had no one to turn to, no one to talk to. If I did have someone, I would have coped so much better. My daughter and I would have benefited from it." There is an entire support system out there filled with people who had similar experiences. Heather's advice to other parents and those she works with is to "take a deep breath and call for guidance."



HEATHER AND HER DAUGHTER AT HER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CEREMONY.

PACKING FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

College students find a way to help foster children who have nothing

“There’s a duck!” said one staff member. “What a cute bear!” said another. “Oh, look at that!” The halls of the building which houses Child & Family Services’ Foster Care & Adoption Program were filled with oohs and aahs over the small comforts brought for the children we serve by two college graduate students.

Michael Paglicci is studying for a master’s degree in higher education administration at Canisius College while his girlfriend Emilia Federice is working her way through the accelerated nursing program at Niagara University. Recently, they saw a national news story about a man motivated to be a foster parent because he was once a child in need of foster care. He was disappointed to see that children still arrive with their belongings in garbage bags. It is a problem Michael and Emilia were inspired to do something about, and when they googled foster care Buffalo, they found Child & Family Services. Michael explained, “I reached out wondering what is the need, and you said there’s a list of things that you can always use. So Emilia and I decided to collect stuff.” They both reached out to their college classes and professors, family and friends, and collected whatever people could give.



More than 20 people donated enough to fill more than 50 backpacks. Each bag had a blanket, stuffed animal, coloring books, deodorant, shampoo, soap or body gel, toothbrush and toothpaste. They also collected books.

It is not every day we see such philanthropic students. Michael said, “I guess it is just seeing that something needs to be done and trying to fill that need. I just feel giving back is a good thing.” Emilia had a very personal experience to share that explains why she always helps out when she can. “After my Dad passed away a few years ago, we actually had a lot of people donate to my family around Christmas time. Just to be able to do that for someone else I think is really nice.”

Child & Family Services has its highest number of children in Foster Care in many years. These blankets and teddy bears bring comfort to the children we serve.

A Decision to Foster...Continued from page 1



That was the night that changed all of their lives forever. “Once we saw them together, all four of them so happy and complete, we knew we could not separate them any longer,” Jessica remembered. After much praying, Jessica and Nick knew in their hearts that it was important for the siblings to be in the same home.

Once all four kids were together, Jessica and Nick began to incorporate the children’s culture into their everyday lives. “We put on music from their homeland, and then we dance around the living room. Their birth parents will give them food from their culture during their visits. We show them where they are from on different maps; we want them to be connected,” Jessica explained.

Jessica and Nick’s lives have changed so quickly! Jessica described, “We went from a year of being married to two children in six months and then a total of four children two months later. Our family thought we were crazy, but they were just being cautious.” It did not take long before all four kids were calling Nick and Jessica’s parents, Grandma and Grandpa. With each passing day, the children are doing better and better. Jessica said excitedly, “I love having them. I love being able to be their foster mom. Even when it’s crazy, it’s fun!”

If you are interested in finding more out about fostering children please attend a General Information Meeting. Visit www.cfsbny.org or call 716.882.0555 to sign up.

“FOR OUR DAUGHTERS” DELIVERS POWERFUL MESSAGE: “If You Know Better, You Can Do Better.”

Mercedes Wilson, cancer survivor and founder of For Our Daughters Inc., presented a two-day workshop to the young women of the Stanley G. Falk School. The mission of For Our Daughters is “To assist young women between the ages of 11–19 with living longer, healthier lives by taking the reins on their health.” More than 50 female students ranging from 11-18 years of age participated in these full day events held in the Cambridge gymnasium.



During the two workshops, one of which included high school girls and the second junior high, Mrs. Wilson shared her own story and life lessons,

which conveyed a very powerful message to the students. Each two-day workshop included discussions on friendship, self-advocacy, self-awareness and effective communication. Students also participated in a full session of ZUMBA with instructor, Ashley. Mrs. Wilson noted, “Teenagers have the unique responsibility of learning who they are in life while trying to develop relationships with those around them. With the unrealistic pressures that come from advertising and media, teenagers are also challenged with loving themselves. This is very difficult task if they do not already have an established communication system with the trusted adults in their lives.”



The girls, who came from four different locations of the Falk School, enjoyed their time together. Despite the fact many of the girls did not know each other, came from various backgrounds, and faced different challenges, they melded together as a group. “This is an important partnership for our school,” said Lori Hammond, Assistant Superintendent. “As educators, we have an important responsibility to teach young women how to advocate for themselves. Mrs. Wilson’s message is a powerful one, and we are thrilled to have her present these engaging sessions to our students.”

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SELECTED AS HOST SITE FOR UB SOCIAL IMPACT FELLOWS PROGRAM

After a competitive application process that drew a high level of interest from the Western New York business and non-profit community, Child and Family Services’ Employee Assistance Program (EAP) was honored to be selected as one of the eight host sites for the inaugural UB Social Impact Fellows (SIF) Program. A partnership between UB’s School of Management and UB School of Social Work in collaboration with Balckstone LaunchPad, the program afforded a student from the School of Social Work, Maur Delaney, and a student from the School of Management, Brendan Donahue, the opportunity to develop innovative solutions to address societal issues in an eight-week summer placement.



C&FS EAP operates on the understanding that every worker must have equitable access to a broad array of community resources that support their personal and occupational success. Operating as a true social-enterprise model, EAP provides direct, fee-for-service supports to companies across all industries in WNY, improving stability for an evolving workforce and diverse employee population. Account Manager, Jennifer Zeitler explains that, “EAP is unique in that it serves as a neutral resource, and thus as much a tool for the employer as it is a protection for the employee. Employers receive consultation, training, and a sizable ROI. In other words, services are provided to those who need them AND simultaneously, the bottom line is improved. It’s really a very practical yet effective way for businesses to participate in social justice. Only when ALL people are equitably supported to sustain employment, will Buffalo lose its unwanted status as a leader in poverty.” Supervised by Zeitler and EAP Counselor, Jocelyn Bos-Fisher, two Social Impact Fellows developed a stakeholder presentation and framework for a white paper. Both deliverables explored how occupational injustices impact WNY employees’ ability to fully engage in the workplace, assessed opportunities for improved access to resources and job retention through employer based benefits, and make an argument for creating occupational justice in the WNY workforce to increase the economic, social and community impact in our region.

HAPPENINGS AT CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES



There was a great turnout from Child & Family Services for the 2017 Corporate Challenge! Over 100 employees joined the Agency this year. Congratulations to our top runners: Aimee Hopkins (24:46) & Josh Hutchings (25:15).



Several Stanley G. Falk School alumni came back to visit with their former teachers during the annual alumni basketball game.



Quilts for Charity donated homemade patchwork quilts. Pictured above is Christine Curtis from Quilts for Chairty and Bridget Licata, Public Relations Specialist at Child & Family Services.



Children in the Residential Treatment Program hosted a Pizza Party instead of the usual dinner. The party was organized by two of the children in Residential Treatment.



JetBlue and Together donated 50 suitcase bags to the Agency's Foster Care & Adoption Program. Each sweet case had a teddy bear, blanket, crayons, coloring book, toothbrush and earbuds.



Thank you to the employees at BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York who made 85 new stuffed animals. The gifts will bring much needed comfort to children in Residential Treatment.



Members of the 8th Grade Coloring for Charity Club at Nichols Middle School created coloring books for foster children of the Agency.



The Erie County District Attorney and West Seneca Police Department donated 70 jackets to the women, children and men at Haven House.



Dezmin Lewis of the Buffalo Bills spent time with children in the Residential Treatment Program. The kids loved painting their faces with Dezmin, playing catch and getting autographs.

GRANT AWARDS

HopeLine from Verizon
\$20,000

James H. Cummings Foundation, Inc.
\$20,000

JetBlue Airways
\$2,000

Mary Kay Charitable Foundation
\$20,000

**National Association for Community
Mediation**
\$1,000

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Funds
\$21,000

The Almar Family Foundation
\$1,000

The Children's Guild Foundation
\$24,250

The Garman Family Foundation
\$7,500

The John R. Oishei Foundation
\$5,000



Collin Gehl and Laura Terrell graduated from the Agency's first Management Fellows program.



Child and Family Services

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Fashion Show with a Twist



Child and Family Services
Benefiting Haven House

**Thursday, October 5, 2017 at 5:30pm
Samuel's Grande Manor**

**www.cfsbny.org/get-involved/fashion-show
for sponsorship & vendor information**