

Child Family Services

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

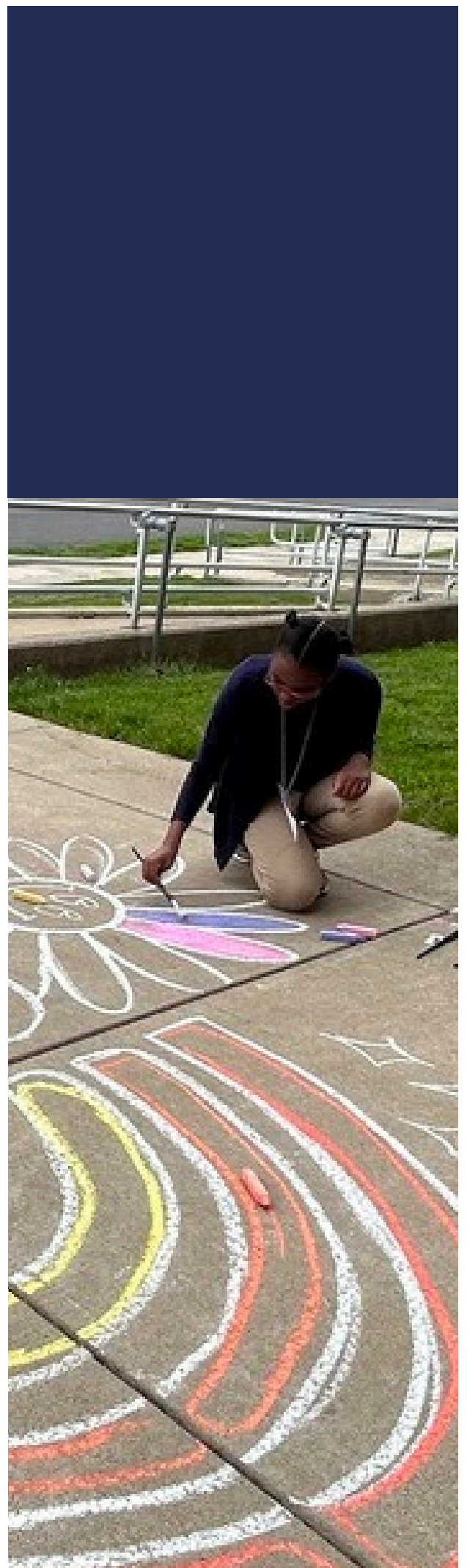
2023 – 2024





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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

As I celebrate my 25th anniversary with Child and Family Services (C+FS), I find myself reflecting on the power of growth, change and connection. Over the years, I've witnessed firsthand how this Agency continuously adapts to meet the evolving needs of our community while staying grounded in our mission.

This past year has been a shining example of that growth. The 2023–2024 school year at the Stanley G. Falk School began with the opening of our new Mullen campus to better meet the growing needs of special education at the elementary school level. Toward the end of that school year, Falk was also selected for the New York State PLAN Pilot Program, a significant step forward in our commitment to providing specialized support for students with alternative educational needs. You will read more about the PLAN Pilot Program in this Community Impact report.

Growth was also evident in the expansion of our Counseling Services, with the opening of a new office at the William–Emslie YMCA. This location represents our dedication to breaking down barriers to care, ensuring that mental health support is available to more individuals and families across Buffalo.

Our work in mediation has similarly deepened. This year, our Center for Resolution and Justice partnered with the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities to provide crucial services to individuals with developmental disabilities, helping them and their families navigate complex challenges through dialogue and understanding.

Even in our Children's Residential program, growth has been demonstrated by the smiles of children settling into newly renovated bedrooms, a small but powerful reminder of how even the simplest changes can provide comfort and stability.

These are just a few examples of growth from the past year, but more is happening each day. Whether it's expanding our services, forming new partnerships or making children feel at home, every step we take is rooted in the belief that lasting impact begins with understanding and connection. As we look toward the future, we will continue to listen, grow and respond to the needs of our community—just as C+FS has for over 150 years.

With warm regards,



ELIZABETH MCPARTLAND, LMSW, MBA
PRESIDENT AND CEO





Counseling

35,893 total client sessions.

Foster Care and Adoption

68 children provided care.

14 families became certified foster parents.

13 children were adopted.

Haven House

267 individuals provided shelter.

2,162 individuals provided counseling and/or advocacy.

1,867 calls to the 24-hour hotline.



Residential Treatment

52 children and families received treatment.

41 children were reunited with their families without needing additional out-of-home placements.

Stanley G. Falk School

24 seniors graduated in June 2024.

573 students were enrolled.

COUNSELORS PARTICIPATE IN PLAY THERAPY TRAINING

Over the summer, 24 counselors across Agency programs attended an in-person play therapy training at the 330 Delaware campus. All counselors received continuous education hours towards becoming certified in play therapy.

Play therapy is a great way to engage children without doing traditional talking or expecting them to engage similarly to how adults and adolescents would.

“Many counseling programs don’t provide services for children ages three to five years old,” explained Nicole Holloway, Director of Clinical Services. “Preschool and kindergarten students don’t respond well to traditional talk therapy, so we want to ensure we have counselors who specialize in working with children in that age range.”

In the past, counselors would be sent to a training program, which required most individuals to complete five days of training to achieve their certification. The amount of time spent out of the office started negatively impacting clients, so Nicole reached out to a play therapy expert to arrange a foundations training course on-site.



During the training, counselors worked together to utilize play therapy techniques, like drawing pictures and took turns role playing as the client. One play therapy activity counselors learned about was sand tray therapy, which teaches children how to use certain objects to convey their feelings and experiences.

“Everyone was so glad to have the opportunity to participate in a hands-on learning experience and get direct feedback from the trainer,” said Nicole. “All our counselors are eagerly waiting to complete part two of the training and receive their certifications.”

Thank you to the Michael and Kathleen Munster Counseling Program Fund for providing the funding needed to support this unique training opportunity.



STANLEY G. FALK SCHOOL SELECTED FOR NYSED PLAN PILOT PROGRAM

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) is launching a performance-based learning and assessment network (PLAN) Pilot program to 23 school districts. The Stanley G. Falk School Ressler campus in Cheektowaga was selected as a PLAN Pilot school and is the only special education school in the state that was chosen.

New York State wants to reimagine graduation requirements by creating one diploma while offering different certifications and specializations. Falk was selected for the Career and Technical Education (CTE) subgroup and has been linked with Questar III BOCES for technical assistance.

"Students are interested in learning about financial skills, such as earning credit, taking out a business loan, opening a checking account, buying a car and other things adults often take for granted," explained Kaycie Nucheren, CTE Certified Teacher.

Falk Principal Timm and other teachers attended a two-day training session alongside other participating schools where they crafted a vision statement and were assigned a professional developer to

provide additional training for staff members. Falk will also be linked with a mentor school that can share protocols and procedures that have been successful in the classroom.

The curriculum under the PLAN Pilot will focus on preparing and equipping students with education tailored to what they might do in post-secondary life, whether it's attending college, entering the workforce or trade training. This includes teaching students social skills, personal independence and soft employment skills.

"We believe this program will help our students develop real-life skills and ensure better outcomes when they leave Falk and take the next step in their lives," stated Principal Timm. "Our student's unique needs will be directly impacted by this work."

Once training is fully completed, Principal Timm hopes to start implementing the PLAN Pilot strategy in the classroom at the end of the calendar year. NYSED predicts this project will take approximately three years before new regulations are put in place across the state.

FOSTER CARE HELPS REUNITE FATHER AND SON

At just six years old, Daniel* was facing serious emotional and behavioral challenges. Neglect at home had left him without critical care – he had never attended school, missed important medical appointments and struggled with daily routines. His mother, battling mental health issues, was unable to provide a stable environment. In February 2023, Daniel entered Child and Family Services Foster Care and Adoption Program.

“Daniel’s first months in foster care were rough,” said Nicole Luko, Manager of Foster Care and Adoption. “He experienced difficulties attending school since he didn’t have much contact with other children before. He was very behind his classmates in some ways, yet advanced in other ways.

While Daniel adjusted to his foster family, the C+FS team reached out to his biological father, who had not established paternity. After taking a paternity test, Daniel’s father discovered he was indeed Daniel’s dad, and the reunification process began.

C+FS facilitated regular visits between Daniel and his father, during which Daniel often expressed his feelings through drawing and writing. These visits were challenging at times, as Daniel became upset when his father tried to engage him in new activities. The C+FS team guided Daniel’s father on managing Daniel’s emotional outbursts and understanding his unique needs.

“There was a lot of missed time between them,” Nicole explained. “Even though Daniel’s father was living with him before, he wasn’t too involved in Daniel’s life and didn’t understand how far behind Daniel was.”

Over time, Daniel’s communication skills improved and the bond with his father grew. His father made significant changes, including moving to a more child-friendly home and seeking counseling for Daniel.

In August 2024, after a year and a half with C+FS, Daniel was officially reunited with his father. Daniel’s father is overjoyed to have his son in his life and excited to continue building memories that will last a lifetime.



A NEW BEGINNING: HOW MEDIATION TRANSFORMED A FAMILY

After over a year of legal battles in court, a family in Western New York was at an impasse. A complex conflict between a child's parent and grandparents had led them to file with the court system, but no progress was made toward resolution. Finally, at the recommendation of the child's attorney, the family turned to Child and Family Services Center for Resolution and Justice (CR+J) for help.

Sitting down together, even virtually, was no easy task for these family members. Yet, after just two virtual mediation sessions, something remarkable happened—they began to have a meaningful, productive conversation. They listened to each other, acknowledged their feelings and ultimately found a solution that prioritized the well-being of the child.

"This family needed the mediation process to talk about what happened and how they got to this point," shared Rahel Belete, Program Associate at CR+J. "Mediation offers a non-judgmental space where people can engage in mindful conversations without the pressure and constraints of a courtroom."

"This is why we do this work," emphasized Karen Carroll, Manager of Family Mediation Services.

CR+J is the only community dispute center and provider of mediation services for all eight counties in Western New York. The program

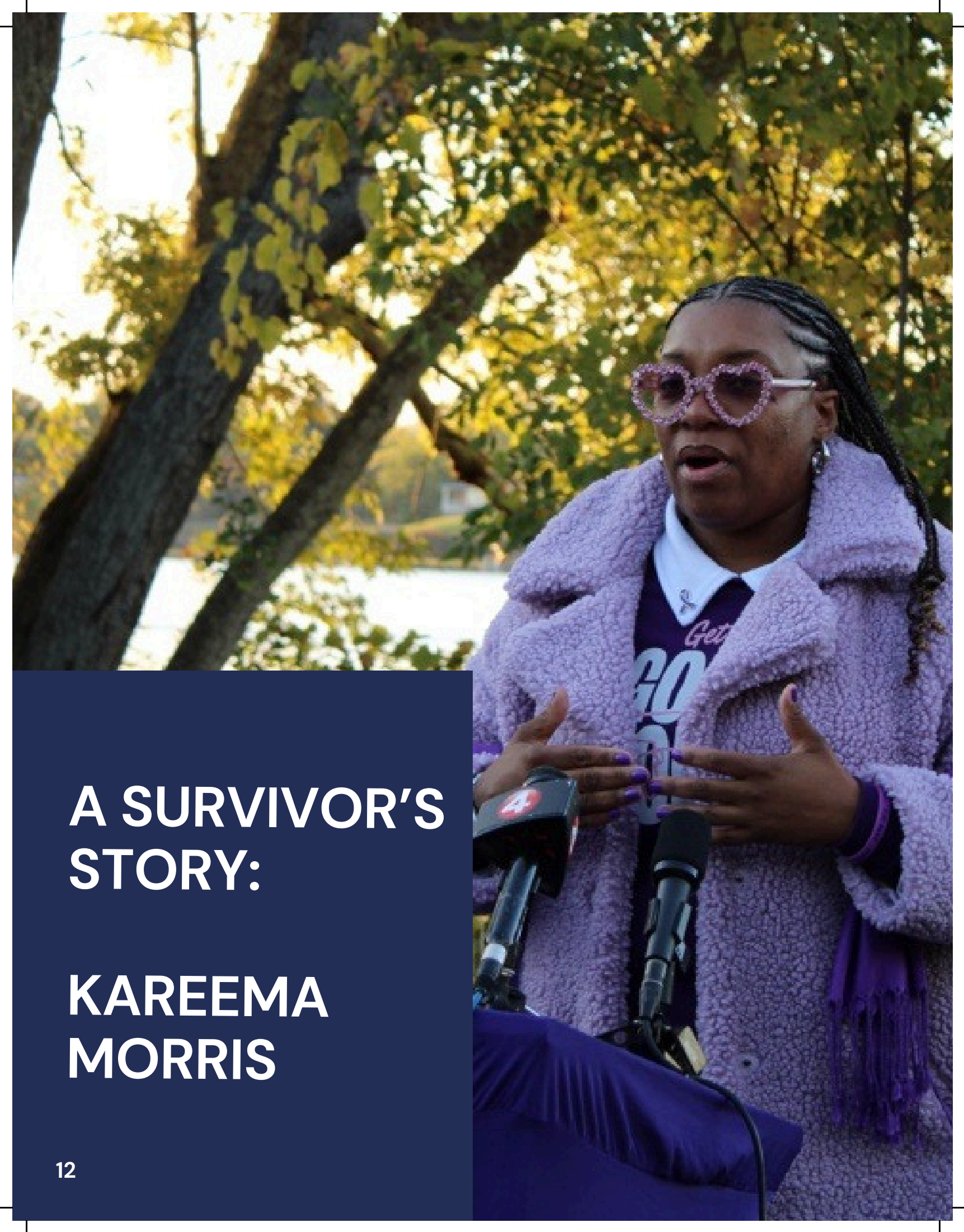
relies heavily on volunteer mediators from the community who undergo hours of training and continual education to successfully navigate stressful situations.

"Mediation offers a unique opportunity for individuals to have conversations that wouldn't happen in any other setting," stated Karen. "We have about 70 volunteer mediators who stay connected by taking on more cases, attending events and learning more through training sessions. It's a community within a community."

For this family, and countless others, CR+J's mediation services have been a lifeline—offering hope, healing and the opportunity to resolve conflict with dignity.

Interested in becoming a mediator? Email mediate@cfsbny.org to learn more about the training opportunities at CR+J.





**A SURVIVOR'S
STORY:**

**KAREEMA
MORRIS**



In 2003, Kareema Morris sought refuge at Haven House with her three young children. During her time in shelter, Kareema participated in weekly group therapy sessions and parenting classes. Through these programs, she not only learned how to process her trauma, but also discovered effective coping strategies and began to recognize the patterns of abuse she endured throughout her life.

“I never realized the different types of abuse I encountered until I was at Haven House,” Kareema shared. “I thought domestic violence was only physical, but I learned I had been subjected to multiple forms of abuse.”

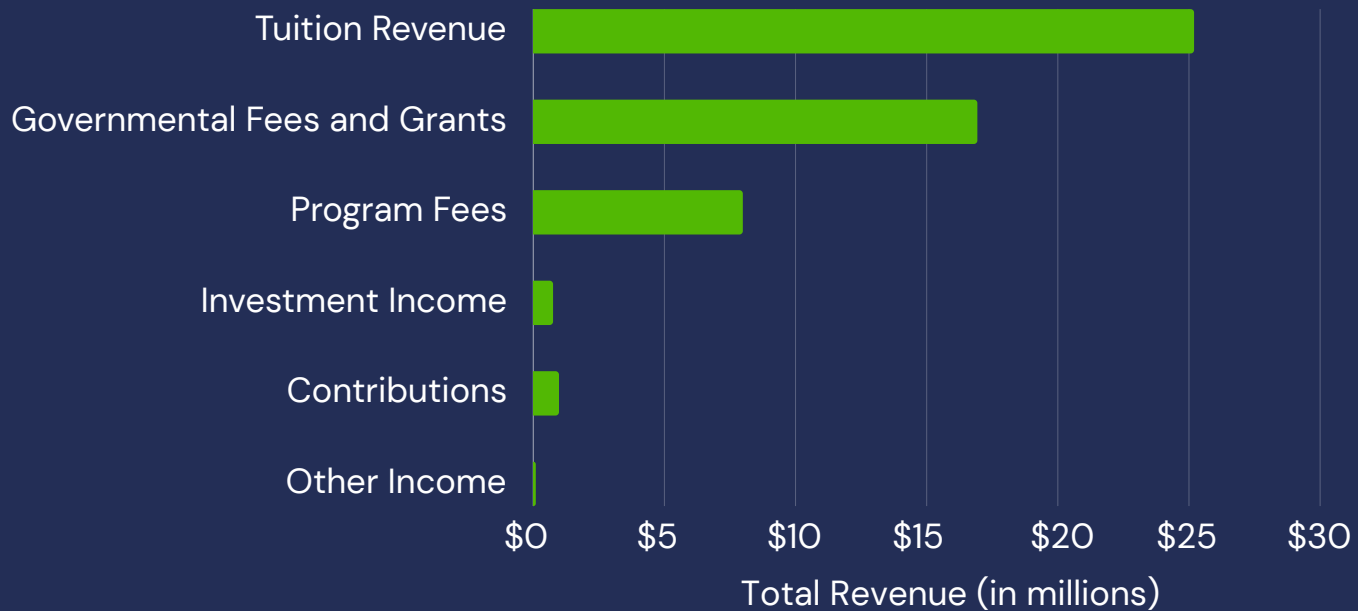
Haven House’s programs also made a lasting impact on Kareema’s children. Her oldest son, now 29, still remembers their time at shelter. After leaving Haven House, Kareema continued applying what she learned in her daily life. Open communication and active listening became the foundation for stronger relationships with her children.

Kareema’s commitment to healing and supporting others did not stop with her time at Haven House. In 2013, Kareema’s niece passed away as a result of a domestic violence incident. Kareema was compelled to take action. She founded **Bury the Violence**, an organization dedicated to solving cases of missing domestic violence victims and offering support to survivors.

In a powerful moment of courage, Kareema publicly shared her story as a domestic violence survivor for the first time at Child and Family Services’ 2024 Shine the Light press conference. “My whole life is centered on helping others,” Kareema said. “I felt it was important for people to know I’m a survivor, so they understand why I do this work and how deeply personal it is for me. I wouldn’t be the person I am today if it hadn’t been for Haven House.”

We are deeply grateful to Kareema for sharing her story and for her advocacy on behalf of domestic violence survivors. Her resilience and dedication continue to inspire and bring hope to many.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION



Operating Activities

Tuition Revenue	\$25,194,398
Governmental Fees and Grants	\$16,932,123
Program Fees	\$7,990,098
Investment Income	\$755,398
Contributions	\$981,277
Other Income	\$95,940
\$51,949,234	
Total Revenue	

Expenses

Program Services to Children and Families	\$44,819,202
Administration	\$5,601,691
Development	\$511,030
\$50,931,923	
Total Expenses	
\$1,017,311	
Net Income	



GRANT RECOGNITION

Circle of Hearts (\$10,000+)

East Hill Foundation

Circle of Family (\$5,000 - \$9,000)

Buffalo Rotary Club

Evans Devereux Memorial Fund

Killian J. and Caroline F. Schmitt Foundation, Inc.

Circle of Love (\$2,000 - \$4,999)

Health Foundation of Western & Central New York

The John R. Oishei Foundation

RBC Wealth Management

The Starbucks Foundation

Circle of Guardians (\$1,500 - \$1,999)

Maria Love Convalescent Fund

Circle of Hope (\$1,000 - \$1,499)

The Almar Family Foundation

Our Mission

Nurturing a healthy and more equitable Western New York for the benefit of current and future generations.

Our Vision

A thriving community where all people live in safety with dignity.

Follow Us:



**Child
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