

Portraits of Hope

Winter 2025 Newsletter

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

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YEARS OF CHILD
AND FAMILY
SERVICES



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A Message From President and CEO, Elizabeth McPartland

Dear Friends,

As we look forward to everything 2025 will bring, we also take a moment to reflect on the past holiday season and express our deepest gratitude to all who dedicated their time and energy to uplift our community. Thanks to your generosity, programs like Adopt-a-Family and Toyland were able to make a profound impact on those we serve. In this newsletter, you'll find stories that highlight the effect these programs have on families, as well as insights from the donors and volunteers who helped bring them to life.

Through the Adopt-a-Family Program, we were able to assist over 1,000 individuals and 250 families across nine of our Agency programs. In addition, thanks to the incredible outpouring of support, our Preventive, Counseling and Wraparound Programs were able to distribute extra donations to other families in need and restock storage closets for future emergencies.

Running such a large-scale effort takes a village. Our dedicated volunteers played a crucial role in ensuring the workshop operated smoothly, allowing our case planners to seamlessly deliver gifts to families. This year, we were thrilled to welcome 300 volunteers, including both familiar and new faces. In this issue, you'll also hear from a first-time volunteer as they reflect on their experience.

Alongside Adopt-a-Family, Haven House hosted its annual Toyland donation drive. More than 70 individuals and organizations contributed essential items to support survivors of domestic violence as they work to rebuild their lives. For many, Toyland brings holiday cheer during a difficult time and provides the foundation needed for individuals and families to create new beginnings.

While the holiday season is behind us, our commitment to helping and equipping families with the resources they need to thrive continues into 2025. Thank you for standing with us and making these efforts possible.

Warmly,



Elizabeth McPartland
President and CEO



Elizabeth McPartland,
President and CEO



The Amazon team sorting through donations during Adopt-a-Family 2024.

Helping a Family of Six Start Over



Rebecca Gunning,
Preventive Case Planner

When Mandy* and her five children fled their home in Texas last year, they traveled with nothing but the clothes on their back. What started as an engagement to a man had unexpectedly turned into a domestic violence situation that forced Mandy to escape with her children.

After relocating to Buffalo, Mandy was struggling to get public assistance and food stamps. Her abuser still had possession of important documents, including her green card and all the children's birth certificates. Without these, Mandy struggled to access public assistance. Mandy often relied on pantries that were within walking distance from her apartment to provide food for her family.

All the children were sharing one bed, had only one set of clothes and were not registered in school. Mandy knew she needed help starting over, and that's when she found Child and Family Services.

Rebecca Gunning, Preventive Case Planner, knew this family needed additional support and referred them for Child and Family Services' Adopt-a-Family program. The Adopt-a-Family donor who was matched with the family donated 26 boxes filled with blankets, winter clothes, hygiene products, kitchen appliances, toys and other essential items. In addition, a queen-sized mattress was given to the family, and each child received their own tablet. The family received everything on their wish list and more.

"It was amazing how much this family received," emphasized Rebecca. "I had to ask our maintenance team for help with the delivery. When we showed up on Mandy's doorstep, she was in complete shock."

Since the start of the new year, all the children have been enrolled in elementary school and have made new friends. Rebecca has been actively working on linking the family with medical and dental assistance while also supporting Mandy through the process of getting public assistance.

"I visited the family shortly after the holidays and all the children were wearing their new clothes," said Rebecca. "They were so excited to show me all the fun designs on their shirts. Seeing the smiles on their faces reminds me why Adopt-a-Family is so important to families in our community."

*Names changed for confidentiality.



Gurney Becker & Bourne volunteering at
Adopt-a-Family 2024.

Donor Spotlight

Curbell, Inc. has been an enthusiastic participant in the Adopt-a-Family program since 2015. The holiday season is a special time for the organization, as they see it as an opportunity to spread joy and make a difference for families in the community.

"We've always enjoyed participating in Adopt-a-Family because the program gives employees the flexibility to go above and beyond for families," said Jonathan Hughes, Creative Services Specialist at Curbell. "For example, if a child asked for crayons, someone would purchase a coloring book and colored pencils to go along with the crayons. Or if a child needs a winter hat, they will also receive gloves and a scarf."



Curbell employees organizing Adopt-a-Family donations.

As donations poured in the collection quickly grew beyond its initial space. Eventually, they had to move everything to the cafeteria because it was the only area large enough to accommodate all the gifts. The entire company played a role in the effort by organizing the gift requests, posting lists in common areas and ensuring every item was accounted for before the delivery date.

"Throughout the years, we've noticed families are always asking for necessities, like winter clothes, blankets, kitchen appliances and other basic items we may take for granted," explained Jonathan. "It's easy for us to continue participating in the program knowing there are so many families who need our support."

Alicia Stark, Development Manager, expressed her appreciation for Curbell's contributions. "It's always a pleasure seeing Jonathan pull up for his Adopt-a-Family drop off," said Alicia. "While unloading his car with the donations, Jonathan had a big smile on his face. You can tell how much this program means to him and his team. The intentionality Curbell shows with each member of their family match is what makes Adopt-a-Family the success that it is!"



Curbell's Adopt-a-Family gifts.

Jonathan emphasized the generosity of his colleagues. "We're fortunate to have a lot of employees who want to make sure families have everything they need—and more—to enjoy a really nice holiday. It's the best feeling, and it just keeps getting better every year."

Thank you, Curbell for your continued support during Adopt-a-Family and helping us create memorable experiences for so many families each year! We look forward to seeing you again this December!

Volunteer Spotlight

Two years ago, Lauren Latona and her husband moved back home to Buffalo to start a family. Lauren has always been passionate about volunteering and knew she wanted to find an organization to be involved with and call home.

While watching a Buffalo Sabres game, Lauren discovered the Holiday Angels Program, a partnership with Child and Family Services' (C+FS) Adopt-a-Family Program. "Right away, my husband and I knew we wanted to contribute," emphasized Lauren. "We adopted a family and went on a shopping spree at our local Walmart. We had a blast picking out the gifts for our family."



Lauren Latona and her daughter at a Buffalo Sabres game.

After dropping off the donations, Lauren was thoroughly impressed with the organization and coordination of the program. She researched C+FS and realized her values aligned with the Agency's mission of helping families and children. Lauren decided to reach out about volunteer opportunities and has been involved with C+FS ever since.

"As an Adopt-a-Family donor, you are assigned one family and that's your primary focus," explained Lauren. "As a volunteer, you realize the breadth of how many families you get to be a part of something much bigger and witness the generosity of donors first-hand."

During her volunteer shift, Lauren worked with other veteran volunteers and staff members to collect, organize and sort through all the gifts. While sifting through the donations, she was surprised to see some of the items requested on wish lists – basic toiletry and household items like toothbrushes, deodorant, cleaning supplies and more. It put into perspective how impactful the program is and how much more work needs to be done to help those who need it most.

"Adopt-a-Family is such a great way to give back to the community, whether you're a donor or volunteer," said Lauren. "I look forward to helping out for years to come!"

Thank you, Lauren, for helping us bring holiday cheer to so many individuals and families!



The Buffalo Sabres Holiday Angels Program.

Bills Family Flag Football Challenge Raises Money for Haven House

This past November, the wives and girlfriends of Buffalo Bills players took to the field to host the Bills Family Flag Football Challenge. Inviting the community to donate to Haven House as they voted for which team they expected to win, this event raised over \$21,000.

"The Bills ladies love getting together for the community, and what better way to do it than a friendly game of flag football," said Alexis Jones (wife of DaQuan Jones). "But it wouldn't be complete if we didn't have something bigger worth playing for, so we teamed up with Haven House to raise awareness about the work they're doing for the community we all love!"

As donations poured in, Jones, along with Alexis Lewis (wife of Cam Lewis), organized the event. Each team executed impressive drives with guidance from Buffalo Bills players who were acting as their coaches. Ultimately, the Blue Team was victorious, but the ladies were more excited for the opportunity to support an important cause.

"It was really fun, and I think it's amazing no matter who won or who lost," said Lewis. "It's all for Haven House, and that was really our mission – to do this to help those in need."

At the game, Tiffany Pavone, Director of Victim Services at Haven House, spoke about the impact this event could have on the community. "One in four women and one in nine men will experience some form of dating or relationship violence in their lifetime," said Tiffany. "Getting the information out there is key to raising awareness, and we are so grateful to the wives and girlfriends of the Buffalo Bills who put in so much work for to help the survivors at Haven House."

"It was so much fun," Jones added. "It turned out to be a really great event. We raised a ton of money, so I couldn't be happier."

Thank you to the Buffalo Bills Foundation, Alexis Jones and Alexis Lewis for shining the light on Haven House with this event!



Buffalo Bills WAGS with their team captains raise money for Haven House.



Alexis Jones (left) celebrating with her teammates.

In Case You Missed It



Tran Marong organized a donation drive with her husband, family and friends to benefit Haven House Toyland.



Brookdale-Kenmore filled an entire van with donations including toys, hygiene products and winter clothing.



C+FS annual press conference, Shine the Light, was held at the Tribute Garden in Tonawanda on Thursday, October 17.



The Stewart Family adopted Xavier during National Adoption Month.



C+FS held a Partner Appreciation event in the Richmond-Lockwood library.



Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of WNY selected Haven House to receive \$5,000.

Correction to the Summer 2024 Newsletter:
Thank you to John Percy for being a Circle of Children donor.

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