

Portraits of Hope

Summer 2026 Newsletter



Falk School students and staff enjoyed summer activities during their annual Field Day.

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A Message from President and CEO, Elizabeth McPartland

Dear Friends,

As summer comes to a close, we are taking time to reflect on the many moments of growth, connection and transformation that took place across Child and Family Services. In this newsletter, you will find stories from some of our dedicated donors like you, whose generosity helps make our work possible.

Your commitment serves as a powerful reminder that while our support often begins during a challenging chapter in someone's life, it is the collective investment of caring community members that helps create opportunities for lasting change.



Elizabeth McPartland,
President and CEO

For example, this summer children in the Residential Treatment Program celebrated important milestones, from moving-up ceremonies and school promotions to a special picnic shared with families and staff. These occasions helped to recognize the confidence, resilience and progress each child has made, especially when they feel supported and cared for by trusting adults.

At Child and Family Services, individuals and families continued making important strides toward better stability and independence. Families in our Preventive Services Program worked to strengthen relationships and move toward reunification, while clients at Haven House participated in a new Life Skills Group designed to build confidence and prepare for what comes next. Though each journey is unique, they all share a common thread: access to the support, guidance and resources needed to move forward.

That same spirit of growth and possibility was evident at Falk School, where we unveiled a new name, logo, mission and vision. This exciting rebrand honors the school's rich legacy while embracing a forward-looking vision that reflects who we are today and where we are headed.

These successes are possible because of caring supporters like you. Whether helping a child reach an important milestone, creating opportunities for students to thrive, strengthening family connections or empowering survivors as they rebuild their lives, your generosity helps turn everyday moments into lasting change.

Thank you for being part of this work and for believing in the power of hope, healing and possibility.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth McPartland". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Elizabeth McPartland
President and CEO

A Safe Space to Begin Again

After spending three transformative months at Haven House, Claire,* a former resident, reached out to share an update with the staff who had supported her through one of the most difficult chapters of her life.

Claire arrived at Haven House directly from the hospital after suffering severe injuries as a result of domestic violence. From the moment she entered the shelter, Claire was met with support. She found a team of compassionate advocates dedicated to helping her heal and begin rebuilding her life.

After helping her unpack and settle into a safe space, they guided her through the necessary paperwork and arranged transportation to medical appointments so she could focus on healing from her injuries. As the days turned into weeks, that support remained constant. Staff encouraged Claire every step of the way, offering reassurance, practical assistance and a steady reminder that she didn't have to face her journey alone.

Residential Domestic Violence Advocate Amanda* remembers Claire's determination from the very beginning.

"Everyone on our team at Haven House helps those who stay with us work toward their goals," Amanda shared. "Claire was incredibly self-driven and intelligent, but she needed support balancing the challenges she was facing at the time."

For Amanda, some of the most meaningful moments weren't about finding solutions; they were about creating a space where Claire felt heard.

"She had so many ambitions and ideas for her future," Amanda said. "The most important thing we could do was listen without judgment. That acceptance and support went a long way in her healing journey."

"From the day I arrived at Haven House, everyone showed me so much compassion and kindness," Claire reflected. "I truly don't think I would be where I am today, rebuilding my life, without the support I had at the shelter."

Claire's story is a powerful reminder that everyone's path forward looks different. Every day, Haven House advocates meet survivors where they are, providing unwavering support as they take the next steps toward their future.

*Names changed for confidentiality.



Haven House Employees

Board Member Spotlight



Kara Oliver-Perez

For Kara Oliver-Perez, giving back to the community has always been her calling. Through her leadership on the C+FS and Falk School Board of Directors and her financial generosity, Kara has spent over three years supporting the future of Western New Yorkers.

As the Director of Communications and Marketing at the Charter School for Applied Technologies, Kara brings years of experience in education and community engagement to her role. Her commitment to service began long before joining the C+FS family.

As a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., a historically African American sorority focused on addressing social causes, Kara has been guided by the principle of service to others and the belief that everyone has a role to play in strengthening their community.

"When you have so many opportunities, it is important to give back to those in need," Kara shared. "I ask myself, how can I make things even a little bit better for someone, whether it is donating my time or resources."

Kara first became connected to C+FS through friends who had worked with the Agency. As she learned more about the work being done across the organization, she found a mission that aligned closely with her own values. She was especially drawn to Falk School, where her passion for education and advocacy for students could make a meaningful impact.

"Falk does so much for our community, helping children reach their highest potential," Kara said. "That is what keeps me coming back."

Beyond her role as a board member, Kara continues to support C+FS through monetary gifts, believing that every contribution can make a difference in someone's life.

"If my ability to give impacts a child in C+FS programs or a woman healing at Haven House, it is worth it," she shared.

We are incredibly grateful for Kara's continued partnership. Her belief in the power of service reminds us that when individuals choose to give back, they help create meaningful change that reaches far beyond a single moment.

Donor Spotlight



Buffalo Shimmy Mob Team

For the past eight years, Bogdana Sokolov has used the art of belly dance to do more than entertain audiences. She has used it to raise awareness and support survivors of domestic violence through Haven House.

After experiencing domestic violence firsthand, Bogdana began searching for ways to support other survivors. She eventually found Shimmy Mob, a worldwide organization that uses belly dance to shine a spotlight on domestic violence while raising funds for local shelters.

Eight years ago, Bogdana began teaching and formed her own Buffalo Shimmy Mob team. As she prepared to launch the group, she researched domestic violence organizations in Western New York that aligned with Shimmy Mob's mission. A friend recommended Haven House, and it has been one of the organizations her team has proudly supported through its fundraising efforts ever since.

"It's a passion of mine to be able to dance and move the audience, while having a great cause that we are supporting," Bogdana shared. "Our participants care so deeply about Haven House."

Each year, Bogdana organizes Buffalo's annual Shimmy Mob event, bringing dancers together to raise funds for Haven House. Registration fees from participating teams are donated directly to the shelter, helping ensure survivors have access to the resources they need to begin again. "Haven House has become a cause that is very close to my heart," said Bogdana. "I've seen how Haven House continues to be a place of hope for survivors."

For Bogdana, the annual fundraiser is only one part of the impact. Through her dance community and involvement with women's organizations, she often meets individuals experiencing domestic violence who are unsure where to turn. Those conversations have allowed her to connect people with Haven House's services.

"It brings me a lot of joy to be able to raise awareness because not everyone knows how great the needs for domestic violence resources are in our community," she said.

We are incredibly grateful for Bogdana's generosity and commitment to Haven House. Through her fundraising efforts and advocacy, more survivors can find safety, support and hope, knowing they are not alone on their journey.



Bogdana Sokolov

Thank You 2025-2026 Donors!

Child and Family Services extends a sincere thank you to the following individual donors whose generosity included a one-time gift of \$1,000 or more, as well as those who supported us through recurring donations during the 2025–26 fiscal year (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026). All efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Please call (716) 335-7079 with any questions or corrections.

Leadership Circle (\$1,000-\$4,999)

- Clement & Karen Arrison Family Charitable Foundation
- David and Wendy Barth
- Diane R. Bessel
- Mary Jo A. Braun
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- Marie S. and Frederic K. Houston Fund at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
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- Jason Serrano
- Smith Family Foundation
- Jacquelyn Stroh
- Thomas C. Toy III
- Francisco and Janet Vasquez
- Richard and Terry Wall
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Danahy Real Estate LLC, hosted their annual fundraiser for Haven House.



Former Board Members were honored at our annual Celebration of Friends.

C+FS Visionaries (\$5,000+)

- Melissa Baumgart
- Paul N. Bogner
- The Marjorie and John Buyers Foundation Inc.
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- Russell Family Charitable Trust Foundation
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Thank You 2025-2026 Donors!

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- Connie Poniatowski
- Cheryl Terranova

1873 Society (Planned gifts or \$5,000+ to the Child and Family Services Foundation)

- Henry J. Brock, Jr.
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- John and Amy Spitzmiller
- Matthew and Shana Stegner
- Michael K. Walsh
- Kristina M. Young

2025-2026 Grant Awards

(\$400,000-\$500,000)

- New Era Cap Foundation

(\$100,000-250,000)

- The Children's Guild Foundation

(\$10,000-\$49,999)

- Garman Family Foundation
- KeyBank Foundation

(\$1,000-\$9,999)

- Evans-Devereux Memorial Fund
- Fair Buffalo Fund at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- FeedMore Western New York, Inc.
- Health Foundation for Western & Central New York
- Independent Health
- Jo Ann Long Charitable Fund at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- Maria Love Convalescent Fund
- The Almar Family Foundation
- The Children's Foundation of Erie County
- The John R. Oishei Foundation

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emcpartland@cfsbny.org

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mzczopp@cfsbny.org

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Chief Impact Officer
ydubois@cfsbny.org

Rachael Greene
Superintendent, Falk School
rgreene@falkschool.com

Julie Loesch
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jloesch@cfsbny.org

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ilong@cfsbny.org

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ereger@cfsbny.org

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gszymanski@cfsbny.org

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330 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14202
www.cfsbny.org
(716) 842-2750

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Cheektowaga, New York 14225
(716) 842-2750

Community Mediation Center
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

Conners Children's Center
824 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209
(716) 884-3802

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
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Buffalo, New York 14214
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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/

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

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