



# Child & Family Services of Northeast Michigan, Inc.

# NEWSLETTER

Alpena, Michigan 49707 — — Spring - 2004

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## President's Message

These are difficult times indeed for any agency relying on public funds, and Child and Family Services is certainly no exception. The Board of Directors has struggled with some hard decisions in the past few months. We are forced to adapt to policy and legislative changes that often make no sense to us, and make even less sense to the clients we are trying so hard to help. The Board continues to be impressed with the quality and dedication of the staff in all of the programs, and acknowledge how difficult these changes are for them as well.



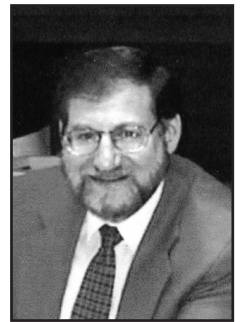
Jan Kane

On a bright note, we have been able to fill a needed gap in literacy services with the Even Start program and adult literacy services provided in some of our counties where adult education funds have been cut or eliminated. The Raising Readers program is another exciting project just underway. This program will increase the quality of services for children in day care and their families.

The Board continually strives to adapt to change without compromising the mission of the organization.

## Executive Director's Column

When you're handed lemons, those who are optimistic make lemonade. If not a natural optimist before, I have learned over the past year or so to become one. With the State budget woes continuing and the resultant cutbacks to many of our programs, including the painful phase out of the Allen House program, it would be all too easy to see only negatives, while waiting for the next shoe to drop. When confronted with these difficult times, it is neither the services nor even the staff of this agency who suffer. It is the clients and consumers of our programs who have to make do with fewer services and less intensive help to get them past rough times or to help reunite their families, or provide higher quality child care for their children. When we fully focus on the consumer and on the needs of our community, cutbacks in services, while initially devastating, can provide new opportunities.



Alan Brown

When we are no longer able to do things the way we always have, it allows us to take a fresh look at the issues and problems our services were meant to impact. Now while there may be only one way to make good lemonade, there are surely many ways of providing appropriate help to families and children in need. It is amazing how creative and positive staff can be when addressing new approaches to solving old problems. For instance, with the closing our our Allen House program, we now have an apartment building available with six apartments. We have also recognized a chronic need for transitional living for older teens leaving out-of-home placement over the last few years.

Matching up our available resources with the needs of our community in new ways has led to a renewed effort to fund a transitional living program with our apartment building as a key component and as leverage against Federal funding. We will be submitting an application for funding in June for a three to five year program. In the meantime, we are working with the Family Independence Agency to find other funding sources to address this problem, as well. We hope you will continue to support our efforts to find new solutions in a time of reduced state resources.

## Staff Spotlight

### Lyle Dorr

Lyle Dorr is the Supervisor for the agency's Families First services for the six-county cluster including Alpena, Otsego, Presque Isle, Crawford, Montmorency, and Oscoda. He has held this position since May of 1993, and has been with the agency in various positions, including Hope House Director since June of 1988.

Lyle has a Bachelor's degree in Human Services from Ferris, and his Master's in Counseling from Western. Lyle worked in several residential programs after his degree, including Eagle Village and Shadow Mountain in Oklahoma.

Born and raised in Alpena, Lyle's dad and brother served in law enforcement. Lyle's wife, Renee, has recently returned to school for a degree in nursing. They have three sons, Steven, Aaron, and Zach. Lyle enjoys hunting and sports.

When asked about his longevity with the agency, Lyle credited the flexible and supportive atmosphere and positive working conditions at the agency. "Child & Family is very supportive of the personal lives and needs of its staff", he said. Lyle also enjoys working with other professionals and the variety of families he has been privileged to serve. Perhaps his greatest work fulfillment is in his training and mentoring of staff. Many staff members serving under him have gone on to supervisory positions, and one of his staff members was recognized on the State level as Families First worker of the year.

Lyle has contributed his time and talents for the statewide Families First program as well, helping to develop many of the forms and procedures currently in use. He is also a great asset to the agency, currently chairing our quality assurance committee, and always contributing to a positive atmosphere. Thanks Lyle for your work with children and families and your loyalty to Child & Family Services.



## Hinks Sunrise Club

Working parents who seek adequate child care for their children often find that it can be a very difficult task. There are many factors to consider that may include cost, quality of care, available openings, ...etc. When parents have at least one child in care that is of school age, a new factor comes into play. If the child is not old enough to stay at home alone between the time that the parents leave the house and the school bus or carpool arrives, then parents need to make arrangements for before-school care. For many parents the best solution is a before-school program that allows students to arrive at school and engage in safe activities until school is in session.

Child & Family Services Community Coordinated Child Care (C&FS 4C) has maintained its mission to assist in providing quality, accessible, and affordable child care in Northeast Michigan. For this reason, Melissa Schaedig, principal of Hinks Elementary, contacted 4C with her concerns regarding the need for before school-care for Hinks students. She has stated that parents experienced quality before-school care for students when the 21st Century Grant was in place and provided such care. Now that those funds are not available for that purpose, Melissa believes that a before-school program housed within the school library will be the best solution for many parents. In the best interest of the Hinks students who need before-school care, Child & Family Services has assumed the role of licensee for the program, now referred to as Hinks School Sunrise Club.

Hinks School Sunrise Club is housed within the school library and is open from 7:30 am - 8:45 am following the school calendar. The capacity of the program is twenty students, with the average enrollment being about eight students each day. Melissa Shaedig serves as the volunteer director, and the child care staff consists of one employee who is also employed by APS during school hours as a school para-professional. C&FS monitors the program with monthly visits to the Hinks Sunrise Club. The child care center license for Hinks School Sunrise Club, and thereby C&FS, is directly monitored by the State of Michigan FIA Office of Children and Adult Licensing.

## OPERATION GOOD CHEER PROVIDES CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE WITH CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

Child and Family Services of Northeast Michigan continued its participation in the annual Operation Good Cheer gift-giving program Saturday, December 4, 2004, at Alpena County Regional Airport. At approximately 10:00 a.m., airplanes loaded with Christmas gifts made their way from Pontiac Air Center hanger at Oakland County International Airport in Waterford and into the hearts of 4,841 children in foster care, residential treatment, and group homes all across the state. Participants include infants, children, and teenagers. Locally, the project was expanded this year to include teens in the care of Holy Cross Children's Services (Huron House and Russell House).

Operation Good Cheer began in 1971 when a group of Ford Motor Company employees decided to pool the money they were spending on Christmas cards and give it to a worthy cause. That first year of the program there were sixty-six children involved. Operation Good Cheer has since grown to include thirty-nine of Michigan's private child and family social service agencies. This year, more than 4,800 children will have their Christmas wishes come true.

The State Office of Child and Family Services of Michigan, Inc., in Okemos, coordinates and sponsors this entirely volunteer program. Annually, thousands of volunteers from several businesses, corporations, public schools, government agencies, and individuals gather to purchase and wrap gifts from a Wish List. Each Wish List contains the participant's first name, last initial, age, physical and personality profile, and six gifts they would like for Christmas. Donors purchase gifts directly for each child.

Gifts are picked up from 27 locations across Michigan, by companies who volunteer their equipment, and fuel as well as the drivers who donate their time. Friday, December 3, 2004, Chemtrend, Trucks For You, Meijer, Landstar Systems, Inc., Hollingsworth, Swift Transportation, Inc., United Parcel Service, Penske Truck Leasing, Professional Movers, Inc., Two Men and a Truck, Mason-Dixon, Topflight, Vector SCM, Innovative Logistics, Ruehles Towing, 7-Up Bottling Co., Acc Flint, Ryder, Lansing Movers, Conway, and Select 1 Transport gathered the wrapped gifts and delivered them to Oakland County International Airport. Gifts were then sorted and delivered from Pontiac Air Center and Tradewinds Aviation. Several additional participating donors deliver gifts to the same airport. In all, there are 124 separate donor groups that are participated in Operation Good Cheer 2004.

Alan Brown, Executive Director of Child and Family Services-NE has watched his agency participate in this program over the last twenty years. "We are just extremely grateful for all the volunteers across the states who give so much of their heart and time to make this happen for our kids".

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## NEW PROGRAM TO BE LAUNCHED

This January, thanks to a grant from the American Express Foundation, Child & Family Services will be launching a new, but long hoped for program aimed at equipping older at-risk youth with independent living skills. Long recognized as a need of teens aging out of the foster care system, skills and supports for competent independent functioning is a key for long-term success of these youth. All too often, teens aging out of the foster care system have ended up homeless or in marginal living and vocational situations. We see this program as a last best hope to make lasting, positive changes.

The American Express grant covers one aspect of independent functioning, financial literacy. We will be following curricula endorsed by the National Endowment for Financial Education. This proven approach will be enhanced with additional study on common legal/financial aspects of independence such as reading and understanding a lease and obligations and rights as a tenant. We will be examining ways of establishing and maintaining good credit, how to negotiate loans, what to look for in warranties, what is meant by "let the buyer beware", etc.

Classes will be held throughout our traditional ten counties, on a rotating basis over the two years of the grant. We will also integrate classroom material with life situations by coordinating actual financial functions, including simple budgeting and shopping which occur at the foster care group home with relevant components of the curriculum.

We also will be establishing an advisory group of a range of professionals, including bankers, insurance reps, landlords, investment people, and others who will guide our efforts and provide additional hands on learning experiences. We hope this program will be one cornerstone of a broader approach to training for successful independence.

Operation  
Good  
Cheer

New Program

# NEWSLETTER

## Families First Alpena

In October two Families First workers resigned. One to open a daycare at home and the other was promoted to supervisor of Families First at the Women’s Resource Center in Petoskey. These were positive changes for both of them. We have since hired two new staff who are well suited for the position. Kristine Mehlhorn and Darcie Bowers are both from Grayling. They will primarily cover the four county areas of Crawford, Otesgo, Oscoda and Montmorency.

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## CFS Staff Available for Speaking Engagements

Child and Family Services has staff that would be happy to tell your group or organization about the work we do here and the services we have available to the community. Also, they may be able to speak on a general topic, such as working with children, discipline, nurturing, abuse and neglect, prevention, adoption, foster care, choosing quality child care, reading and literacy. If your organization or club would like us to do a presentation, please call the office at (989) 356-4567.

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## Hope House

Hope House continues to fill a crucial need in the region, with more girls entering the delinquency system statewide. Though the basic program of peer accountability remains the cornerstone of our treatment, staff is very innovative in adding positive elements to the program. Recently we have increased the involvement of parents in the onsite activities of the program. Parents have been invited to stay over in Alpena and to participate in treatment activities of the whole group in addition to family sessions. This has provided a unique perspective for the families involved. Parents get to see their daughters through the eyes of other youngsters and staff, and the girls see their parents in a different role.

In addition, we are reinvigorating the mentoring program, where successful professional women in the community are matched with a Hope House girl for support and role modeling. Hope House will also be the first site for the new financial literacy classes, beginning in January.

On another positive note, the agency received word of a \$35,000 grant from the Alden and Vada Dow Foundation toward the new Hope House building. Fifteen additional grant requests have been submitted toward this project.

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## 4C Update

4C continues to offer recruitment activities, assistance, and professional development opportunities to potential and current providers. We have completely transitioned to a new Internet-based database offered by NACCRRRA, the National Association for Child Care Resource and Referral. Some of our goals are to increase the speed, convenience and accuracy of referrals. An added benefit is our ability to generate a broader range of reports, including statistics that will help 4C better define and serve parents and providers.

4C On-Site Coordinators (OSCs) were instrumental in the success of the “Raising Readers” Interactive Literacy Program. OSCs carried out site visits with 75 of the 100 participating child care providers. During visits OSCs read aloud one of fifteen library titles and carried out a related literacy extension activity. They also delivered the entire library along with a set of extension activities for both parents and providers. 4C will serve another fifty providers with additional libraries and materials purchased in a second phase of the program.

4C Futures Training staff continue to offer a variety of topics to area providers. Examples of recent well-attended events include 5-hour Mini Trainings entitled “Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Child Care Providers”, “Way to Go, Weight to Grow! & Snowshoe Fitness”, and “Literacy Experiences & the Wonderful World of Puppets”, 4C also offers Basic, Special Needs, Infant & Toddler, and Advanced Training to providers.

## CHILD WELFARE NEWS

Our foster care and adoption program continues to be busy and observing some changes. Recently, foster care caseworkers Steve Kasubowski, Andrea Datadeen, and Jerianne Zaske left the program for other endeavors. Kelly Sommerfeld who has been doing foster home licensing for the last year and a half also left the program. Although we don't ever like to say good-bye, we have had the good fortune of now saying hello to new staff who are joining our program;

- **RACHEL BURKE** is working as a foster care caseworker in the Alpena office. Rachel comes to us from CMH, and she has quickly assimilated into our program and has been a tremendous asset to our agency. If you have been lucky enough to work with Rachel, you quickly come to realize that she is dedicated, committed, and goes beyond the call of duty when it comes to providing support and services to our children and families.
- **CLIFF MCKELVEY** has assumed the foster care caseworker position in our West Branch office. Cliff also came to us from CMH, and he has just stepped right in and done some excellent work with our children and families. Cliff is not a stranger to Child and Family Services, given that his wife, Darla, worked for the Families First program based in West Branch for a number of years. Cliff has proven to be a tremendous advocate for our children and families, and brings many skills with him to better serve our customers.
- We are very lucky to have to have a former staff return to our program. **DEBRA SMITH**, who took some time off to be home with her two lovely children, has returned to the Child Welfare Program. Initially she took over a part time foster care caseworker position, but with departure of a licensing worker, she has now assumed part time responsibilities in foster home licensing. She will be working collaboratively with **KELLI SUMERIX**, who was promoted to a full time position within the agency. Kelli will be wearing a couple of different hats, as she not only will be doing licensing, but she is still working the adoption program as well.

Our adoption program continues to be very busy helping children to be with permanent families. Most of their adoptions they are completing are foster parent adoptions, which is fantastic as it prevents the child from having to move to a new home. The adoption workers have also seen an increase in the number of home studies they are completing for families who are adopting children internationally. We are hoping to possibly identify an adoption agency that specializes in international adoptions, and partner with them in providing home studies and supervision for families who choose international adoption as a way to build or expand their family.

As the holidays approach, we would like to extend a heartfelt wish for a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We also want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your continuing support and encouragement for the agency, as well as the children and the families we serve.



Child &  
Family  
Services



# Child & Family Services of Northeast Michigan, Inc. NEWSLETTER



## Thank You Family Builders

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