



Child & Family Services of Northeast Michigan, Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Alpena, Michigan 49707 — — Spring - 2005

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President's Message

This has been another year of extreme challenges, and we expect many more challenges in the years ahead. The board and staff have started an extensive strategic planning process in order to help the organization do an even better job - to focus its energy, to ensure that staff are working toward the same goals, to assess and adjust the agency's direction in response to a changing environment. 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. One of the upcoming challenges is that almost all of the state contracts are going to need to be rebid. This will not only require a great deal of extra work on the staff's part, but may jeopardize funding of these quality programs.

A major initiative that seems to be arising from our initial strategic planning is that of improvements to the Hope House program. This program is an intensive, residential treatment program for young girls, often with severe problems, and has excellent outcomes and almost continual 100% occupancy. Unfortunately, the building this program is housed in is in very poor shape, with structural and design issues that are irreparable. Our dream is to build a new facility that will better meet the needs of this program and will serve the girls of this community for years to come. We are also investigating the possibility of adding an independent living component to this program - giving discharged girls who are old enough to be on their own a semi-structured environment as they transition to true independent living. We are also seeking some land upon which to build the new Hope House. Ideally, this land would be donated so the funds raised could be used for the home.

We have had some success in our initial fundraising efforts, although much more needs to be done. A special task force will be developed to lead this effort. If you are interested in participating, or have an interest in a possible donation of property or other major gift, please contact Alan or myself.

Lastly, as my term as president comes to a close, I enjoy reflecting on the many accomplishments of the agency over the past several years. These successes would not be possible without both an extremely dedicated staff and the support of the community



Jan Kane

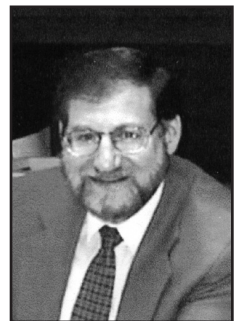
Executive Director's Column

As I was preparing our agency statistics for 2004 - year end reporting and comparing them to our previous years, I couldn't help but reflect on not just the numbers, but on what the numbers actually represent.

On one hand, due to state cutbacks to several service areas, we actually saw a decline in the number of children and families served in programs such as Families First and in child care providers trained. We know that the need has not diminished, but because resources have, some children and families are left to struggle on their own. Some, who may have family or community supports, will be resilient and will overcome their challenges, while others will fall deeper into dysfunction. In December alone, Families First turned away seven referrals due to lack of staffing capacity, having lost two full-time staff during the last funding cycle.

From a different perspective, the numbers of youth served in out-of-home placements for the year - Hope House, Foster Care and Adoption - topped 120 youth in our region. Because of our dedicated staff, wonderful, caring foster and adoptive families, and our myriad community supporters, we were able to provide nurturing, loving support, stability, and sometimes corrective guidance to a large number of youth in our communities whose lives were on the brink of despair and turmoil. Being able to restore and reclaim so many of our youth is at the heart of the mission of Child & Family Services.

Even with shrinking resources, we can still accomplish much for those we do serve, and we can all join together in advocating loudly for those who may be left behind.



Alan Brown

Staff Spotlight

Stephanie Dettloff



The staff spotlight for our spring newsletter falls on our 4C Training Coordinator, Stephanie Dettloff. Stephanie was appointed to this position in October of last year, and is greatly enjoying the role so far. Direct contact with a range of people in the child care provider community as well as networking with other professionals have been very rewarding. Stephanie’s long-standing advocacy for children in challenging circumstances fuels her passion to do what she can to improve the quality of care provided to children in Northeast Michigan.

Stephanie came to the agency originally as the 4C public relations coordinator for a special projects grant through the 4C Association. She then helped to get the Even Start program off the ground as its Data Manager / Administrative Assistant.

Born in Gaylord, Stephanie spent a number of years in Colorado before her family came back to this area. She has lived in the Alpena area since she was thirteen. She earned an Associates degree at ACC, her BA in health services management and her MA in organizational management and development from Spring Arbor.

Stephanie and husband, Dennis, have two children, Dean, 15 and Carley, 12. The family enjoys camping and travel. Stephanie had a home-based scrap-booking business for a number of years and still enjoys that hobby as a way of preserving family memories. In response to a question about working for Child & Family Services, Stephanie replied, “I wouldn’t want to work anywhere else. I enjoy the people and the great atmosphere so much.” We feel the same about Stephanie, and appreciate her many talents, professionalism, and staunch advocacy for children who aren’t able to speak out for themselves.

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Economic Literacy Program

The Economic Literacy Program for At Risk Youth is Up and Running

In our Winter 2004 newsletter we gave you a glimpse of great things to come with the “New Program” article describing the American Express Foundation Grant that Child and Family Services was awarded for the creation of a financial literacy program for at risk youth. The target audience includes our teens in foster care and area treatment homes like Hope House and Huron House. We hope to expand our audience to include teens served by area alternative programs, such as the Turning Point day treatment program for adjudicated youth.

January 18 marked the beginning of our first six-week course presented to the residents of Hope House. Curriculum from Virginia Tech and University of California armed the teens with valuable information about such topics as goal setting, basic budgeting, record keeping systems, building good credit, opening and using a checking or savings account, wise use of credit, and the “real story” about credit cards. We discussed using an ATM machine, dealing with creditors, apartment hunting and signing leases, connecting utilities, rent-to-own, check cashing services, insurance,...the list goes on and on.

The most exciting element was discovering that the group’s comments and questions raised in each class helped determine the direction the next class session would take. I’m sure I learned as much from them as they learned from me. They immediately let me know what was important to them (saving for, purchasing, and affording to drive that first car)! “Car Math” was one of the most popular topics. I’m sure each new group will give me new insight into which economic issues are top priority for teens.

Many thanks to our Advisory Council members including Kip Burke of American Express, Gary Dawley of Independent Bank, Steve Wilson of Alpena Agency, and Tom LaCross, attorney, for their support and guidance in narrowing our focus, and to Dave Eger from Alpena Community College for assisting with our project Evaluation. Our next series of classes will be offered to our teens served by Foster Care in the Alpena area. They will be scheduled so that the students can complete the course by the end of the school year. The more flexible schedule of summer will afford me the opportunity to present programs for the Gaylord and West Branch areas.

For more information about this exciting new program, contact Marilyn Wallen-Program Coordinator at 989-356-4567 Ext. 3011.

Families First of West Branch

Families First of West Branch

Families First of West Branch is finally fully staffed with 3 FF workers, 1 FF supervisor, and 1 office secretary. The FF supervisor returned to full load status in February, having fully recuperated from knee surgery.

In December the office was moved from an upstairs office to a location providing ground floor access. The new office location is 3217 W. M-55 in West Branch. The Families First staff shares this office with the Child & Family Services area foster care worker.

Since the first of the year our FF workers have experienced almost 100% utilization. Each worker carries two cases at a time and most usually has had only two days between closing one case and opening another. The FF Supervisor has taken two cases since returning to full duty.

One of FF of West Branch goals for FY05 is to get to know the Department of Human Services' workers and provide them with an overview of our services. As of this date the FF staff has met with Iosco, Gladwin, and Arenac DHS workers.

Another goal for FY05 is to develop a better awareness of the dynamics of suicide and enhance staff's suicide intervention skills. To accomplish this goal, a FF trainer has been contracted to provide training on "Teen Suicide". This was held on April 21.

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Even Start

Even Start

Northeast MI Even Start is a family literacy program serving Alpena, Alcona and Montmorency Counties. We have seen many exciting developments in the last year. We have had our participants take 18 tests in this last school year by eleven different participants (the GED has five different test portions) and have had a diploma completion in the last month. It's always amazing to see the shift when a learner passes their first test, because for so many, tests were an aggravation in school. We also had great success with our Learner's Groups. These are groups that are focused on having participants enjoy the learning process. Groups held so far have included Poetry, Photography, Book Discussion, and Scrap Booking. Early childhood education activities are also offered during these meetings to enable parents to bring their children with them. Our program continues to be filled with a waiting list. To be eligible for our program each family must have: a parent who hasn't completed their GED or high school diploma, a child birth through age seven, and residence in Alpena, Alcona or Montmorency County.

Hope House

Hope House Program Update

Since the beginning of the year, we have hired three part-time Treatment Specialists (Lisa Cook, Karl Kleve, and Tabetha Kierzek) in an effort to give some much needed time off to our dedicated staff! Our search for a new cook continues, when hired, he/she will be using a new menu that was developed by a registered dietician.

We are currently at full-capacity, having had two releases and four admissions since January. We are anticipating two releases at the end of the school year, one of which will be entering a Child & Family foster care home. Our residents are actively volunteering and attending community events, including a painting class at Home Depot. They are currently fascinated with crocheting and knitting, and we have been getting several donations of supplies and time from individuals and businesses. Bev Sparling has been especially helpful and we are grateful for her patience and energy.

Jane Wood and Jennifer Snyder were recently guests on "Talk of the Town." They discussed the Hope House program and brought a bit of comedy to the morning line-up at WBKB. Alan is threatening to show our tape at the All Staff Meeting...I think Jane hid it in the house somewhere.

Lastly, we are planning a Luau for the residents on the last day of school. We will have a cookout, hawaiian music, leis, and a friendly game of volleyball between staff and residents at Hope House. But shhhhhh...it's a surprise!

4C Update

Child & Family Services Community Coordinated Child Care (4C) continues to offer recruitment activities, assistance, and professional development opportunities to potential and current providers. In the few months that have passed since 4C staff transitioned to a new database offered by NACCRRRA (National Association for Child Care Resource and Referral), our goals for implementing the system have been achieved. We have found an increase in the speed, convenience and accuracy of referrals. For the near future we have added the goals of streamlining the system to fit our needs and also entering into NACCRRRA's accreditation process. Becoming accredited through NACCRRRA will require thorough self-evaluation and will give us a chance to showcase the excellent quality of our services.

If you have ever wondered how one office is able to serve nine counties across a very wide-spread area of Northeast Michigan, 4C staff will attest that outreach efforts have been very worth their while. 4C On-Site Coordinators (OSCs) have served their purpose very well; that is, they take many of our services directly to outlying sites so that parents and providers have a "local" person to refer to. While each of our five OSCs are very busy fulfilling their responsibilities and traveling between two counties, they always find time to personalize their services to meet a wide range of existing needs. Some examples of outreach on the part of OSCs have been assisting with Family Fun Fair events, offering tailored information about developmentally appropriate practices in child care, and hosting monthly meetings of child care providers which feature various topics.

4C Futures Training Staff recently offered several types of training to providers in our area. January's BASIC Training (15-hour Series) took place in Rose City. In March C&FS 4C joined with three other 4C offices (Alma, Saginaw, and Traverse City) to host our annual Spring Provider Retreat. The retreat included three training choices: Infant & Toddler Training (15-hour Series), Inclusive Child Care (15-hour Series), and "Exploring with Children" (10-hour Advanced Series). Throughout the weekend, providers received current research-based information, learned new skills, and enjoyed the beauty of Roscommon's Higgins Lake. Our trainings are open to licensed providers, relative care providers/aids, parents, and many early childhood professionals.



**Child &
Family
Services**

Child Welfare News

The Child Welfare Program has been lucky to have no staff turnover since the last newsletter (knock on wood!). Our existing staff is as follows:

- Cliff McKelvey - Foster Care Caseworker based in West Branch
- Diana Boyd - Foster Care Caseworker based in Gaylord
- Madelene Wirgau - Foster Care Caseworker based in Alpena
- Rachel Burke - Foster Care Caseworker based in Alpena
- Marci Sample - Adoption Specialist
- Kelli Sumerix - Adoption Specialist and Foster Home Licensing Worker
- Debra Smith - Foster Home Licensing Worker

Foster care staff are busy preparing many of the youth on their caseload for Independent Living. A bit later this spring, we will be providing the Financial Literacy Program for those teens that are aging out of foster care. We are very excited to be able to provide this great program in order to better prepare our youth for life in the grown up world!

Our program is in the middle of strategic planning that we hope will enhance the services we provide to children and families, as well as point us in new directions to better meet the ever-changing needs of the children we serve. We have found that the children being referred to our program tend to be older, with multiple special needs. We need to enhance our internal services in order to better meet these needs.

Our agency has also been involved in the Family to Family initiative that is being introduced across the state. This model, as provided by the Casey Foundation, stresses the importance of team decision making and maintaining children in their communities when out of home placement is necessary. This new initiative will require an increase in our targeted recruitment of foster homes, as well as providing new training to foster parents about this model. We look forward to the enhancements that this program will provide for the children and families we serve.

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Mark Your Calendars!

Come to JJ's Awesome Acres, 1120 U.S. 23 N., Father's Day Weekend. Once again Jerry & Gailyn Reed have graciously agreed to host our Family Fun(d) Day.

On Saturday, June 18th we will have our annual Fundraiser, CFS Family Fun(d) Day, 10:00 - 9:00, with miniature golf, dunk tank, concessions and silent auction. JJ's usual fun activities; bumper boats, go carts and arcade games will also be available at their usual prices. This is the primary fundraiser for the agency and your support is vital to our success. This event celebrates the importance of fathers in the lives of children. Come out and join in the family fun activities. JJ's will be open, their normal business hours.

THANK YOU TO JJ'S AWESOME ACRES FOR ONCE AGAIN GENEROUSLY AGREEING TO HOST OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER!

Child Welfare

Child & Family Services Fun(d) Day



Child & Family Services of Northeast Michigan, Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Thank You

We wish to thank the following individuals and organizations for their continued support:

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Michael & Debbie Wojda
Sanda and Lee Hall

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Karen Richards:

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Knights of Columbus

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