



CHILDREN'S AID  
AND FAMILY SERVICES



Building Brighter Futures  
Since 1899

# IMPACT

2020

## Helping Even More Vulnerable People

Last summer, officials from the New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities approached Children's Aid and Family Services' CEO, Joanne Mandry, with an opportunity to bring our mission to even more people. The decision had been made to close the state's largest provider of group homes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Based on our reputation for excellence in caring for those we serve, the state asked us to assume the management of eight group homes in Passaic County over an eight-week time period.

"I was confident we could do this in such a short timeframe because of our team," says Joanne Mandry, President & CEO. "Everyone who works here is deeply invested in the success of the agency. And helping people with special needs is what we do every day."

The project had its challenges. For instance, the families weren't familiar with Children's Aid, and agency staff needed to learn about the new clients and their unique needs. Additionally, the agency needed to interview and hire staff quickly. "The staff that made the transition to Children's Aid is very dedicated to the clients and their success," says Melinda Iannarone-Geraghty, Administrator, Disability Support Services. "They want to learn about

our success in running group homes and we, in turn, have learned from them. They've been a huge help in teaching us about the clients."



Everyone who works here is deeply invested in the success of the agency. And helping people with special needs is what we do every day.

— Joanne Mandry,  
Children's Aid President & CEO

### Behavioral and Medical Support Make a Big Difference

After assessing the group homes, Children's Aid staff determined that, in order to provide the best possible care for all residents, they needed to reduce the number of residents in some of the larger homes and move some of them to other agency group homes. The behavioral support team, which is led by Lisa Berkowitz, a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst, was expanded to provide support to our residents and staff. "Every resident has a personalized motivational plan in place, and the behavioral team provides training to the staff," says Lisa. "We constantly ask, 'how do we keep the residents happy, healthy and safe?' We are there to help the residents, and we work together to give them more choice, teach them responsibility and how to advocate for themselves."



Residents and staff from our Disability Support Services program had fun at the Evening of Wine and Food

# Message from the President and CEO

**W**elcome to the latest issue of **Impact!** Last year was our 120th anniversary and what a year it was! It was full of opportunities for Children's Aid and Family Services to help even more people in the community. As you'll read in the cover story, we were asked by the state of New Jersey to take over the operation of eight group homes in Passaic County for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It was certainly a big challenge, but with everyone pulling together and working hard, we were able to integrate the eight homes into Children's Aid in just eight weeks!

We also expanded our Baby Basics program into Essex County by partnering with several social services agencies. We are now providing baby essentials to an additional 193 low-income families in urgent need.

Also, The Center for Alcohol and Drug Resources is expanding its recovery support in the community. Thanks to funding from the Horizon Foundation of New Jersey and a partnership with the Bergen County Sheriff's Office, our Recovery Specialists are meeting

with people suffering from an opioid use disorder in the Bergen County Jail. Additionally, the Support Team for Addiction Recovery has expanded by 50% to provide 60 individuals with a year of recovery support. You will read more about The Center's work with the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office in this issue of Impact.



Joanne E. Mandry, President and CEO

I am extremely proud of our employees and grateful to all of you for your belief in our mission. We couldn't fill these needs in the community without your help!

**Joanne E. Mandry**  
President and CEO

## Helping Even More Vulnerable People (Continued)

Many of the residents have chronic medical conditions; some are unable to speak and tell the staff when they aren't feeling well. Our medical team, led by Ama Baffoe, Senior Nurse Case Manager, provides support to the residents and advocates for their wellbeing. The team teaches the staff how to use adaptive equipment, dispense medication and provide guidance on special diets, as well as provides training about common illnesses. Ama started her career as a Direct Support Professional working with individuals with special needs, and she ensures that "the staff is in tune with the clients' needs."

### Community Support Critical to Success

Our goal is to help people with disabilities lead lives of possibilities, and we can only provide high quality services and programs with the help of our supporters. "Their generosity provides our clients with a level of community engagement that is unique and that they haven't had in a long time," says Donna Kennedy, Senior Vice President, Disability Support Services. "The residents are much more active since the transition. They go on day trips, to dinner and run errands, all of which help them build

communication skills and become more independent and confident."

Adds Joanne: "More than doubling the number of group homes we operate was a formidable challenge. But our donors' belief in our work helped make this opportunity a reality. We are so grateful that we can help even more people with special needs to lead lives of dignity and purpose."



Hakeem and his mother, Pamela, at our Disability Support Services family BBQ.

# Can You Foster a Child or Teen?

**C**hildren's Aid and Family Services always has a need for dedicated and caring individuals to become foster parents. With a combined experience of over 100 years, our foster care team has extensive knowledge about the children in our care and the support that foster parents need to be successful. In this issue of Impact, members of our team shared the questions that prospective parents frequently ask.

## **Q. What is Therapeutic Foster Care?**

**A.** Foster care is the temporary placement of a child with a family outside of his or her own home. Therapeutic foster care is a higher level of care than traditional foster care because the children have suffered trauma as a result of abuse and neglect. They need additional support, such as therapy and sometimes medication management.

## **Q. I have birth children. Can I still foster?**

**A.** Yes! However, we stress that this is a commitment for the entire family, and everyone has to be involved in the decision from the beginning.

## **Q. How old are the children?**

**A.** The children range in age from 8 – 18, however, we have a real need for foster parents for teenagers. At this age, there are many important turning points at which a teen needs guidance, help, and a patient and stable presence.

## **Q. What kind of support does Children's Aid provide?**

**A.** We work closely with our foster parents from the moment they decide to foster with us. At first, that involves a home study process, and it is during this period that some people realize they may not be ready to foster full time. Instead, they may consider a lesser commitment to a child in need and become a mentor or even a respite parent (an individual who cares for the children when foster parents need some time off).

For those who decide to foster full-time, we emphasize that they are part of a team taking care of the child and as such have several sources of support, including the case manager, clinician and program administrator. Our team has over 100 years combined experience working with vulnerable children and families, and we are available 24/7 to provide guidance. This is especially helpful as it's not unusual for foster parents to encounter a new situation with their foster child. We also host monthly trainings to help build skills

around behavior management and life skills, as well as friendships among our foster parents.

## **Q. What traits do a successful foster parent have?**

**A.** Our children have endured multiple moves, neglect and abuse and our parents are well aware that fostering is about the children's needs. As such, they are a consistent, stable presence in the child's life and want to give the child a safe, caring home. Sometimes it takes a while for a child to trust but this doesn't deter the parents from being there day after day.

*You can help a vulnerable child! If you'd like to learn more about becoming a Therapeutic Foster Parent — or know someone who would — please call our Family Recruiter at 201-740-7049.*



*Treatment Home dinner.*



*Some of our therapeutic foster parents and staff at the holiday party.*

# The Center Collaborates with Law Enforcement

## Q&A

Since its inception 40 years ago, The Center for Alcohol and Drug Resources has worked with local law enforcement, and the collaboration has increased considerably in response

to the opioid epidemic. In 2016, the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office and The Center worked together to create the innovative Opioid Overdose Recovery Program. Since then, The Center has partnered with local police departments and the Bergen County Sheriff's Office on several initiatives to help people suffering from the disease of addiction who are in need of recovery support. In this issue of Impact, we asked the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office to discuss its collaboration with The Center.

### **Q. Why has the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office partnered with The Center for Alcohol and Drug Resources?**

**A.** In 2016, then-Acting Prosecutor Gurbir Grewal recognized that the number of heroin and opioid-related overdoses and fatalities were significant and increasing.

In an effort to address this issue in a novel way, the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office collaborated with Bergen New Bridge Medical Center to set aside a number of detox beds for individuals who were arrested on drug charges and battling addiction. Members of a multiagency task force arrested individuals whom they observed buying heroin and presented the option of one of those detox beds.

The BCPO recognized, however, that there was a significant hurdle in convincing someone to take advantage of an offer of treatment. The solution was a modification of an already existing program — the Opioid Overdose Recovery Program (OORP).

In this new initiative, the peer recovery specialists from The Center of Alcohol and Drug Resources would meet with an individual upon arrest and motivate them to enter treatment.

Additionally, this partnership has been expanded to other scenarios. Through the Heroin Addiction Recovery Team (HART), individuals can walk into a police department, turn over drugs and paraphernalia, speak with a peer recovery specialist, and be connected to treatment.

### **Q. What value does The Center bring to law enforcement's efforts about substance abuse prevention education and recovery support?**

**A.** In addition to the partnerships within recovery support services, The Center has been a critical partner in our prevention and education efforts. Each year for the past six years, the BCPO has presented to more than 10,000 ninth grade students across Bergen County. BCPO's Narcotics Task Force discuss the most common pathways to addiction, and peer recovery specialists from The Center share their personal experiences with addiction. We believe that this combination of voices is an effective way to reach young people before they are introduced to opioids.

Since 2016:

9 operations completed

300 individuals encountered

This model has been adopted in some form in all 21 New Jersey counties.



### **Q. Are there specific outcomes and impact that have been achieved because of this partnership?**

**A.** This partnership has changed the way our communities treat individuals struggling with addiction. It has given hundreds of Bergen County residents who are suffering from the disease of addiction the opportunity to connect to treatment. It has also raised awareness of the heroin and opioid crisis, which is the leading cause of accidental deaths in the United States.

We know that the disease of addiction cannot be cured through arrest and incarceration and that a connection to treatment is the only way to disrupt the cycle. This partnership has served as the model for how law enforcement, government, treatment centers, and partner agencies can work together to help those struggling with addiction to get to treatment.

# Always Something at STRIVE Day Program

There's always something fun and interesting going on at STRIVE Day Program. With a commercial kitchen, sensory room, and space dedicated to life skills, art, music and games, our members are active and engaged. The STRIVE team held several special events for its members in 2019.



Angie and Raphaella looking good at prom!

## PROM



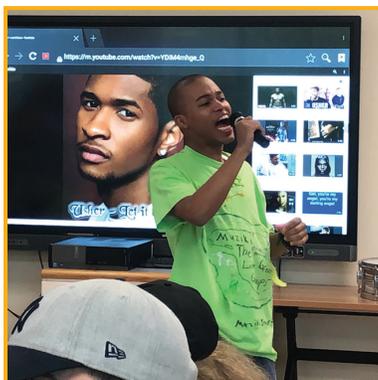
STRIVE members celebrated prom, most for the very first time. A local company even donated a limousine so our members could arrive in style.

## SPA DAY



Students from Empire Beauty School gave STRIVE members a spa day. Betsy loved her manicure!

## TALENT SHOW



Muziki sings Usher at the talent show.

## HALLOWEEN



Sean and Neel celebrate Halloween.

# Grants Update

Children's Aid and Family Services wishes to thank the many generous organizations and foundations that provided grants to support its programs for vulnerable children and families over the past year.

BD

CME Group Community Foundation

Crane Foundation, Inc.

Gift of Life America Fund

Greater Alliance Hopes & Dreams Foundation for Children

Greater BERGEN Realtors® Care Foundation

Greater Newark Holiday Fund

The Healthcare Foundation of NJ, founded by the Jewish Community

The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey

The Hyde and Watson Foundation

The Kaplen Foundation

National Mah Jongg League Foundation

Novartis Corporation

Nordstrom, Inc.

Orange Orphan Society

OritaniBank Charitable Foundation

The Price Family Foundation

St. Elizabeth's Church

The Lillian Schenck Foundation

The Gertrude E. Skelly Charitable Foundation

TD Charitable Foundation

The TJX Foundation, Inc.

The Valley Hospital Foundation

The Edward W. & Stella C. Van Houten Memorial Fund

Wells Fargo

# Building Independent Futures



The young moms from Zoe's Place and teens leaving foster care are provided with a dedicated mentor for five years.

**F**our years ago, Children's Aid and Family Services began offering "Mobility Mentoring" to our teenagers that "age out" of foster care and the young mothers served by Zoe's Place, thanks to a generous grant from the Price Family Foundation. The program partners a dedicated mentor with clients so that, over time, they develop the maturity and skills needed to achieve and maintain economic independence. Tisha Mender, our Mobility Mentoring Specialist, is a professionally trained coach who helps our teens assess their strengths and weaknesses and set personal goals. Most of the participants in the program don't have family support, and they are often on their own at a heartbreakingly young age. "This is a unique program in that we provide mentoring for five years, and continue working with the participants after they leave Zoe's Place or foster care," says Tisha.

The program is built on the five pillars to success: family stability, physical and mental well-being, financial management, educational attainment, employment and career, and works with the participants to build their life skills in each area. For example, Briana and her baby were homeless when they first came to live at Zoe's Place. Briana began working with Tisha and set goals of obtaining a job in the health care field and affording her own apartment. Tisha worked with her to enroll in school to become a Certified Medical Assistant. Child care was provided so she could focus on her studies. After graduating, Briana started working part-time at a local hospital. Eventually, she moved in with another graduate of Zoe's Place and began working full-time. Last year, she was promoted and had saved enough money to move with her son into her own apartment. She's currently studying health care administration with the goal of earning her bachelor's degree.

The program started with 13 young people and has grown to 32. Of the first group, 92% now have their own apartments, which is an enormous accomplishment. "There are so many obstacles to achieving these goals because most of their basic needs aren't being met when we first start working with them," says Tisha. "But we break down their goals into achievable steps so they don't get overwhelmed. We give them the resources and tools to manage life, reach their goals and create self-sufficiency."

*We need volunteers to help with resume writing and interviewing skills. Please call our Volunteer Resource Specialist at 201-740-7104 if you can help.*

## Baby Basics Expands to Help More Families

**D**id you know that 1 out of 3 families struggle to afford diapers? For more than 25 years, the Baby Basics program has provided free nutritional formula and diapers to low-income working families in Bergen County. Recently, the program began partnering with social service agencies in Essex County to serve even more families. In 2019, we distributed more than 215,000 diapers and helped 340 families keep their babies healthy, happy and dry.

Gabriella, Tyrell and their son Anthony are one of the families receiving this vital assistance. After suffering a stroke that left her partially paralyzed when Anthony was four months

old, Gabriella could no longer work. With their income cut in half and unexpected medical bills, the family was struggling financially. A friend told her about Baby Basics. "It's a great program," Gabriella says. "I feel sad that I can't work and contribute financially. Having diapers for the baby has helped relieve our stress."

*You can help by hosting a diaper drive! This is a meaningful service project for Girl/Boy Scouts, Rotary Clubs, corporations, schools and religious or faith-based organizations. You can download a Baby Basics toolkit at [www.cafsnj.org](http://www.cafsnj.org).*

# VOLUNTEERS WANTED



Volunteers from TD Bank put their green thumbs to good use at Zoe's Place.



Volunteers from Ernst Young painted one of our group homes.

**A**re you interested in giving of your time and talent? Children's Aid and Family Services needs your help! We have a wide range of volunteer activities available, including:

## Recreational Volunteer for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

- Share your talents with the amazing men and women in our STRIVE day program. Opportunities include pet therapy, yoga/exercise, cooking/baking, martial arts, pottery, photography, sewing/weaving and computers.

## Tutoring

- Help children in foster care realize their educational goals through one-on-one tutoring with subject-based lessons.

## Mentoring

- Be a positive and consistent role model for a child in foster care; requires an 18-month commitment and completion of Mentor Training.

## Baby Basics Volunteer

- Assist with bundling, distributing or hosting a drive for diapers and other baby supplies.

## Life Skills Volunteer

- Teach "life skills" classes to our children in therapeutic foster care or young mothers at Zoe's Place, such as how to create a budget, dressing appropriately for a job interview, and health/nutrition.

## Office Assistant/Admin

- Act as a clerical volunteer doing tasks such as mailings, reference checks, and using Microsoft Office. Our administrative offices are located in Paramus, Fair Lawn, and South Orange.

## Depot Sales Associate

- The Depot is the largest all women's exchange in North America — volunteer to staff this gift/craft shop in Midland Park; requires one 3.5 hour shift every two weeks.

## Special Events Volunteer

- Help plan a special event or celebration for members of STRIVE, our day program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Examples include a Halloween party, holiday party or themed event/Prom.

**Please call our Volunteer and Resource Specialist at 201-740-7104 if you'd like more information.**



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**Call us at 201.261.2800**



Our **Mission** is to strengthen families and empower individuals — children and adults alike – to reach their fullest potential. Motivated by compassion and in partnership with the community, we make positive lasting differences in the lives of those we serve. We provide high-quality, innovative services to children, adults, and their families that advance social, educational and emotional development and well-being.