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Director's Message- Lyle Dorr

In the past several months we have gone through a few changes. The most significant was our move away from foster care and toward adoptions of youth whose parent's rights have been terminated. James Juchartz (pronounced "you carts") will provide more detail of this great opportunity for the child welfare department in his article. Also, see updates on our other programs by their respective supervisors in this newsletter.

We are maintaining a Specialized Treatment Foster Care Program in the three county region of Iosco, Ogemaw and Oscoda. In collaboration with Ausable Valley Community Mental Health we are helping to bring youth with relatively severe emotional disturbances back to the community from residential placement. Though it is a small program, treating 6-9 youth in a year, it has been very successful since its inception 18 months ago. Youth from the program are being reunited with family or entering less intense foster care placement upon graduation. Everyone has been very pleased with the results, especially the youth and their families.

Hope House, our residential program for court referred girls ages 12-17, continues to do well. Most significant is our progress toward a new treatment facility for the girls. Alpena Community College donated the old Catholic Central High School (their former East Campus) to Word of Life Baptist Church last summer. They in turn have offered to partner with us and donate the two classroom wings (15,000 sq. ft.) adjacent to the gymnasium that they have renovated into a youth center. We are currently engaged in an energy analysis and a renovation funding research phase. The agency has \$250,000 currently available for this \$1.2 - \$1.5 million dollar project. It is hoped that the CFS Board will be able to vote in June to receive the property.

Even in this tough economy there are many positive events on the horizon for Child & Family as we seek to help the most vulnerable children and their families throughout Northeast Michigan. Thank you all for your support on many levels throughout the year.

Lyle

Thank You for Caring!

A few weeks prior to Christmas a caller asked if she and her brother could provide Christmas presents to one of the youth in care. It was very timely as we had a teenage girl just entering our Specialized Foster Care Program who had missed getting into our annual Flight of Good Cheer Program for Christmas gifts. What a positive experience for this youth entering an unfamiliar program at the holidays. The kindness and generosity of people in Northeast Michigan, despite these hard economic times, amazes me!

Child Welfare – James Juchartz



As we move from one exciting journey into the next, let us look back upon a noteworthy purpose of the Child welfare program and that is foster care. Over the past few years, picking up the telephone and hearing “I need a foster home for a child ten minutes ago” was to say

the least a daunting moment, but quite rewarding. You see, the CW team would immediately drop everything and move into action with note pads and pencils in hand asking questions, sifting through faxed and transcribed information about the child, which at times was very vague, tracking down foster parents through cell, home, and work phones, reorganizing daily and after hours schedules, running to the nearest store to purchase clothing for the child when needed, and on one occasion, decorating a birthday cake and having a birthday party. Yes, children have been known to be removed from home on their special day. This is just a mere fraction of what occurs in foster care and the emotional difficulties of today’s youth tend to far outweigh those of yesteryear and the ole mighty green back still controls what we can do to help, yet a dollar can only be stretched so far and this is the preamble to moving into another new and challenging direction (leaving behind foster care) and this is adoption.

One of the most fundamental goals in child welfare is to provide permanency for children who yearn for a place to call home, an environment where they feel safe and secure, and a warm bed to cozy into at night.

Beginning in latter 2007, the State began privatizing all adoption services, which is a tremendous shift in child welfare.

Let’s take 2007 statistics where CFS conducted approximately 7-adoptions. Today we are servicing 27-cases, primarily among two workers. Three former foster care workers have recently undergone three weeks of state adoption training and are currently beginning to assume, at an even pace, adoption cases. The forecast is that throughout 2009, we will be modifying and building upon the adoption program gearing for a first full year of adoption services targeted for 2010, with an estimate of conducting 90-adoptions throughout the year. Did I mention that the financial forecasts have our CFO jumping for joy?

Some thing’s that have already occurred are a new fully equipped office in West Branch with two staff, expansion of our catchment area to include Bay County and the U.P., and upcoming intensive training for agency staff entailing PRIDE Train the Trainer (Parent Resource Information Development and Education), a 27-hour core curriculum which will be provided to all adoptive families assisting them with raising children. There is so much excitement about this new direction. When I walk through this building, I am met with so much invigoration for this reconstruction by this agency’s entire staff that it has provided a new revitalized focus for our future.

CFS Family Fun(d) Day

Jerry & Gailynn Reed have graciously agreed to host our annual fundraiser again this year. On Saturday, June 20th from 10 am to 8 pm at JJ’s Awesome Acres we will be providing lots of fun activities for families to do together.

Even though we know the economy will be a factor this year, we are looking forward to celebrating families with all of you. We will again be having our silent auction, concessions, and golf, as well as, the usual fun activities at JJ’s Awesome Acres; bumper boats, go carts, arcade games etc..

We appreciate all our faithful sponsors, especially those of you who have already contacted us with your commitment to supporting us this year.

Mark you calendars for Saturday, June 20th.

*Have you ever thought of
sharing your love and home
with a child in need?*



Interested in adopting a child?

Contact Child And Family
Services Of Northeast Michigan
Locally at 989-356-4567 or
1-800-779-0396

4C News -Robin Benson-Clark



4C has been working steadily along on an extension, anticipating a new contract opportunity with the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC). The ECIC has been doing a lot of research and surveying into how to improve child care services throughout the state. Our 6-month extension turned into a full year

extension while they complete this, and will last until September of this year. We are anxious and excited to see the changes they will bring to our mission of improving the quality of child care! The Request for Proposals (RFP) is expected to come out prior to the end of spring.

In the meantime, we have been busy fulfilling our contract requirements and developing new opportunities in training. Last calendar year, 2008, our 4C office trained 330 child care providers. This included 69 providers trained through contract funding and 261 providers trained in outside contract trainings. These are offered through outside grant funds and provider fees. Topics included mandated reporting, creative play, SIDS, sign language, Foundations of Child Care, emergency preparedness, math activities, Administrator courses, music and movement, and so much more. Our training has been offered in classrooms, online and through correspondence in order to meet the needs of all providers, including those in very rural areas.

Also through our contract funded training is a program that assists child care centers and providers in becoming accredited. Accreditation is the gold standard in child care, ensuring that high quality standards are met in all areas. It is an expensive and lengthy process for programs, and our program assists them in finding scholarships and working through the criteria. Two centers, one in Gaylord and one in Indian River, are involved in this program. They are working their way through accreditation with the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

In May, we will begin a new adventure with our staff! Five of the nine staff of 4C will be trained to be Safe Sitter Trainers. The Safe Sitter program will be taught in counties where the program is not already offered. Safe Sitter is a national program for young people ages 11 and up who want to gain skills and knowledge in the area of caring for children. We decided this would be a

good way of helping to ensure that anyone using a "babysitter" could at least know that training is available for them. This will be offered as a fee based program.

Child care referrals are somewhat down this quarter, but we anticipated that as parents experience lay-offs and work reductions. However, we expect those to return to average as parents head back out to look for work and go back to work. We are busy trying to recruit child care providers in areas where they are needed in our nine county area, especially for night and weekend care, and for infants in some cases.

I was fortunate to be able to attend the NACCRRA National Policy Symposium entitled, "Getting Child Care on the Right Track," in Washington DC in March of this year. NACCRRA funded one parent from each state to attend the symposium, which over 800 child care resource and referral agency staff from around the country attended. I learned a lot about how the funding streams work from the federal level, how policy and law drives the use of those funds, and ways to advocate for changes in our federal and state systems. Six people from Michigan, including two other 4C directors, the Michigan 4C Association Director, an ECIC staff and a parent, attended and were able to use the information we learned there to strategize in work groups how to improve Michigan's system. Additionally, we were able to use one day to visit Michigan Senators and Representatives to inform them about the issues in Michigan and update them on critical areas of needed change. It was definitely an educational experience!

If you see a 4C staff, pat them on the back! They have been working hard to ensure that 4C services are available to all parents and providers in our nine county region while dealing with many changes in their county offices. I am proud to be able to work with such wonderful people committed to this field, whose passion for what they do outweighs the frustrations of dealing with the challenges we encounter. The 4C staff is a group of individuals that Child and Family Services of NE MI can be proud of!

Hope House - Peggy Krajniak

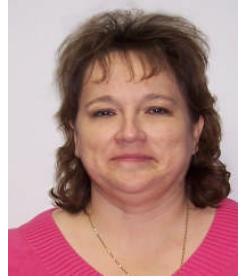
The Hope House girls spent part of their spring break volunteering at Tender care. The girls absolutely love this time with the residents there. They play cards and sing with the people there as well as make crafts with them. When you talk to the girls about this experience they get a big smile on their face. This seems to be a valuable experience for our girls as well as the residents of Tender care. In fact they have asked that our girls try to continue to do an activity with them at least once a month. We are going to make every effort to see that this occurs.

We have also been seeing referrals come in consistently. We are currently at twelve girls with two referrals awaiting court hearings. One more will take us to capacity.

We have graduated a couple of ladies in the last couple of months and have three more getting ready to graduate in June when school ends.

We have some new staff that include: Felonie Keller who is the new Family Worker, Karen Green, Night Staff, and Marcia Vincent, a Treatment Specialist.

The community continues to be very generous with the Hope House program. We have received many monetary donations as well as other kinds of donations. The other donations have included: clothing, hygiene items, food, etc. With the generous donations we are able to provide some extras for the girls such as lunch at Culver's while they were on Spring Break. The girls really had a good week so we rewarded them with lunch compliments of a community donation. The girls really appreciate all the things that they receive. So, A BIG THANK YOU from the entire residents and staff at Hope House.



A Life Changed- Peggy Krajniak

Adrianna came into the Hope House program in February, 2008 as an abuse/neglect exception by the state. When she first came into the program Adrianna was 13 years of age and had seen more in her short life than most of us will see in a lifetime. Adrianna was a victim of abuse and exploitation by her family. She and her brothers were removed from their home abruptly when she was caught with drugs and alcohol in a car with older persons. Adrianna admitted to being addicted to many different drugs that were often supplied to her by her mom and mom's live-in partner. She was even prostituted out for drugs by these same people who claimed to love her.

Adrianna had a rough start when she came into the program. She did not trust anyone, would barely speak, and would never look anyone in the eye. She was interviewed by a detective from the police department investigating her family. At this point Adrianna was suicidal and was placed in a psychiatric hospital for a week.

After much debate the staff at Hope House decided to give Adrianna a second chance in the program. Adrianna came back to the program, no longer suicidal, but still extremely reluctant to trust anyone.

With time and tenacity Adrianna has become a leader in her group. She is not afraid to speak up any more, she has a stable home (with a relative) to go to post Hope House, and gets to see her brothers often. Her parent's rights have been terminated. Adrianna is celebrating her 15th birthday soon and has come a long way from the frightened child that she once was. Adrianna is a beautiful young lady that will look you in the eye when she talks to you and will now even laugh at herself when she does something funny. Adrianna has said that she feels like she can finally be a kid, something that she never had before. Adrianna will graduate the Hope House program in June and will move into her Aunt and Uncle's home and begin her new life.

Staff Spotlight – Linda Eberline



Linda Eberline is the Treatment Coordinator for our Specialized Treatment Foster Care Program. Linda is married to Joseph, they live in Greenbush and have two children. Linda's 26 year old daughter Lindsey Brewer is married, has three children, and lives near Perry, Michigan. Lindsey just gave birth to Kaylin Rose Brewer on March 14th. Joe has one 18 year old son, Bryce who lives in California with his mother.

In her spare time, Linda likes to fish, which is how she met her husband. He has since also introduced her to bow hunting whitetail deer which as most who know her can vouch; has become a passion. Although they enjoy the same hunting and fishing hobbies, they often do them separately and then get back together to compare stories.

Linda and Joe have a beloved pet Sadie, a buff colored white Labrador Retriever. Sadie loves to go everywhere with Joe. Last year Joe bought a license plate sporting a white lab and had Sadie's name embossed across the front. It is true about a dog being man's best friend!

Linda earned her Bachelors of Arts from Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant, she has worked for Child & Family Services of Northeast MI Inc for over nine years. Linda says she "enjoys the small agency attitude/approach where the employee are treated as a people versus just staff members."

When asked what she has found most challenging about her job she stated, "I worked for Families First for eight years, so I am used to being on-call, but the challenge is the number of calls I received per day with this new position. Within a month I maxed out cell phone calling plan in with another month they almost maxed out the biggest calling plan centennial wireless had available.

My biggest challenge now is making sure that my foster care homes remain full (referrals) and the foster parents are happy. The program is new and the local agencies are not used to using it as a resource. Also, the referral counties are experiencing financial struggles themselves, making it difficult to afford placing youths in treatment programs." The foster care parents are a great group of people to work for who truly care about the youths placed in their homes.

In response to what she finds most rewarding about her position, she said "Over the last four months I have come to believe that this particular program is one of the few I've seen that is extremely effective with juvenile delinquent/emotionally involved teenagers. It is very rewarding to see youth who might have continued to have problems in the criminal justice system actually improve their behaviors and their relationships with their families. I also enjoy being able to work at my job from home. Although I know that I work more hours than a standard workweek, it is very convenient to be able to start a crock-pot for dinner at 10 a.m. or e-mail at DHS worker at 9 p.m."

When asked about accomplishments, Linda admits she is most proud of her daughter. "She has three beautiful children (grandchildren), one of which has autism and she has done a fantastic job of raising all of them and providing a healthy and positive home for her family. I am also proud of my husband and how well he is doing at taking care of us. Finally, I am proud of where I am in life and my accomplishments. I love our home and our lifestyle and am proud of the fact that we're mostly debt-free."

I just want people to know "that the Specialized Treatment Foster Care program can be a very successful program that can truly help troubled teens work through their problems and give them a chance at having a successful and productive life.



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