



Connection

CEO MESSAGE

As I write this, it's May (you'll probably get this in June), which is Mental Health Awareness month. It seems every month of the year is used to bring awareness to a cause, and that's great! There are many issues that need our attention. At Family Services, mental health is always at the forefront of our awareness.

Many of our programs directly address mental health as the central challenge our clients face (such as our Counseling Center, the Samaritans, and our Suicide & Crisis Lifeline). In reality, every program we offer addresses the mental health of those we serve. Parents cannot be there for their children, students cannot succeed in school, and older adults cannot continue to live independently if they don't have the emotional resources necessary to cope with life's challenges.

At the beginning of the month on May 9, we gathered with 150+ guests at our annual gala. While this event was fun and celebratory, everyone there learned about the impact we're having on mental health and quality of life more broadly. We are so grateful to everyone who joined us and gave so generously so that we may continue this important work!

Warmly,

Elizabeth Sweeney
Chief Executive Office



Liz Sweeney (L) and guests at our recent "Springtime in Paris" gala.

WHO WAS YOUR MENTOR?

Did you have someone growing up – a teacher, a coach, a neighbor – who had a positive impact on your life? Do you know that not all children benefit from these "natural mentors"? In fact, the more risk factors a child has in their life (growing up in poverty, trouble in school, language barriers), the less likely they are to naturally connect with an adult role model who can be a positive influence. But, those are the kids that need mentors the most!

Today, there are over 80 children on Family Services' mentoring programs' wait lists. That's 80 kids in need of a...

(cont. inside)



Family Services' mentor, Romona (L) with her graduating mentee, Anaya (R).

PARENTING PROGRAMS

Family Services' **Family & Community Resource Center (FCRC)**, located at our satellite office at One Union Street in Lawrence, is launching some new parenting programs in the coming months!

To meet the needs of parents, address the struggles they face and build on their strengths, Family Services' FCRC will be offering four parenting groups over the coming year. Two of them (**The Parenting Journey** and **Nurturing Fathers**) have been offered at the FCRC for a while and will continue because of their value and impact. New to the menu of programs will be **Parenting in America** and **Active Parenting**.

"These two new curricula help the parents deal with the struggles of raising kids through each developmental phase," says **Betsy Green, Family Programs Director**, *"and adds an important component of parenting across cultures, which will help lots of parents who are new to this community."*



As you can see from these photos, there's even more going on at the FCRC. In addition to parenting, the FCRC provides:

- Assessment and family support planning and access to basic needs.
- Peer-to-peer support groups for teens, parents and grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Children's play groups.
- Life skills workshops such as bullying prevention, financial literacy and behavior management.
- Cultural, social, recreational, and community service activities, including holiday gatherings and community celebrations.
- Information, resource and referral services.

The FCRC is implemented in partnership with the **Department of Children and Families**. To reach the FCRC, call 978-975-8800.



Samaritans Awarded Grant

Family Services' was recently awarded a grant from the Massachusetts **Department of Public Health** (DPH) as part of its state-wide effort to reduce the incidence of suicidal ideation, behavior, and deaths in Massachusetts.

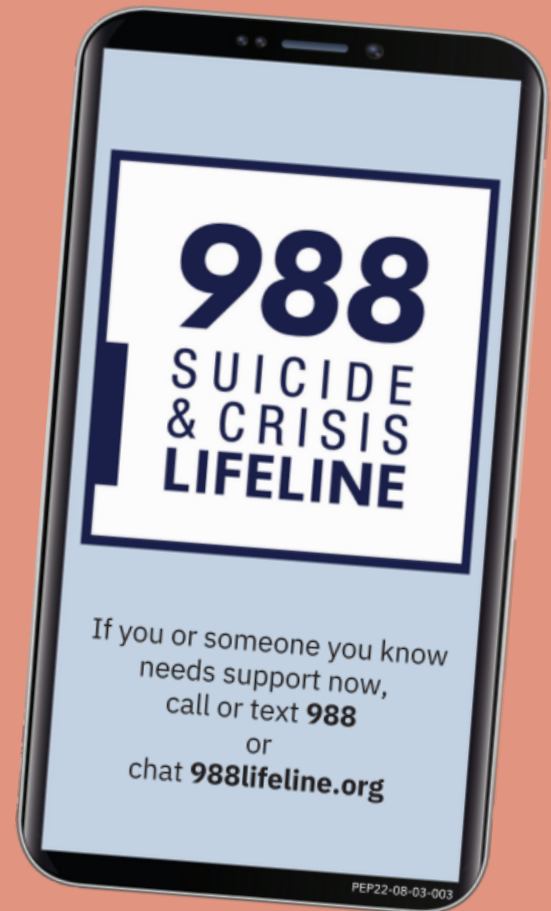
"Too many people are struggling with behavioral health issues that can contribute to an increased risk of suicide for some. Suicide is preventable, and DPH has made it a priority to provide funding and reduce barriers to evidence-based interventions so residents can access the help they need when and where they need it," said **Public Health Commissioner Robbie Goldstein, MD, PhD.**

With this grant funding, Family Services will expand the services provided by its **Samaritans of Merrimack Valley** program. The Samaritans will provide additional support groups for survivors of suicide loss and suicide attempt survivors, trainings for individuals who interact with at-risk populations, and initiate new services specifically for LGBTQIA+ folks.

"We are very excited about the new programs we will be implementing to expand our scope of services," said **Debbie Helms, Samaritans Program Director.** *"This grant allows us to reach traditionally under-served/historically marginalized groups as well as provide much needed support services to the growing number of people affected by suicide."*

This funding builds on Family Services other work in the field of mental health and suicide prevention, including the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**. The Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to those experiencing emotional distress and/or thoughts of suicide 24/7, 365 days a year via phone, chat, and text. The Lifeline can be reached by dialing **988** or 978-327-6607.

For more information on the Samaritans services, please call 978-327-6671, email Samaritans@fsmv.org, or visit Stop-Suicide.org.



SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEEDS THIS NUMBER

- Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States.
- 49,476 Americans died by suicide in 2022.
- An estimated 1.6M attempted suicide.

To make sure that the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available for those at-risk in their moment of need, **we need YOU to help spread the word** about 988.

- ☛ Tell your family
- ☛ Tell your friends
- ☛ Tell your colleagues
- ☛ Post it at work
- ☛ Share it on social media

You never know who you might reach who will one day dial those life saving three digits. Thank you for helping spread the word about 988!

On Friday, May 3, **Kathy Faigen**, one of Family Services' dedicated CASA volunteers, was honored with the 2024 **Children's Champion Award**. This award is given to individuals who have made a significant contribution in the areas of child abuse prevention. The event was held in partnership with the **Michael B. Christensen Community & Family Support Center** at **GLCAC**, and the **Exchange Clubs of the Merrimack Valley**.

"Through her outstanding work as a CASA advocate, Kathy has changed the trajectory of children's lives, giving them hope for an unlimited future that they may not otherwise have had," says **CASA Director, Lisa Cioffi, Esq.** Congrats to Kathy on this much deserved recognition!



The CASA team (L to R): Ellen Killam, Irene Bucken, Honoree Kathy Faigen, Lisa Cioffi, Celine Stokes

WHO WAS YOUR MENTOR?

(cont. from page 1) ...caring adult to spend time with. **Will you be that person?** For only a few hours a month YOU can have a life changing impact – and it's fun!

By providing friendship, guidance and support, mentors open doors, inspire confidence and can be that ONE person a child needs to succeed in life. YOU can be this person. Scan below for more information on the mentoring programs of Family Services.

- ☞ **The time is now.**
- ☞ **Make a difference.**
- ☞ **Become a mentor!**



"I wish that hesitant, would-be mentors could feel what we active mentors feel. They would jump in feet first! It really is a great experience for mentors and mentees alike."

~ Ramona, Mentor

TRAININGS AVAILABLE

Do you regularly interact with young people? Do you want to make a difference in the youth mental health crisis? Then these trainings are for YOU!

Family Services is pleased to offer Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) and Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) **FREE** for individuals and groups throughout the region.

QPR is a 2-hour suicide prevention training where participants will learn how to recognize when someone is in crisis and talk with them about getting help.

YMHFA is a 7-hour training for adults who interact with young people that teaches how to help an adolescent

ATTENTION: If you are a teacher, school staff, coach, camp counselor, youth group leader, parent, or any adult who works with or cares about young people, **this training is essential!** (CEUs available for YMHFA)

FREE!

experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge.

Scan QR code to register for upcoming dates:

- Virtual QPR - July 17, 12:00 pm
- Virtual QPR - Aug 19, 2:00 pm
- In person YMHFA - Sep 17, 9:00 am

To schedule a training for your organization, email KPfeiffer@fsmv.org.



STAND & DELIVER

Family Services' **Stand & Deliver** academic mentoring program matches Lawrence students with mentors from four partner companies (**Schneider Electric, Raytheon, Pfizer, and New Balance**) who inspire them to achieve in school and in life. Congratulations to the 70 students and 50 mentors who completed the program this school year! They finished off the school year with some exciting events... the Capstone Celebration, Paint Night, and a College Tour. Read about each here!

PAINT NIGHT



Our students enjoyed a therapeutic paint night at the **Essex Art Center**, where they took inspiration from the captivating works in the gallery. Using the exhibited art as a creative springboard, the students explored their artistic talents and expressed themselves through painting. It was a wonderful evening that highlighted the therapeutic power of art and the power of artistic expression.

CAPSTONE CELEBRATION

Ice cream sundaes, goodie bags, awards...what's not to like? That's what attendees enjoyed at Stand & Deliver's annual school year ending "Capstone" event held on May 21 at the **Greater Lawrence Technical School**. Thank you to **Deb Hult** from **Core Trainings** for delivering such an impactful speech at the event on the importance of recognizing and capitalizing on your own personal strengths.



COLLEGE TOUR

Stand & Deliver students recently had an exciting and educational tour of **Merrimack College**. The visit featured an engaging presentation that provided a comprehensive overview of the college life. The students were inspired and left with even more enthusiasm for higher education and future possibilities.



CELEBRATING FATHERHOOD

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

To register:
scan QR code, or
call 978-975-8800



**SATURDAY, JULY 27,
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

**Family Services' Parking Lot
430 North Canal St.
Lawrence, MA 01840**

A recognition event for the men in our community who provide love, guidance, and support.

FREE & FUN community event for the entire family with FOOD, GAMES, RAFFLES, and the chance to win a \$200 Visa Gift Card! (must be present to win)

Presented by:



In partnership with:



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FSMV.org

Lawrence, MA 01840

430 North Canal Street



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