

Connection

CEO MESSAGE

This fall's newsletter has a lot of news and information focusing on Family Services' work in the field of suicide prevention. This is a topic and an area of work that is, obviously, difficult. It deals with the most unimaginable trauma and grief. And yet, in that work we find hope.

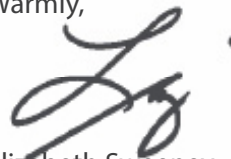
At our annual Walk for Hope, held recently at Andover High School, we were joined by XXX participants who were supported by XXX donors to raise critical funding to support this work. Yes, there were tears as we remembered friends and family that we have lost. And there was hope.

We heard from a mother whose daughter had previously attempted suicide and who now attends our support group for other attempt survivors. In that group she finds empathy like nowhere else. She finds understanding,

common experience, comradery and, most importantly, a sense of purpose and meaning.

Thank you to everyone who joined the Walk, everyone who has shared their story, and everyone who provides hope.

Warmly,



Elizabeth Sweeney
Chief Executive Office



SMALL GIFT...BIG IMPACT

Knowing that so many children may show up to school without the basic supplies to succeed in school, Family Services rallied caring members of the community to make sure every child could enter school with a backpack full of tools for learning. We put out a call for donations, and WOW, did you respond!

With incredible generosity and so many donations, we provided backpacks filled 80 back packs with nearly 400 items, including crayons, markers, colored pencils, highlighters, dry erase markers, pencil boxes, notebooks,

(cont. p.4)



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

2024 Summer Camp

With the generous support of the **Greater Lawrence Summer Fund**, Family Services held a Summer Camp program this year for 60 young people from the City of Lawrence.

For eight weeks, young people ages XX - XX came to Family Services to participate in a great combination of games, trips, and fun activities as well as life skills curricula designed to enhance communication and healthy decision-making skills. "Lots of young people don't have the opportunity to do things that support their health and development and are fun during the summer months," says Jonathan Torres, Youth Development Director at Family Services. "This program does both and gets more popular every year."

Some of the highlights... a trip to the Massachusetts State House, water slide park, water balloon



PARENTING PROGRAMS

Active Parenting of Teens

The dynamics of parenting changes with every generation. But one thing stays the same...parenting teens remains hard! The teen years are when children are finding their voice, establishing independence, and pushing societal and cultural boundaries.

For families struggling with economic insecurity, cultural isolation, and histories of generational trauma navigating these years can be even more challenging. That's why Family Services' Family & Community Resource Center has started providing the "Active Parenting of Teens" curriculum to give parents the knowledge, skills and support they need to navigate these difficult years.

At the end of October, the first class cohort graduated with a new sense of hope and encouragement.

Family Services FCRC is part of a statewide network of Family Resource Centers dedicating to supporting families and preventing child abuse.



Profile of Compassion

Twice a month for 19 years, **Rosemary Heiseler** has volunteered to lead a support group for adults (18+) who have lost a loved-one to suicide. The group, called "Safe Place" provides space for individuals to grieve and find support from peers.



Rosemary came to this volunteer role from personal experience. In 19## she lost her sister to suicide. Ten years later, she lost her mother. "I truly believe that if the Samaritans and its Safe Place support group had been available, my mother could have found the support she needed," said Rosemary. "At the time, no one would talk about a suicide loss, so the grief we experienced was that much more profound."

In addition to facilitating Safe Place, Rosemary has provided individual support to newly bereaved and conducted speaking engagements to raise awareness about suicide prevention and survivor support. "Rosemary's time and compassion has provided much needed comfort and hope to so many," says **Samaritans Director Debbie Helms**. "I think it is safe to say that Rosemary's dedication and empathy has truly saved lives."

Safe Place meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at Saint Michael Parish, 196 Main Street in North Andover. The group is free and confidential. Prior registration is not required.

The Samaritans program is **looking for additional volunteers to facilitate support groups** for suicide loss survivors, suicide attempt survivors, and members of the LGBTQAI+ community. Facilitators will be well trained and supported to lead these peer support groups twice per month.

For more information, email dhelms@fsmv.org or call 978-327-6671.

2024 Walk for Hope

On Saturday, October 19, Family Services Samaritans of Merrimack Valley program had a wonderful **Walk for Hope** and raised over \$23,000! With 155 walkers in attendance and 12 sponsors, the outpouring of support we received for this event far exceeded our expectations and shows that we are making progress to end the stigma around mental health and suicide.

Thank you to our generous event sponsors: **Institution for Savings, Merrimack Valley Credit Union, Velonex Technologies, Windover Constructions, MIKE'S FAMILY, David Electrical Contracting, Kirk & McDonald, CPA's PC, R.C. Lafond Insurance, Anna Jaques Hospital, LMHS PC, and Ironworkers Local #7 Industrial Fund.**

Shout out to the biggest event fundraisers: **Linda Caruso, Tim Newman, John Rile, and Bill Alley!**



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

SMALL GIFT...BIG IMPACT

(cont. from p.1) folders, scissors, pencil sharpeners, and calculators. Thank you to everyone who gave.

This holiday season, we are once again looking to meet the needs of families struggling to provide for their children. See below to learn more about how you can make the holidays magical for children in the Merrimack Valley!

Holiday Gift Drive

Drop off new, unwrapped gifts, for kids age 6-18 at Family Services at 430 N Canal St, Lawrence

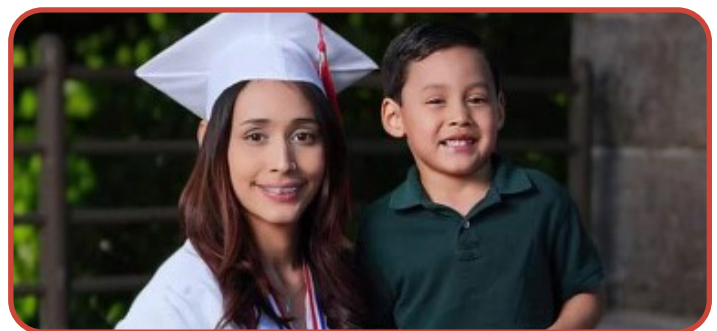
Or use our Amazon Wish List linked in QR code!

MILAGRO'S STORY

Picture a 13-year-old girl with only her younger sister to call family living in a makeshift shelter far away from what was once her home, being subjected to human trafficking and gang violence, with no access to healthcare, education, nutrition, or a safe place to live. These were Milagros' circumstances not long ago.

As with many individuals and families, changing the life trajectory of someone mired in such misfortune takes a village. When she arrived in Lawrence, Family Services became that village for Milagro, and her story turned from tragedy to triumph.

Visit FSMV.org/giving or scan the QR code to read more



about Milagro and give online so we can continue to support Milagro and thousands others like her.

"Family Services always supported me in my studies and struggles as a young mom, cheering me on and celebrating my accomplishments."



BIG FRIENDS LITTLE FRIENDS

Mentoring is a simple concept with a profound impact. The establishment of a supportive, caring relationship between an adult and a young person results in

- increased high school graduation rates;
- healthier relationships and lifestyle choices;
- enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence;
- improved behavior, both at home and at school;
- stronger relationships with adults and peers; and
- decreased likelihood of drug and alcohol use.

Outcomes like this make another fact hard to deal with: Family Services has **XXX** young people waiting to be matched with a mentor. Some of them have been waiting for 4+ years.

HELP US
ERASE THE WAIT

INQUIRE ABOUT
MENTORING TODAY



STAND & DELIVER

Family Services' **Stand & Deliver** academic mentoring program is now fully school mode now that it's kicked off its 2024-2025 year! This school year, Stand & Deliver has matched 80 students from **Lawrence High School**, the **Greater Lawrence Technical School** and the **Bruce Middle School** with amazing mentors at our corporate partner companies: **New Balance**, **Pfizer**, **Raytheon**, and **Schneider Electric**. Nothing but smiles, laughter, and flowing conversations at each of the kick-off sessions over the held earlier this fall. We can't wait to see these relationships flourish throughout the rest of the year! One kid came up to our team and asked, "How did you find someone just like me?!" I guess our team can consider our work a job well done!



THIS IS WHAT MENTORING LOOKS LIKE

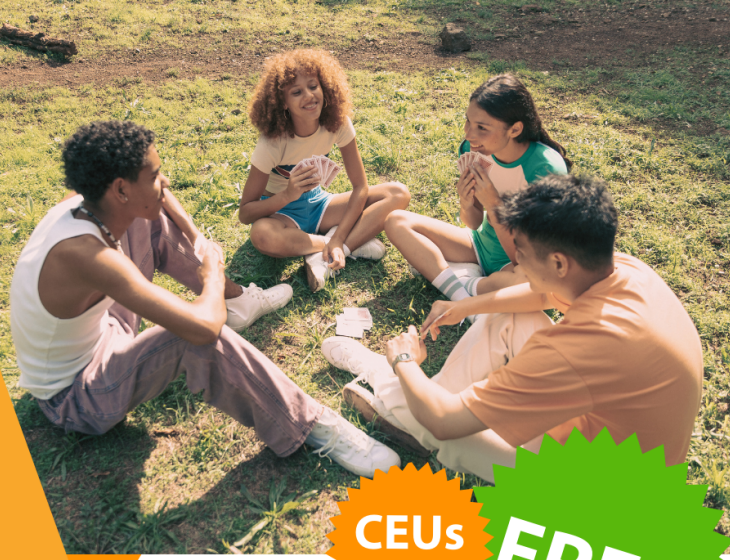


OUR TEENS NEED YOUR HELP!

TRAINING FOR ADULTS
WHO CARE ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE

LEARN:

- Risk factors and warning signs
- How to distinguish between crisis and non-crisis mental health situations
- Ways to connect young people to professional help



CEUs
Available*

FREE

Youth Mental Health First Aid

Learn about youth mental health and how to talk with youth about how they're feeling and how to get help.

- 2 hours of self-paced pre-work
- 6 hours of in-person training



Thursday, December 5
9:30 am - 3:30 pm



430 N Canal St.
Lawrence, MA



Chance to win \$100!

*Upon completion of course
and follow-up surveys

To Register

Email the Training Coordinator
at kpfeiffer@fsmv.org

Space is limited.
Must be 18+ to attend.

*CEUs available through
MA-NASW only

Address Service Requested

FSMV.org

Lawrence, MA 01840

430 North Canal Street



Non Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lawrence, MA
Permit #210