



# Newsletter

## CEO MESSAGE

On December 26, 2025, Family Services celebrated its 171st anniversary. On that day in 1854 a group of citizens of the newly incorporated City of Lawrence, MA, founded the Lawrence Provident Association with the mission of meeting the needs of newly arrived mill workers. As the needs of city residents grew, so too did the Association, which in 1859 became the Lawrence City Mission.

With the advent of the New Deal in the 1930s, many basic needs began to be met by public entities and the City Mission was able to transition its focus away from emergency relief toward counseling, and child and family welfare services. During this period, it became known as the Family Service Association of Greater Lawrence.

Most recently, Family Services again experienced a spate of growth and expansion that was reflected in a name change. With its broad programmatic and geographic reach the organization adopted the name Family Services of the Merrimack Valley in 2016.

What has remained the same over its long history is Family Services' commitment to helping individuals and families overcome the obstacles they face so that they can care for themselves and their loved ones and participate meaningfully in their community. We are honored to continue this vital work for years to come!

Warmly,

Elizabeth Sweeney  
Chief Executive Officer



## HOLIDAY GIVING

This holiday season was filled with joy and generosity. Thank you to the many individuals and organizations that gave so generously to our families in 2025, including **Christ Church** in Andover and **Project Elf!** With the support of so many, Family Services was able to give over 200 presents to children and families who otherwise may not have had gifts to brighten their holiday season.

Family Services' work focuses on building skills for resilience and self-reliance, and to do that successfully, it is vital that we meet the basic needs of our clients and ensure that they experience joy and warmth during the holidays, and all year round! Thank you to all who gave!



## Wellness For Young Parents

Family Services' Young Parent programs came together earlier this winter for an inspiring Multi-Cultural Wellness event. Parents joined together at Family Services' building for meaningful conversations about different cultures and traditions, sharing personal experiences and perspectives, and offering peer support and encouragement.

The program's mental health clinician, Adrianna, also led a discussion about Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), focusing on how changes in weather can impact mental health. For young parents navigating the challenges of establishing a young family, winter weather can have a very significant impact on all areas of functioning.

In addition to the discussions, participants enjoyed playing Mexican Bingo and the Telephone game, which created a fun and engaging atmosphere. Winter-themed prizes were given to the winners, adding excitement and joy to the event. Everyone came together to share a meal, fostering a warm sense of community and connection.



## Family & Community Resource Center

Family Services' **Family & Community Resource Center** recently kicked off a new offering... FREE Basic Computer Skills classes. Many adults who have spent years working in fields that did not require use of technology feel left behind in the modern world where so much is now done online. This computer class is designed to give folks some very basic skills for digital communication, navigating the internet safely, and working with documents.

*"These skills are key for managing a household, accessing opportunities, and building self-sufficiency,"* says Betsy Green, FCRC Manager.



In addition to this new class, the FCRC continues to provide a host of other programming for families, including: playgroups, life skills workshops, grandparent support groups, parenting support groups, youth groups, and individual support for resources and referrals. Scan the QR code for the latest FCRC calendar!



## AMIGOS

Like many young people in Lawrence, Jayven is bright, curious, and thoughtful, but he's also growing up in circumstances that don't always provide stability or enriching experiences. This is where Family Services' **Amigos Mentoring Program** comes in.

Family Services' Amigos mentors show up consistently to offer guidance, encouragement, and stability, helping young people grow academically, emotionally and socially.

Amigos goes beyond one-to-one mentoring by holding wellness and Youth Circle meetings. Topics have included healthy eating, alcohol and drug prevention, yoga, and art therapy. In addition, each student has monthly one-on-one outings where activities are connected to what we work on in group sessions.

One recent mentor outing offers an example of how this works in practice. On the Wednesday prior, a wellness group art-therapy session was held where mentees painted self-portraits reminiscent of Picasso's style. The following week, during their one-on-one outing, Jeyven and his mentor visited the **Addison Gallery of American Art** on the campus of **Phillips Academy** in Andover.



While there, Jeyven was fully engaged in the experience and asked thoughtful questions about the artwork. And what mattered wasn't just the art, it was that

Jeyven was in a space where curiosity was encouraged and where he felt comfortable exploring.

After the museum visit, Jeyven and his mentor walked around campus where Jeyven initiated a conversation with students about their math class. When the student shared about calculus, Jeyven shared his own interest in higher-level math.

In that moment, Jeyven wasn't just observing a different environment—he was imagining himself in it. He was practicing confidence and future-oriented thinking.

The impact of the Amigos Mentoring program on Jeyven isn't measured by this one outing alone. It shows up in his growing confidence, his willingness to initiate conversations, his curiosity about learning, and his expanding sense of what's possible for his future.

## VOLUNTEER MENTOR INFO SESSIONS

Want to embark on a volunteer opportunity that will have a meaningful impact, dare we say that will change a life? Have you ever contemplated becoming a mentor? Does Jayven's story (above) feel meaningful for you?

If you've ever thought of becoming a mentor but are cautious about making the commitment, then Family Services' volunteer info sessions are for you! Family Services is hosting monthly, virtual info sessions to provide more information to prospective volunteers about what

this opportunity really involves, what are the benefits, challenges, and requirements.

Info sessions are held monthly via Zoom in the evening. Scan the QR code to register or visit the mentor-ing section of our website: [FSMV.org](http://FSMV.org).



## Walk for Hope

Thank you to everyone who came out to support Family Services' Walk for Hope this past October! Over 150 people of all ages (and breeds...dogs welcome :) walked and were supported by an additional 239 donors and 15 event sponsors. With this outpouring, Family Services was able to exceed its fundraising goal!

Proceeds from this event support Family Services' **Samaritans of Merrimack Valley** program, which provides a host of suicide prevention trainings and support to those who have been affected by suicide loss.

Thank you to our top sponsors and event donors: **Tim Newman, Linda Caruso, Institution for Savings, Windover Construction, Velonex Technologies, and Brightbright Credit Union.** Thank you all!



## Suicide Loss Survivor Day

In partnership with the **Northeast Regional Coalition for Suicide Prevention** (part of the **Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention**) and the **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**, Family Services held its annual Survivors of Suicide Loss Day gathering, on November 22, 2025. Some were longtime attendees and others were joining us for the very first time. All participants connected over their experiences, honored loved ones together, and found comfort in a community that truly understands.

We're grateful to everyone who showed up with such honesty and courage - and to our partners and volunteers who made this space possible. Learn more about the Samaritans and its services at [stop-suicide.org](http://stop-suicide.org).



Thank you to Rosemary Heisler for sharing a few words at the event.

## 988 Lifeline

A critical service Family Services' mental health offerings, is the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**. Family Services is honored to be the local provider for 988 for individuals calling from Essex, Franklin, Berkshire and Hampden counties in Massachusetts.

In FY2025, Family Services answered 15,625 calls to the Lifeline! Each call is answered by a trained Call Taker who provides a caring ear to listen. Scan the QR code below to read FAQs about the Lifeline and learn more.



## Spring Gala - Save the Date



Family Services' is pleased to be honoring **Connie LeMaitre** at this year's spring gala! Connie has been a member of Family Services' Board of Directors and Advisory Board for decades. During that time she has played a vital role in establishing Family Services as a strong, stable and effective organization able to transform thousands of lives each year.

We hope you will join us in honoring Connie and celebrating Family Services. Look for invitations in the mail in early April. Also visit: [FSMV.org/gala](http://FSMV.org/gala).

## 2026 Mental Health Awareness Training

Family Services is in the final year of a grant from the federal **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** which allows us to provide free trainings for any adult who interacts with young people and cares about their mental health. Be part of the solution - attend a training in 2026!

**CEUs available**



**Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)** is an informative and evidence-based training where you will learn three simple steps that could save a young person from suicide.

- Audience: **Everyone!**
- Commitment: **1.5 hours**
- Cost: **FREE**
- Venue: **Virtual** (Zoom)
- 2026 Dates: **Fri 2/27, Wed 8/18, Thur 4/16, Tues 5/19, Wed 6/10, Thur 7/23, Tues 8/18, & Wed 9/16.**



Mental Health  
FIRST AID

**Youth Mental Health First Aid** teaches the signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges among children and adolescents and equips learners to take action to help.

- Audience: **Everyone!**
- Commitment: **8 hrs** (2 self-paced + 6 instructor led)
- Cost: **FREE**
- Venue: **Family Services**, 430 No. Canal St. Lawrence
- 2026 Date: **Tues 2/10, Thurs 4/23, Wed 6/17, & Tues 9/22**

**Register Today**





430 North Canal Street  
Lawrence, MA 01840  
FSMV.org

Address Service Requested

Family Services' 18th Annual

# BOWL A STRIKE FOR KIDS




March 6, 2026  
4:00-10:00 PM  
Academy Lanes, Haverhill



Help match young people with caring adult mentors!

This year's theme is Toy Story!  
Dress up as your favorite character. Prizes for most team spirit and best costume.

## DETAILS




-  Fri, March 6
-  4-10 pm (2 hr slots)
-  Academy Lanes, Haverhill

JOIN US!

[FSMV.org/bowl-a-strike](https://FSMV.org/bowl-a-strike)



## HOW TO PARTICIPATE

-  Create a team with 4-6 players
-  Raise \$100 per player
-  Become an event sponsor

