



update

WINTER 2012 • ISSUE NINETEEN

MAKING A DIFFERENCE. RIGHT AT HOME.



Launching Pad is helping vulnerable teens and young adults avoid risky behaviors, move toward independent living and attend college.



New Launching Pad Program Supports Adolescents Aging Out of Foster Care, Group Residences

Seventeen-year-old “Anna” was acting out, stealing and skipping school when she was placed in a girls’ group home. When she turned 18 and was released from the home, she was referred to **Aftercare**, one of three components of an important new FSW initiative called **Launching Pad**, designed to provide support to older adolescents and young adults (16 to 24) in Westchester who have been involved with mental health and social service programs. The goal of Launching Pad is to help these teens and young adults transition successfully to independent living. Anna’s case worker developed an excellent rapport with the teen, and helped her graduate from high school with a Regents diploma. The social worker took Anna to a college open house and drove her to take the placement exam for the school. Anna is now registered to attend college in the spring, an accomplishment Anna claims would not have been possible without the help of her Aftercare case manager.

“We know there is a real void in services for adolescents aging out of foster care and residential living,” notes Susan Wayne,

President and CEO of FSW. “Launching Pad provides a supportive bridge for these adolescents and young adults. It offers them the support and resources to attend college and avoid risky behaviors, such as early pregnancy, gang involvement or substance abuse.”

Family Services of Westchester recently received grants from the **New York Life Foundation**, the **Marion E. Kenworthy-Sarah H. Swift Foundation**, and the **Viola W. Bernard Foundation** to enhance and expand the agency’s resources for these young adults, which now fall under the umbrella program, Launching Pad. Three components comprise Launching Pad: **Aftercare**, which provides counseling services for youth and their families to ease the transition out of group residences, foster care and mental health support programs;

Youth Forum, a twice-weekly support group for young adults who have received mental health services. Youth Forum encourages participants to gather information and tap into resources that will help them achieve independence; and a **Special Assistance Fund** to allow participants to take advantage of opportunities to help them succeed in life. This fund covers fees for SAT/ACT college preparation courses, GED courses and tutoring; appropriate clothing for job/college interviews; and transportation costs for work or education-related travel.

“We are so grateful to these three foundations for helping FSW create Launching Pad,” notes Wayne. “We know this is a successful model, so we are hoping to see real benefits to the young adults in this program.”

FIND OUT MORE

about Launching Pad,
contact Sharifa Armorer
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Junior League Selects FSW for Award

The Junior League of Central Westchester has selected Family Services of Westchester to receive its inaugural **Community Partner Award** at its 65th Anniversary Gala on March 16, 2012 at Lake Isle Country Club in Eastchester. FSW was chosen based on its history of providing JLCW members with opportunities to volunteer and engage with the community. The Gala celebration is open to the public. Tickets can be purchased online at www.JLCentralWestchester.org.



The JLCW is conducting a diaper drive for FSW’s Early Head Start program and has collected more than 7,500 diapers for the 40 toddlers in the program.





The Sharing Shelf Relocates to Port Chester; Now Supplies Clothing to 150 Children Monthly

The Sharing Shelf, a clothing redistribution program run by Family Services of Westchester, has relocated to a new site in Port Chester. The new location, a warehouse at 47 Purdy Avenue, provides a loading dock, parking lot, more storage space and a real sign, notes Deborah Blatt, Coordinator of The Sharing Shelf. "I am thrilled that the program is now located in a centralized, accessible location,

making it easier for parents to drop off their gently used clothing and for social workers from FSW and nearby agencies to pick up sorted packages of clothing for their clients," adds Blatt. Shortly after the move to the larger site, FSW and The Sharing Shelf received an offer of 40,000 new diapers. "We can accommodate this type of donation in our new site," notes Blatt. "It's our goal to be able to distribute large donations like this and become a program that agencies can rely on to provide clothing and other basics for children in need."

When Blatt began The Sharing Shelf in October 2009, the program was operating out of a rented space in Rye, serving about 30 children a month mostly through social workers in three agencies. Last January, the program began operating out of classrooms in Young Israel of New Rochelle and steadily grew from there. By December 2011, Sharing Shelf was providing clothing to 150 children a month, working with more than 20 social service agencies in the distribution process. During August and September of 2011, Blatt and her volunteers also packed and distributed 260 supply-filled backpacks to needy students around the county.



Volunteers help sort clothes at The Sharing Shelf's new warehouse in Port Chester. The program now provides clothing to 150 children a month through 20 social service agencies.

"We are really pleased with the number of families The Sharing Shelf is able to help," notes Lynn Green, Vice President of Development for FSW. "Families living in poverty often can't afford new clothing for their children as the seasons change or as the kids outgrow their wardrobes, so Deborah and her team of volunteers are serving a basic need."

Right now, The Sharing Shelf is in need of clothing sized 4T through 7. Several items are needed for the new space, including heavy duty shelving, rolling coat racks, garment boxes and strong plastic or metal hangers. "Finally, we need to pay our rent – it's our largest and most basic expense," says Blatt, who volunteers more than 20 hours a week to run The Sharing Shelf.

FIND OUT MORE
about The Sharing Shelf, contact
Deborah Blatt (914) 305-6848
thesharingshelf@fsw.org

Congratulations to Deborah Blatt for being selected as one of the "Sound Shore Superwomen" being honored by the Junior League of Westchester on the Sound at the organization's Spring Fling Benefit 2012 on March 31, 7 pm, at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck.



"Each day I come to the office, I feel proud to be part of FSW. We have a very strong family of staff, volunteers, donors and Board members, all of whom truly care about what we do. With all this support, we can provide services to thousands of families each year with a level of professionalism and dedication unparalleled in Westchester County."

Susan B. Wayne,
Family Services of Westchester President and CEO

www.fsw.org

PROGRAMS

- Adoption & Children's Services
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Camp Viva for families living with HIV/AIDS
- Child and Family Clinic-Plus
- Early Childhood Services
- Elder Abuse Prevention
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Enriched Housing for Seniors
- Family Mental Health
- Family Support Services
- Fathers Count
- FS Works
- Head Start/Early Head Start
- Home Health Care
- Intergenerational Adult Day Program
- Partnership for Care HIV/AIDS Services
- Prime Time Special-Ed Preschool
- Special Needs Youth Programs
- Supported Youth Residences
- Youth-At-Risk Interventions
- Westchester County Youth Councils

My Second Home Intern Raises Money; Brings Creativity and Tech Expertise

When Christy Ruvituso, a Westchester mother of three teen-aged girls, decided to get a Master's Degree in Social Work from Fordham University, little did she know that she would soon be implementing innovative programming at **My Second Home**, FSW's intergenerational adult day program. My Second Home shares a facility with Mount Kisco Child Care Center, and the participants from both programs interact through music, gardening, dance, and arts and crafts. Fordham faculty members told Christy that My Second Home would be an ideal internship placement. When she met Director Rina Bellamy, the two women instantly connected.

Care Center, won the organization's Mind Alert Award.

Christy began a second internship at My Second Home this year, working with Rina and reaching out to caregivers and families, helping them become educated about Alzheimer's disease and their advocacy role. "What has made Christy such a stand-out team member is her ability to see the need for a change and then find a way to make it happen," notes Rina. For instance, when she saw the drivers rifling through records of the participants they pick up, she thought they needed iPads so they could access any information they needed electronically. Christy raised \$5,000, enough to purchase six iPads for the drivers. "The old approach was so cumbersome and such a waste of paper," notes Christy.

When Christy discovered through her research that older adults are more likely to remember information when they see a visual, she created a "News Update" program on her iPad, using newspaper headlines and graphics she could discuss with participants. She created another program called "America through the Decades," pairing historical information with easily identifiable photos from each era.

"Participants will see photos from a particular decade, and say 'I remember that.' It's exciting. Even people who don't often speak up will become interested in the conversation," she notes. At a recent "News Update" presentation, Christy roamed the room Oprah-like and informed the participants about the news of the day. Christy's background and training in advertising sales make her a natural at



My Second Home Director Rina Bellamy, left, calls her intern Christy Ruvituso a "change agent."

public speaking and advocacy.

Christy's latest efforts involve chairing, with her husband Stephen, a fundraising dinner for My Second Home called **La Dolce Vita**. The event will honor loyal supporters of MSH, **Cassie and Frank Kernan**. "Christy brings hope, compassion, joy, a sharp intellect and a desire to serve every time she walks through the doors of My Second Home," says Rina Bellamy. "Christy is a change agent, and we are so blessed and grateful that she is sharing her passion for helping older adults with us at My Second Home."

Interestingly, Christy's own volunteer efforts began as a high school student at Dominican Academy in Manhattan, when she helped out at a nursing home during her senior year. Her grandmother developed Alzheimer's and observing her mental decline was a catalyst for Christy's interest in helping older adults. "There is not enough education about Alzheimer's, and research into the disease is so underfunded," notes Christy. "Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in this country and yet so few dollars are allocated for finding a cure or promoting prevention of this epidemic. If we had more early intervention through intergenerational programs like My Second Home, nursing home placement would decrease," she notes.

Saturday, March 24, 2011

CELEBRATE "THE SWEET LIFE"

LA DOLCE VITA

DINNER • DANCING • SILENT AUCTION

Whippoorwill Club

Armonk, NY

7pm Cocktails; 8pm Dinner

Tickets: \$175 each

Call (914) 305-6876 or

dwilson@fsw.org

In September 2010, Christy began her internship with Margaret DeRose, a Social Worker at MSH who encouraged Christy's efforts to initiate therapy sessions with high-functioning participants. Christy was so impressed with the program that she created a video using iMovie on her Apple computer depicting what she calls "the magic of the intergenerational approach." The movie was shown to scientists at the American Society of Aging National Conference in 2011, when Rina Bellamy and Dottie Jordan, Director of Mount Kisco Child

FIND OUT MORE

about My Second Home, contact

Rina Bellamy (914) 241-0770

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BE THE ONE

Mentor a child... Clothe a toddler... Support an FSW event...

Make a Donation... Give locally. See how you can help: www.fsw.org

To volunteer, call (914) 305-6834. To donate, call (914) 305-6876

Step up to the plate. Don't wait for someone else to help.

STAR Gala 2012: Helping Families Transcend Challenges

Since the agency's beginnings in 1954, families have always been at the core of what Family Services of Westchester is all about. This year's **STAR Gala**, FSW's major fundraiser of the year, is focusing on programs that Help Families Transcend Challenges. Five programs that support families through challenges include: Our **Prime Time Special-Ed Preschool and Evaluation Services**, our intergenerational adult day program, **My Second Home**, **Camp Viva**, our one-week sleepaway camp for families affected by HIV/AIDS, **Youth Respite**, which gives families with children affected by emotional challenges recreational opportunities, and our latest initiative, **Support Services for Returning Veterans** and their families.

This year's honorees, **Tony Lembeck and Family**, have been longtime supporters and volunteers at FSW. Nearly 18 years ago, Tony helped found Camp Viva, and he and his family have been working at the summer camp ever since then. Our corporate honoree, **Swiss Re**, has been offering volunteer assistance, financial support and in-kind gifts to FSW since 2006. Over the past six years, the company's annual Thanksgiving Food Drive has provided more than 1,200 boxes of food for holiday feasts along with important staples to Head Start families.

Other highlights of this year's STAR Gala include a prominent emcee, TV anchor and journalist Caroline Clarke, and a cabaret performance by Tony Award-winning actress and singer, LaChanze. Clarke, a New Rochelle resident, is executive editor and host of Black Enterprise Business Report, which can be seen in 54 million households. LaChanze, who performed at Lincoln Center in January, has a long list of credits, including *The Color Purple* (Tony Award), *The Wiz* and *Ragtime*, along with films, *The Help* and *For Love or Money*, and several TV shows.

"We are really excited about this year's Gala," notes Susan B. Wayne, President and CEO of FSW. "I think the honorees and performers will make this a special event for all those who attend."

FOR TICKETS
CALL (914) 305-6876
or
dwilson@fsw.org

STAR

April 25, 2012

Glen Island Harbour Club
New Rochelle, NY

Gala



Caroline Clarke will emcee.



Tony Award winner LaChanze will perform.



The Lembeck family will be this year's honorees.

Eagle Scout Collects 200 Toys for Head Start, His "Preschool Alma Mater"

Eagle Scout Jeffrey Bosmediano knows the meaning of "giving back" to his community. For his service project for Troop 73, he chose to conduct a Holiday Toy Drive for the children in FSW's **Head Start**, a program he himself enjoyed as a pre-schooler. "I still remember some of my teachers from Head Start and wanted to give back to the program," notes Jeffrey, a senior at White Plains High School.

With help from his parents and Scoutmaster, Jeffrey started planning the Toy Drive in August. He and his fellow Troop members strategically placed several donation bins around White Plains. He also distributed a flyer so residents could call and have Scouts pick up their toy donations, while 43 Eagle Scouts scoured their own homes to find toys for the cause. "I was able to collect more than 200 toys," notes Jeffrey.

"The fact that 13 years after his participation in our

program, Jeffrey chose FSW's Head Start for his Eagle Scout project indicates he had a positive experience here," notes Barbara Sommer, Senior Program Director.

FSW serves 194 pre-school children in its Head Start program and another 40 babies and toddlers in its **Early Head Start** initiative. The agency's Prime Time program offers Speech, OT, PT, psychological and education services as well as special education evaluations to 350 pre-school children annually. This year,

FSW collaborated with the White Plains City School District to offer a Universal Pre-K program that accommodates 72 children.



Eagle Scout Jeffrey Bosmediano

FIND OUT MORE

about how you can design a volunteer project, contact
Gerry Goldberg (914) 305-6834
ggoldberg@fsw.org

FSW Celebrates!

The Holidays saw our program participants, big and small, in party mode. Here are some photos from holiday parties held by Big Brothers Big Sisters, Youth Respite, Camp Viva and FSW's Junior Board.



Nearly 300 children and adults attended the Youth Respite Holiday Party at Children's Village in Dobbs Ferry.



FSW's Junior Board celebrated the holidays at Vintage 1891 in Larchmont.



Santa received a warm welcome from "Littles" at the Big Brothers Big Sisters party.



More than 140 alumni and friends gathered at The Huguenot Memorial Church in Pelham for the Camp Viva Holiday Reunion.



Stacy and David Saabye, left, along with Geoff and Leslie Chang celebrated at the Junior Board Holiday Party.



A young family is dressed in their holiday best for the Big Brothers Big Sisters gathering.



A mother and daughter were among the 240 celebrants at the Big Brothers Big Sisters party at The Elk's Lodge in Mount Vernon.

Mark your calendar!

Sharing Shelf Open House

March 6

11am-1pm & 6pm-8pm

47 Purdy Avenue, Port Chester, NY

La Dolce Vita

To benefit My Second Home

March 24, 7pm-11pm

Whippoorwill Club, Armonk, NY

Junior Board Wine Tasting

March 29, 7pm-9pm

Tarry Wine Merchants

179 North Main Street, Port Chester, NY

STAR Gala

To benefit Family Services of Westchester

April 25, 6:30pm

Glen Island Harbour Club, New Rochelle, NY

for detailed information on these and other FSW events please visit our website:

www.fsw.org



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FSW UPDATE

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Pelham Churches and Synagogue Create 300 Thanksgiving Boxes

Members of three churches and one synagogue in Pelham banded together to collect food and create 300 Thanksgiving Boxes for needy families working with Family Services of Westchester. Members of **Huguenot Memorial Church, Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH), St. Catherine's Rectory** and **Pelham Jewish Center** worked together this year to collect the Thanksgiving Boxes, which provide enough food for a family of eight. This Pelham Thanksgiving Drive began five years ago when parishioner Tina Constable of the Huguenot Memorial Church spearheaded the effort. Members of Pelham Jewish Center and OLPH joined the campaign last year and this year, parishioners from St. Catherine's participated as well. "We are humbled by the willingness of so many members of the Pelham community to participate in this annual Thanksgiving Drive," says Susan B. Wayne, President and CEO of FSW.

FSW Receives \$544,000 Grant to Promote Responsible Fatherhood among Incarcerated Dads

As part of a \$150 million fund established by Congress, FSW was one of 120 grantees chosen by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to promote healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood. This \$544,000 grant will enable FSW's **Fathers Count** staff to serve a targeted population of 125 fathers annually over the course of three years. These men will include those fathers who are about to be released from incarceration, on probation supervision, or in child support arrears. Fathers Count will use a Responsible Fatherhood curriculum to teach parenting, healthy relationship and financial literacy skills in a series of ten two-hour workshops. Individual action plans will be created and counselors and case managers will work with the men to ensure program participation and desired outcomes.



Blind Brook Junior Collects Hats, Mittens For Head Start's Pre-Schoolers

When Renée Mango, a junior at Blind Brook High School, heard several years ago that youngsters in FSW's **Head Start** program couldn't go out during the winter months because they didn't own hats or mittens, she decided to do something about it. She organized a drive last year that brought in 100 hats and 100 pairs of gloves and mittens. This year Renée, whose family was honored by FSW in 2009, hopes to collect even more warm weather items for the young students since FSW's early childhood program has grown dramatically. "We are so thankful to Renée and her family for providing hats, mittens and scarves to our young students," notes Barbara Sommer, Senior Director of Head Start. "It's impressive that Renée acted in response to a need she heard about, and we are grateful for her efforts."



Renée Mango has collected hundreds of hats and mittens for FSW's Head Start students.

Luncheon Stresses Importance of Mentoring



Author Lucia Greenhouse

Approximately 150 people attended a recent lecture and luncheon at the Coveleigh Club in Rye hosted by **Big Brothers Big Sisters** of Family Services of Westchester. Author Lucia Greenhouse read from her book, *fathermothergod: My Journey out of Christian Science*, which examines the challenges of growing up in a home with two Christian Science parents. Barbara Mautner of Ossining and Nancy D'Alessandro of Tarrytown talked about being matched as "Big" and "Little" sisters by BBBS of FSW in 1974. Both women spoke fondly of the lifelong bond they have shared. "Accept the responsibility for just one child," Marsha Tom, Director of FSW's BBBS program told the crowd.



Ten new students joined the "I Believe, I Achieve" program thanks to the Lanza Family Foundation. The students and parents went to the New York Hall of Science in Queens in February.

Kudos to FSW's Home Health Care Program

Every once in a while we get a thank you note we just have to share with our friends. Anthony B. recently sent that kind of letter applauding the home health aide, Georgina Kyeremehn, who is caring for his mother. "Georgina has made a tremendous difference in the quality of life for our mother. Prior to Georgina's arrival, my mother's quality of life was deteriorating fast. She had lost her smile, her appetite and most importantly, her dignity. The quality of care Georgina has delivered has been nothing short of fantastic. My mother's life has only been enriched by Georgina. Today, we give thanks for everything your agency has done for my Mom and our family. The difference Georgina has made cannot be measured in words but in heart beats. Please thank her and we thank you for giving our Mom back her dignity." Thank you Anthony for your kind words and kudos to you, Georgina!



Lanza Family Foundation Helps Fund Mentoring Programs

Thanks to the **Lanza Family Foundation**, 10 new elementary pupils will join the original ten youngsters in FSW's highly successful and innovative mentoring program called "**I Believe, I Achieve.**" With an emphasis on parental involvement, this mentoring program stresses the need for younger students to maintain good grades, perform community service and read books outside of class. Funded by the **Vera and Walter Scherr Foundation**, the program pairs pupils from Scholastic Academy in Yonkers with students from Manhattanville and Mercy colleges. Other highlights of the program include twice a week after-school instruction in writing, field trips and workshops. The original youngsters were also lucky enough to receive individual laptops. "We are delighted to open up this exciting program to 10 more students," notes Marsha Tom, Director of FSW's Big Brothers Big Sisters program. "We encourage these students to go to college and achieve at a high level, so it's a great opportunity for more students to get that message." The Lanza Family Foundation also funds **Yonkers Model for Success**, a mentoring program for 72 at-risk youth.



Family Services of Westchester
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Port Chester, NY 10573

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update...

WINTER 2012

OUR MISSION

Family Services of Westchester, founded in 1954, offers a broad range of social and mental health services to strengthen and support families, children and individuals at every stage of the life cycle, from infancy to adulthood.

www.fsw.org

RideConnect Needs Volunteer Drivers to Transport Older Adults

RideConnect, FSW's new transportation referral program, is looking for volunteers (over 55 years of age) to provide rides to older adults in Northern Westchester. Older residents living in Mount Kisco, Katonah, Lewisboro, North Salem, North Castle, Pound Ridge and Somers will receive these rides, which can take them outside this immediate service area. This service enables older adults to keep their doctor's appointments, go shopping, visit family members, see the hairdresser, etc.



“Residents living in these towns often face a \$50 taxi fare to get from one place to another, so we are hoping to find volunteers to transport older adults so they can remain active in their communities,” explains Karen

Ganis, Director of RideConnect. “Their volunteer efforts can give older adults the gifts of mobility and independence.” Volunteers must have a valid and clean driver's license and a flexible schedule.

Staff members from RideConnect serve as personal assistants and direct callers to the fastest, most cost-effective transportation option that will meet their needs. The call center, (914) 242-7433, is staffed from Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm. In addition, the program's website, www.rideconnectwestchester.org, is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



FIND OUT MORE
about the RideConnect program
or to volunteer to drive contact
Karen Ganis (914) 864-0955
kganis@fsw.org

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www.fsw.org

