

Family & Children's

SERVICE OF ITHACA

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Dear Friend,

When 2020 began, we were full of such hope for the new year. Then to all of our dismay, we found ourselves amid a global pandemic, and in a matter of days, we all had to shift course. For Family & Children's Service, that meant ensuring that our community could continue to receive the **high-quality mental health services** and the **compassionate care** it has come to rely upon.

This year has already taken a toll on all of us, physically, emotionally, and psychologically, and the challenges facing everyone this winter cannot be underestimated. We know that it's going to take all our internal strength and the support of our community to get through this as best as we can. **Now more than ever we need to ensure that a vital support system is in place for everyone.**

Over these last several months, through the course of many counselling sessions, we have become acutely aware of the psychological effects of this pandemic on people of all ages. Children and teens are struggling with social isolation, with remote learning, and the inability to access new experiences that foster their social and emotional development. Furloughs and job loss have brought many people to their limits as they struggle to pay bills, make ends meet, and support their own mental wellness as they strive to meet the needs of their family members. Older adults are increasingly fearful for their health and safety, and wondering whether they will ever see close family members again. And for the essential workers and medical staff who risk not just their own exposure every day, but that of their families and loved ones, the emotional and psychological burden can be overwhelming.

What has become evident is that the overwhelming number of calls we receive requesting counseling and psychiatry services reflect growing anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, and despair amongst many individuals, young and old, throughout our community.

We are here for everyone; for those of who have had prior struggles with mental illness, or for those of who have never needed mental health services before, but now find themselves struggling with thoughts and emotions they have never previously experienced.

Family & Children's Service is committed to providing continuity of care as we meet the growing demand for mental health services through tele-mental health. F&CS was designated an

“essential service” which meant we remained up and running while we quickly found new ways to continue to provide care. We have invested in essential technology, reimagined multiple aspects of our operations, and have most importantly, been there for people struggling with the psychological and emotional repercussions of the pandemic.

The support from our community and local funders has been critical through this process, as we strive to find new ways to provide the services we’ve always delivered—and under present circumstances, many of our services are more important now than ever before.

We recognize that this year has been one of uncertainty, trauma, and loss for so many. With the generosity of friends and donors like you, we can ensure that the high-quality mental health and outreach services we offer continue to strengthen those most in need.

Your gift to Family & Children’s Service can help so many build resilience, find hope, and healing during this difficult time.

Our dedicated team stands ready to meet the challenges ahead—but we cannot do it without your support. Never before has the mental health of our country been so strained. From the crisis of the pandemic, to the racial and political divisions that this year has brought surging into the open, the magnitude and scale of the healing we all must work together to achieve is staggering.

As many of you know, after over 30 years at F&CS, I will be retiring early next year, which is why it is so incredibly important to me that I leave this agency that I love, as strong and vital as it can be.

Please make a gift today to support high quality, affordable, accessible, and compassionate mental health care. Now, more than ever, we need your help!

Individuals like you have believed in and sustained our mission for nearly 140 years. Your donation will help ensure that no one in our community has to struggle without the resources and support they need to thrive.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Karen Schachere". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Schachere".

Karen Schachere
President & CEO

P.S. **Please consider your most generous gift this year.** With your help we can ensure that the critical services provide are there when people need them most.