

Family & Children's

SERVICE OF ITHACA



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Remarks from the Executive Director

With so much exciting news to share from Family & Children's Service of Ithaca, I want to take a moment to thank you for making it all possible. Because of you, F&Cs has provided 21,394 mental health and counseling appointments to 1,236 clients between January and August of this year alone.

You have supported hundreds of families and individuals by ensuring they can access programs like KINECT, DAP, Open Doors, and the Rural Outreach Program.

And this September, you helped make this year's Cardboard Boat Race the most successful ever.

There is so much that can cause worry these days—the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the explosive start to Hurricane Season here in the US, rising inflation and the impact of the economy on so many in our community to give name to just a few—but thanks to you, anyone who is struggling with the challenges they face in life, has a place to turn to find the support they need to thrive.

Together we are building a more compassionate, supportive society. Your support makes all of this important work possible.

Thank you for your commitment to our community and to our mission.

With Gratitude,



Alicia Kenaley.
Executive Director



Alicia Kenaley, *Executive Director*



Mission Statement: Family & Children's Service of Ithaca supports, promotes and strengthens the well-being of individuals and families by providing accessible mental health care and related social services, with a particular sensitivity to the needs of children.

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New Program: Rural Outreach

In 2021, Family & Children's Service of Ithaca was presented with an opportunity to expand upon the successful model of the Community Outreach Worker program that has enjoyed several years of success and positive impact. F&CS worked with the newly-created Office of Mental Health Diversion Center to devise a program that would focus on rural communities in Tompkins County. The program received funding through a SAMSA grant to improve outcomes for individuals diagnosed with a serious mental health issue who have either been involved with the justice system, or are at risk of entering the justice system.

With the support of the Tompkins County Sheriff's Department and the Criminal Justice Alternatives Board, F&CS forged a new relationship with Cayuga Medical Center, to prioritize the care of those discharged from police §9.41 or §9.45 Intervention Codes (also known as Involuntary Commitment), from hospitals, and assist with their reintegration into society. The program would take a multi-faceted approach to serving rural clients, seeking to decrease law enforcement intervention in mental health and non-criminal poverty issues, such as homelessness. The philosophy of the program was one of preventative care—proactively reaching out to help individuals get connected with the services they need to live more stable and safer lives.

Guided by input from the Sheriff's departments and those involved with the local justice system, other mental health agencies, and local homeless shelters, F&CS identified high-conflict and high-maintenance areas on which to focus outreach attention, such as the Econo Lodge in Lansing, housing developments in Dryden, Lansing, and West Hill, as well as Food Pantries in Groton and Lansing. As the program matures, the Outreach Team will continue to learn where people are frequently engaging with law enforcement regarding mental health calls, and target those areas for additional outreach.

The Rural Outreach Team is comprised of two outreach workers, Joy Grobelny, and Joseph Lambro, and a brand new van enabling them to deploy throughout Tompkins County to areas identified as needing increased attention, and to meet with families and individuals in need of support.

Since joining F&CS, Joy and Joseph have begun building community relationships, introducing themselves to other agencies, and getting to build relationships with clients through daily interactions. They have reached out to area libraries, and even school counselors to help identify families that may be struggling, in order to offer support, and TC Sheriff's will forward non-violent concern calls to them to help identify when Rural Outreach might better serve as first-responders.

The team base their work on harm-reduction principles, and liaise between individuals and social systems in place, getting to know clients and connecting them with resources to help them stay stable, and think through and problem-shoot barriers to receiving support.

"When you get out into the rural parts of Tompkins County," Joy explained, "people tend to think about locality-based services, not County-based services. If someone lives ten minutes from Cortland, they might head there looking for help, only to be turned away because they don't live in Cortland County. And often they end up thinking 'Well, I guess I can't be helped!' We can help connect them to the right people for the right services."

And that's part of what makes the Rural Outreach program so successful—it combines connection with resources and a connection with an individual.

Rural Outreach Worker, Joseph Lambro (left), Outreach Coordinator, Natalya Cowilich (center), and Rural Outreach Worker, Joy Grobelny (right).



"Especially in rural areas, it can be isolating," Joseph explained, "and if you don't have access to a car, to a computer, or a smart phone, it can feel insurmountable."

The Rural Outreach team are able to provide families and individual with the support they need to thrive, from mental health care, to connection to community resources, to performing wellness checks, and providing de-escalation services. Once their new van is fully stocked, Rural Outreach will be able to provide winter clothes, small food supplies, hygiene supplies and care packages, and will be equipped with laptops and forms to help people apply for community resources and programs, like Section 8 Housing, DSS, INHS, and to make referrals. They have even printed off resumes to help clients apply for employment.

Another key addition of the program is the creation of an Outreach Coordinator position at F&CS. Stepping into that role is Natalya Cowilich, already known to the community through her years as a Community Outreach Worker in downtown Ithaca. The role of the Outreach Coordinator is to help tackle the needs of those whose issues are so complex that they need support from multiple organizations, in order to help coordinate an effective care plan. The Coordinator works with multiple agencies to keep them updated on approaches and treatment that are successful with an individual and to strengthen areas that aren't working as well, tracking how treatment is going and how progress is being made for each individual.

"It's a true wrap-around service," Natalya said. "The goal is to keep agencies talking to one another, to provide more triage care, less duplication of service, and to gather providers around the client to create an expanded support network."

The Rural Outreach Program is a pilot program to demonstrate how this type of client-focused outreach can benefit the community, and has secured just one year of funding. So far, the program has been meeting internal goals, however long term diversion results will have to wait to be seen, based on whether law enforcement programs see a reduction in calls for mental health and non-criminal issues in the identified target areas. But as the city and county look for strategies to support initiatives like the Reimaging Public Safety Initiative, F&CS hopes that this Rural Outreach program will serve as another example as an alternative to the use of law enforcement for public health and safety issues.

To connect with the Rural Outreach Team for yourself, or someone you know, call F&CS at: 607-273-7494, and ask for the Rural Outreach Team.

Rural Outreach is a pilot program funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health, Division of Forensics Services.



The Fourth Annual Cardboard Boat Race

On September 11, 2022, despite the rain, crowds gathered at the Ithaca Yacht Club to witness the Fourth Annual Cardboard Boat Race on Cayuga Lake, presented by the CFCU Community Credit Union. Over 225 people packed the shore of the yacht club to cheer on the up-cycled boats that arrived that day to go head to head on racecourse created specially for them in the Yacht Club's harbor.

Thanks to the interest and support of Cardboard Boat Race sponsors, in a first, registration fees for all boat builders were waived, and thirty teams participated this year, in the largest boat race to date. Boat builders designed a dazzling array of cardboard vessels—some of which proved to be more sea-worthy than others. Relentless drizzle also meant that some boats arrived pre-soaked, but as one participant pointed out, "They're going to get wet one way or another!"

As emcee's Amy Dickinson and Geoff Dunn inspected the waiting boats, spectators also had the opportunity to cast votes for the People's Choice Award for Best Boat (sponsored by CSP Management). Boat-builders seem to have gone all out this year, adding stylish embellishments and designs to their watercrafts, including a replica of the Titanic that arrived in two pieces,

complete with miniature Jack and Rose figurines at the prow; a boxy race-car; a lost-boys/Peter Pan-themed raft towing a crocodile; a vintage VW bus; a floating camouflage tank; and a three-part floating horse and chariot.

The Ithaca College Women's Crew team were on hand to help carry boats to the starting line and launch them in each heat. Participants competed in three brackets: the Youth Bracket (sponsored by Guthrie Medical), the High School Challenge Bracket (co-sponsored by True Insurance and Warren Real Estate of Ithaca), and the Mixed/Adults bracket.

More than a few boats failed to reach the finish line above the surface, but for those that floundered or sank below the waves, they had the chance of winning the Most Spectacular Sinking Award. Indeed, some teams arrived more excited to win that notorious award than they were to be the fastest in their heat.

Between sponsors and spectators, this year's Cardboard Boat Race raised a record \$70,212.50, all of which goes directly to providing vital mental health care and support services in Tompkins County.



AWARDS WENT TO:

Fastest Youth Boat: The Flame Thrower, Liam Duffer and Michael Politi

Fastest High School Challenge Boat: The Fluorescent Hummingbird, Orion Bennett and Daniel Ford

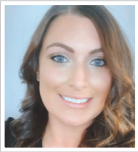
Fastest Adult/Mixed Boat: Bullet and the Gluestachios, Morgan, Alden, and Oliver Thompson

People's Choice Best Boat: Roan Roan Roan Your Boat, Finger Lakes Equine Practice, Jeff LaPoint, Sean Nash, and Tyler Olson

Most Spectacular Sinking: Cardboard Boaty McCardboardBoatface, James Coulombe, Sylvie Froncek, and Benjamin Mumford-Zisk.

Open Doors

Announced earlier this year, the Open Doors program at Family & Children's Service of Ithaca was officially revived in June 2022, and has been active in the community enrolling youth who have run away from home, are thinking of running away, or are facing homelessness. The team is comprised of Open Doors Team Leader and Crisis Therapist, Nadie, and Youth Advocates Gibrian and Haley.



Nadie Phoenix

Nadie is the Open Doors Team Leader and Crisis Therapist. She obtained a Master of Social Work degree from

Temple University. Nadie has a rescue pit bull named Nesta who she enjoys playing outside with, especially in the fall.



Gibrian Hagood

Gibrian is one of the Open Doors Youth Advocates.

Gibrian attended SUNY New Paltz for three years and studied liberal arts. Gibrian loves good music and is drawn to places that have good vibes.



Haley Newman

Haley is the other Open Doors Youth Advocate. Haley obtained a Bachelor of Science degree from Union

College with a major in Psychology. Haley enjoys going on walks with her dog, Sugar.

You may find the Open Doors team out and about, visiting schools and youth programs to promote the program and help youth learn more about emergency support options if they find themselves without a safe place to stay. In addition to providing immediate counseling support to youth and families at a time when people are feeling fractured and needing intensive support, Open Doors can offer emergency transportation, temporary shelter, as well as go-bags with essential hygiene, clothing, and food supplies for youth in need.

If you (or someone you know) is in need of assistance with uncertain living arrangements, call or text the Open Doors warm-line at 607-301-3002. Or send an email to opendoors@fcsith.org. If you are concerned about a youth you know, you can fill out an Open Doors Referral Form and help the program team get in touch with them by visiting www.fcsith.org/opendoors

A Fond Farewell

After a career of just over twenty-two years at F&CS, we bid a very fond farewell this fall to long-time Facilities Manager, Jim Miller. We reached out to colleagues, past and present, to share some memories about Jim.

Speaking on the phone, Jim Johnston, former F&CS President & CEO, reminisced, "Our relationship goes way back to 2000. It started when we bought the Ciaschi buildings" (where the Free Clinic and Saigon Kitchen are now), "and Jim was the Facility guy for Joe Ciaschi. The question came up, 'Who's going to take care of these places?' so I asked if he was willing to work part time. Jim said, 'Well, I'll do it for a couple of months.' So we hired him part time. And then temporary part time turned into eight years."

"When we bought the current building in 2008, Jim had also been working part-time for the previous owner, Rob Colbert. He already knew everything about the building, so he said he'd come with us for a little while again. But eventually the building's needs outgrew his ability to work part time... so he came on full-time, and by then, Jim was just part of the family. He was the go-to guy for everything. If there was flooding, if the elevator broke down, if something needed to be built, he'd say 'Well, I don't know. Let me give it some thought,' and then the next think you know, he's doing it!"

"He's just a friendly, gracious guy, and he was always willing to do, or at least try, anything." Jim added. "He's a delight, and a good friend. And I know he's going to be missed by a lot of people. F&CS has been lucky to have him all these years."

When we spoke to Karen Schachere, former F&CS Clinic Director, and later President & CEO, she smiled and said, "What strikes me most is how much Jim's involvement has grown over the years. When we moved into the current building, it felt like he could do everything—he helped deal with our computers, he fixed the elevator when it broke, he built furniture and dealt with all the building issues. Jim was the point person for all the transition into the new building, with all the contractors and renovations."

Karen was quick to add, "And Jim was there during Covid! He was there through everything, every day, helping ensure our building was safe for the staff who were still coming in, getting computers home to staff to work remotely, and enacting the enhanced cleaning protocols, installing the new H-VAC system."

When we stopped by the office of F&CS Manager of Administrative Operations, Tammy Wheeler, she got a little teary. "Jim is genuinely one of the nicest guys I have ever met. He would bend over backward for anything at the agency—custom furniture, plumbing, electrical work, construction—he's done it all. He takes care of everything. I've even called him on vacation. He always does everything with a smile."

Pausing, Tammy laughed, "Who am I going to vent to? He's my therapist! But more importantly, he's my friend. We've shared sad times; losing colleagues—people who left the agency, and people who have passed."

Current Executive Director, Alicia Kenaley added, "Stepping into my role so recently, Jim has served as a steadying force and invaluable resource with incredible institutional knowledge. His practicality, sense of humor, and commitment to the organization has grounded us as we navigated multiple challenges through Covid and beyond. His kindness, compassion, and dedication are bar none, and he will be sorely missed!"

Jim Miller has been, for many people, the invisible hand guiding F&CS through storms, patching holes and fixing up the ship. In a stroke of well-deserved coincidence, Jim was also the winner of this year's raffle at the Cardboard Boat Race for a sunset cocktail cruise on Cayuga Lake. We can't think of a more deserving guy!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Honor and Memorial Gifts

Gifts in honor or in memory of friends of F&CS | March 2022 – September 2022

In honor of Jason Blumenkamp

- Christianne McMillan White & Walter White

In honor of Gould Colman

- The Sunshine Committee

In memory of Steven W. Cribbs

- Tompkins Trust Company

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- Mary Jacobus & Reeve Parker

In honor of Jack W. Donahue

- Heather Swift & Jeremy Morrison

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- Randy & Ronald Ehrenberg

In honor of Ithaca Boys Lacrosse

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- Ladeen Case
- Madeline & Matt Estill
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- Mary Beth Ihnken Neely
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- Pamela Tan
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In memory of Sara Jacoba

- Nancy & Peter Massicci

In memory of Thomas Jane

- Laura Jones

In honor of Vicki John

- Rich and Jeanie Carpenter

In honor of Jim Johnson & Linda Mack

- Beatty Watts

In memory of Zak Korf

- Kumi Korf

In memory of Janet Lein

- Donald Lein

In honor of Cliff Madden

- Carolann & Steve Saggese

In memory of Nadia Rubaii

- Neti Fredericks
- Scott & Linda Hyeman
- Nan & Tom Pasquarello

In honor of F&CS Staff

- Paul & Andrea Pitkin

In honor of Steele Steffy

- Christianne McMillan White & Walter White

In honor of Catherine Stone

- Lindsay Doyle
- Bernadette Fiocca



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