

Family & Children's

SERVICE OF ITHACA



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A message from our 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 18,521 mental health and counseling appointments to 1,032 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 Community Outreach Program. You can read further about some exciting news in our Open Doors Program.

And this September, you helped us host another successful Cardboard Boat Race.

There is so much that can cause worry these days— the housing crisis, a highly active wildfire season around the world, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, rising inflation and its impact on so many of our neighbors to name 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 world. 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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Tips from the Field: Staying In Good Health and Reducing Social Isolation

We hear from F&CS clinicians Erin Durkin, LCSW-R, and Ashley Earll, LCSW, who are part of our Geriatric Mental Health Program; sharing tips for older adults for this fall & winter!

As we enjoy the few remaining sunny days left over from summer, it is important to think about the impacts that upcoming seasonal changes can have on our physical, emotional, and mental health. With colder months looming, many of us experience an increase in loneliness or social isolation due to a myriad of reasons. There can be concerns about illnesses such as COVID, RSV, or the flu; mobility or transportation issues and weather events; and/or important loved ones who have declined in health or relocated to warmer areas seasonally, to name a few.

A few practices can help all of us stay healthy and connected during the winter months:

1 Keep up on care. It is important to engage in activities that help support healthy aging such as:

- Gentle Self-Care
- Healthy Nutrition
- Restful Sleep
- Exercise Habits
- Social Engagement
- Activities of Interest, Meaning, Purpose and Fun!
 - Mix it up & try something new to ward off boredom that can come with loneliness
 - Try new things in small stages
 - Return to a previously enjoyed activity that you may have lost touch with

If you find yourself struggling in these areas, have a conversation with your primary care provider or mental health therapist to address your concerns. Involving a loved one or friend in these conversations as an advocate can also be useful.

2 Help others and ask for help. Volunteering or simply offering to help a friend can be another way to create a sense of well-being:

- Mutual Aid Tompkins offers some great ways to get involved. Their Immediate Needs Facebook Group also makes it easy to ask for help. If you are having trouble registering for a vaccination, for example, just pop onto Facebook and ask the group for help. Someone will likely respond and offer to help remotely or meet up with you to figure it out! We all know those pharmacy websites can be so confusing sometimes.

3 Utilize local resources! Tompkins County has several resources that can assist you in reducing social isolation and loneliness:

- County Office for the Aging
 - Reducing Social Isolation: www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa/social-isolation
 - General COFA resources: www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa
- Finger Lakes Independence Center: fliconline.org/FLIC/
- GIAC Senior Program: giac.recdesk.com/Community/Page?pageId=29210
- Lifelong: tclifelong.org/
- Love Living at Home: www.lovelivingathome.org/
- Mutual Aid Tompkins: mutualaidtompkins.com/
- Mutual Aid Tompkins Immediate Needs Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/541333123157147/

- Tompkins County Public Library: www.tcpl.org/
- 211: hsctc.org/211tompkins/

4 Brush up on your reading. Here are some additional articles that address social isolation and loneliness:

- 13 Free or Low-Cost Things You Can Do Now to Deal with Loneliness
www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2022/dealing-with-loneliness.html
- 7 Ways to Combat Loneliness with Technology
www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2022/connecting-without-technology.html
- Loneliness and Social Isolation – Tips for Staying Connected and so many other great resources on the National Institute on Aging website:
www.nia.nih.gov/health/topics



Although taking steps to decrease social isolation and loneliness can be challenging, the resulting connections can be worthwhile for our emotional, mental, and physical health. Do not hesitate to reach out and seek assistance when needed. By being open to both giving and receiving help, we strengthen the bonds within our community. In the end, it is those connections that help us navigate life's challenges more smoothly and ultimately contribute to a happier, healthier you. The Geriatric Mental Health team hopes you have a safe and connected fall and winter.

Our Fifth Annual Cardboard Boat Race!

Anticipation of approaching downpours and lightning had everyone on high alert, but the storm held off and on September 10, 2023, a crowd gathered at the Ithaca Yacht Club to watch the Fifth Annual Cardboard Boat Race on Cayuga Lake, sponsored by CFCU Community Credit Union. Once more, due to the generosity and support of sponsors, boat registration fees were waived. The crew teams engaged in friendly competition on a racecourse specially designed for them within the club's harbor. Nearly 400 individuals lined the shoreline to cheer enthusiastically for 40 teams and their boats, all creatively repurposed from cardboard.

While Costa Lambrou, the Commodore of the Ithaca Yacht Club, examined the boats in queue, onlookers had the chance to vote for the People's Choice Award for Best Boat, sponsored by CSP Management. The Ithaca College Women's Crew team were on hand again to help launch boats in their heats. Emcees Amy Dickinson and Geoff Dunn kept the commentary lively with predictions on who would sink or float.

As always, boat-builders went the extra mile, incorporating chic decorations and artistic designs into their vessels. There were TWO Barbie-themed watercrafts; one festively accessorized as Barbie's Dreamboat, from F&CS's board-member crew team, and the other was jam-packed with Kens, from The Westy proclaiming "We are Kenough!" Many puns were relevant this year, including a few aptly named "Get Your Ship Together", "CFCUL8R", and "H2OhNo!". Cody Adams and Team C-Train (as a reference to Ozzy Osbourne's famous song) presented a sleek, black locomotive with a red water wheel and pulley system, complete with the crazy face on the front! Some high school teams opted to be more straightforward, with boat names like "Sam the Boat", presented by Ithaca Boys Hockey, or "Bob", who won Fastest Elapsed Time in the High School Challenge Bracket, sponsored by True Insurance. Fastest Elapsed Time in the Youth Bracket was a tie between team Deux Boys from Dubois in their Viking themed ship and single crew, Tate, in "Hammerhead", his shark themed vessel. Finger Lakes Equine Practice dubbed their watercraft "Horsing Around" and enlisted F&CS's former Director of Development, Josiah Jacobus-Parker, to join in the fun on the other side of the race – a change from past years in helping races go off without a hitch.

A few teams engaged in fine-tuning previous models, naming them, for instance, "Sharkey v.2" and "What Could Possibly Go Wro...V." Karen Steffy of 'Sharkey v.2' said, "Last year...my goal was to stay afloat, which I did. I was, however, probably the slowest boat. This year, after some modifications to my design, I hope to add some speed in addition to staying dry!" Add some speed she did, maintaining an average of 2 minutes, a common pace for most boats! Boatbuilder Rich John of 'What Could Possibly Go Wro...V' has been involved in every race and as tradition would have it, his boat (in its 5th edition) sank most impressively within 30 seconds of hitting the water. He did not, however, win the Most Spectacular Sinking Award. That honor went to his wife, Vicki John, who tried 3 separate times to get back in her boat and paddle through the course, epically rolling each time. The boat was a kayak built for her by Frédéric Bouché; beautiful but not very functional. In a rivalry for the ages, Vicki, a Cardboard Boat Race organizer since its inception, raced in a 3-boat heat against husband, Rich, and longtime friends on team CarpeDiem 2023, who touted a lumberjack theme and hailed from "Canada."

Thanks to the involvement of sponsors and attendees, the Cardboard Boat Race raised \$67,650 - all of which will directly support delivering essential mental health care and related services in Tompkins County.



Awards went to:

Fastest Youth Boat Tied: *Hammerhead*, Liam "Tate" Blumenkamp; and Team Deux Boys from Dubois: Alden and Oliver Thompson

Fastest High School Challenge Boat: *Bob*, Tyler Stulgis & Leo Elliott

Fastest Adult/Mixed Boat: *Horsing Around*, Team Finger Lakes Equine Practice: Jeff LaPoint, Sean Nash & Josiah Jacobus-Parker

People's Choice Best Boat: *USS Southwoods*, Team Southwoods Skippers: Batu, Mina and many Southwoods neighbors

Most Spectacular Sinking: *The Cayuga*, Victoria John

Open Doors Keeps Growing!

Sincere thanks to KeyBank and the Avangrid Foundation for their ongoing support of Open Doors! due to their commitment to this unique program, our team is now better equipped to provide counseling, address immediate needs, and offer essential support services to youth (up to age 21) who have run away from home, are experiencing homelessness, or are facing housing instability. This support from KeyBank and Avangrid greatly contributes to F&CS's ability to provide essential care for youth in our community, and we sincerely thank our partners for making a positive impact on the lives of our youth.

Since its relaunch in 2022, the Open Doors team has been actively involved in the community. The team can be found interacting with schools and youth programs, raising awareness about runaway prevention, and educating young individuals about emergency support options if they lack a secure place to stay. In addition to aiding youth and families during times of distress and heightened need, Open Doors also provides emergency transportation, temporary shelter, and essential go-bags containing hygiene products, clothing, and food supplies for youth in crisis.

Open Doors is seeking new Host Home Volunteers!

WHAT IS A HOST HOME?

Host Homes are an essential component of our Open Doors program. Host Homes, also known as interim families, provide a safe, temporary place to stay for teens and youth who are at risk of running away from home or are currently without shelter. Open Doors depends on the commitment, care, and dedication of community members who are willing to provide a safe space for youth in crisis. Pending certification from the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), you too can become a volunteer Host Home!

Visit our website for complete information including a PDF of the Open Doors Host Home Manual that outlines how you can become a designated Host Home.

<https://www.fcsith.org/opendoors/>



Lora Tsui

Open Doors Team Leader & Crisis Therapist
is also available for questions at
Itsui@fcsith.org or 607-273-7494 Ext. 124

Patrick P. Lee Foundation's Generous Gift Fuels Growth and Excellence at Family & Children's Service of Ithaca

We are celebrating a significant boost to our mission of supporting, promoting, and strengthening mental health care in the community! The Patrick P. Lee Foundation has generously awarded a \$150,000 grant to F&CS, furthering our efforts to provide enhanced support, professional development, and increase retention among our clinicians.

F&CS faces challenges in competing with private practices and corporate entities, which often have the capacity to offer salary and benefit packages that are more attractive. Recognizing the need to retain and nurture exceptional talent within our clinic, we are embarking on a transformative journey, with the Patrick P. Lee Foundation's grant marking a major milestone.

At the heart of this initiative lies the 'F&CS CARES' project, an acronym for "Clinician Advancement and Retention through Enhanced Supports." This multi-pronged project aims to elevate the skills, expertise, and overall satisfaction of the clinical team. It has several key components:

1. **Professional Development:** F&CS is committed to fostering continuous learning and growth among its clinicians. The grant will enable us to expand professional development opportunities for all clinic staff members, keeping them at the forefront of their field.
2. **Financial Support for Licensing:** The organization will provide targeted financial assistance to cover licensing and licensing renewal costs for clinicians, including clinical interns. This support will facilitate a seamless transition from intern to full-time employee, adding to our team of skilled professionals. F&CS has a strong reputation as a top location for mental health intern placements, and many interns choose to join after graduation.
3. **Tailored Professional Development:** F&CS will fund professional development that aligns directly with the clinic's needs, including training in clinical issues, specific populations, modalities, and more. These endeavors will lead to certificates or certifications, empowering clinicians to train others.
4. **Supervisor and Management Training:** The project will support comprehensive training for clinic leadership, enhancing their ability to provide effective supervision and management within the organization.
5. **Clinic-Wide Training and Community Building:** F&CS will host two annual dedicated days for clinic-wide training and community-building activities. These sessions will address specific clinic and community needs, fostering unity and shared learning among clinicians. This unity is especially vital given the challenges posed by remote work during the pandemic years.
6. **Implementation of a New EMR System:** F&CS plans to streamline administrative tasks and improve documentation with the introduction of a new cloud-based Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system. This systems' upgrade will allow clinicians more time to focus on delivering exceptional care.

While acknowledging that we may not compete on salary alone, F&CS is dedicated to encouraging a culture that values knowledge, learning, and skill retention. By investing in therapeutic modalities certification and ongoing professional development, we aim to create an environment that retains talent and enriches the community.

The 'F&CS CARES' project, funded by the Patrick P. Lee Foundation will span a two-year period. With this project and its approach, F&CS remains committed to providing high-quality, compassionate, and affordable mental health care to the community. Our dedication to education and training strengthens our workforce and the system of mental health care which in turn strengthens our community.

F&CS extends heartfelt gratitude to the Patrick P. Lee Foundation for their invaluable support. This game-changing grant will enable F&CS to pave the way for a more promising future for our clinicians, community, and the field of mental health care. Together, we will persist in making a meaningful difference in the lives of those entrusted to our care.

Family & Children's

SERVICE OF ITHACA

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Honor & Memorial Gifts

Gifts made in honor or in memory of friends of F&CS | March 2023 – September 2023

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- Barbara Knuth and Kurt Jirka

In honor of Katy Nicholson

- Hallie Mitnick

In honor of Armis Richardson

- Josiah Jacobus-Parker and Sean Nash

GO GREEN! Sign up to receive our newsletter and monthly program updates by email.

Family & Children's Service envisions a community in which families, children, individuals, and seniors have access to the social supports they need in order to strengthen well-being and lead fuller, more meaningful lives.