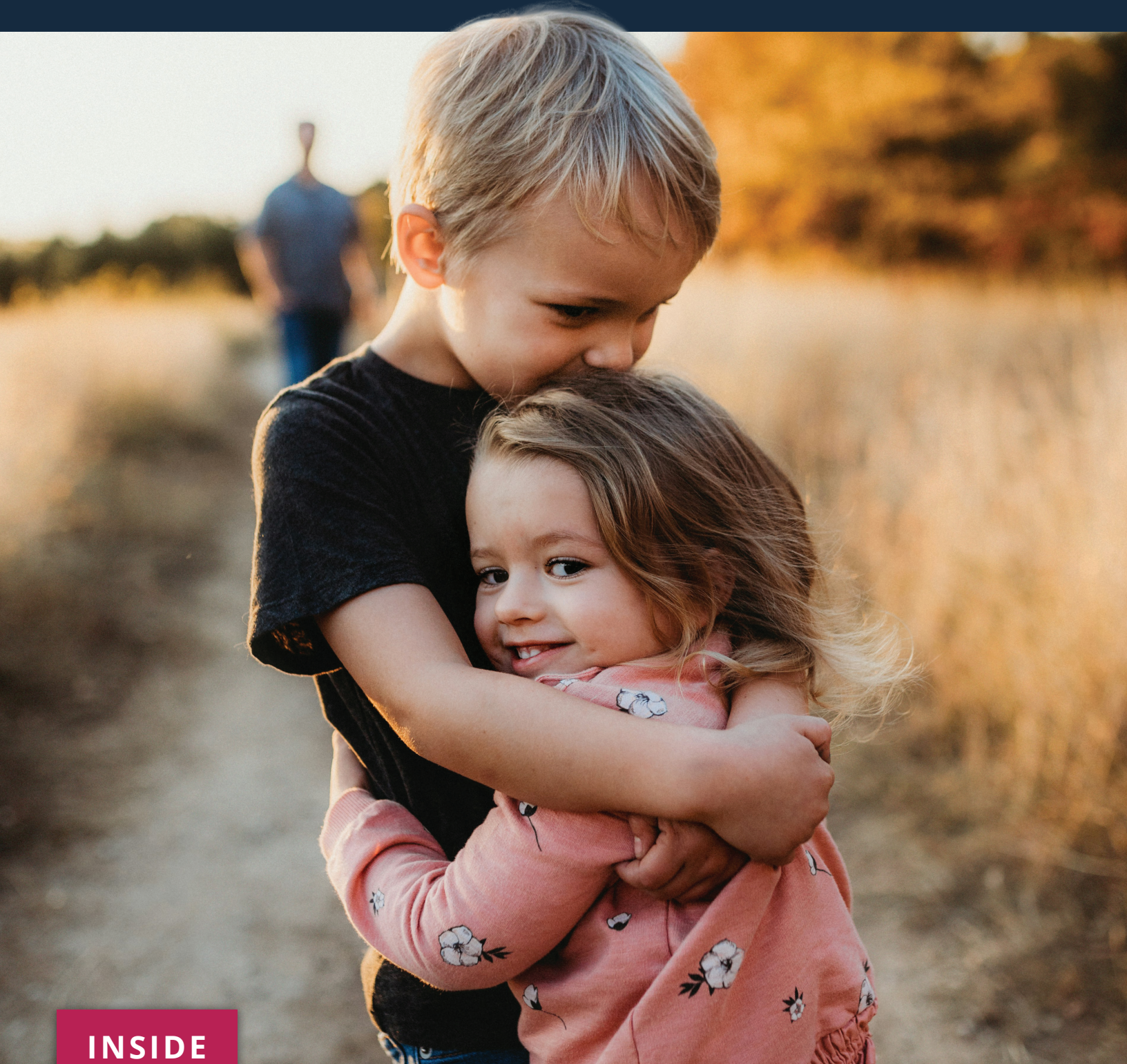


Family & Children's

SERVICE OF ITHACA



INSIDE

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Gratitude for 2023 and Looking Ahead in 2024

I want to express my deepest appreciation to you, the community of supporters who buoyed Family & Children's Services of Ithaca through 2023.

Last year proved to be both a challenging and fruitful year for the agency. We renewed and re-established the roots that support our mission. This year, we will nurture the seedlings and regrowth so we can more fully meet the community's mental health needs. Here's what that looks like:

Meeting Community Needs: Our clients overwhelmingly prefer in-person appointments with their therapists and so we have shifted more of our staff to onsite schedules. For us to meet our financial goals, we have also focused on ensuring we are fully compensated by insurance companies for the services we provide to our clients.

Staffing: Recruitment continues to be challenging throughout the organization. We have made a commitment to hire staff that represent the community we serve and to pay as competitive a wage as our budget allows. The encouraging news is that we were able to hire several leaders in the latter half of the year and that we were able to support several clinical interns in the spring and fall semesters.

Funding: We secured funding for two important initiatives – clinical staff professional development and new electronic medical records software. Investing in the professional development and licensing of our clinical staff ensures that we remain at the forefront of the mental health field and that we retain our staff to provide that care. Investing in new software will ensure greater operational efficiency and improved customer experience for the community.

As gardeners know, it's hard work preparing the soil and nurturing the seedlings but that hard work is crucial to strong healthy plants later in the season. We will have our work cut out for us this year, but I predict we'll have the abundance of a well-tended garden at year's end and will continue to fulfill our mission to provide mental health care to all who need it, regardless of their ability to pay. Thank you for your continued support – it will be crucial to our success in 2024 and in the years to come.

With gratitude,



Alicia Kenaley,
Executive Director



Alicia Kenaley, Executive Director

You Are Invited! F&CS ANNUAL CELEBRATION 2024

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

The Hotel Ithaca

222 South Cayuga Street Ithaca, NY

Join us for breakfast as we share our 2023 Community Impact Report and kick off the 2nd annual Better Together for Mental Health event. Arrive a few minutes early to mingle with staff, board members, and other mental health community members! The program will feature keynote speaker Lora Tsui, Open Doors Program Leader, and remarks from Alicia Kenaley, Executive Director.

Ticket price is \$30. Help us continue to offset event costs by making an extra donation today! Purchase tickets and find all the information on the events page of our website. <https://www.fcsith.org/event-calendar>

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.

Diversity & Inclusion: F&CS is committed to fostering, cultivating and preserving a culture of diversity and inclusion, and advancing anti-oppressive practices throughout our programs and activities. We embrace differences in age, color, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, sex, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make our clients, our staff and the people in the larger community unique.

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Tips from the Field: What to Expect at the Toddler to Preschool Age

In this article, we hear from F&CS clinicians Katy Nicholson, LMFT, and Shane Scarofile, MHC, who are part of our Zero to Five Project. One of the many challenges of parenting is knowing what is to be expected at each developmental stage for your child. In the Zero to Five Project, we often see clients in the 3-5 year old range struggling with emotional distress around adults and peers. Here we provide some tips on what is foreseeable, how we might help caregivers, and how that will help them help their children.

The following has been adapted from Early Learning Guidelines – New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council –
<https://www.ccf.ny.gov/files/7813/8177/1285/ELG.pdf>

Interactions with Adults

At this age, we would expect a child to: separate with assistance from significant adults in transitions to school/daycare, express affection for significant adults, approach adults for assistance or offer to assist adults, carry out actions to please adults (at times), and express feelings about adults.

Caregivers can promote healthy development at this age by: helping a child manage feelings of distress, establishing regular one-on-one time (when the child can confide in the caregiver), using positive behavior and words when separating from the child, and only making promises to a child that can be kept.

Empathy

Expressions of empathy at this age look like: noticing and showing concern for peers' feelings, comforting peers when they are hurt or upset (with adult assistance), adopting a variety of roles and feelings during pretend play, identifying and responding to the feelings and experiences of the characters in stories, expressing how another child might feel, and showing concern about fairness within peer groups.

Caregivers can help foster empathy if they can: name and discuss feelings a child is experiencing and provide opportunities for the child to play with friendly and gentle animals (with close supervision).



Feelings and Impulses

At this age, a child may: express strong emotions in appropriate ways (at times with assistance), express ownership of feelings and desire to control self (with assistance), calm self after having strong emotions (with guidance), wait for their turn during group activities (sometimes), stick with difficult tasks, and demonstrate increasing ability to deal with frustration.

Caregivers can support a child by: engaging with them to provide support when they are having difficulty, acknowledging a child's effort to express and regulate intense feelings, and discussing upsets when they are over, and the child has become calm.

This may include saying "I see that you were really mad, and I liked that you walked away from your brother who was making you feel mad." Bedtime can be a good time to discuss what happened earlier in the day. Example conversation starter: "Remember earlier today when your brother took your toy and you felt mad?"

Emotional Expression

At this age, children can: name and talk about their own emotions, use pretend play to understand and respond to emotions, associate emotions with words and facial expressions, and use humor to entertain and make others laugh.

Caregivers can, in turn: model appropriate expressions of emotions and talk about how they feel, avoid stereotyping children's expressions of emotions based on gender (by letting girls know it's okay to be angry and boys that it's okay to cry), and incorporate books on feelings reflective of the language and cultural background of a child.

An example to model appropriate expressions would be telling a child, "I am going to sit on the couch and take a few deep breaths because I can tell I am starting to feel upset."

As is apparent, during the 3-5 age range, children are showing emerging ability to express themselves with adults and with peers, but still need ample support from caregivers to foster growth in this area. Any significant adult can take these tips and collaborate with caregivers in a child's life.

Nurturing Well-Being: Embracing Awe through Nature

Nature therapy, including the broader concept of Ecotherapy, has become increasingly prevalent. Numerous articles and podcasts discuss studies on various nature-based therapies such as forest bathing, wilderness outings, and equine therapy. Locally, NatureRx@Cornell and Family & Children's Service (F&CS) are discussing the benefits of spending regular time in nature. Cornell Health has been "prescribing nature to students" since 2018 and is continuing to expand by integrating more green spaces on campus today.

"Time spent in nature has been shown to:

- Improve your cognitive ability, specifically by boosting your ability to concentrate and increasing your attention span
- Positively benefit your mood and improve your sense of overall happiness
- Reduce feelings of and physiological responses to stress
- Increase your number of social connections and the quality of your social relationships
- Boost your physical health and well-being"

– Cornell Health Tips & Information to help you thrive –
<https://health.cornell.edu/resources/health-topics/nature-rx>

Donald A. Rakow, director of the NatureRx@Cornell program, and colleague, the late Gregory T. Eells, co-authored the book *Nature Rx: Improving College-Student Mental Health*. Eells was a former F&CS Board Member and a steadfast advocate of mental health services in our community. F&CS honors his memory through a special fund providing wellness support and continuing education opportunities for staff.

Because of this connection, in 2021, F&CS hosted a presentation on Nature Rx and Rakow's research into the positive impacts of nature exposure. This presentation, titled "Physical and Psychological Benefits of Time in Nature," left a lasting impression on some staff members. Therapist Leslie Bode, LCSW, reflected on its power, noting, "Being in nature automatically brings in the human experience without effort." Bode spoke about mindfulness of bodily sensations and highlighted how clients often connect better with their physical state outdoors. She stated that she is often met with resistance when trying to move clients through an exercise in a monotonous office. "People can't quite figure out what I'm asking," she says, "but then, say, I'm out walking with a client and ask the same question. They can immediately tell me, 'Oh I didn't wear the right shoes. My feet hurt.' And that's it. Right there, what it's all about. It comes so much more naturally when you are outdoors and experiencing nature."

From Nature to Awe

We know research shows that time spent in nature contributes positively to overall health. F&CS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Counselor, Adam Mozeleski, MA, says that we should "think about nature as a jumping-off point to awe." He draws from research by Professor Dacher Keltner and The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, to underscore awe's role in well-being.

"Awe is the feeling we get in the presence of something vast that challenges our understanding of the world, often described as wonder or transcendence. Scientists believe that awe may have helped our evolutionary ancestors survive in the face of uncertain environments that demanded group cooperation. Today, researchers are uncovering the benefits of awe for clear thinking, good health, and close relationships. Nature is a common source of awe, but we often think it is only in response to rare and intense events, such as looking up at millions of stars in the night sky or viewing a sunrise over the Grand Canyon."

Adapted from *Keys to Well-Being* – Greater Good Magazine
– <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/key>

Mozeleski encourages regular nature experiences as a means to cultivate awe and improve health outcomes. If awe is more than just a fleeting emotion and has an enduring impact on our minds, bodies, and social connections – making us happier, encouraging curiosity and creativity, and making us more generous – how could we embrace practicing it?

Keep it Simple

"A change in fresh air, sunshine – even if that's all you notice, it's so beneficial," said F&CS Clinician, Jess Evett-Miller, LMSW, during a discussion about Mozeleski's proposed question. Integrate moments of nature appreciation into daily routines. Take note of a quieter green space when walking from the car to work. Then, during workday breaks, take the opportunity to pause in that space or enjoy a brief stroll around the block. Leave your cell phone at your desk and take in your surroundings. Focus on your breathing. And remember, making it outside once is still a success. These low-effort practices lay the groundwork for embracing awe.

Recognizing that venturing outdoors may not be easy for everyone, especially those experiencing deep depression, Bode highlighted accessible ways to connect with nature and experience awe. The NatureRx@Cornell website (<https://naturerx.cornell.edu>), lists 17 different natural areas near bus stops with a description of difficulty. Some of those areas can be viewed from indoors, like the Engineering Quad which is best viewed from the upper floors of Duffield Hall. When the Cornell Lab of Ornithology reopens this spring, it will offer new spectacular views of Sapsucker Woods. Everyone agreed the view from The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art is breathtaking. If you are more comfortable indoors, take baby steps. Just taking in a beautiful view can inspire awe.

Catherine Johnson, LMSW, emphasized how "mental health can be fostered by many experiences that don't involve critical analysis of yourself," reminding us that therapy is only one part of the equation. NatureRx@Cornell and The Johnson Art Museum are great resources, not only for students but for everyone. TCAT to Trails (<https://tcatbus.com/ride/tcattotrails>), Tompkins County Area Transit offers more options to easily access nature. While The Greater Good in Action (<https://ggia.berkeley.edu>) features a curated list of practices for healthier well-being.

"There isn't only one way to experience awe," concluded Johnson. Nature serves as a rich source of inspiration and healing for all, where the path to awe and well-being is multifaceted. Whether through immersive outdoor adventures or simple moments of contemplation, explore what resonates with you.

Noticing Nature

Pay attention to nature to boost feelings of connection.

Duration: 10 mins Frequency: 1x/day Difficulty: Moderate

Time Required: 5–15 minutes per day for two weeks. Eventually, you could make this activity part of your daily routine.

How to Do It

- **Be mindful of nature.** Give special attention to the natural elements and objects around you on a daily basis (e.g., trees, clouds, leaves, the moon, moving water, animals, etc.). Ask yourself and notice: How do these make you feel? What emotions do they bring up? Take a moment to allow yourself to fully experience the nature around you.
- **Take a photo.** When you encounter a natural object or scene that evokes a strong emotion in you, that moves you in some way, take a photo of it. You can use any type of camera that's available to you. Don't worry too much about the quality of the photo or how creative it is. Remember that tuning in to what you are photographing is more important.
- **Save, share, and describe your photo.** If possible, upload the photo to your computer, share it with people, or even have it printed. Along with the photo, write a short description of why you took the photo and how the nature scene made you feel. This can be a few words or a few sentences.
- **Repeat.** You can take as many photos as you like, but try to take at least 10 photos over the course of two weeks. Be mindful of how the nature you encounter makes you feel on a daily basis, and try to space out your photos across different days.

– Greater Good in Action's Noticing Nature Practice –

https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/noticing_nature



Honor & Memorial Gifts

Gifts made in honor or in memory of friends of F&CS | September 2023 - January 2024

In memory of Janet Burton

- John Burton

In honor of Jack Charles

- Michael Smith & Kristen Brennan

In honor of Elizabeth Dissin

- Daniel Hoffman

In memory of Greg Eells

- Jeanette Eells-Rich
- Leslie Kinsland
- Cheryl & Jerry Robinson
- Paul Waldrop

In honor of Liz Gebhart

- Rachel & Ethan Ash

In memory of Carol George

- Albert George

In honor of Ken Harris

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- Margaret Snow
- Jennifer Tavares
- Stephen Tillotson
- Barbara Van Dine
- Kelly White

In honor of Jim Johnston

- Beatty Watts
- Jennifer Engel & Lawrence Young

In honor of Ruth Knuth

- Barbara Knuth and Kurt Jirka

In memory of David Koestler

- Jane Koestler & Jim Karpinski

In memory of Grace Miller

- Amy LeViere

In honor of Joan Murphy

- Nanette Virgilio & Richard Fox

In honor of Cynthia and David Niederdeppe

- Jeff Niederdeppe

In memory of Jackie Roskelly

- Shannon & Steven Thayer

In honor of Mary Ellen Rossiter

- David Rossiter

In memory of David Sprague

- Nancy Cleveland

In honor of F&CS Staff

- Aaron Bouchie

- L. Paul Pitkin & Andrea Rankin
- Kelly White

In memory of Ellen Stotz

- Jud & Sue Kilgore

In honor of Sandy True

- Joel & Cathy Zumoff

In honor of Marguerite Uphoff

- Jeffrey and Suzanne Snedeker

In memory of Charles Walsh

- Joyce Walsh

In honor of Becky and Ron Harris Warrick

- Ali Warrick

In memory of Rosemary Keel Birdsell Weaver

- Marty Milton & Carol Elliott

In memory of Marjorie Waldman-Wolga

- John & Linda Waldman
- Mark Waldman

In memory of Patty Zimmermann

- Stewart Auyash

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SPRING 2024

Family & Children's

SERVICE OF ITHACA

Annual Celebration

The Annual Celebration

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024
9AM - 10:30AM
AT HOTEL ITHACA

Join us for breakfast to celebrate all the changes at F&CS in the last year, get the inside scoop from our Executive Director and Keynote Speaker, and meet our class of 2024 Board Members. In commemoration of May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and a kickoff to Better Together! Tickets for sale on our website.

**better
together**

FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Better Together for Mental Health

SATURDAY MAY 11, 2024
11AM - 3PM
AT STEWART PARK

Over 20 mental health and wellness-focused organizations will host the 2nd annual interactive community event focused on providing mental health resources, education, and combating stigma surrounding mental illness.



The Cardboard Boat Race

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2024
1PM-4PM
AT THE ITHACA YACHT CLUB

A fun day on the lake for our Sixth Annual Cardboard Boat Race! Participation in the race is FREE for all ages! With the launch of a new peer-to-peer fundraising campaign this year, you can help make this the best fundraiser yet! Spectator tickets include admission and a picnic from Luna Catering.

GO GREEN! Sign up on our website to receive our newsletter and weekly 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.