



# NEWS & VIEWS

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022

## From the Desk of the Executive Director

*The mission of Family Enrichment Network is to provide supportive services for the optimal development of children, adults, and families.*

*The vision is that all children, adults and families in our service area have the opportunity to grow and develop to their full potential.*

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It's hard to believe that 2022 is here and as we look back at 2021 it was a roller coaster year. COVID continues and has been a significant issue this past year. We continue to use all the tools we have—masking, social distancing, sanitizing and hand washing—to keep our staff, children, and families safe. The vaccine and booster shots are now available to our staff and I encourage all of our staff to get vaccinated as soon as they can. The sooner we are vaccinated, the sooner we can return to normalcy. Our funders have imposed a vaccine mandate for our agency and we intend to honor that mandate.

Our funding sources have been great and we were able to insure the majority of our staff remained employed while COVID is still here in our community. We continued to provide as much service to our children and families as we could. In spite of all that, the Agency completed another great year of growth, development, and financial stability. There were some successes and some setbacks.

Every year at this time we start to look to the future and what we need to do. We need to review our Strategic Plan and see where we are. That plan along with our annual Community Assessment, will help us streamline our program development. We continue to complete upgrades to our sites. We continue to look at ways to develop additional non programmatic revenue to assist us in meeting the many programmatic and agency needs we have.

Grant writing and program development will continue to be a major focus for the next couple of years. We are entering into our second year of our HHAP project for 19 homeless housing apartments. We will continue to develop our housing for the homeless and low income families. We are still looking at enhancing our services to children with disabilities and hope to increase those services in Chenango County and looking at developing those services in Tioga County. We are also looking at applying for

federal funding for a new facility in Tioga County for our Owego site. We submitted an application to ESSHI for funding to support ten single units in the City of Binghamton. Other areas we are looking at are ADHD programming, support for elderly services, food insecurity, and re-entry services. In addition, we know we must continue to find a way to increase staff salaries and fringe benefits to attract and retain quality staff.

We could not do that without the support of the staff, the Governing Board and the entire community. Our staff this past year has worked tirelessly to assist us in moving this agency forward and meet the needs of children and families. We thank you for your past support of our Agency and look forward to future partnership opportunities.



***Darrell Newwine,  
Family Enrichment Network***

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## CHILD CARE STABILIZATION GRANT UPDATE

The federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, signed on March 11, 2021, included \$23.97 billion for child care stabilization grants to be allocated to states. The goal of the child care stabilization grants is to provide financial relief to child care providers to help defray unexpected business costs associated with the pandemic, and to help stabilize their operations so that they may continue to provide care.

New York State Office of Children and Family Services released \$900 million to the child care providers across the state. The online application was released in August and closed on November 30, 2021. Family Enrichment Network CCR&R helped the child care programs in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties understand the opportunity and apply for their funding.

We are excited that all eligible programs in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties applied for the funding. Locally, 170 child care programs will receive the grant totaling almost \$7 million in funding to our area for child care. This is an unprecedented investment in the early childhood system!

If you have any questions about the Stabilization Grant, please contact CCR&R director, Jenn Perney at (607) 723-8313 ext. 872.



### New Programs:

- Broome Family Child Care-Watch Me Grow Child Care - Kayla Russell
- Broome Group Family Child Care - My School - Wendy Ladd
- Chenango Family Child Care - Dallas Beang
- Broome School Age Child Care - Broome County Urban League, Inc.

## Head Start

### Understanding the Benefits of Family Engagement in Head Start/Early Head Start

One of the most brilliant aspects of the Head Start program is the call for parent engagement and the requirement for parents of currently enrolled children to serve as leaders in their Head Start programs.

In 1965 when the Head Start program was created, they knew that in order to effectively meet the health, educational, and social emotional needs of children, programs had to have an understanding of the children's families, and work with them in a meaningful way to ensure success. In 1970, parents and families were included in the program and program decision making in a formal way with the Head Start 70.2 requirements. And, in 2007 with The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act, parents/families were written into the Head Start Law. Parent engagement is forever embedded into the work we do in Head Start and Early Head Start with children.

Families in Head Start and Early Head Start programs take part in monthly home visits; participate in Parent/Teacher Conferences; engage with teachers during Education Home Visits, attend events and activities at the Head Start Sites/Centers, get involved in their children's classrooms; connect with program staff at child/family case conferences; serve as members of their center/site Parent Committees; and be elected to Policy Council and make program-wide decisions that will benefit the Head Start and Early Head Start program and its communities. Ultimately, families achieve their personal and family goals impacting their children in a positive way; prepare their children for success in the next learning environment; and become leaders in our communities.

During the 2020-2021 Head Start and Early Head Start program year, even though much can be considered different due to COVID-19, parents served as Policy Council or Parent Committee Representatives and made decisions that lead to program prosperity; Parent/Teacher Conferences took place and families participated in Education Home Visit activities; parents took part in evaluating and planning for the program.

Through the parent engagement listed above, Head Start and Early Head Start families achieved 628 personal and family goals; this represents 64 percent of our total goal in a year that was anything but typical for family engagement. These include achievements in the following areas: education; housing; finance; basic needs; nutrition; school readiness/transition; parenting; relationship skills building; literacy; and dealing with crisis situations. We applaud families for their participation in our program whether it was in person or virtually; we recognize their efforts and contributions to their personal and family successes; and we encourage them to always take part in their children's education.

If you'd like more information about family engagement, contact Network Offices at (607) 723-8313.

## Housing Services

### Helping the Homeless in Winter

Article adapted from "Helping the Homeless in the Winter: What You Can Do" by John Ligan at The Right to Shower, <https://www.therighttoshower.com/>

For most of us, winter means holidays, family gatherings, and gift-giving. For people experiencing homelessness, winter is a brutal challenge. The cold weather makes life on the street more dangerous than usual, and the focus on togetherness and holiday cheer can create a sense of even greater isolation.

If you would like to know how to help the homeless during winter, here are some ideas.

**Donate warm clothes, socks, and blankets.** Cleaning house for the cold season? Taking stock of your family's winter wardrobe? Don't let those coats and hats go to the trash. Shelters and individuals will be grateful for your gently used items, especially socks and blankets, which are even more necessary during the cold months.



Image from <https://www.therighttoshower.com/make-difference/how-to-help-the-homeless-in-winter>

**Lead a holiday gift drive.** Enlist your friends, coworkers, classmates, or social media connections in a campaign to raise money or donate items (from kids' toys to personal hygiene products) to a local shelter. If you can, ask the shelter what items are most needed and prepare care packages that they can distribute to the people they serve.

**Donate food, including leftovers.** All shelters and soup kitchens will be grateful for donations during the holiday months, and if you over-prepare for an office party or gathering among friends, don't let those leftovers go to waste.

**Call 211 when you see someone in danger.** The colder it gets, the more dangerous it is for people to live unsheltered. If you see a person outside on a cold night, contact 211 to access local services and potentially save a life. Code blue goes into effect when temperatures fall below 32 degrees. Shelters must accommodate any homeless individual to get them out of the cold.

# Kinship Care Program

## Community Donor Thank You

For at least ten years at Thanksgiving and Christmas, Dave Watson has been helping kinship caregivers enrolled in our Kinship Care program.

Kinship care families are those who are raising someone else's child, which means they are fully responsible for taking care of their kinship child's (or children's) education, housing, nutrition, clothing and medical needs.

Dave has helped the families by buying and donating frozen turkeys at Thanksgiving—(this year he donated 26), and turkeys and hams at Christmas (usually around 20). Many kinship families enrolled in our program just can't stretch their budget far enough to buy a large bird or ham for their seasonal celebrations.

Through Dave's generous donation of his time and collected funds, he has been able to make everyone's holidays just little bit brighter. Initially Dave collected funds for the turkeys/hams by sending out flyers to family, friends, and coworkers through his job in real estate. When he changed careers three years ago he moved to social media to solicit funds for his holiday donations.

Dave was inspired to start buying hams and turkeys as a way to give back to veterans in our community, as he was in the Marine Corp Reserves himself from 2000 to 2006. He was deployed overseas for a year after 9/11. Originally his donations were distributed to veterans in need, by an older couple involved in a local veteran's group. This veteran's group had some members who were also kinship caregivers involved with the Kinship Care program at Family Enrichment Network and kinship caregivers were included in the annual distribution.

After a few years, Dave took over the distribution and contacted both veterans and the Kinship Care program directly looking for families who could use a hand.

Our Kinship Care program is indebted to Dave and we truly appreciate all his efforts over the years to help the kinship families enrolled in our program.

For more information on the services provided by the Kinship Care program please call (607)723-8313 ext. 831.



*Dave unloading all the frozen turkeys for the kinship care families, November 2021*

## Special Education Services

### Special Education Services Program

It is hard to believe that almost half of our school year is over. Considering the continued change and uncertainty in our homes, schools, and communities, the SES staff has remained determined to provide positive stable surroundings and continued support to our students. We are staffed with teachers, teaching assistants, 1:1 aides as per IEP's, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists, a school psychologist (Jim Lucenti), social worker (Darrell Bush), aide mentor (Jen Lovaglia), clerk (Linda Alcantara), and director (Tamara Ivan). We continue to offer in person classes and therapy sessions for speech, physical therapy and occupational therapy which are in person, as outpatients, or via teletherapy. We also continue to provide evaluations in speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and psychological and educational reviews.

Additionally, we always practice safety and hygiene protocols which include: using social distancing spaces; washing and sanitizing hands, materials and rooms; and wearing masks (all adults wear masks and students do so when possible). Staff members are diligent in their sanitization efforts while still managing to provide structure, academics, and fun in the learning environment. The safety and well-being of our students, staff, and community remain our number one priority.

Please keep aware of the classroom requirements as our community winds its way through continued changes due to the pandemic requirements. As a reminder we take the children outside everyday (if the "feel like" temperature is above 20 degrees) so please make sure your child has appropriate clothing to keep warm during these cold months. As always, please contact the SES department with any concerns or questions at (607) 723-8313.

From all of us in the SES department, we wish you the Happiest of Holiday Seasons and a Happy, Healthy New Year!

# Adopt-A-Family

## **ADOPT-A-FAMILY**

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 2021 Adopt-a-Family Program! Through your support, we were able to adopt 353 children from 128 families in our community. Thank you to everyone who donated, from individuals and friend groups to coworkers and local businesses. No donation was too small, and together we were able to make sure that every single child nominated was adopted this holiday season.

We also want to give a special thank you to Lalor Family Dental, who adopted a grand total of 70 children from 14 families! And we also want to thank the Local Carpenters Union 277 who not only adopted a family, but also donated additional toys and coats for additional children in need.



*The Lalor Family Dental team dropping off their Adopt-A-Family gifts*



*The Carpenter's Union dropping off coats and toys*

## **Coats for Kids**

The Coats for Kids drive had another successful year, with a total of 1,500 coats donated! Thank you to WBNG for organizing another successful coat drive and thank you to Bates Troy for cleaning and delivering all the winter coats to our office at Cherry Street. The coats went to children and adults in our programs, from babies in our Early Head Start classrooms to grandparents in our Kinship program. Thank you to everyone who donated a new or gently used coat this year.

## **Community Support**

Finally, we want to thank the Binghamton University Student Affairs Graduate Association and Graduate Student Organization for organizing a winter apparel drive. Through their efforts, they were able to collect and donate coats, hats, snow pants, boots, and clothing for children and adults. These items will go a long way in helping our families stay warm this winter.

## Employee Spotlights

### Ann Shear

Howdy! I'm Ann and I have been with the agency since the first Crusades, or so it seems. Actually, it was in June of 1998. I have worked in CCR&R since that time, and while my title has changed several times the work has always been about supporting child care providers. I have made many lasting relationships with family child care providers that have endured many years, even long after they are no longer providing child care. I treasure those relationships.

When I'm not working for CCR&R, my passion is spending time with my "critters" at home. All of my animals are rescues in one way or another and I have had so many over the years. I currently have three horses and a barn cat, my 17-year-old Treeing Walker Coonhound having passed away at the end of October. I miss my buddy, but look forward to giving a home to another dog in need after the holidays.

I am a Westerner at heart and embrace "cowboy culture" and the way of life it represents. My hero is The Lone Ranger, I love George Strait, and you'll be sure to find me at the rodeo whenever it comes to town.



### Lisa Rosa

I have been working at Family Enrichment Network for about 21 years in the CCR&R department, where I've held several different positions. Currently, I'm working with Legally Exempt Providers who are being paid by the Department of Social Services to provide child care either in their homes or the children's home. Before working here, I was a New York State Registered Family Daycare Provider providing care in my home for eight children. I have an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education from SUNY Cobleskill. I also work part-time at Campus Preschool at Binghamton University as a floater, working in classrooms with children ages 18 months to five years.

I am married, live in Endicott, and have two grown children. My daughter is a Family Nurse Practitioner at UHS and was married in June and my son works for the Town of Union. In my spare time, I enjoy walking, reading, and playing with my grand pups.



## Employee Spotlights, Continued

### **Jesula Saintus**

I've been working for FEN for seven years. I started working here at the agency as a Child Care Giver. When my children were in the program here at FEN, I participated in Policy Council and other committees within the agency. I worked throughout Broome County for a couple of years.

In 2019, I got my CDA to work with infants and toddlers. I worked in Carlisle's infant and toddler rooms for a couple of years.

In September of 2021, as the lead teacher, I started my new journey at Saratoga in the threes UPK classroom. I love working with children. I love watching the children grow, develop and learn. I love helping families and children in any way I can. I love these children as if they were my own.



At home, I have three young kings. Jr is 12, Q is 11, and Liam is 9. All three of my boys started their educational journey here at FEN. Now, these boys are older and keep their mom even busier. If I am not at home doing school work, I am in the park or the gym cheering my boys at whichever sport they play. My family is my world, and they defiantly keep me motivated and will be the best version of myself each day. I love to sleep, watch movies or TV, and spend time with my friends and

### **Christina Coddington**

My name is Christina Coddington and I work at the Saratoga site. I am currently in the process of completing my CDA. I have been at Family Enrichment for ten years and I love working here. I have enjoyed all the children I have gotten to work with over the years. It is always such a joy to watch the children grow.

I have a seven-year-old son at home named Carter and I have an eight-month-old daughter named Kinslee who is in the infant room here at Saratoga. We love being outside and going swimming in the summer time. One of our favorite past times is playing board games together.



## Employee Spotlights

### Brandy Reynolds

Hello FEN Family, thanks so much for including me in this month's Employee Spotlight! My name is Brandy Reynolds and I am the Tioga County Early Head Start Advocate. I started my FEN journey as an EHS Teacher for four years, left for a year, then came back as an Advocate, now on my fourth year. I was employed at a Head Start program prior to FEN, started out as a bus monitor, bus driver then teacher. Before that, my children attended Head Start. Head Start is something that is near and dear to my heart—what we do for our community and young people is amazing and I love that I've been a part of that for all these years. When I'm not working, I enjoy my family (and not just my human family)! My husband and I have been together since high school (a really long time ago), we have two beautiful children together—Zezra Anne, who will be 22 in January, just moved to Ohio and is working as a photographer and my son Zachary, who will be 20 in just a few weeks, and works here at FEN's Owego site in the maintenance department. I also have 16 chickens, three ducks, a cat, dog ,and fish. You can say we are a bit of a funny farm—but I wouldn't have it any other way.



### Years of Service



#### Five Years

Jesula Saintus	Teresa Brown
Erik Lasky	James Lucenti
	Rashidul Haque

## Department Spotlight

### Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)

The CCR&R department is a smaller department, usually averaging around 12 staff, depending on funding. CCR&R consists of all programs supporting child care throughout our area.

The bulk of the CCR&R funding comes from the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). OCFS is the state agency that oversees the licensing of child care programs. They fund CCR&Rs to offer that supportive services. Every county in the state is covered by a CCR&R. We serve Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties.

Referrals: CCR&R can help parents find child care to meet their needs. Anyone can go on the OCFS website and look up registered or licensed programs, but our referral service goes that next step and can help parents find something closer to meeting their needs. We gather a little information from the parent, such as location, hours of care needed, ages of children, etc., then we match that to all the registered and licensed child care programs in our database. We don't just send out a "list" of programs in the area. We assist in their specific child care situation. Parents can also do a quick search for programs on our website, but can call or email for a more comprehensive search.

Resources: CCR&R offers a variety of resources for child care programs in the community. The CCR&R staff can help programs navigate the licensing regulations or help with classroom/program concerns or improvement. We get calls and emails asking anything from quick simple questions to needing more support and onsite assistance. The Infant Toddler Specialist can support programs who work with infants and toddlers specifically. The Infant Toddler Mental Health Specialist also works with infant and toddler caregivers, but more supporting the social-emotional development. The Child Care Business Specialist can support the business operations of child care programs, anything from helping them create contracts and policies to tracking required paperwork.

Training is large part of what the CCR&R staff can provide. OCFS requires child care programs have ongoing professional development in certain topics, and we can help them meet those requirements. CPR/First Aid training is the biggest requirement we help programs meet, as well as the OCFS required Health and Safety Trainings for new family providers or for new directors. CCR&R staff can provide training on almost any topic needed, such as supervising children, behavior guidance and managing challenging behaviors, diapering and hand washing, developmentally appropriate practice, child development, and child abuse reporting requirements. CCR&R can work with the OCFS licensors and help programs with any corrective action plans needed for licensing violations. CCR&R also provides a CDA (child development associate) credentialing course to help increase the education of those in the field.

## Department Spotlight, Continued

CCR&R operates the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) as the sponsor of family child care homes. The CACFP staff work with the family child care programs on serving healthy meals and snacks, offering training and education, as well as monetary reimbursements for serving those foods.

The Legally Exempt (LE) staff work to enroll child care providers who are not required to be registered or licensed but are watching a child (or children) whose parent receives help paying for child care through the department of social services. The parent applies for subsidy assistance with their local DSS. If they want care by someone other than a registered or licensed child care program, such as a family, friend, or neighbor, the provider needs to go through the enrollment process with us to accept the subsidy payments. We assist the provider through that process, as well as conduct inspections to make sure they are following the guidelines they agreed to in the application. The goal is for children to be in safe, healthy environments.

CCR&R helps anyone in the community who is interested in starting a child care program. We can assist with understanding the requirements, ordering the application, and navigating that licensing process. There are often small grants to assist in the costs associated with starting a child care business.

CCR&R also collaborates and hosts the Southern Tier Early Childhood Regional Coordinator of the Professional Development Institute (PDI) with CUNY. This project coordinates the Leadership Initiative for the entire Southern Tier, working with directors and other early childhood leaders in the community on professional development and networking opportunities. The project also includes the Career Development Center, working to bring more early childhood workers into the field and supporting the career progression of those currently in the field.

CCR&R understands the entire landscape of child care in the community. Analyzing the supply and demand of care and knowing where there are gaps, we can support the outreach and recruitment of new programs to meet needs. We also educate the community on why supporting child care is important.

# Family<sup>SM</sup>



## Enrichment Network



We are a proud sponsor of Family Enrichment Network, and the positive changes they make in our community.

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for all you do!*

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