



# NEWS & VIEWS

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2021

## 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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The holiday season is a time for reflection. We need to continue to provide quality services in everything we do. We need to step up advocacy to increase revenue so we can increase salaries and benefits for our staff. The most important job in the world, which is caring for our young children, should not be the lowest paid. In childcare, cheaper is not better. The long-term answer continues to be a cooperative effort between government, not-for-profits and the business community. We need to find a way to attract more staff to our agency. Every little change we make makes us stronger. We have to take risks, but calculated risks. We continue to grow and prosper, which is a very difficult task in the not-for-profit world today. We continue to look at what we have accomplished in the past and spend a considerable amount of time and energy looking to the future.

Obviously, the big story this year continues to be COVID-19. We did have several positive COVID cases and we followed Public Health guidelines in dealing with that. The staff has done an extraordinary job in keeping the agency moving forward. We are currently working to implement the federal mandate that all employees be fully vaccinated by the New Year. This is a federal mandate and we are required to comply. We anticipate a number of staff will choose not to be vaccinated, which will impact the number of children and number of programs that will be able to operate. Any possible exemption for medical and religious reasons is unclear at this time but we will comply with whatever the outcome is. We will give parents as much notice as we can to what the actual impact will be.

As we close the year, it is always good to look back and see all the good we have accomplished and the new areas we need to look at in the coming year. This year we opened Housing Connections, our first permanent supportive housing program, in the City of Binghamton. This was a cooperative

effort between our agency, the City of Binghamton and New York State Office of Temporary Disability and Assistance (OTDA). We have purchased another two-family home on Crocker Avenue in Johnson City that will be available for those receiving Section 8 assistance. We have also submitted another permanent supportive housing grant through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) to provide ten (10) single units, also in Binghamton. Over the coming years, we will continue to expand quality, affordable housing in our community.

We have been very fortunate to have a tremendously supportive and talented Board of Directors that—coupled with a strong organization, staff and structure—has placed us in a great position for the future. We thank you for your past support of our Agency and look forward to future partnership opportunities.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



***Darrell Newwine,  
Family Enrichment***

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# Head Start

## **Head Start and Early Head Start Policy Council Governance**

The hallmark of any Head Start program is that parent involvement and engagement are at the very core of our programming. And, this is what makes Head Start different. Policy Council is the governance authority over the Head Start program. They work in concert with the Agency's Governing Board, and they have membership on the Governing Board as the Policy Council Chairperson or Designee serves as a board member.

At least 51% of Policy Council member must be parents of children who are currently enrolled in our Head Start or Early Head Start program; up to 49% can be past parent or community members. Policy Council is responsible for governing our Head Start and Early Head Start program. Policy Council members are involved in program planning and decision making. The Policy Council works in concert with the Agency's Governing Board and program staff to ensure program goals are achieved.

In January 2022, our Agency's Head Start and Early Head Start Policy Council will begin their year. They will start by participating in the program's annual self-assessment; they will take part in the Community Assessment; they will participate in Human Resources activities including interviewing and making decisions about program hires; and they will plan for the coming program year.

At November Parent Committee Meetings (either virtual or in person), new parent representatives will be elected by their classroom's parents to serve on the 2022 Policy Council. These new members will participate in their first meeting in December 2021 (either virtually or in person). At that meeting, a slate of officers including Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Corresponding Secretary will be elected by the membership and the new Executive Committee will conduct their first meeting in January 2022.

If you would like to learn more about Head Start and Program Governance please contact Network offices at (607) 723-8313.



## CCR&R

### **Did you know we have a child care shortage?**

There are not enough child care programs, either family-based or center-based, to fully meet the needs of working parents in the area. There is especially a need for infant child care. When new parents want to return to work, they often can't find affordable child care to meet their needs.

Child care programs are also struggling to find staff to work in their programs. In a recent survey, 70% of the local child care programs indicate they are having problems finding staff.

If you love children and want to work in the field, we can help!

You can start your own business and open a family child care home. Call us for help! There are some grants available to help you through this process.

**Broome County – call (607) 723-8313 ext. 826**

**Tioga County – call (607) 723-8313 ext. 1616**

**Chenango County – call (607) 373-3555 ext. 1522**

Or, if you want to work in a local program but aren't sure where to start, contact the career advisor through The Southern Tier Regional Early Childhood Career Development Center for one-on-one career counseling and advisement.

**Email: [careeradvisor@earlychildhoodny.org](mailto:careeradvisor@earlychildhoodny.org).**

#### **New Program:**

Chenango Family Child Care Provider: Kimberly Beang

## ERSEA

The ERSEA department participated in the 2021 Otsiningo Scarecrow contest this October, "Growing Tomorrow's Leaders ... Today." The event is held annually and this was Family Enrichment Network's first year partaking in the contest. We hope park attendees enjoyed the family as much as we enjoyed creating it!



ERSEA also participated in Otsiningo Park's annual Trunk & Treat this year on October 17th. As you can see from the photos we had many fun characters visit our display!

If you are interested having your child or know of a child who would enjoy participating in Head Start of Early Head Start, contact the ERSEA department at (607) 723-8313, Ext 850 or Ext 1632 for more information.





## Read for the Record



## NOEP

## Need Help Affording Groceries?



# SNAP CAN HELP!

### Monthly **Gross** SNAP Income Guidelines

Updated 10/1/2021

| <u>Household<br/>Size</u> | <u>130% FPL<br/>Unearned<br/>Income Only</u> | <u>150 % FPL<br/>Earned Income</u> | <u>200% FPL<br/>60+, Disabled, or<br/>Childcare</u> |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| 1                         | \$1,396                                      | \$1,610                            | \$2,147   |
| 2                         | \$1,888                                      | \$2,178                            | \$2,903   |
| 3                         | \$2,379                                      | \$2,745                            | \$3,660   |
| 4                         | \$2,871                                      | \$3,313                            | \$4,417   |
| 5                         | \$3,363                                      | \$3,880                            | \$5,173   |
| 6                         | \$3,855                                      | \$4,448                            | \$5,930   |
| 7                         | \$4,347                                      | \$5,015                            | \$6,687   |
| 8                         | \$4,839                                      | \$5,583                            | \$7,443   |
| +                         | \$492  | \$568                              | \$757   |

# NOEP

## NOEP

### Nutrition Outreach & Education Program

#### NOEP offers:

- A **confidential** prescreen, completed over the phone or in person
- **Application** assistance, document gathering and prescheduled interviews with DSS/ SNAP unit
- Up to date information on **SNAP** income guidelines, and Federal changes
- Assistance with reporting changes to existing SNAP cases and **barrier work**

For more information or to complete a eligibility prescreen contact:

Broome County **NOEP** Coordinator

Family Enrichment Network

(607) 723-8313 ext. 827 for calls

(607) 765-0425 for texts/calls



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## Department Spotlight

### Special Education Services (SES) Department

The Special Education Services Department at Family Enrichment Network is composed of a director, clerk, social worker, school psychologist, aide mentor, evaluation coordinator, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, teachers, teaching assistants, and 1:1 child aides. The main goal is to help coordinate all services (educational, therapeutic, and community) for children and their families and to help support the start of their educational journeys.

The educational component consists of integrated classes for three- and four-year-olds (classified students integrated in classes with either Universal Pre-K or Head Start children). All students register through our social worker which begins our school/family/community connection. Teachers follow specific curriculums that are modified to meet each child's educational goals. The special needs students are identified at a school district CPSE meeting, which is held with the school of residence personnel, parents, county representatives, and FEN staff. At that meeting all services and goals for the child with a disability are established. The classroom teacher and staff then work on all academic and social goals. This effort is coordinated by the staff of FEN in conjunction with the school district to help create a positive educational experience.

Children can also be evaluated by our staff psychologist or by a specialist from one of our therapy disciplines (speech and language, occupational therapy, or physical therapy). Based on the evaluation results, recommendations are made at the CPSE meeting as to the structure, frequency of therapy, location, as well as any specific goals pertaining to each child's needs. The staff can see children who are in school at FEN as either SCIS (Special Class in an Integrated Setting), Head Start, or Universal Pre-K students, or as out-patients in which parents bring them to one of our sites for their sessions. It is the hope that by providing intervention at an early age, the child will have a strong foundation to reach their academic and therapeutic goals.





## Employee Spotlights

### **Linda Alcantara**

Linda Alcantara is the friendly voice you hear on the phone when you call the SES Department. She is also the super glue that holds everything together balancing the needs of the educational programs and therapeutic responsibilities within FEN. That also includes a great deal of coordination with parents, staff, county health departments, and the school districts in many counties. She is known for getting tasks completed professionally and accurately and keeps the entire SES Department running smoothly. Linda enjoys being able to help everyone in the department; especially taking care of things that help save time for others.



Prior to joining FEN seven years ago, Linda had been a medical transcriptionist for ten years and a compensation analyst for eight years. In her spare time she enjoys gardening, cooking (her lunches make the entire department jealous), walking, reading, and spending time by her pool in the summer. Linda lives in Apalachin with her husband John, son Louis, and cat Minx.

### **Michelle O'Brien**

Hello, my name is Michelle O'Brien. I have been with Family Enrichment Network for ten years. I am also a licensed beautician and have worked in different salons prior to 2011.

I started at Family Enrichment Network in maintenance, and I worked there for two years before going to the Front Office, as Receptionist/Security. When I am not working, I can be found with my family and my grandkids who bring me such joy, working in my yard, camping, anything outdoors, or at my favorite casino.

I am grateful to have worked with so many people who really care about children and their families.



## Employee Spotlights, Continued

### **Erik Lasky**

Erik is the Case Manager for the Housing connections program. After being hired in 2016 as a facilitator for the New Pathways for Fathers Program, Erik continued his professional development within the field and received a Master Facilitator Certification through the National Fatherhood Initiative. Erik remained at his position and became the lead facilitator in the Fatherhood Program until the end of the grant in 2020. Wanting to stay with the Agency, Erik looked for new opportunities to support and assist FEN clientele and found his way into the new Housing Connections Program. He happily accepted the position of Life Skills Instructor before later becoming the Case Manager.



Erik graduated from Elmira College with a Master of Fine Art and a Master of Education. He has worked in Special and Inclusive Education K-12 as well as teaching at the university level. Erik was a former Division III athlete, Ice Hockey Goaltender, and played professionally for the Elmira Jackals, Binghamton Senators, and Binghamton Devils. His passion on the ice translated into various coaching positions, working with beginners to the collegiate level. Erik's devotion for art has led him to exhibit his paintings in both regional galleries and museums and his paintings are in the collections of several museums and private collectors. Erik is a fervent gardener, extensive traveler, enjoys cooking and has seen his favorite band, Counting Crows, 31 times. He and his partner have two rescue dogs, Marty and Demi, two rescue cats, Felicia and Vicky, and five horses they ride on the weekends at their property.

### **Jillian Dischinger**

My name is Jillian Dischinger and I am the Center Director at our Cherry Street Site. This is my sixth year with the agency and my fourth year as a Center Director. I previously taught UPK and I have a total of eight years' experience working as an Early Childhood Teacher. I received my Bachelor's Degree in Early Child/Childhood Education from SUNY Cortland and my Master's Degree in Literacy Education from Binghamton University.

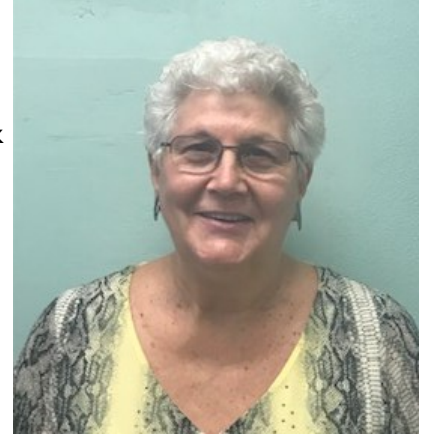
I enjoy working with the children, families, and staff to support their optimal growth and development. When I am not working I enjoy spending time with my family, two German Shepherds, practicing yoga, and rock climbing.



## Employee Spotlights, Continued

### **Rozann Greco**

I've been a Credentialed Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) through OASAS since 2005. I have my Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Science from Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, NY and in 1995, obtained my Master's Degree in Gerontology through Vermont College at Norwich University. I started working at Family Enrichment Network in August 2007 working two part-time positions, Wheels for Work and VESID (helping people with disabilities find employment). I then began working full time as the Nutritional Outreach and Educational Program (NOEP) Coordinator from July 2009 to August 2018, providing SNAP outreach for Broome County. Through this work I collaborated with the Department of Social Services making the SNAP application process more accessible to individuals and families. In July 2018, I created the Re-entry Program, Walk with Me, at Family Enrichment Network. This program provides transitional services for men and women being released from the Broome County Jail.



In 2012, I was recognized as Employee of the Year for my outstanding commitment and dedication to the agency. Traveling is one of the many hobbies I enjoy and I'm looking forward to revisiting Africa, Italy, and Aruba as well as many other places when I retire this December.

## Years of Service



### **Ten Years**

- ◇ Hafida Benkada
- ◇ Stacy Dean
- ◇ Christina Coddington

### **Fifteen Years**

- ◇ Jennifer Perney
- ◇ Jeanne Burnett

# Family<sup>SM</sup>



## Enrichment Network



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

*Thank you  
for all you do!*

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### Associates of Psychotherapy Welcomes MaryLou Popielarski, LMHC

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Space is now available to send your valuable message to OVER 1,000 community members.

“Blocks” approximately 2 1/2” x 3 1/2” are now available, become an advertising partner of Family Enrichment Network for \$15 per year, and receive 3 issues of “free” advertising.

For more information on available space or to set up your ad,

please call Laura at (607) 723-8313 ext. 815.