

Branching Out

ISSUE 1 2018

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It Starts With A Home

Poverty, chronic homelessness, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence- all can bring a family to the brink of crisis. Often these factors put children at risk of abuse and neglect which can result in child welfare involvement and ultimately removal from the family home. Just imagine how incredibly traumatic this separation can be for a child and the life-long challenges it creates for the family. But what if there was an approach to keep at-risk families together?



It starts with a home. Research demonstrates that supportive housing paired with support services such as case management and family preservation services can help vulnerable families with highly complex challenges stay together. Housing stability not only protects children but gives families the opportunity to lead healthier, more productive lives in a safe environment. This spring, I'm excited to share that we plan to launch two new family housing programs.

Keeping Families Together (KFT), a statewide initiative through the Department of Children and Families, will provide affordable supportive housing and support services for families in Burlington County involved with the child welfare system. KFT will address each aspect of the family's life to ensure housing is maintained such as linkage to primary and behavioral health care, substance abuse treatment, therapy, education, education/vocational services, financial literacy and life skills training.

Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI), our first ever SAMHSA award, is a 3-year project to increase access to housing for families in Mercer County with at least one member living with a Substance Use Disorder, Serious Mental Illness or Co-Occurring Disorder. Services designed to increase family functioning and maintain long-term stable housing include outreach, housing search, family-focused supportive services, benefit access and peer support.

Data shows that this approach not only provides a home but has the potential to break the intergenerational cycle of homelessness, poverty, abuse and neglect. When partnered with the right resources, a home becomes much more than simply a roof over their head. It becomes a source of strength and an opportunity for a bright future for so many families in our communities.

Respectfully,



Derry Holland
Chief Executive Officer

Intensive Family Support Services

A Message of Hope

Caring for a loved one with a serious emotionally stressful. Family members of isolation and fatigue. Oaks offers in Camden and Mercer Counties to ways that promote wellness, recovery choose from a variety of services such groups, respite activities, advocacy referral information.

We recently received a letter from a family reminder that compassion and commitment The letter details their struggles as a family for of our programs, praise for our supportive IFSS who battled both mental health and substance abuse issues. Despite their incredibly difficult story, the letter closes with a message of hope that reads-



mental illness can be both physically and often become overwhelmed with feelings **Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS)** help families learn to be supportive in and independence. Caregivers can as individualized consultation, support and

member which serves as an important make an incredible impact on so many lives. over ten years, the benefits and effectiveness staff and the unfortunate passing of their daughter

“So if you ever get frustrated or question the importance of these programs, please remember us and this letter. You and your employees are transforming lives every day, one client at a time, one session at a time. Please don’t ever lose sight of how valuable your programs are to your clients and their families. Your programs transform lives and make the unmanageable manageable.”

We know asking for help isn’t always easy. If you or someone you know needs support caring for a loved one with mental illness, call IFSS today to make an appointment. Please visit www.oaksintcare.org for contact information.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Telugu Association of South Jersey

Thanks to generous community involvement this past December, Oaks distributed over 8,000 holiday gifts to children, teens and adults in our community in desperate need of support. The Telugu Association of South Jersey (TASJ) helped make the drive a success by donating an amazing 350 toys and volunteering their time to deliver the gifts!

Using the instant messaging platform WhatsApp, Vice President of TASJ Shailasree Shinamgaram organized a group of 50 women to collect donations for the drive. Shailasree shared, “Every one of us is so grateful for such a wonderful opportunity! Donating to such a worthy cause is a blissful feeling.” For more information about TASJ and their good work in the community, visit www.tasj.org.

Thank you TASJ for sharing the joy of your holiday season with those who need it the most.



Community Scrapbook

Thank you to everyone who helped us collect over 1,700 Thanksgiving meals and 8,000 holiday gifts for vulnerable children, adults and families in our programs! Check out a few of our generous donors.



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DIAPER Derby

JOIN THE RACE!
MARCH 15 –
APRIL 15

Get Involved

- 1. Run your OWN Diaper Derby**
Get your co-workers, classmates, community or church involved.
- 2. Donate Items**
Drop off to one of several convenient Oaks Integrated Care locations listed at www.oaksintcare.org from now until April 15.
- 3. Make a monetary donation** online or by mail.

JOIN OUR RACE TO COLLECT 15,000 DIAPERS AND OTHER BABY ITEMS FOR FAMILIES IN NEED!

Many families in Oaks programs cannot afford to pay for necessary baby items. Although safety-net programs such as food stamps and WIC help with the cost of food, they do not cover the cost of diapers. Diapers directly impact a family's ability to thrive and be self-sufficient. Every donation counts! You can help families just like Gianna's-

Fifteen-year-old Gianna was helping to care for her ill mother while learning to be a mother herself to her 4-month-old son and finish her education. The pressures she faced heightened when her parents were evicted from their home leaving her struggling to find resources. Gianna turned to Oaks Foster Flex program in need of mentorship. She found the support she needed to move into an independent setting and is now working toward her goal of becoming a nurse.

Questions? Please contact Addy Castellar at 609-267-5928 or aldelise.castellar@oaksintcare.org.

Donation Ideas

- Diapers
- Toiletries (cream, etc.)
- Powder Formula
- Baby Wipes
- Bibs/Feeding Towels
- Bottles
- Baby Food

**We cannot accept certain used baby items such as strollers, cribs and car seats due to possible recall. We do not want to put any child in danger.*

Family Preservation Services Road to Reunification



Tom came to our Family Preservation Services (FPS) program as a broken man who lost his 7-year-old daughter Amber due to his chronic drug use. He was unable to see the light at the end of the tunnel until meeting a case worker in parenting class who reminded him that even though he was at the lowest point in his life and had lost his daughter, it did not make him a bad person or father.

Parenting classes helped Tom think about how he was raised as a child and how he wanted to raise his own children, in a way that set them up for success as they grow. To work toward the ultimate goal of reunification, Tom and Amber began with supervised visits, then gradually moved on to unsupervised, extended visits to improve communication. They opened up about their feelings toward each other and Amber's mother, who she misses so much but is still battling her own addiction.

The family proudly completed Family Preservation Services in September and once Tom obtained stable housing, he was happily reunified with Amber. They continue to communicate their emotions to one another in a healthy, productive way and look forward to growing as a family. Tom shared, "When I lost my daughter it felt like the end of the world. With the care, love and much needed help from everyone at Oaks, I can thankfully say I have custody of my daughter and can raise her, teach her and love her with the wisdom I received."

For more information about services, visit www.oaksintcare.org or call our Access Center: 1-800-963-3377.



Project Dress Up

Make Prom Possible



Give Your Dresses a Second Chance Now – March 30

You can **#MakePromPossible** by donating your dresses and accessories so deserving teens in our community can attend their prom in style! We accept donations of formal dresses in good condition of all sizes, colors and styles appropriate for a high school prom. Please also consider donating dress shoes, formal purses, clutches, shawls and jewelry.

Hold a Dress Drive

Invite your classmates, co-workers or community to help. We can provide you with a toolkit including collection bins, posters and email templates.

*This is a great activity for high school students!

DROP-OFF DETAILS

When:

Monday through Friday, 9 a.m - 5 p.m.
NOW until March 30, 2018

Where:

Oaks Integrated Care Locations
79 Chestnut Street, Lumberton, NJ
770 Woodlane Road, Suite 15, Mt. Holly, NJ
128 Cross Keys Road, Berlin, NJ
1138 E. Chestnut Avenue, Unit 3A, Vineland, NJ

Questions:

Contact the Development Office at 609-267-5928.

Supportive Housing Award: *Tenant of the Year*

Congratulations to Morgan Wilson who received the 2017 Supportive Housing Tenant Award by the Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey at their 19th Annual Conference this December! This award recognizes an individual living in a supportive housing setting who exemplifies an outstanding tenant through their actions and support of fellow residents.

Morgan has lived in Oaks Supportive Housing for nearly 8 years after facing hardships such as incarceration and depression. He takes every opportunity to share how Supportive Housing has changed his life and consistently participates in events promoting it. He shares, "I would be dead or in jail if I had not been housed. The apartment gave me a sense of direction and responsibility."



Morgan is a role model for his community, evidenced by daily words and actions. Every Wednesday he volunteers at the Community Kitchen where he collaborates with others to assemble food bags and distribute them to Trenton Rescue Mission residents. At the Rescue Mission, Morgan offers the residents more than just food. He jokes with them giving them encouragement and a sense of dignity. Morgan also recently accomplished his goal of obtaining his driver's license by his 50th birthday and happily tells people it took half a century to get it!

His caseworker expresses, "His positive attitude is contagious and he has a strong commitment towards giving back to others." Morgan's inspiring story shows us that with stable housing and wraparound services it is possible to achieve a full, meaningful and productive life. **We couldn't be more proud of you Morgan! Congratulations on your award.**



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Mount Holly, NJ 08060

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If you or someone you know needs our care, please call our confidential point of entry: Access Center 1-800-963-3377

Stay Connected www.oaksintcare.org



SAVE THE DATE • FRIDAY, APRIL 20, 2018

9TH ANNUAL
Haddonfield
PROGRESSIVE DINNER

For more information about hosting a dinner, ticket sales or sponsorships,
contact the Development Office at 609-267-5928 or visit www.oaksintcare.org.

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