

...from Michael's Pen

Dear Friends,

Most of the articles in Family Ties describe programs that we have developed to target the need of a specific population. In this issue, two of the major articles talk about efforts Family is making to impact more globally on the overall community or a major constituency that has barriers to accessing the services it needs.

When Family started in 1970, food insecurity was not a major issue. However, by 1974, the need was recognized, and Family opened its first formal food pantry. As our other walk-in centers opened, it was automatically assumed that there would be a food pantry connected to them. More recently, the agency has led a coalition of food pantries, feeding programs, and local farmers to improve the quality of food available from our and the other 40-odd food pantries in the county. The group has accomplished great improvements in the food system in our county and the story in this issue highlights the latest initiatives. The waste and inefficiencies which have frustrated both farmers and feeding programs have proven to be no match for the creative energies of our food collaborative. Family is proud to be a leader in solving food insecurity issues for area families.

While the county has a vast network of helping agencies, including Family, over time we recognized that a major and growing section of the population was significantly underserved, namely, the Hispanic community. Barriers for this population not only include lack of English proficiency, but also, for many, issues of immigration and undocumented status. These issues compound a lack of awareness and at times a lack of respect for the dominant cultures represented by this population. Family recognized the need to hire Spanish speaking staff, individuals who could not only communicate with this population, but also have an understanding and respect for their cultures. The individuals who comprise the Spanish speaking communities can be a vital additional resource to build the future of Ulster County's economy. The article describes the outreach and support that is needed to integrate Spanish speakers into Ulster County, and explains the efforts made throughout Family to address barriers that prevent individuals from accessing the services they need.

In addition to the above efforts, Family is currently struggling with the massive changes that are occurring in the delivery of behavioral health services to the community. As the system shifts to Medicaid, it feels as if the agency's ability to serve those most in need is being challenged. I recognize that in order for Family to continue to serve those people who view themselves as "outside the system" and who are unwilling or unable to change themselves to meet system requirements, we will have to generate funding independent of the systems. Fortunately, we live in an Ulster County community which is extremely generous and committed to serving all in need. It is your contributions that allow Family to respond to these individuals as they present themselves, rather than expect them to change to meet the helping system.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of Family, I want to wish all of you a joyous and healthy springtime.

Best regards,



Michael Berg

P.S. *It's been a long time since we've had cars donated. We sell them at reasonable prices to people who desperately need a vehicle, and we use the proceeds to keep the agency afloat. In many cases, these vehicles allow people to continue to work and meet the needs of their families. All donations are tax exempt.*



Many of us know people who have been in this country for many years and still speak little or no English, no matter their country of origin. Some years ago, FAMILY began seeking Spanish speaking staff for our outreach to families in Ellenville, a community with many Latino families, but few who sought our services. We were astonished at how many signed up for assistance in our new case manager's first few weeks.

Immigrant groups are worried about seeking help without really understanding how the systems work. If you are not an immigrant, picture yourself in someone else's shoes as you read this piece, someone who has moved to a new country with unfamiliar social structures and language.

Alonzo (not his real name) came to this country thirty years ago as a young man. He was from a rural area and had not spent much time in school. He left home early and had gained only the roughest social and communication skills. He held and lost jobs and apartments until, one day, he found himself homeless. He was referred to FAMILY's Adult Case Management Program by the staff at a temporary residence. He began to talk with Andrea Rodriguez, a skilled and patient counselor and advocate. Andrea, originally from Mexico, has a Master's Degree in Education and has worked with immigrants from many countries. "I know what being a stranger feels like. When I work with Spanish speakers there is something special about sharing a cultural joke or shared experience. I feel the bond and so do they."

Alonzo, though, was both angry and disrespectful. He didn't know how to talk about his life. As Andrea built his trust by listening patiently and lightly suggesting ways to behave toward others, he began to open up. It took the better part of a year. "He had made many mistakes. Now he could begin to express his regret. As he calmed down, he began to ask himself, Why did I do these things? Why did I leave that job? Why did I hurt my wife? He began to change. Alonzo is now in stable housing and is working on some of his long-standing issues.

Salvador Altamirano Segura has been with FAMILY for eighteen years. Originally from Mexico, he began as a Case Manager with Adult Case Management Services, became Program Director, and is now a Team Leader. Although all of FAMILY's programs serve Spanish speakers, ACMS has, by far, the largest number. That is because they help clients fill out forms for assistance at other agencies, understand the immigration process, and advocate for services for their clients. "Spanish speakers find our services through word of mouth," observes Altamirano Segura. "It gets around that we are a safe place. Even when someone calls and says 'my cousin told me to call you,' we say we cannot confirm or deny that their cousin has been to see us. That models the strength of our commitment to confidentiality. FAMILY's philosophy of being non-judgmental and non-directive helps to open the door to everyone."

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FAMILY's Spanish speaking staff, both men and women, come from Honduras, Columbia, Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, making them similar in many ways to their Spanish speaking clients. In 2015, almost three hundred Spanish speakers were served, many with simple issues, translations, and information. More than forty required longer-term assistance.

"It is hard to find Spanish speaking therapists, substance abuse services, help with housing, jobs, and child care. Language is a survival skill," adds Rodriguez. "It is very stressful without language."

Domestic Violence is a special challenge for those with no or limited English. Court appearances, paper work, and moving children from familiar schools are all complicated by a lack of English. FAMILY's Domestic Violence Services all offer help in Spanish. Lara Russo is a Case Manager at The Washbourne House. "A year ago I was the only Spanish speaking staff member at the Washbourne House. Now there are two case managers here, a court advocate at Family Court, and staff offering counseling and groups for women who are not at the shelter. A Spanish speaker is often isolated socially by her abuser and she worries about citizenship. She may have married a US citizen, but her own shaky status becomes a way to threaten her. If she doesn't obey, she believes she will be deported."

Washbourne House and Adult Case Management often collaborate with Catholic Charities to advise and advocate for an immigrant client's rights. For those in domestic violence situations, special consideration under the Violence Against Women Act enables women to begin the legal residency process on their own if their abuser is a legal resident or a citizen.

Coming to a shelter is disruptive and challenging for anyone. For Spanish speakers in a shelter where few if any residents speak Spanish, it is especially daunting. "I have watched as the other residents reach out to these women," observes Russo. "They are welcomed with gestures and some halting Spanish/English communication. We help them network with family and supportive networks where they can go after they leave the shelter."

Altamirano Segura is clear about what works. "The successes we see, whether for Spanish speakers or others, come from the relationships our case managers create. Our Spanish speaking clients respond with so much gratitude. Many offer gifts to our staff (which we cannot accept of course). They often come from situations and countries where they do not feel entitled to the kinds of help and compassion we offer. We understand that."

More good food on more tables!

Stocking food pantries, and doing it well, is a complex task. For decades, unknown availability, little refrigeration, and short shelf-life have limited pantries' ability to offer fresh and fresh frozen produce to families in need. Ulster County's Food Collaborative is coordinated by FAMILY and supported by a multi-year grant from the Local Economies Project through the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley. The vision is to improve both the quantity and quality of food on the tables of families facing food shortages. Thousands of people rely on Ulster County food pantries at some point to make up for an unexpected loss of work or illness. Thousands more visit a pantry monthly.

Last year, the Collaborative collected more than sixty-three thousand pounds of fresh produce, an increase of forty percent from the previous year. Most was donated by twelve different farms through Rondout Valley Growers Association (RVGA); some was donated by Farm To Table Food Packers in Kingston and the Bruderhof communities; and thirteen thousand of those pounds were gleaned by volunteers coordinated by UlsterCorps. More volunteers joined in processing the food. The fresh, packed, and frozen produce was distributed by FAMILY to twenty-eight pantries, soup kitchens and shelters, and to seven school districts throughout the county. Most of the locations were unable to store the food for any period of time. The Collaborative's focus turned to creating Food Hubs to solve this problem.

Two Food Hubs are now operating: one at the Rondout Municipal Center (the former Rosendale Elementary School) and the second at People's Place in Kingston, the county's largest food pantry. Three additional locations-- in Ellenville, Clintondale, and Boiceville--will be opened in the coming year. When the network is complete it will significantly reduce the transportation required for each pantry to stock up. Food will be apportioned for each food pantry and feeding program and moved to the Hub freezer or cooler nearest them. The local programs can go to the Hub as needed to pick up their allotment.

According to Deborah Dewan of RVGA, whose offices are now at the Rondout Hub, "We not only have freezer and cooler space but we also have Ulster Greene ARC's kitchen which has become the processing center here. The towns have been really helpful and supportive. Pantries have started to talk to each other about needs that come up unexpectedly. The Hubs are creating improvements naturally."

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...Y POR LOS NIÑO

FAMILY's Child Care Connections helps families find quality care for their children and helps child care providers improve their programming, safety, and nutritional offerings.

Linda Stoothof, Director of First Steps Day Care in Woodstock, never had Spanish speaking children--not until last year. As part of New York's Universal Pre-K program, children who are English Language Learners (ELL formerly ESL) are considered "at risk." School districts are granted paid spaces for ELL students whose families cannot afford pre-school tuition. "Before this program, we hadn't considered many of the issues," said Stoothof. "The school district provided a training that focused on how children acquire language. We learned so much."

Last year, the program brought four new students to First Steps and they hired a Teaching Assistant, Miss Tania (pictured here reading the Spanish language version of A Snowy Day) a local graduate who speaks Spanish and has a degree in early childhood education. "It is wonderful to have her there to speak with parents about what is happening at the center. She interprets what is going on for the children during the day and reads to them from our library of books in both languages. An extra benefit to the program is that all of our students are learning their colors and alphabet in Spanish and English. At the winter holidays, our students sang Twinkle Twinkle Little Star in both languages." Stoothof says that parents of Spanish-speaking children are nervous at first, but they are eager for their children to fit in, to be able to communicate in their new environment. "They are excited for them. Our students who started the year with no English are now fluent."

Stoothof's dream for the future? "My dream is to offer language skills for the parents. So many are eager to learn."



United Healthcare volunteers building shelves at Rondout Food Hub

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Christine Hein is the Director at People's Place. In addition to their ongoing food pantry program, they offered a Farmstand during the growing season which was hugely successful, serving more than 20,000 people in its first year. "The Hub at People's Place allows all of the pantries in our area to take advantage of fresh food when it's available. It also allows pantries to purchase frozen foods when they are available from the Regional Food Bank rather than at retail stores. The Hubs will save everyone money, allow pantries access to food which they can pick up when they have space and staff, and, in the end, get more nutritious food to more people."

Money isn't everything, but sometimes it can really help. FAMILY's three hotline offices and the Adult Case Management Program field dozens of calls each month for help with car repairs, back rent, and prescription co-pays. Financial assistance is hard to get and yet seemingly small amounts can relieve stress, offer hope, and even restore self-esteem.

Deirdre knows what it is like to have a responsible, professional career. She also knows what it is like to lose it all in a flash. Diagnosed with breast cancer, she embarked upon treatment only to find the aftermath of those treatments incredibly debilitating. She lost her job and fell behind in her bills. It became a challenge to put food on the table for herself and her daughter. Through her Oncology Support Program, Deirdre found her way to FAMILY and The Gap Care Fund. It is one of a handful of funds under the umbrella of the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley.

While the agency does not have its own funds set aside for direct client assistance, our staff does help manage The Gap Care Fund and a few other targeted funds. For example, the John Herald Fund assists musicians and artists in the area with small grants for emergencies. This year, the C.F. Martin Guitar Foundation honored the Fund at the annual Woodstock Luthiers' Invitational Showcase with a five hundred dollar contribution. When Deirdre came to FAMILY, the Gap Care Fund bought her a Grocery Card and then, when she found a decent mattress for her new apartment, the Fund purchased it. She has been sleeping better, getting stronger, and has just started a new job. The dollars mentioned here may seem small, but to those on the receiving end they are huge.

The Premier Cares Fund is available to people with a variety of illnesses. Last winter, the concerned husband of an elderly woman being treated for colon cancer called FAMILY for help with fuel bills. Carroll Sisco, Team Leader at FAMILY and the person who administers many of these outside funds, used the Premier Cares Fund to pay the couple's fuel bills every two weeks. The relief they felt was tremendous.

The most frequent request for financial help is for security deposits. Occasionally, federal funds become available for these expenses, but the supply comes without warning and disappears quickly. FAMILY set up the Lorraine Kohn/Michael Wood Fund a number of years ago to help with housing-related expenses, but it has no regular funding stream. The Bruderhof Fund was created a few years ago, supported by the Bruderhof through United Way of Ulster County with FAMILY and RUPCO. It offers help with security deposits and similar needs.

It is difficult to say no to someone in dire circumstances. FAMILY is grateful to all of the donors and funds whose support enables us to say yes. If this way of helping people appeals to you, you can earmark a tax-deductible donation to go to funds that provide direct financial aid. Please contact Michael Berg to make your gift help someone in this specific way.

Safe Harbour

You've seen the billboards around Ulster County. You've probably thought, Human trafficking here? I had no idea. And you continue your drive. On the news, trafficking looks dramatic: women and young girls stolen from faraway places by pimps and put to work selling drugs or sex. In the US, many who fall victim to trafficking are runaway or homeless youth. They are vulnerable and often "different." They may be transgendered, gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Immigrant and refugee youth are also at risk. Trafficked youth have often experienced domestic violence and most were in the care of social services or in foster care when they ran.

FAMILY Adolescent Services is partnering with Ulster County's Safe Harbour Program to shed light on this issue. The goal is to find these victimized youth and divert them from the juvenile and criminal justice systems. The program can then offer a wide range of supports to help these young people rebuild their lives. Shelter, food, clothing, medical care, legal assistance, therapy, and educational services can all be made available. The Safe Harbour Critical Team, funded by NY State, is led by Ulster County's Department of Social Services. According to Jackie Arsenuk, county Safe Harbour Coordinator, "There is a need to shift people's perspectives from the stigmatizing idea of teen prostitutes to one that views these youth as survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. It is often youth with the least amount of choices who end up in these situations. Runaways don't always leave home with the intention of engaging in 'survival sex,'" explained Arsenuk, "but traffickers know where to find them and how to prey on their vulnerabilities."

Tori Barnes is one of FAMILY's Program Directors for Adolescent Services. She described some other ways trafficking might appear. "It could be happening next door and you wouldn't know it because you're looking for something different. In reality, it is the fifteen-year-old whose parent trades her for sex in exchange for rent or the boy who is arrested for prostitution, who is an addict and is trading sex for drugs with his dealer."

Nicole Martin is in charge of FAMILY's outreach efforts for the initiative. "Our first year was about education. The billboards, mall posters and bus placards are all part of that. Our next step is to work with organizations of all kinds to offer training in how to spot a young person at risk for this kind of abuse." Some of the indicators for sex trafficking include a history of running away, unexplained expensive items, tattoos indicating "ownership," and multiple sexually transmitted diseases. According to Martin, "The dynamic is delicate. The victims often feel indebted to their traffickers and can even feel protective of them, so getting disclosures can be tricky," continued Martin. "The interview process is slow and gaining a youth's trust is crucial."

The county has identified high-risk and trafficked youth and a few cases are under investigation. The Department of Homeland Security provides guidance and support to the Safe Harbour Critical Team, which includes a number of agencies in addition to FAMILY.

Martin and Arsenuk are hopeful that continued outreach efforts will lead to an increase in contacts with trafficked and at-risk youth in all of the county's locales. It is important to note that ultimately, youth have to be invested and want to participate in Safe Harbour. They cannot be 'rescued.' Otherwise they will simply go right back to the streets.

If you have concerns about a young person who may be trafficked, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888; Nicole Martin, at FAMILY, (845) 331-7080; or Crime Victims Assistance Program at (845) 340-3443. If your organization would be interested in a presentation about trafficking, contact Jackie Arsenuk, Ulster County Safe Harbour Coordinator at 845-340-3927.





FAMILY receives support from four thousand individuals, businesses and corporations each year. You send us checks, join us at events and earmark your United Way contributions to our programs. In fact, your contributions make up eleven percent of FAMILY's 8.5 million dollar budget. Add to that almost 1.5 million dollars in donated services and goods and you get an idea of how important you are to FAMILY.

Why Give?

A couple had donated clothing and household goods to FAMILY's Free Stores and recently, they had taken furniture and linens to the Family Inn as they moved Goldman's parents to a retirement community. "They gave me a tour of the program. I had had hard times in my life and I knew I could have needed a place like The Family Inn," said Goldman. "The staff was wonderful and I remember the children's room. It was just a few months later that this money arrived. We knew right away where we needed it to go. The whole experience made us feel so good. It turned something ugly into something positive. We sent notes to all of our friends asking them to think about The Family Inn when they make donations."

Janlori Goldman and her partner had a real estate transaction that didn't go well. The agent was dishonest and the couple pressed to recoup their expenses. They would find another apartment. When they received their check, they knew it just didn't feel right to keep it for themselves. "It just didn't seem right to benefit from this ugly situation," recounted Goldman. "We decided that we wanted to donate it to support housing for people who were vulnerable and at-risk." Over the years, the

Doing the Wash, Lifting Youth Up and Going Solar... with You FAMILY CAN!

FAMILY receives financial support from businesses in our communities in many ways on an almost daily basis. For example, upon hearing that MidWay (FAMILY's supported apartment program for youth) was in dire need of a new washing machine, Samuel Sawyer and Liane Potter of Moving Right Along, a local cleaning service, stepped up. They went to Lowe's and purchased one. Lowe's not only gave a generous rebate but assistant manager Tom Salmeri delivered and installed it personally.

Meagan Weiss-Rowe has been the engine behind FAMILY's youth programs in MidTown Kingston. Her Student Success Center initiative engages students in helping other students not only envision their futures but also plan for them. Last year, the Student Success Center at Kingston High School received a generous grant of \$10,000 from AT&T enabling the program to hire additional student mentors and expand their reach to non-traditional students in the district. "AT&T is proud to support Family of Woodstock's Student Success Center to provide academic and programming support to some of Kingston's most promising, but sometimes vulnerable students," said Marissa Shorenstein, president of AT&T New York.

This year, FAMILY has focused on making our six shelters more energy efficient (and therefore cost effective). A generous \$8,000 grant from Ulster Savings Bank Charitable Foundation and an anticipated grant from New York State, earmarked to help non-profits address energy issues, will be used to solarize four of the shelters and create efficiencies in all six. The initiative is expected to lower energy costs by 60%, saving FAMILY approximately \$60,000.00 annually! If this effort is meaningful to you, consider adding to our campaign for energy efficient buildings.



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Our Volunteer Opportunities

CONSIDER...

BECOMING A HOTLINE VOLUNTEER IN ELLENVILLE, NEW PALTZ OR WOODSTOCK. Our training offers life-changing tools—for you and the people you will help as a FAMILY volunteer. We hear over and over what an incredible value this training provides. Contact your local FAMILY office today to learn more.

HELP AT HITS! All summer long FAMILY sells tickets and helps people get around on Sundays at Horse Shows in the Sun in Saugerties. The shows feature world-class horsemanship and this is an event the whole family can enjoy and volunteer for. Call Doris at 331-7080 to learn more

SELL RAFFLE TICKETS, RUBBER DUCKIES, HELP AT FOOD DRIVES AND AT OUR MANY FUND RAISING EVENTS! We love our Event Volunteers. No special training is needed. Contact your local FAMILY office to learn more.

JOIN WITH US TO BRING QUALITY FOOD TO MORE TABLES! Join a gleaning event at local farms or a processing event to freeze foods for winter distribution to pantries. Call Beth at 845-331-7080 to find out more.

HOLIDAY GIFT GIVING... It is never too early to give our Walk In Centers a hand with organizing for holiday gift giving.

AND JOIN US AT A FAMILY EVENT! Coming Up...

8th Annual Bob Dylan Birthday Celebration Sunday, May 29th 8PM at the Bearsville Theater, Woodstock. Hosted by Happy Traum with Connor Kennedy and Minstrel plus an array of the Valley's best! Tickets on sale NOW at www.bearsvilletheater.com

11th Annual Midtown Make a Difference Day Saturday, June 18th from 11am-3pm. Franklin St, Kingston. A day full of FREE fun, food, music, and community services.

Visit our brand new re-imagined website for current news, volunteer and employment opportunities, events, and links to our program-specific Facebook pages.

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