

Profile

Fall 2011/Winter 2012



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A Publication of St. Catherine's Center for Children

A message from the Executive Director

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to friends of St. Catherine's.

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Remain true to our mission

Editor's note: *After 30 years of service at St. Catherine's Center for Children—20 years in the role of Executive Director—Helen Hayes has announced her retirement. This is the last issue of Profile magazine with Helen as the agency's executive director.*

* * *

It has truly been an honor and a privilege for me to serve the families and children at St. Catherine's for over 30 years. I sincerely believe in our mission and have seen the tremendous effort that our families put into making life better for themselves and their children. I have been blessed in my life with loving parents, family and friends who have supported me and believed in me through the years. I always knew I wanted to share the gifts I had with those who are less fortunate, and feel grateful for the opportunity St. Catherine's gave me to realize that dream.

I could never have done this job alone, and so I thank all of you for being so supportive and making my job a bit easier. In my time here, I have had the privilege of working side by side with the most dedicated, hard-working people I have known—people who have continued to give their best in the midst of significant challenges.

I am grateful for the support I have received from colleagues and board members, through good times and bad. I am espe-

cially grateful to Bishop Hubbard, who has offered me his friendship and support for many, many years.

I have the utmost respect for the Daughters of Charity who led the agency for the first 105 years. It was their vision, their commitment and their prayers that kept the agency relevant and strong. And they are still praying for us and our work every day!

As we look forward with hope to the next 125 years, we can be certain that unforeseen challenges lie ahead, but I am confident that St. Catherine's will continue to be a vibrant and valuable resource for the vulnerable who are sometimes overlooked or shunned.

There are, I believe, four key elements to ensure a solid future for St. Catherine's:

- *Remain true to the agency's Mission*
- *Keep the focus on the needs of the families and children—they are the reason we are here.*

• *Respect and support one another —no one can do this work alone.*

• *View change as an opportunity for growth.*

As long as we remain true to these ideals, St. Catherine's will remain a haven for hope in the Capital Region for many years to come. And to everyone who has had—and will have—a role to play, thank you. Our staff, board members, donors, volunteers, and friends are what makes St. Catherine's a special place, and I wish all of you the best in the years ahead. ■



Bishop Howard Hubbard congratulates Helen Hayes for 30 years of service at St. Catherine's.

Cover photo

Yvette Austin (left) and Shavon Thompson on the steps of the Addiction Recovery Center for Hope (ARCH) at 231 Sherman Street in Albany. The program is a joint venture between St. Catherine's Center for Children, St. Peter's Addiction Recovery Center (SPARC) and ClearView Center. Their story begins on page 2.

Helping families heal, grow, and recover

An arch is a structure that spans a space while providing support. At the **Addiction Recovery Center for Hope (ARCH)** program in Albany, the arch is a fitting metaphor for a program that supports homeless families as they make the transition from shelters back into homes of their own. Yvette Austin and Shavon Thompson, two women who recently completed the yearlong ARCH program, are testaments to that support.

“I feel better about myself,” said Yvette. “I’m more confident about my ability to handle new challenges in life.”

Yvette’s sentiments are echoed by Shavon. The two met at the ARCH program, where they participated in weekly group discussions and became friends.

“I’ve learned patience,” said Shavon. “I still worry—I have to, I’m a mother—but my outlook is more positive than ever.”

ARCH opened its doors at 231 Sherman Street in Albany early in 2010, bringing together the experience and organizational skills of three human services organizations: St. Catherine’s Center for Children, St. Peter’s Addiction Recovery Center (SPARC), and ClearView Center. At one location, ARCH provides substance abuse and mental health treatment, trauma treatment, and case management services for families.

“ARCH provides a supportive staff in a welcoming environment,” said Louisa Marra, Director of St. Catherine’s Marillac shelter. “Our goal is to help families make the difficult transition from shelters back into the community.”

Marra is also Project Director for ARCH. As a longtime shelter director, she is intimately aware of both the causes of homelessness and the issues that trap some families in a cycle of homelessness.

Advocates for the homeless understand that finding a new home for a family is sometimes just the beginning. Families often need support structures in place to prevent a return to homelessness. That’s where ARCH can help. The program is made possible through a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. St. Catherine’s, SPARC, and ClearView Center have partnered to offer a con-

tinuum of services which the three agencies believe offer the best hope for permanently removing families from the rolls of the homeless.

Advocates for Human Potential, Inc., a research firm specializing in behavioral health, is partnering with the three agencies to help measure the effectiveness of the program.

St. Catherine’s Center for Children provides overall case management for every family enrolled in ARCH. Case managers offer practical support, from helping families with transportation and housing issues to guiding them to other available resources, including health screenings and legal assistance.

SPARC offers substance abuse education, treatment, and referral services.

ClearView Center provides a trauma treatment component to the ARCH program. Families struggling with homelessness, particularly single mothers, often have histories of trauma, and little understanding of how that trauma affects their behaviors and responses. The experts believe that understanding trauma can help immeasurably when coping with challenges.

Today, Yvette and Shavon have a better understanding of how trauma has affected their lives, and they are grateful to the ARCH staff for that understanding.

Yvette is a Long Island native who moved to the Capital Region more than a year ago. A mother in her mid-40s with an 11-year-old daughter, Yvette came to Albany eager to start a new life after the death of her mother. Her daughter had special education needs, and a friend convinced her that the Capital Region was the ideal place to begin anew.

“We moved into my friend’s home, and that just didn’t work out,” said Yvette. “I was depressed and worried about my daughter. After a while, my friend and I did not get along. I moved out of her home, and ended up at the Marillac homeless shelter in December, 2010.

At Marillac, Yvette learned about ARCH and enrolled in the program. She never regretted the decision. ARCH offered her the practical assistance she needed—counseling, trans-



Paul Hackett, a case manager at the ARCH program, chats with Shavon Thompson (left) and Yvette Austin (center) at the ARCH facility in downtown Albany. Thompson and Austin were in the ARCH program together for a year.

A home and a heart for “just one more”

Susanne Coburn and Pat Gagnon are recruiters/trainers for St. Catherine’s therapeutic family programs. Susanne, a native of Rockville Center, Long Island and graduate of the College of Saint Rose, has worked at St. Catherine’s for three years. She is owner of her own horse farm. Pat has also been employed at St. Catherine’s for three years, and before that worked as a volunteer foster parent trainer at the agency. Pat and her husband, Mark, began fostering children in 1996 after their oldest daughter started college. They have opened their home to 14 full-time foster children, and provided respite care for numerous others.

* * * * *

How does St. Catherine’s therapeutic foster care program differ from other foster care programs?

St. Catherine’s foster care program differs from other programs because it is a therapeutic, or specialized, program. The children referred to us need a higher level of care. All of our children have experienced multiple layers of trauma and loss. They come to us having no sense of what a “normal” childhood is like. We are also much smaller than the county foster care programs, which enables all of us to get to know each child placed with us.

Describe a typical child in St. Catherine’s foster care program.

Our children range in age from five to 18 years. They are scared, sad and miss their families. When you learn their history, it’s hard to imagine how any child could survive some of the frightening experiences they’ve encountered. Then, when you meet the child, you are reminded...it’s just a little child who really needs a great deal of love and nurturing.

What range of services does a child in your program receive?

The therapeutic program is made up of a number of caring adults who help create a safe environment where the child can begin to heal. Each child is evaluated by a program psychologist or psychiatrist who makes treatment recommendations. A therapist works with the child and foster parents on issues that are of special concern at home and school. Each child also has a family specialist. The family specialist supervises visits with birth

parents when needed, works with the child on building skills, and provides other necessary supports. And last, but not least, the foster parent is very important in the life of a child, caring for the child as their own and ensuring that all of his or her needs—including medical and dental care—are met.

What are the basic requirements for becoming a foster parent?

Potential foster parents must be 21 years of age, have a room in their home for the child, have a primary source of income and must have reliable transportation. They also need to be cleared through the State Central Registry, and must undergo a background check that includes fingerprinting.

What kinds of people are you looking for to become foster parents?

We always look for someone who wants to make a difference in a child’s life. We are looking for committed and responsible adults who have the patience and the heart to help a broken child heal. They need to be willing to raise the child as their own, yet always remain mindful that the goal is to return the child home. Lastly, they need to have a good sense of humor; if they don’t, they will quickly develop one.

What considerations go into matching a particular child with a family?

There is much to consider when trying to make the right match between the foster family and the child. We take into consideration if there are any other children in the home, and their ages. We look for the right level of structure and supervision the child needs. We consider the location to be sure that the child will feel comfortable in the home. We ask if the child needs to share a room or if there are any pets. Also, if both foster parents work full-time, we consider the child care arrangements during the day.

What kind of training does a prospective foster parent receive in your program?

We have a 10-week training class that we offer in the spring and fall. The class—**Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting**, or **MAPP**—is informative and fun, and offers the



Susanne Coburn (left) and Pat Gagnon are recruiters and trainers for St. Catherine’s therapeutic foster care program.

opportunity to form a new network of friends. The class meets once a week, generally from 6 to 8:30 p.m. For prospective foster families who are unable to attend our group trainings, we offer one-on-one MAPP training for six weeks. Prospective foster parents also have the opportunity to meet and talk with seasoned foster families and St. Catherine's staff.

How about the support foster parents receive after their initial training?

There is a lot of support at St. Catherine's. We are a small agency where everyone works to help each other. A family specialist works with foster care parents to provide support and guidance in addressing any issues or concerns a family may have with a child. We also offer monthly trainings on topics requested by foster families, and often invite guest speakers to share their experience and insights. We inform foster parents of the many trainings offered *outside* our agency, which includes convenient, online computer courses. We also offer respite services when needed, and 24-hour emergency support. Families have a phone number they can call *any time* they need us.

What happens if, despite their best efforts, a foster family decides they cannot keep a child in their home?

When and if this happens, the agency will help the child transition into a more appropriate setting. This could mean placement in a different foster home—which may be a more successful match—or even placement in a group home that offers more intensive services if that is what a child needs to succeed. Some children have a difficult time thriving in an intimate family setting, but we don't know that until they try it. The foster family is always supported if they are willing to give a child the chance to succeed in a family setting. We believe that most children grow better in families.

On the other hand, you have a number of families that have served as foster parents for many years. What is your longest serving family, and how many foster children have they opened their home to?

There are many families who have been with us a long time. The longest-serving foster parents at St. Catherine's are Sandy and Arnold Yerry. They have been with us for 30 years, and have cared for more than 100 children.

It takes a special family to open their homes to these children, doesn't it?

It takes a family with room in their home, and hearts, for just "one more". These families have reached out and embraced a child who needs to experience a safe and loving environment. We refer to them as Professional Parents or Treatment Parents. They are normal parents who have been given the training to care for children who have been through horrific situations, and often have behavioral problems as a result. Our families work as a team with the agency and birth families to offer what every child should be entitled to: hope and a future.

Foster parents receive monthly stipends to support the added costs of another child in their home. What is the stipend?

The monthly stipend for a full time placement is about \$1,200, and is tax free.

What Capital Region counties do you recruit in?

We are looking for families within a one-hour radius of our office on Delaware Avenue in Albany. We have families from as far north as Washington and Warren counties and as far south as the Catskills.

Have any St. Catherine's foster parents adopted a foster child?

Over the past 15 years, seven of our families have adopted at least 14 of our children. Whenever a child is freed for adoption, the foster family is always our first choice to become the child's "forever family".

If you could send a particular message to someone reading this interview right now, what would it be?

We would like to challenge some "empty nesters" to consider this opportunity to make a difference in a child's life. You have skills and experience that our children need. Even if you could only commit to taking care of one child for one year, you would be giving that child a priceless gift. Fostering can be a life-changing experience for both you and the child—one you will never regret! ■

Interested in becoming a foster parent? Call today!

According to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, there were 23,202 children and youth in the state foster care system at the end of 2010. The average length of stay for children in the system was 29 months, or just a little more than three years per child. The need for foster parents is great. If you are interested in learning more about therapeutic foster parenting, call Susanne Coburn or Pat Gagnon at 432-1624 to learn more (Susanne/x19 or Pat/x12).

ARCH, *continued from page 3*

portation, a place to do her laundry—but it also taught her about herself.

“The best thing about ARCH was the group meetings with other mothers,” she said. “We met three times a week for group meetings, usually for two meetings each day. We talked about our problems and our hopes for the future. Sometimes we had open discussions and talked about everything that came to mind. Other talks focused on single issues, like emotions or teamwork. We learned from the staff at ARCH, but we also learned from each other.”

According to Yvette, ARCH families forged a real sense of community in those group meetings. That sense of community was especially critical for Yvette’s friend, Shavon, who was initially doubtful about the value of the meetings.

“I’m gonna be honest, I didn’t want any part of those group discussions,” said Shavon. “I’ve never liked being in groups or sharing my feelings with strangers.”

In November of 2010, Shavon was a 27-year-old mother of two boys with another baby on the way. She found herself homeless after her apartment became uninhabitable.

“We were surrounded by fleas and mice,” she said. “My landlord didn’t do a thing, so we had to leave. I learned about ARCH while we were in a homeless shelter. I signed up for the counseling services, but I couldn’t bring myself to attend the group meetings.”

Shavon admits she has never been a “people” person. She grew up with an abusive father, and has struggled her whole life to manage her anger. Her response has been to avoid dealing with people whenever she could, to the point of taking jobs that minimized her interaction with others.

“I’m naturally shy,” she said. “I only deal with others when I have to. And because I was abused, I have a temper. I often let my anger build, and I’ve lashed out at people when I’m really angry. I would never hurt my kids—I love them—but I do get angry at people who mistreat others.”

Shavon was in ARCH six months before her counselor, Brian Roland, finally convinced her to attend meetings.

“I had a lot of issues to deal with. Postpartum depression, anger, a history of abuse,” she said. “I had six months of one-on-one counseling with Brian before he talked me into joining group discussions.”

But those group meetings, Shavon says with a smile, were one of the best things that ever happened to her.

“After my first meeting, you couldn’t get rid of me. I was the first one to come to group discussions, and the last one to leave. Meeting with other women who shared the same experiences taught me a lot about myself. And about how to deal with my problems.”

As they finish their formal affiliation with ARCH, both Shavon and Yvette are grateful to the staff who helped them. Both have found homes, and have learned how to trust others. Each has a greater self-awareness of how trauma has affected their lives. Each understands that challenges still lie ahead, but feels better equipped to handle the unexpected.

Their newfound confidence has also encouraged them to establish goals—including helping families with similar experiences. Both Yvette and Shavon are graduates of a 14-week training course from the Mental Health Empowerment program that qualifies them as *peer support specialists*. The training, and their own experiences, will allow them to lead group discussions and help other families connect to community services and supports.

For Louisa Marra, Yvette and Shavon’s confidence is one sign of ARCH’s success. And Marra is proud of the partnership the three agencies have forged to help the community.

“We have a talented staff who think creatively and are flexible,” said Marra. “They are open and willing to go beyond our defined roles to meet the needs of our families. Their goal is to partner with our families and the community to provide a service to help families heal, grow, and recover. I’m really confident about our ability to do just that!”

Shavon agrees with that assessment. “ARCH has been a home away from home for me,” she said. “It has given me self-confidence, something I never really had before. I had my doubts in the beginning, but now I wish could go on with the program even longer. It has been a life changer!” ■

Friend us on Facebook; check out our QR code!

St. Catherine’s celebrated 125 years in 2011. As we maintain a respect for tradition, we still embrace new tools and technologies! Two cases in point: St. Catherine’s is now on Facebook, and we have our own Quick Response (QR) code. Our Facebook page, a supplement to the agency’s website, offers the latest news and information. You will learn on our Facebook page, for instance, that students from The College of Saint Rose donated more than 300 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to our Marillac Family Shelter! The QR code, a matrix barcode that stores information that can be scanned and read by portable electronic devices, has become ubiquitous in the marketplace. The code at right provides a direct link to St. Catherine’s website for people with devices that read QRs. Mobile access allows for donations or purchase of special event tickets from anywhere! ■



St. Catherine’s Quick Response (QR) code!

A special 125th anniversary celebration

The celebration of our 125th anniversary reminds us again of how fortunate we are to have friends and supporters who believe in our mission. As we commemorate a long history of service to the community, our friends do what friends always do—they demonstrate faith in our future! I'd like to take this occasion to thank all of our donors, listed on pages 9 through 11, who supported us during our anniversary year. We deeply appreciate your donations, which provided our children and families with services they might otherwise not have received.

In addition to donations, many of you found other ways to help during the year. You might have attended one of our special events—our tribute to *The Wizard of Oz* or our golf tournament, for instance—or you might have donated gifts or volunteered your time and talent. Whatever your level of support, we are grateful to have friends like you.

While we send our heartfelt appreciation to our supporters, I would like to this opportunity to extend a special thanks to those of you who were able to support our special **125th Anniversary Campaign**. In that special appeal, we asked our donors to give \$125 or more, one dollar for every year we have been serving the community. Many of you responded, and some of you—listed on page 11—donated \$1,000 to the campaign. Thank you!

Our **125th Anniversary Campaign** runs through May 25, the anniversary of our founding. It's still not too late to participate! If you would like to make a gift or pledge to this campaign, simply use the envelope in this issue of **Profile** and send it to us. Or, you can visit our website at www.st-cath.org and use the **DonateNow** button. We accept gifts in any

amount. Those who donate at the \$1,000 level will receive a brick—engraved in their name or the name of a special friend or loved one—on the new terrace that will be installed at St. Catherine's Byron Center for Loss and Healing. The terrace will be installed in the spring!

There are, of course, many ways to help an organization. Some people donate money, others volunteer their time and talent. However you choose to give to St. Catherine's, it has to work for your lifestyle and situation. But if you are wondering how to help, here's one easy way? CafeGive.com is a website that allows online

shoppers to support their favorite causes. If you are an online shopper, you can support St. Catherine's at no additional cost to yourself simply by using CafeGive.com. Just visit <http://cafegive.com/causes/st.-catherines-center-children> and click "shop and earn" to start shopping for us. Hundreds of vendors participate in CafeGive, so you are sure to find something you like. Happy holidays! ■



Joanne Gambino-Morehouse
Director of Development



A rendering of the terrace that will be built at St. Catherine's Byron Center for Loss and Healing in the spring of 2012. All \$1,000 donors to *St. Catherine's 125th Anniversary Campaign* will receive a brick on the new terrace!

St. Catherine's 2011 Holiday Wish Appeal

It's time for St. Catherine's 2011 Holiday Wish Appeal! Each year, we compile a list of gifts for friends who wish to donate for the holidays. The list includes gifts our children most often ask for, and also items for their health and comfort. If you or your organization would like to donate a gift to a child this year, simply choose an item from the list below. You or your organization may also adopt a family in need and donate to them. No time to shop? Send a cash donation using the form at the bottom of this page. Jean Hagin, St. Catherine's Volunteer Coordinator, compiled the following list of items for this holiday season:



- Arts and craft supplies
- Backpacks/duffel bags
- Basketballs/footballs/soccer balls/kick balls
- Batteries (AA & D) and AC universal adapters
- Bicycle & scooter helmets
- Books and Board games
- Computer games for DS and Wii consoles
- CD Players/Radios
- Costumes or dress-up clothes
- DVDs (age appropriate)
- Elbow and knee pads
- Gift certificates (store or restaurant)
- Gift wrapping materials (Christmas and birthday)
- Hats, mittens, gloves and scarves
- Infant supplies (diapers, formula, etc.)
- Legos building blocks
- Movie passes
- Personal hygiene and hair care products
- Playing cards (all kinds, age appropriate)
- Socks
- Sweatshirts
- Winter coats and boots

Call Jean at 453-6755 to arrange a delivery time for your gifts. **To help us in our planning and preparation, we request that you deliver unwrapped gifts to St. Catherine's Center for Children at 40 North Main Avenue in Albany by December 14.** To make a cash donation, detach and mail the form below using the envelope provided in this magazine. Or, you can fax the form to 453-6712 (attention: Joanne Gambino-Morehouse). *If you are looking for another way to donate this holiday season, do not forget St. Catherine's Angel Tree at Colonie Center! From November 21 through December 20, holiday shoppers at Colonie Center can select an Angel from our tree and purchase a gift for a child. The tree is located on the first floor of Colonie Center near the courtesy desk. Drop the gift and the Angel off in the donation box by the courtesy desk, and St. Catherine's will do the rest!* We are also looking for volunteers willing to wrap gifts for our children. A volunteer gift-wrapping day is scheduled for Wednesday, December 21 at 40 North Main Avenue in Albany. Call Joanne Gambino-Morehouse at 453-6757 for more details. Hot chocolate and refreshments will be provided! ■

Name _____

Company/Organization/Group _____

Address _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Fax #: _____ E-Mail: _____

Enclosed is my contribution of: \$ _____ (Please make checks payable to the Foundation of St. Catherine's)

Please charge my credit card: (circle one) Visa Mastercard Amount \$ _____

CC # _____ Exp. Date _____

3-Digit Credit Card Security Code _____ Signature _____

I will gladly donate the following unwrapped gifts: (Please call Jean Hagin at 453-6755 to arrange delivery).

Donations

St. Catherine's Center for Children is grateful to these individuals and organizations who provided monetary donations between **January 1 and September 30, 2011**. Your generosity allows us to deliver quality care and treatment to our children and families.

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