



Family Resources Community Action

Reaching Out

A Semi-annual Newsletter

Spring 2011

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Supporting Foster Parents and Children

Each May, we take time to recognize the dedication of foster parents who play a critical role in the lives of children affected by trauma and loss.

The need has never been greater to secure stable, loving homes for children. Milagros Cruz has been a foster parent with FRCA's Treatment Foster Care Program for two years, caring for two girls ages 13 and 16. Though they are no longer living with her, she has kept in touch.

"It was a good experience. We were from completely different cultures," Milagros said. "I was learning from them and they were learning from me." Milagros appreciates the support and training received from the program. "The foster care staff is al-

ways there, every step of the way. The trainings are on a range of topics—the law, how to treat kids, learning how to listen. They teach us how to be a better foster parent."



Foster Parent
Milagros Cruz

FRCA's Child Welfare Director Patti Corbett reinforced the need to support foster parents. "One of the most impor-

tant things in child welfare is that foster parents receive support from neighbors and the community," she said.

"Children in foster care are dealing with loss and change on many levels: being removed from their home; starting in a new school; coping with issues such as a parent's arrest, illness or death; dealing with the effects of abuse and neglect."

FRCA's Foster Family Support Program (FFSP) provides support, training and resources for kinship foster parents. Foster children may have difficulties with events such as holidays and birthdays that trigger painful emotions for them. FFSP is a

Continued on pg 3

Join Us for FRCA's 6th Annual Golf Tournament Friday
June 17th. Visit
www.famresri.org for details



From left: Scott Fietz, Citizens Bank, Congressman David Cicilline; FRCA Board member Eva D. Heroux

Woonsocket's Financial Opportunity Center

FRCA, in partnership with NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley (NWBRV), will serve as the Woonsocket Financial Opportunity Center (FOC).

With funding from the Local Support Initiatives Corporation (LISC), FRCA will expand on its current work in financial literacy and workforce development and better connect individuals to benefit



FOC Team with First Client Amanda Martin (3rd from right); FRCA Success Support Manager Deb Martin (3rd from left)

and income support programs. FRCA and NWBRV will collaborate with Connecting for Children & Families to assure that individuals served in common by multiple local organizations receive a comprehensive array of financial and family support services.

Continued on pg 2



FRCA Executive Director
Ben Lessing, Jr., MSW

Greetings from the Executive Director

Hope for the future is a valuable commodity. In this issue of *Reaching Out*, we share with you some resources designed to create the spark that can lead to a brighter tomorrow for the people we serve.

FRCA foster care programs provide stable, caring families and the promise of a permanent home. Working with local partners such as Neighbor Works Blackstone River Valley, our recently launched Financial Opportunity Center

provides a resource for participants to improve their financial literacy and improve their future employment.

With Access to Recovery (ATR), vulnerable populations struggling with addiction now have a resource for choosing and selecting treatment and recovery support services that will assist them in creating a stable life.

And the Agape Center provides critical support to people living with HIV/AIDS so that they can maximize the quality

of their lives.

Many thanks to all of you that work with us to create hope for a better tomorrow!

-Ben

"Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today."

- Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Monk and Activist

Woonsocket Financial Opportunity Center

A career & personal finance center providing

- Employment, education & career improvement
- Financial education & coaching
- Public benefits access & income supports

The Woonsocket Financial Opportunity Center

(Con't from pg 1)

Through this project, low and moderate income individuals with a desire to develop and follow through with an individualized financial stability plan will be connected to the full range of support services to assist them in achieving their goals. Individuals will be followed over the long term to support their progress.

A Kick-Off was held on April 21st. Speakers included US Congressman David Cicilline, Woonsocket Mayor Leo Fontaine, FRCA Executive Director Ben Lessing, NWBRV partner Ainsley Morisseau and LISC national President/CEO Michael Rubinger.

"FOCs are a part of a comprehensive program to assist individuals and families improve their financial standing," noted moderator Jeanne



Woonsocket Mayor Leo Fontaine

Cola, RI LISC Local Advisory Chair. "With the proper tools, families can build incomes and assets in ways that have a long-term impact on their quality of life."

"This is a model for the rest of the state that will help people move up the economic ladder," said Ben Lessing.

Mayor Fontaine added, "This program gives people a hand up, so they can help themselves get back on their feet."

A savings bond was presented to Amanda Martin, the

first Financial Opportunity Center client.

The Woonsocket Financial Opportunity Center is one of five new centers in RI and part of RI LISC's "Our Neighborhoods" initiative to help residents transform their distressed neighborhoods into places of choice and opportunity.

The grants were made possible by a national award from the Corporation for National and Community Service's Social Innovation Fund, a \$4.2 million program to expand similar centers in 10 metropolitan areas nationwide.

For more information about the FOC, contact Deb Martin at 401-235-6037 or dmartin@famresri.org.



US Rep. Cicilline, FOC client Amanda Martin, Tammy Summiel, Teamhealth, Kathy Kane, FRCA



Jeanne Cola, Deb Martin FOC Manager, Amanda Martin, Michael Rubinger, LISC national President/CEO

Supporting Foster Parents and Children *(con't from pg 1)*

partner in parenting with the foster family, helping them to see the big picture.

Patti noted there is “no wrong door” for those wanting to help. “We welcome whatever level of support people can provide—as a mentor, respite care provider, foster care placement, adoption. We are seeking a stable, safe place for as long as that child needs it, be it a week, a year or a permanent placement. The primary goal is re-unification



FRCA Child Welfare Director and permanency.”

“Everyone has a stake in providing for children who are in

the State’s care,” Patti said. “The quality of care provided to those children is a reflection of the State, of our society. It is important for all of us to help, to do our share, to offer support to foster families.”

Asked to give advice to those considering becoming foster parents, Mialgros had this to say:

“You have to listen. Kids come from very difficult situations. You need to let them

know you are there for them, and to learn how to love them like they were your own.”

For more information about becoming a foster parent, contact Terri Killory at 401-235-6089 or tkillory@famresri.org

“Foster care is not about rescuing children. Kids need foster parents to meet them where they are in their life’s journey.”
- Patti Corbett

FRCA Awarded Statewide Access to Recovery Contract

In January 2011, FRCA was awarded one of two statewide Access To Recovery (ATR) contracts to provide assessment, care coordination and access to transportation for populations struggling with addiction; these include:

- ⇒ Persons leaving residential treatment or state funded detox
- ⇒ Inmates re-entering the community from the corrections system
- ⇒ Persons involved in the AG Diversionary program
- ⇒ Families serviced by DCYF
- ⇒ Women (October 2011)

Prospective participants may be seeking treatment services and other recovery supports such as shelter, housing, residential care, employment and other community based resources.



ATR Team from left: Krystal Vasconcelos, Kerri Slezak, Celeste Greene, & Irene LeBlanc; Not pictured: Darlene Magaw, Family Support Services Director.

In addition to FRCA, Stanley Street Treatment and Resources (SSTAR) in North Kingstown, RI was awarded a contract. Both organizations are working collaboratively to assure that prospective participants throughout Rhode Island receive a comprehensive assessment and have access to an array of resources of their choosing.

Resources funded by the Department of Behavioral

Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) are accessed via a voucher provided by care coordinators. Each voucher coincides with an individual’s care plan and recovery goals. FRCA has hired

additional clinical and case management staff to implement ATR.

FRCA has developed subcontracts with East Bay Community Action, TIDES Family Services and South County Community Action to provide care coordination.

In addition to a thorough assessment and access to BHDDH funded services, FRCA is committed to insur-

ing ATR participants learn about and have an opportunity to access a comprehensive array of formal and informal supportive resources statewide. FRCA sees recovery as an ongoing, multi-faceted process requiring treatment and other resources such as shelter, housing, employment, food, transportation and supportive persons to rely on.

In addition to the ATR contract, FRCA is working with BHDDH to recruit people in faith communities to serve as voluntary Recovery Coaches to support the people we serve in their journey toward sobriety.

For more information, contact Counseling/Substance Abuse Coordinator Celeste Greene at 401-235-6062 or cgreene@famresri.org



Agape will be hosting a "Books & Stuff" Sidewalk Sale on

Saturday, June 4th from 7:30 - 11:30 am in the parking lot across from Chan's Restaurant, 267 Main Street, Woonsocket.

Proceeds will support the Agape Center.

Agape Center for People Living with HIV/AIDS

The Agape Center is a community HIV/AIDS support and resource center that provides services, resources, and advocacy for persons living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

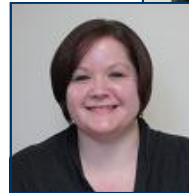
The Center has a holistic approach to supporting individuals living with HIV/AIDS, treating its clients with dignity and respect while continuing to reinforce the importance of consistent medical care.

Clients have access to on-site meals as well as a food pantry and personal care products. In addition, clients receive assistance with basic needs, education about the disease, peer support/socialization and case management.

"Coordinating care for our clients can be very complex," noted Lorna Cohen, Agape Program Manager.



Agape Team above from left: Wilfredo Rodriquez, Christine Halkett, Nicole Mahan, Shirley Fraticelli, and Lorna Cohen (behind). Newest team member Dana Cook at left.



"We assist clients with coordinating their medical treatment and navigating the social service system. We try to make sure that our clients are seeing an infectious disease specialist and are taking their prescriptions. In Agape we all

work hard to ensure everyone has the resources to not only live as long as they can, but as *well* as they can."

For more information about Agape, contact Lorna Cohen at 401-235-6092.

Meghan Farrelly Appointed Senior Manager

"I'm so pleased to be a part of Agape and the Shelter. These programs are so important to this community and provide so much for those in need of support."

-Meghan Farrelly

FRCA is very pleased to announce the appointment of Meghan Farrelly, LICSW to the role of Senior Manager for FRCA's Housing and HIV/AIDS Support Services.

Meghan is a licensed Social Worker who has a broad array of experience with children and families and persons with disabilities. She has served in multiple clinical leadership positions and is experienced in the development and implementation of case management services.

In her last position, Meghan served as a clinical manager for the Northern RI Family



Care Community Partnership.

In the Senior Manager role that Meghan has assumed, she is responsible for the Agape Center, a drop-in psychosocial support center for people living with HIV/AIDS.

In addition, Meghan is responsible for the agency's emergency

shelter programming, and the transitional and permanent supportive housing programs. This continuum also encompasses sober housing and specialized scattered site apartments for people living with HIV/AIDS.

On any given day, Meghan and her very capable management team, including Shelter Coordinator Harry Diarblian and Agape Program Manager Lorna Cohen, are responsible for serving two of the agency's most vulnerable populations.

We welcome Meghan to her new role!

FRCA Monthly Radio Show Begins on WOON 1240 AM

FRCA is hosting a new radio show *Community Connections* on WOON 1240 AM to air the fourth Wednesday of every month from 9:00 to 9:30 am.

Host Roth Nhar, the FRCA Community Services Liaison, will be joined by guests from the agency and the community to discuss issues of concern to individuals and families in Woonsocket and northern RI, and share information on community resources that can provide support to families.



Community Connections host Roth Nhar

Guests for the first show included Ben Lessing, FRCA Executive Director; Nancy Benoit, FRCA Board Chair and Ivy Medeiros, northern RI Family Care Community Partnership (FCCP) Network Manager.

In recognition of Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention month, guests discussed some of the challenges families face with balancing the needs of themselves and their children while coping with high unemployment and the rising cost of food, utilities and gas.

Guests stressed the need for parents to seek out supports in the community, and to take time to care for themselves.

The next show, which will air May 25th, will focus on Health, Well-being & Permanency.

A recording of the most recent *Community Connections* show is on WOON's website at www.onworldwide.com as well as on the News & Events page of FRCA's website www.famresri.org



Tax Assistance Helps Strengthen Families

So far this year, FRCA has prepared over 1,100 tax returns free of charge for low income individuals and families, returning over \$1.8 million to the local community, \$715,000 of which was from Earned Income Tax Credits.

This program comes at a critical time, putting money back in the pockets of families that can be used for food, utilities, gas and other basic needs.

Many thanks to the FRCA VITA team for their time. They have made a tremendous difference in the lives of many low income individuals and families.



FRCA Finance Director Rita Gandhi (far left) with VITA team members Josie Byrd, Janie Sweeney, Lorraine Boudreau, Yvette Corneau, Steve Johnson, and Lisa Lachance

Community Garden

Plots are still available for the GrowUp Community Garden, located on Clinton Street, Woonsocket next to the Harris Public Library.

Learn how you can take advantage of this great community resource, and make some new friends along the way!

For more information, contact Elena Marchand at 401-235-6083 or visit www.famresri.org



Gene Blanchette (left), brother of Susan Jarosz, accepts award from RICH Board president Rabbi Alan Flam

Award Honors Memory of Susan Jarosz

Susan Jarosz, who passed away in January, received the Carol McGovern Award at the RI Coalition for the Homeless' (RICH) Annual Awards Luncheon on March 28th. Susan's brother, Gene Blanchette, accepted the award on Sue's behalf.

The Award is given annually to an individual who exemplifies the spirit and work of Sr. Carol McGovern, with involvement in advocating to fight homelessness, providing services, and empowering those



who are homeless.

Sue was with FRCA for over 24 years, most recently as the Director of Services for the Homeless and the Agape Center (HIV/AIDS support.)

"Sue was dedicated to making the Woonsocket shelter a safe, caring place to help families succeed," Jim Ryczek, Executive Director of RICH said.

"She was never afraid to be direct with her opinions but was utterly compassionate at the same time. Sue led with a raw wisdom that enabled and inspired her staff to be more effective in their work. Her knowledge and passion empowered residents to thrive, helping them to transform their housing into homes."

"Sue had a deep commitment to strengthening the lives of families and individuals that are often hidden and pushed to the margins of our society. Although we miss her daily, she left a strong foundation and has inspired our staff to continue to evolve the important programs that benefited from her leadership and advocacy." - Ben Lessing, FRCA Executive Director



SAVE THE DATE!

FRCA's 23rd Annual ShelterWalk 2011 is on **Saturday, October 15th**. The walk begins and ends at River Island Park, Woonsocket. Teams and individuals are encouraged to participate.

Check out FRCA's website at www.famresri.org

for registration form or call 766-0900 for more information

Hundreds Participate in ShelterWalk 2010

Nearly 400 walkers came out for FRCA's 2010 ShelterWalk to support the Woonsocket Shelter and homelessness prevention programs.

FRCA thanks all the walkers including those participating in one of the 24 teams from local businesses, churches, organizations and schools.

Forty three organizations and businesses stepped up to become sponsors of the event. Special thanks goes



out to our Major Banner Sponsors:

- BankRI
- Citizens Bank
- NE Chimney & Roofing
- North Smithfield Animal Hospital
- Soucy Insurance Agency
- St. James Baptist Church
- St. James Episcopal Church
- State Line Power Products
- Technical Support Int'l
- UnitedHealthcare

Proceeds from walker pledges and

sponsorships yielded over \$30,000 to support these much-needed programs. A list of all of our 2010 ShelterWalk sponsors can be found on FRCA's website at www.famresri.org.

Please consider joining us for FRCA's **23rd Annual ShelterWalk on October 15th**. Our next planning committee is being held on Tuesday, June 7th at 4:30 pm at FRCA, 245 Main Street Woonsocket.



Mount St. Charles Academy Team

FRCA Welcomes New Board Members



Eva D. Heroux

FRCA recently welcomed two new members to its Board of Directors. Woonsocket resident Eva D. Heroux, MBA, CFRE, comes to the FRCA Board with a broad range of fundraising and community service experience. She has been a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) since 1979, and was elected as a National Board Member for 10 terms.

Eva's past experience includes serving as the Director of Development and Alumni Relations at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine and Director of Development

at Rhode Island Hospital, where she directed the fundraising campaign that enabled the construction of Hasbro Children's Hospital.

In addition, Eva has served as a Citizen Ambassador and Delegate for the People to People International Programs since 2000, representing the United States as a part of international contingents to countries including Jordan, Peru and China.

Woonsocket resident Wesley Cruz is employed at NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley (NWBRV) in Woonsocket where he conducts enrichment classes for youth in kindergarten through grade five, and tutors youth in grades 6 – 12 in English and science.

Prior to his work at NWBRV, Wesley was a student at RiverzEdge Arts Project in Woonsocket, where he specialized in silk screening with

the organization's ScreenWorks studio service.

In addition to his tutoring, Wesley is a student at Rhode Island College where he is studying social work. Asked why he was interested in joining the FRCA Board, Wesley said, "It feels good to contribute to kids' lives. The passion is there. I need to help people; it drives me."



Wesley Cruz

FRCA Board members play an important role in helping to steer the direction of the agency as well as serving as "community ambassadors."

Board of Directors

- Nancy L. Benoit - **Chair**
- Rev. Dorian Parker - **Vice Chair**
- Julien Ayotte - **Treasurer**
- Gerard A. Noel, Jr. - **Secretary**
- Suzanne Blades
- Chris Carcifero
- Christine Chiacu-Forsythe
- Wesley Cruz
- Dee Henry
- Eva D. Heroux
- Ron Miller
- Bamby Mohamed
- Charles Noel
- Vimala Phongsavanh
- Jo Ann Rajabian
- Candy J. Seldon
- Carol Wilson-Allen

In addition to attending meetings and providing valuable advice and support, Board members have made other important contributions to the agency including supporting annual fundraisers, and volunteering with holiday and VITA programs.

Thanks to all the Board members for all that you do to help FRCA meet the needs of the people we serve.

FRCA Volunteers Honored at Serve Rhode Island Event

Two long-time FRCA volunteers were recently honored at the April 13th VolunCheers event sponsored by Serve RI.

Susan Prats has worked for 6 years helping to stock the shelves and distribute food to Agape Center and Thundermist clients. Susan brings a level of compassion that is second to none, and makes all clients feel welcomed and safe.



Cindy Roy (2nd from left) and Susan Prats (3rd from left) pictured with FRCA staff members Deb Grasso (far left) and Lorna Cohen (far right)

Cindy Roy has been a loyal and dedicated volunteer for over 8 years who gives selflessly of her time and talents. She has assisted in many ways including with the holiday programs, ShelterWalk, the Volunteer Income Tax Program (VITA) and general administration.

Thanks to both Susan and Cindy for all that you do to help support the clients we serve.

Family Resources Community Action

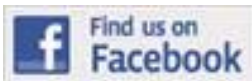
245 Main Street
Woonsocket, RI 02895

Phone: 401-766-0900



Strengthening families and the
community since 1891

Visit us on the Web!
www.famresri.org



Upcoming Events & Information Sessions

- Tune in to **WOON 1240 AM at 9:00 am the fourth Wednesday of every month** to hear FRCA's new radio show: **Community Connections**. The show will highlight issues of concern to community members and share resources and programs at FRCA and in the broader community to help support individuals and families.
 - Saturday, **June 4th 7:30 - 11:30 am** - Check out the **Books & Stuff Sidewalk Sale** in the parking lot across from Chan's Restaurant, 267 Main Street, Woonsocket, RI. Proceeds benefit The Agape Center supporting people living with HIV/AIDS.
 - **Friday, June 17th** - Join us for FRCA's **6th Annual Golf Tournament** to benefit the Woonsocket Shelter and homelessness prevention programs. This year's event will be held at Crystal Lake Golf Club in Mapleville, RI. Check out FRCA's website at www.famresri.org for golfer registration and sponsorship opportunities. For more information, contact Tracey Abrams at 401-235-6061 or tabrams@famresri.org.
 - **Wednesday, August 17th from 12:00 - 4:00 pm** - The RI Blood Center will be hosting a **Blood Donation Drive** at FRCA, 245 Main Street, Woonsocket RI.
 - **Saturday October 15th** - SAVE THE DATE! - Join us for FRCA's **23rd Annual ShelterWalk** to benefit the Woonsocket Homeless Shelter. Registration opens at 9am and the walk kicks off at 10am! River Island Park, Woonsocket. We are actively seeking individuals and teams to participate! More information is on FRCA's website www.famresri.org.
 - **Learn about FRCA's Employment & Training Programs and Employment Support services** at the weekly Information Session Wednesday afternoons at 3:00pm, 55 Main Street Woonsocket, RI.
 - For a complete list of the most updated list of events, trainings & community happenings, visit www.famresri.org.
-