

Inside this issue:

A Shelter Client's Story	2
Staff Profile: Benson Adenodi	2
Agape HOPWA	3
Staff News	4
FRCA Holiday Party	4
Tax Preparation	4

Behind The Scenes

Meeting Needs, Making Connections



Ben Lessing

This issue of *Behind the Scenes* illustrates a fundamental truth that most professionals in our business come to understand at some point; that addressing the most basic human needs can be transformative.

We don't, though, always have the resource to address a particular need. Anna's story (pg. 2) illustrates the power of a relationship, making a connection, providing hope, being patient and eventually finding solu-

tions. What I consistently see in our staff is a capacity to persist in solving problems in the face of enormous odds and difficult circumstances.

This year, Toy Distribution was plagued with a host of systemic problems that threatened to make the holiday season less than pleasant for families. Deb Grasso and her team of volunteers and staff soldiered on, making every effort to assist parents in a respectful, supportive manner.

In the face of a devastating economy, the annual Salvation Army Kettle drive spearheaded by staff and volunteers under the

leadership of Darlene Magaw and Emidio Rosa raised over \$17,500—the most in its history!

FRCA's persistence in addressing basic needs creates other opportunities for better parenting, new employment, building meaningful relationships and tapping strengths many people we serve may not have known existed.

Thank you for the remarkable work you are doing!

Happy New Year!

- Ben

FRCA Holiday Program Wrap-Up

It was a busy year again for FRCA holiday programs. With Deb Grasso's leadership and the support of numerous volunteers, FRCA was able to provide holiday gifts to many vulnerable children.

Staff and volunteers took 1,017 applications for Adopt-a-Family serving 2,163 children; 540 families and 1,100 children were assisted through the Toys for Tots toy distribution program, and 659 families received Holiday food baskets. Hundreds of other families received gifts through Giving Trees, private donations, FRCA staff and other individuals, organizations and



Deb Grasso with FRCA volunteer Cindy Roy

companies.

This year, FRCA was selected as a partner in the 2008 Payless Gives Shoes 4 Kids Program. Family Support staff distributed 175 coupons valued at \$15 to 65 families, helping to ease the bur-

den of clothing costs for families during the holiday season.

The **Salvation Army Kettle Drive** gathered more than \$17,500 in donations—the best ever. At a time of great need, the community overwhelmingly responded.

We would not have been able to tap the generosity of the community without the support of the many volunteers—both within FRCA and in the community.

Over 70 volunteers donated 350 hours of their time staffing the kettles. Of particular note, volunteer William Decesare sang and rang the bell at Wal-Mart for **over 100 hours!** To him and to all the volunteers, we thank you!

Anna: A Shelter Client's Story

Anna never imagined she would end up this way, wandering in the woods, cold and scared, no place to go.

Just weeks before she had a job, a home. But when the co-worker she relied on to get to work left, Anna was suddenly stranded, and eventually had to move out of her apartment.

"I lost my ride, I lost my job," she said, relaying the series of events that led to her becoming homeless.

For weeks, she had called the shelter, checking for openings. Then one desperate night, Anna contacted the shelter again.

"She was crying, she told me she had no place to go," said Benson Adenodi, the second shift Intake Worker who took Anna's call for help that night. "She said we were her last hope."

Benson knew he needed to connect with Anna, to help her understand she was not alone. Benson helped Anna think about her op-

tions.

"He pulled me back to thinking again. He said I was going to be okay, and I believed him," Anna said.

"I felt like I'd known him forever. Benson was my lifeline. He is my friend. Without him, I would have been dead."

Anna was able to find a safe place that night, and when she called the shelter in the morning there was an opening, as Benson had promised.

"The staff never looked down on me. They helped me and treated me with respect," Anna said. Staff connected Anna to FRCA's Family Support Center and helped her go through job listings and tap other supports.

After several weeks, Anna was able to move into the women's sober house. She keeps connected to the shelter staff, and they to her. "If I run out without shoes, I hear about it

from Benson," Anna said, laughing.

Anna wants to feel useful, productive. She assisted with FRCA's coat donation and holiday toy drive, and rang the bell for the Salvation Army kettle campaign.

"I'm always doing something," she

said. Anna previously worked as a CNA and hopes to return to similar work in the future.

As long as she remained homeless, Anna couldn't begin to address her life situation. As she said, "I didn't have a place to stay to get started again."

The support Anna received helped her get back on the road to recovery. "The staff gave me my sanity back. I hated myself. Now I am on my feet again. They made me feel like I can do things. They got me to smile again."

"He said I was going to be okay, and I believed him. Benson was my lifeline."

- Anna, Shelter Client

Staff Profile: Benson Adenodi

How long have you been working at the Woonsocket Shelter?

I began working at the Shelter part-time in 1991, and became a full-time Intake Worker in 1995. I've been working with Harry (Diarbian) for over 15 years, so there is a strong bond there.

As someone who has been with the agency for such a long time, what would you like to say about FRCA?

We are here to strengthen the family, to help people move on with their lives and get on the right track. FRCA has been the backbone for many families.

What is the most difficult part of your job?

It is hard for some clients to blend in when they first come here. Sometimes people are confrontational and nasty. It is hard to deal with that. It is my duty to ensure people follow the rules so everyone is safe. Some-



Benson Adenodi

times people get angry and storm away. But then they come back to talk.

(continued on page 3)

Staff Profile: Benson Adenodi (con't from page 2)

My bosses, Sue and Harry, they are wonderful. During the tough times, I get lots of support. They listen, and we all work together.

What do you like most about working at the Shelter?

I love to work with people. I love to see people progress, to develop and strengthen themselves and move on with their lives. Some clients go on to school, some get a job. This is what motivates me. To help others so they can get back on their feet again. I respect the people who live here. I don't look down on them just because they are homeless.

“Understanding, patience, empathy. You need to care about people. That’s Benson. That’s why he does this job so well, why he is so well-liked.”

*- Sue Jarosz, Shelter Director
on what it takes to be an exceptional
Shelter Intake Worker.*

What a Difference a Home Makes

Other recent stories demonstrate the devastating impact that becoming homeless has on a person's life, and the dramatic turn-around that is possible once that person is able to secure housing and other support services.

A man who had been an Agape client for many years became homeless after he was evicted from his apartment. He was living on a porch, and had become quite ill, in fact, he was near death.

Through the new Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA)

program run by FRCA, Agape staff was able to help him secure housing. Within

weeks, he'd gained thirty pounds, and was back on his medication. He'd even returned to school.

Another story again illustrates how critical housing is to a person's well-being. A veteran in his late forties had been living under a bridge for years. He learned of the Agape Center from the man mentioned above.

Case Manager Laura Mulholland was able to

help this man secure an apartment through the HOPWA Program.

“Within a week, he was a completely dif-



Laura Mulholland

ferent person. I hardly recognized him,” Laura said.

He had put on weight, was back on his psychotropic meds and was taking his HIV medication.

So appreciative of the help he'd received, when a donated bed became available, he told Laura to give it to someone who needed it more than he did.

“That reminded me why I do the work I do,” Laura said. “It's not that often that you see someone who is so incredibly grateful.”

“Within a week, (after securing housing) he was a completely different person.”

*- Agape Case Manager/
Housing Coordinator
Laura Mulholland*



Strengthening families and individuals through social services, education and economic opportunity while respecting the dignity of the people we serve.

401-766-0900
www.famresri.org

STAFF NEWS CORNER

FRCA welcomes new staff:

- * Tara Lambert and Kristine Farmer, EI Primary Service Coordinators
- * Amy Moor, EI Consultant Speech Pathologist
- * Meghan Farrelly, Clinical Supervisor & Family Preservation Programs Manager
- * Joanne Martin, fee-for-service clinical staff consultant.

Other News:

Congratulations to Matt Golding and Tammy Charrett on their recent marriages! Congratulations to Ana Miranda on the birth of her baby boy!

Newsletter story ideas?

Contact Tracey Abrams at x1184

FRCA 2008 Holiday Party

FRCA staff gathered for the annual Holiday Party at the Pines on December 11th for an afternoon of great company, food, tunes and prizes. Among the highlights:

- * Cecile Ryan was honored for her many years of service and contributions as FRCA Finance Director.
- * Patti Corbett graciously accepted the duty of D-Jay, though veteran D-Jay Harry Diarbian was always close by.
- * Janie Sweeney was the quickest woman to the open seat in the annual Musical Chairs contest; Wilfredo Rodriques nabbed the gift certificate as the men's winner.
- * Bette Gallogly led the group in numerous dances, including the chicken dance and YMCA!



Tax Preparation Assistance

FRCA will once again assist low income families with Income Tax Preparation through the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program.

Information to pass on to clients:

Earned Income Tax Credit amounts this year based on income with no qualifying child is \$438, with one qualifying child the amount is \$2,917 and for two or more qualifying child the amount is \$4,814.

A note to FRCA Staff:

All FRCA staff, regardless of income, can receive assistance with Tax Return Preparation through the VITA Program. We can prepare returns for staff as long as there is no schedule C and rental income involved. See Rita for more information.

STAFF ASSISTANCE NEEDED!

FRCA will assist clients with tax returns from January 15th to April 15th. The busiest time is **Feb 1st—March 15th**. For information on how you can help clients with intakes **contact Rita at x1174**