

A Look Back

As we gaze into the old “look back” machine, we see that American journalist William Allen White once said that, “*I am not afraid of tomorrow, for I have seen yesterday and I love today.*” We kind of feel that way here at Family Services.

We have seen yesterday

We remember that in the past fiscal year alone we:

- Commenced a Family Support Program in the Allegheny County Jail.
- Opened a Senior Adult Care Center that provides day programs for physically/intellectually challenged adults.
- Started Reaching Out to Create Success (ROCS), a free resource for youth transitioning out of services
- Commenced a state-wide expansion of Ways to Work for families with bad credit in need of a car.
- Received the National Behavioral Health Pacesetter Award from The Annapolis Coalition in conjunction with The Hitachi Foundation

We love today!

Hey, we’re alive and it’s sunny out as we write this.

We aren’t afraid of tomorrow

We have friends like you that walk beside us, that recognize the value of the services we provide to our region’s most vulnerable citizens, services we’ve been providing for more than 126 years. We hope you’ll support us again during the upcoming United Way Annual Campaign. **Our donor designation number is 66■**



Jordan’s Story:

A First Person Account of Her Experience at the May 2011 Pittsburgh Marathon

As I awaited my Uncle Ben’s arrival, I was filled with ambivalent emotions – both nervousness and exhilaration; as eager anticipation seared through my body. Not twenty minutes after the race started, like speeding bullets, the Kenyans shot by, their faces masks of singular dedication. All that mattered in that moment was the race, and in some deep part of me I understood this. The moment of truth was approaching, what was it going to be like? When my uncle’s number was called was I going to get nervous? Would I faint? I felt fine, and I hoped I would continue to feel this way.

“098,” “075” the announcer called. “076” sounded like “006” so I ran from the curb to the area where people anxiously awaited their relay partners. I eagerly glanced around, frantically searching for Uncle Ben. I tried to remember what he was wearing, then it dawned upon me—he was wearing that “*Running for Laptops*” shirt. That is a pretty cool charity, and I was thrilled to support it. I only hoped that our contribution would make a difference, then again that’s what my goal in life has been: to make a difference.

Would we support another charity next year or would we support the same one? Would I even want to run again? “006” the announcer called, pulling me from my reverie. I leapt out and handed Uncle Ben his medal and I, in turn, received the snap on bracelet, which would accompany me to the finish for my part of the relay, and the beginning for teammate Matt.

Family Affairs is a newsletter of Family Services of Western Pennsylvania

Inside this issue

- Reaching Out To Create Success...P.2
- The Front Porch Project...P.2
- Volunteering...P.3
- Medicare Annual Election Period...P.3
- Upcoming Events...P.4

Pictured: Jordan Reitz, Running for Laptops/Pittsburgh Marathon Relay Runner

Much like life, don’t we all carry something important with us throughout our race, a talent or a piece of our personality perhaps? Then when our leg of the race ends, doesn’t someone else take over that role? I like to believe so. Once the bracelet touched my skin I was off like a rocket. “Slow down, it’s a marathon not a sprint,” I reminded myself. I couldn’t muster my usual pacing abilities today. I must have been really excited. I wasn’t tired yet, not even sweating at the two mile mark. “Wow, just keep it up,” I chanted to myself.

My life’s crescendos and fortissimo’s don’t compare to the feeling of the building tension and exultation of the marathon. Like a crescendo, I ran up onto West End Bridge and I really felt as if I was being dropped, then like a decrescendo, I came off of the bridge. The crowd’s cheers brought my soul alive to a fortissimo as I fought to achieve what I once believed to be impossible. I tried hard to keep pace with Uncle Ben and Kate, having to remind myself numerous times to run my own race. “Stupid move,” I told myself. I felt a slight twinge of nervousness as Uncle Ben announced we were nearing the hardest hill. I acknowledged and braced myself.

I let the cadence of the music of bands carry me through the neighborhood after the West End Bridge. Like an action movie, I ran seeming to

(Continued on page 3)

ROCS:

Reaching Out to Create Success

ROCS is a **FREE** resource program offered by Family Services to youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are transitioning out of foster care or have already aged out of the social services safety net. Youth who live in Allegheny or Westmoreland counties are welcome to join ROCS.

Once in the program, youth design Goal Achievement Plans to help them identify short- and long-term goals. ROCS staff work with youth in obtaining the right supports and resources to achieve those goals.

This is a great program for youth who wish to take charge of their futures and move toward independence.

SERVICES OFFERED TO YOUTH

- Help in obtaining their GED
- Workforce development resources
- YouthWorks' *JumpStart* Success trainings on job readiness and career exploration
- Resource coordination
- Assistance in exploring/pursuing post-secondary education programs (e.g. colleges, vocational schools, apprenticeships)
- Financial education
- Opportunities to develop independent life skills
- Social, cultural, and other program-related trips and outings with peers

Youth can call our office directly to get started. Any professionals working with interested youth can refer them to the ROCS Program as well. For more information, contact Shayla Sojourner at 412-661-1670 ext. 610, or via email at sojourners@fswp.org ■



We've all seen it at one point or another in our lives. In fact, we may have been the one on the receiving end when we were a bit unruly when we were young. A parent disciplining a child in public makes us all squeamish. We think we could handle the situation differently if he/she were our child but we don't know what to say to the parent so we turn away.

Or we suspect that a child we know may be experiencing abuse or neglect, but we don't know how to intervene or may be wary of repercussions if we do.

Recently, the ParentWISE program of Family Services—a leader in parent/child education in Westmoreland County for more than thirty years—adopted an innovative program that helps protect children and supports parents. The Front Porch Project[®], developed by the American Humane Association and sponsored in Pennsylvania by the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance, is a national, research-based, community-based initiative built upon the belief that all people who are concerned about the safety and well-being of the children in their communities need to be encouraged and taught to make a difference to prevent child abuse and neglect.

This concept is much the same as a good neighbor sitting on the front porch who, in years past, would have been aware of and involved in solving problems affecting families they knew. The American front porches served as networking centers where concerned and caring friends could share information and devise support systems to help each other through difficult times. This initiative builds on this concept, by bringing The Front Porch Project to communities across the country and teaching people how to bring about the return of neighborly problem-solving and community compassion and caring.

The Front Porch Project[®]: An Innovative *Old* Approach to Protecting Children, Supporting Parents and Sustaining Communities

Training in the Front Porch Project occurs over a two day period and includes information on:

- How and when to respond safely when you are worried about a child in your neighborhood
- Understanding issues affecting families
- The many ways we can help to protect children and support families to the benefit of the communities in which we live.

Bob Brinker, Parent and Community Educator for ParentWISE and a graduate of—and now trainer for—the Front Porch Project, sees the value of such an approach in his daily work. “It is time-tested. The twin problems of child abuse and neglect are too great for any one institution to solve by itself. The more we can involve the community in early intervention, the more we can support parents, the greater the possibility of a positive outcome. We've seen it throughout history in other situations.”

The program focuses on the positive and is strengths-based. “One of my favorite parts,” said Brinker “was a role play situation in which we encountered a parent struggling with a child in a checkout line. Rather than ignore the situation or just look on disgustedly, we were taught how a kind word to the parent could create an environment for change.” Brinker added, “Let them know you've been there yourself and offer a suggestion about something you did with your child to diffuse a similar situation. This may enable the parent to see the big picture and lets the parent know that they aren't alone.”

For more information on how ParentWISE integrates the Front Porch Project into their support of children and parents, contact Bob Brinker at 724-837-5410, or via email at brinkerb@fswp.org ■

Volunteering: An Opportunity to Change Lives... Even Your Own

Eighty-six year old Helen, a resident of Penn Hills, first contacted Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers (IVC) of Southwestern Pennsylvania, to request help with transportation to doctor appointments and to go to the beauty parlor. Her support system at that time included friends, neighbors and volunteers from her church, which is part of the IVC congregational network, but she did not want to rely on them too much.

When an IVC In-Home Assessor visited Helen for an intake interview, she noted that Helen was a "quick-witted and amazingly sharp eighty-six year old" and that Helen, a widow, had no living family: she was an only child who married an only child and they had no children. The assessor also learned that Helen was agoraphobic and had trouble being in open spaces by herself and, therefore, having an escort to appointments - someone to lean on while navigating parking lots and locating the doctor's office suite - was nearly as important as finding a ride.

IVC enhances the ability of senior citizens like Helen to live safely and independently in their own homes by matching frail older adults with caring volunteers who provide assistance with tasks of daily living such as grocery shopping, driving to appointments, managing correspondence, shoveling snow, and home maintenance. The social connection formed between volunteers and care receivers serves as an important lifeline, helping seniors feel valued and cared for. Frequently, clients enhance and return that friendship and the volunteers and care receivers each come away from their shared experience enriched.

Several different trained IVC volunteers from Helen's church have helped her get where she needs to go, but Rob is her usual driver. Rob meets Helen at the door, walks her to the car, and helps her get settled. Another volunteer, Bob, makes friendly visits on a regular basis. Additionally, Helen received a Safety for Seniors home assessment in February 2011. Her volunteers recommended the installation of a handrail on her stairs, and IVC arranged



for Home Evolutions to do that work for Helen at no cost to her.

Helen has also become a patient of Family Services' Geriatric Mobile Therapist. The therapist makes house calls to work with older adults who are struggling with depression or grief. IVC screens all care receivers for depression as part of our intake process and provides follow up care, if necessary, free of charge.

Although these acts of service itself may seem minor, when taken together these small gestures of kindness can add up to make a big difference in an older adult's ability to stay in his or her own home.

For more information about volunteer opportunities at IVC, or to learn more about IVC's service to senior citizens, please call 412-345-7420, or visit us on the web at www.ivcswpa.org.

Pictured above: Charlene and Ralph Getz, IVC Volunteers and winners of the MetLife Foundation's Older Volunteers Enrich America award, with Family Services President & CEO Don Goughler.

Medicare Annual Election Period

Date is Changed for Medicare Annual Election Period

In the past, the Medicare Annual Election Period (AEP) has been from November 15 through December 31. This fall, **the AEP will begin on October 15, 2011 and end on December 7, 2011** for the 2012 plan year that takes effect on January 1, 2012.

APPRISE can help beneficiaries choose a health plan that fits their needs and their budget. Contact APPRISE at **1-800-783-7067** or visit

<http://pda-apprise.org/meetings/index.php?MeetingType=PRESCRIPTION> to view upcoming enrollment events in your county.

Jordan's Story

(Continued from page 1)

match the beat – a perfect pace. Even as the music faded, I let the cadence permeate the essence of my being and carry me through. We cheered on other runners and I felt like I was truly running with twenty thousand of my closest friends. I felt a sense of belonging. Yet, I was yearning to be out of the city and running in the forests and fields. I was clearly not a city slicker -- I much preferred the woods. Crowds shouted, music boomed, and even this city seemed to be mine to command. Uncle Ben stopped for water but I kept going, I felt great. The last 1.5 miles I was sweating badly, but I felt invincible. This feeling was why I ran.

I didn't know how to distinguish what was sweat and what was rain as I was drenched in both. "Ok, you've got about a half mile left -- finish strong!" I responded with, "See ya later Uncle Ben." When I crossed that line and handed the bracelet to Matt, I felt a surge of pride. I was handed my own medal, which I wore all day until I went to bed. I was not a strong runner; and I was overweight and slow. But, I had achieved my goal. I had done the impossible. I had run in a race that was over three miles long, and can't wait to do it again!

Running for Laptops, part of Family Services Educational Assistance Initiative, supports the educational aspirations of youth aging out of the social services safety net. Running for Laptops runners like Jordan will be participating in Pittsburgh's Great Race on Sept. 25, 2011. To participate or to support their efforts, visit www.fswp.org or www.runningforlaptops.org



Family Services of Western Pennsylvania is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children, Inc.

Family Services of Western Pennsylvania is a non-profit organization declared tax-exempt by the federal government (under section 501 C 3 of the IRS code) and the Commonwealth of Pa. A copy of our official registration may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free from within Pennsylvania 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement All donations to Family Services of Western Pennsylvania are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Family Services of Western Pennsylvania receives funding from the United Way's of Allegheny, Washington and Westmoreland Counties.

Upcoming Event

• Running for Laptops, September 25, 2011

Running for Laptops walkers and runners who participate in the Pittsburgh Great Race can raise money to purchase laptop computers for youth who are aging out of the social service safety net and who wish to pursue their educational dreams. Part of the agency's *Educational Assistance Initiative*. For details on how you can support Running for Laptops, contact Alyssa Cholodofsky at 412-820-2050 ext. 428. Check out the Running for Laptops website at www.runningforlaptops.org for stories on some of our students and details on how you can participate.

• Act II: an education in second chances, December 3, 2011

Family Services proudly presents a one-of-a-kind evening filled with sights, sounds and flavors to support our Educational Assistance Initiative. The event will feature inspiring stories of hope and dreams, with a special presentation by former Steeler and current ESPN host **Merril Hoge**, and dancing to the tunes of the **Terrance Vaughn Band**. This fundraiser will be held at The Grey Box Theatre in Lawrenceville. Tickets and more information are available at www.fswp.org or by contacting Alyssa Cholodofsky at 412-820-2050 ext 428 or via email at cholodofskya@fswp.org. Hope to see you there!

Donate Now

Did you know it's easier than ever to make a safe, secure donation to Family Services? Whether it's in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one, dedicated to a specific program or event, or a continuing donation, you can do it by visiting us on-line at www.fswp.org and clicking on the "Donate Now" button. Of course, we still accept donations through the mail, too. Whichever way you choose, thank you for your support!

Facebook

Yes, Family Services of Western Pennsylvania is on **Facebook**. Check us out for late breaking news, features, events, photos and more!

Family Affairs

Empower People to Reach their Full Potential

September 2011



Administrative Office
3230 William Pitt Way
Pittsburgh, PA 15238
412.820.2050 ph
412.820.2060 fax
fswp@fswp.org email
www.fswp.org website

Bulk Mailing Center
104 Beta Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15238

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 29
NEW KENSINGTON,
PA 15068