



NEWS & VIEWS

MARCH / APRIL 2022

The mission of Family Enrichment Network is to provide supportive services for the optimal development of children, adults, and families.

The vision is that all children, adults and families in our service area have the opportunity to grow and develop to their full potential.

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

It felt like a very cold and long winter, but now spring is just around the corner and we welcome the change. Family Enrichment Network continues to prepare for the future even in an era of uncertainty. No matter what happens at the government level there will be people that need assistance and we will figure out a way to make that happen. This is typically a busy time of year, and this year is no different.

The big item continues to be the novel coronavirus and how it impacts our staff, children and families. There appears to be a light at the end of the tunnel. In the meantime we need to remain vigilant with wearing face masks. We encourage all staff and parents to get vaccinated as soon as they become available.

As normal our program development is driven by funding and, obviously, need. We have significantly expanded our housing development to add more homeless and low income housing. Development is also driven by our ability to staff the services. This continues to be a challenge. There continues to be need in several areas and we will develop those as the ability to staff them presents itself. We are always looking at other diverse program areas in need.

We have been approved for another ten unit homeless housing project and are working on that. We are also continued to look at our Owego site and providing transitional housing to people upon release from being incarcerated. They need a safe place to stay until they can make long term living arrangements; otherwise they struggle and end up re-incarcerated.

We have completed our move to a \$13.20 minimum wage for all staff. With existing funding sources this continues to be a challenge.

We could not do so that without the support of the staff, the Governing Board and the entire community. Our staff this past year has worked tirelessly to assist us in moving this agency forward and meet the needs of children and families. We thank you for your past support of our Agency and look forward to future partnership opportunities. We look forward to another productive and prosperous year.



**Darrell Newvine,
Family Enrichment Network**

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Head Start

Head Start/Early Head Start 2022 **Policy Council Executive Committee**



Federal Program Performance Standards require that annually Head Start and Early Head Start programs recruit and elect members to serve as representatives. At November Parent Committee Meetings, a new Policy Council was elected for 2022, and they began serving their one year term at the January 26, 2022 Policy Council Meeting, which was the first in person Policy Council meeting in almost two years. Members were happy to be serving in person at the meeting. And for those who could not attend in person, an electronic account of the meeting was sent to members via email.

At that meeting, a new Policy Council Executive Committee was elected; Executive Committee members include: Chairperson, Kenyetta Torrence; Vice Chair Person, Cassandra Martin; Treasurer, Erika Hinckley; Recording Secretary, Kerry O'Brien; and Corresponding Secretary, Chakaris Glover. Executive Committee Elections were conducted by the Nominating Committee which was directed by Carrie Bates.

Congratulations to our new Policy Council. The Head Start and Early Head Start program wish them the best as they begin their work with the program.

Head Start, Continued



Stress In Child Care

Almost every child care program we speak to is experiencing stress and multiple issues within their program. Some have referred to it as being in crisis mode for months.

Child care across the country was experiencing a broken system since before COVID-19, but it has been compounded since the first initial shut down.

Child care programs have new health and safety requirements to meet, with things like cleaning and masking. They have to follow the ever-changing COVID guidelines from both the CDC as well as OCFS. New updates and procedures come out often, so keeping up with them all can get confusing. Keeping all the children in their program safe is their number one priority, so sending a child home for a running nose and cough isn't desired, but is needed at this time. Parents are getting frustrated with this process and it is impacting their employment for required quarantines of their children. At the same time, the cost of child care for parents is high, so do they still pay when their child isn't in the program? Well, as a parent, I understand not wanting to pay since you aren't receiving the service. But as a program, the only way to pay your bills and costs is to have consistent income from the parent payments. It's a hard thing to balance. Child care programs have been struggling financially since pre-COVID, but this is one issue that has especially been increased. The federal stabilization grants that came out last summer and fall helped some, but did not do as it intended – stabilize the child care field. It barely made a dent in covering the COVID costs. In some cases, it did not and programs are not balancing their budgets and are forced to make hard decisions. Now let's bring in the salary issues. Early childhood educators make low salaries, especially compared to their public education peers. Because of this, the field is experiencing a lack of new workers. Many programs cannot open classrooms or serve the number of children they could because of not enough staff to meet mandated ratios.



As you can see, there are multiple parts to the stress and what's happening with child care. As a community, we need to understand the current stress and issues within the child care system. Offer your support and assistance to a child care program. Thank your child care teacher for all their hard work and efforts. Be patient with child care programs given the current pandemic situation and requirements for child care. Advocate for increase funding to support the child care system.

If you want more information on supporting child care, please contact CCR&R Director, Jenn Perney, at jperney@familyenrichment.org or call 723-8313 ext. 872.

New Programs:

Chenango Group Family Child Care: Samantha Bennett

Department Spotlight

Community Services

Community Services involves being aware of the needs and finding ways to meet those needs. Currently, through NOEP (Nutrition Outreach and Education Program) we are busy helping with the application process of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), which is a federally funded program for those income eligible, formerly known as Food Stamps. We are available to help answer questions about the application process, determine potential eligibility for individuals and families, and provide resources to locate local food pantries and mobile food trucks.

We also have the wonderful privilege of providing Community Habilitation (Com Hab) and Community Based Prevocational (Prevoc) services for individuals with developmental disabilities. This falls under Waiver Services through OPWDD. Direct Service Professionals (DSPs) are hired to provide these services. Com Hab deals with the lighter side of living, for those who are looking to become more involved in their community life. Individuals can volunteer or be involved in, activities of interest such as walking clubs or art classes. Whereas Prevoc develops soft work skills, which will enable an individual to become employable in the community. Work as a DSP is often a very rewarding position and there is always a need for more staff.

In the summer, we have the Summer Youth Program where young people have the opportunity to learn important work skills in various positions such as working in the kitchen here at FEN, working at the Humane Society, clerical work, and there are also maintenance opportunities. These are teaching and learning opportunities that provide the requirements needed to be successful in not only getting a job in the community, but knowing how to keep it.

Overall, we have a great opportunity to be part of the Community, reaching out and helping where we can.



Employee Spotlights

Dixie Favor

Hi! New kid on the block, I want to introduce myself. My name is Dixie Favor. I have worked over 35 years in Mental Health, Substance and Drug Abuse Treatment programs, now as a NOEP Coordinator with Family Enrichment Network, in our efforts to make changes for our community. I've devoted myself to the fight to make sure no person goes hungry because they are assured and informed of SNAP and their benefit relief programs. Also, all the community plans they have available to offer.



Katie Clark

Hello FEN Family! I've been blessed to be with the Agency since 2015 but actually have worked for Head Start for a total of almost 15 years. I love Head Start and working in a field I believe in! Little humans feed my soul. I need them! I have held several positions within Head Start. I have been an assistant teacher, teacher, and currently I am a developmental specialist and coach. My office is in the Owego site but before the pandemic I was visiting each Tioga site regularly. Each position I have grown. Well certainly not in height (5ft 2in and shrinking)! I've grown as an employee and as a parent. I wish I had these amazing trainings BEFORE I became a mother, 21 years ago! Yes, I have three kiddos and one crazy pit named Comet; Griffin 21, Brady 19 and Leah 11. They are THE brightest lights in my life!



Spare time? I don't have ANY except in the summer! Summers are mostly spent in the Adirondacks/ Raquette Lake. I love hiking, boating, paddle boarding, watching sunsets there and enjoying the fireside. I stay busy working at two different golf courses each summer as well. My favorite Bible verse is Luke 12:48 and I try to live up to that verse and share my blessings with others. You can't take it with you! Carpe Diem!

Employee Spotlights, Continued

James Lucenti

James has worked as the Psychologist at FEN for the past five years. Prior to joining the FEN family, he has worked as a school psychologist, director of special education and principal. He received his MA degree in School Psychology from SUNY Buffalo in 2000 and his Administrative Degree from Binghamton University in 2009.

James has devoted much of his time helping families in the Greater Binghamton area. He has been a guest speaker through various non-profit agencies such as STIC and BTBOCES. He has assisted districts in developing Response to Intervention (RTI), Olweus bullying prevention programs, and crisis intervention training. He has also created and facilitated autism parent training and support groups, and behavioral support services. James is also a licensed real estate salesperson. He enjoys helping families through the home buying process. He is a member of the Community Service Committee through the Greater Binghamton Association of Realtors, which identifies and implements opportunities to volunteer within the GBAR region.



Originally from Fairport, NY James and his family moved to Endwell, NY in 2004. He has two children, one in middle school and one in high school. His children are both black belts in martial arts, and actively involved in several other recreational activities. James has run two full marathons and several half marathons.

Tonya Lindow

Hello! This is my fifth year with Family Enrichment Network. This is my second year working as a center director for our Fayette Street site. I previously was a Binghamton UPK teacher with the agency for three years. I have a total of 12 years teaching experience. I have gained a well-rounded view of the organization by working both in the classroom and outside the classroom supporting teaching staff and families. I truly enjoyed working with families, children, and staff this program year as Center Director. I look forward to continue learning and growing within the Agency.



At home, I live with my boyfriend Andy, my 10-year-old son Simon, my two dogs Ben and Annie, and my cat Kiki. In my spare time I enjoy skiing, exercising, traveling, and being with my family.

Employment Opportunities

Employment Opportunities

We have a number of job opportunities available at our Broome, Chenango, and Tioga sites. If you are interested in working with children and families, adults with disabilities or serving the greater community, Family Enrichment Network has an employment opportunity for you. We offer competitive benefits and paid time off. We are recruiting for a number of openings from entry level up to senior level positions, and are willing to provide education and training.

Please go to www.familyenrichment.org to see our current list of openings or email your resume to mdifulvio@familyenrichment.org.

Years of Service

Five Years

Tonya Lindow
Angela Estelle
Bee Hong Slogar
Joe Bennett

Ten Years

Nicole Knight
Juliet Swiza

Fifteen Years

Michelle Codner

Twenty Five Years

Danielle Brown





Family Enrichment Network

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for all you do!*

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please call Laura at (607) 723-8313 ext. 815.