

# FSA Today

A newsletter of Family Service Association

Fall 2009

## From Homelessness to Hopefulness

*How one phone call and a team approach quickly changed a man's life.*

### **Alone. Homeless. And Grieving.**

Without a home and without Brett, Drew had never felt so alone.

He was trying to sleep in his truck, but the voice in his head was keeping him awake. It beckoned him to join him...to ease the pain he felt.

Drew looked over to the spot where just a week earlier, his partner, Brett, grieving over the death of his son, had taken his own life. It was Brett's voice he kept hearing, telling Drew to do the same.

After yet another restless night, Drew decided to take the first step in saving his life by admitting himself into the psychiatric unit of a local hospital. After several tests, Drew learned that in addition to the grief and depression he was feeling, he was also HIV-positive.

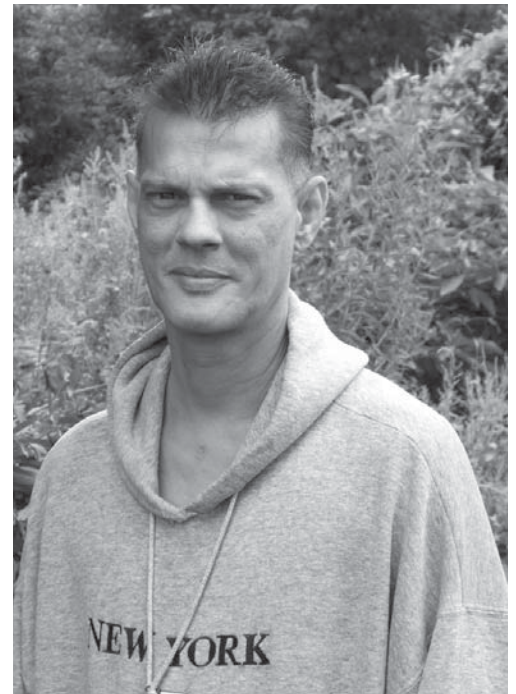
When he was discharged, he felt overwhelmed and in shock. The hospital gave him the phone number to Family Service for follow-up, outpatient treatment. "It was the best thing they could have done for me," says Drew.

### **The Call That Saved His Life**

Drew called Family Service late on a Thursday afternoon. He was connected to our Supportive Case-management Outreach Team (SCOT).

The SCOT program is an intensive case management program that coordinates services and provides referrals to providers both within and outside of FSA for people who are diagnosed with a mental health and/or substance abuse-related disorder.

*See SCOT on page 3*



Drew is receiving life-saving physical and mental health services, and is now living in a safe, supportive environment.

## **Inspiring Hope:** *How a Certified Peer Specialist plays a special role in recovery*

While peer support has been common for many years in substance abuse treatment settings, it is a relatively new option for persons in mental health treatment. A person in our Outpatient Behavioral Health Program can work with a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) who is trained to assist them in skill building, goal setting, and problem solving. A CPS sets up self-help groups and helps individuals develop Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP).

Because a CPS is a peer who has 'been there', they are uniquely qualified to help individuals navigate the mental health services system, achieve resiliency and reach their personal recovery goals. When a CPS helps someone they use the skills and lessons learned from their own experiences and, in turn, empower others.

*see Inspiring Hope on page 2*



*A Message to Our Friends*

I'd like to share what we learned at a recent meeting with the Bucks County

Behavioral Health System and Magellan Behavioral Health—two of the funders of our Outpatient Behavioral Health program. Each year these funders look at the behavioral health and substance abuse services available in Bucks County. Mental health providers are required to meet certain benchmarks for providing high quality services and easy access to these services. In the majority of the areas reviewed, Family Service scores were higher than the average for the County.

One area in which we were very highly rated was waiting time between a first call to Family Service and first appointment with a counselor. Thanks to our office space and an increase in clinical staff, we decreased the waiting time for outpatient behavioral health treatment in the past year by 21%; quick access is so important for people who are struggling with many stressors in their lives.

A second area was the percentage of clients who returned to Family Service for treatment after their first meeting with a counselor. These clients reported in an evaluation survey that they are satisfied with their services, they feel that their lives are improving, they have gained an understanding of their issues, and they have a voice in their treatment. Regular participation in treatment is essential to recovery, and we know that quality care is essential to insuring participation.

Family Service works to maintain high standards and to achieve positive outcomes in all of our programs. We look forward to the ongoing challenge of meeting or exceeding the expectations of our funders, of our clients, and of the community as a whole.

*~Audrey J. Tucker*

# A Celebration of Family & Community Annual Luncheon

The Family Service Association Board of Directors will hold its Annual Luncheon on Thursday, November 19 at Spring Mill Manor.

This is our opportunity to recognize our community partners and the families they have strengthened with their support of our agency.

## *2009 Honorees*

### *Corporate Citizen of the Year*

### *Family Builder of the Year*



**First Federal of Bucks County** has been a longtime supporter of Family Service through generous event sponsorships and gifts. First Federal is also an important collaborator in direct service to our Drive to Success (formerly known as Ways to Work) clients, helping families with low cost loans and helping them get back on their feet and—in the long run—be self sufficient.



**United Way of Bucks County** was with us when Family Service began back in 1953, and our partnership has been strong ever since. Through the years, United Way has always kept a pulse on what our community needed and encouraged their member agencies to provide the necessary services. United Way is a vital community leader in Bucks.

For more information please visit our website [www.fsabc.org](http://www.fsabc.org).

*Inspiring Hope continued from page 1*

“I can tell the clients I work with, ‘I’ve been there.’ I know what you are going through. Life can get better,” says Melissa Gill, a CPS on the Supportive Case-management Outreach Team.

A CPS requires state approved certification. To qualify for the certification, a CPS, like Melissa, must complete CPS training and have the life experience of a person with a mental illness or with a co-occurring (mental illness and substance abuse) disorder. They must also recognize that sharing their experience is a critical part of the CPS role, and they need to be active in maintaining their own wellness.

“I try to be a good example of what hard work and appropriate treatment can do for a person. I am living proof that people who are in the recovery process can be employed.”

“I enjoy my role of inspiring hope in others who want to make a better life for themselves.”

Interested in supporting  
*A Celebration of Family & Community  
 Annual Luncheon*  
 AND promoting your business?

Then advertise in our Annual Report!

Ads are available to fit any budget. Our Annual Report is distributed to attendees of the Luncheon, and to community organizations, businesses, foundations, and donors throughout the year. Plus, our report is accessible on our website all year long!

Contact Florence Kawoczka at 215-757-6916 x 208



*SCOT continued from page 1*

The goal is to help people maintain a consistent level of psychiatric stability, reduce their substance abuse and achieve a higher level of functioning in their community.

*“It is a great feeling to know there is an organization like Family Service that can help in this way.”*

Newly diagnosed at the hospital with Major Depressive Disorder and HIV, Drew needed a team approach to get him through this crisis.

#### **A Team Approach**

“This man was desperate and in a crisis situation. As an agency, various departments worked together quickly to connect him to services,” explains Tanya Feliz, SCOT Coordinator. “We, in a sense, wrapped our arms around him to save his life.”

Working after hours, Drew’s case manager called him to make sure

he was safe. By Monday, Drew was scheduled to see a FSA psychiatrist for an evaluation and to get a medication refill which he desperately needed. Drew had an appointment with a therapist in our Outpatient Behavioral Health program and met with a Medical Case Manager and a Housing Specialist in our HIV/AIDS program. This entire team worked quickly to find him a safe place to live and put together the paperwork required to get Drew admitted to Bucks Villa, a group home managed by FSA for people living with HIV/AIDS.

#### **A Better Outlook**

Case managers connected Drew to a peer recovery group and accompanied him to his first appointment with an infectious disease doctor where he is learning all about his illnesses. He meets weekly with his therapist for grief counseling. Drew is participating in a SCOT group where clients work together under the guidance of Certified Peer Specialist to learn recovery tools and develop personalized action plans to stay well.

Drew is doing what he can to prevent being admitted into a psychiatric hospital again. He is even making new

Founded in 1953, Family Service Association is a private nonprofit, non-sectarian, human service agency providing services to individuals and families in Bucks County, PA. FSA is accredited by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services, Inc. FSA is licensed by the Commonwealth of PA to provide outpatient mental health assessment and treatment services, and out-patient drug and alcohol assessment and treatment services.

#### **Lower Bucks and Administrative Office**

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#### **Upper Bucks Office**

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 215.538.1616

#### **Kelly Family Center**

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 Canal’s End Plaza, Ste. 201G, Bristol, PA 19007  
 215.781.6602

#### **The Teen Center at the Oxford Valley Mall**

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 215.757.7823

*The official registration and financial information of Family Service Association of Bucks County may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania, 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

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#### **FSA Chief Executive Officer**

Audrey J. Tucker, MSW, LSW

friends with other clients he has met through FSA.

“When I called, they got back to me so quickly! The next thing I know I’m living in this beautiful home. I’m getting much needed rest, and this is all helping my health and my mind,” says Drew. “It is a great feeling to know there is an organization like Family Service that can help in this way.”

# Strengthening Families

## Back to School Clothing Drive

300 young people received new clothing and backpacks stuffed with school supplies to start the school year feeling good about themselves and ready to learn. Parents have told us how these items have been a tremendous help at a time when their family budgets are so tight. Thank you to our organizational donors: Alpha Kappa Alpha, Bayada Nurses, Boscov's, Charon Planning, Gilbreth Packaging, Fisher Clinical Services-Bristol, Northtec, Inc., PA Association of School Retirees-Bucks Chapter, Renaissance Benefit Advisors, Robinson Luggage, and St. Cyril of Jerusalem Church.

## ArtSERVE

Families from our Parents as Teachers and FAST programs participated in the pilot program ArtSERVE, with a visit to the Michener Art Museum. ArtSERVE reaches out to youth from our county and community through diverse programming and museum accessibilities projects. Over the course of three Sundays, groups received guided tours, created a hands-on art activity led by an art teacher, and shared a light meal. Transportation was provided by Bucks County Transport. Program fees and museum admission were underwritten for the families.



Community partnerships  
create happy smiles!  
Read how inside...

## Inside this issue...

Drew made a life-saving,  
life-changing call one afternoon....

Certified Peer Specialists  
use their own stories  
to inspire hope...

A Celebration of Family and  
Community Annual Luncheon:  
who will we honor?...



4 Cornerstone Drive  
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... Strengthening Individuals, Families and Communities since 1953