

FSA Today

A newsletter of Family Service Association Summer 2011



Megan is reunited with her baby

At 19, Megan was without a home, a job, and couldn't care for her baby. You helped changed all that.



Parenting is probably one of the toughest jobs many of us will ever perform.

If we are lucky, we will receive guidance from our own parents, family, and friends, relying on them for advice, support, child care and perhaps even assistance with finances.

But for some families in Bucks County, that support system isn't there. Imagine how hard parenting is when you have never had good parental role models in your life and no one to turn to for help.

Imagine the struggle if you are also coping with mental illness, substance addiction, or other disabilities in your family. Imagine not

knowing how you will provide the next meal for your children or if you can afford diapers for the week.

Megan didn't have to imagine.

Megan was 19 when her daughter Kiera was born. During her pregnancy, Megan was "couch surfing"—staying at friends' houses or sometimes renting a room at a motel for a few days at a time.

Megan was homeless and had no family to help her.

Shortly after Kiera was born, the baby was placed in foster care because Megan didn't have a permanent address where she could care for the baby and was not receiving the mental treatment she needed. Although it tore her apart to be away from her baby, Megan used the opportunity to make a better life for her family.

Preparing to get Kiera back.

Megan was connected with our LINKS Family Reunification program.

continued on page 2

Brighter Futures for Families Because of You

Thanks to your support, about 100 young families who are at risk of child abuse or neglect due to lack of information on child development and effective parenting, poverty, or other stressors, receive help from Family Service Early Childhood Services. These programs teach and support families in a variety of ways.

Parents as Teachers, PAT, is a home visiting program serving a range of at-risk families including first-time parents and teen parents with children from birth to age 5. PAT includes screenings to assess a child's overall development as well as health, hearing and vision. It provides a resource network that links families to other community services. Parents as Teachers is a nationally recognized evidence-based program.

The **LINKS Family Reunification** program works with parents to overcome challenges that led to the placement of their children in foster care. As LINKS staff work to reunite these children with their families, they also connect families with other community resources that will support them in maintaining long-term stability. The LINKS Family Reunification program is a partnership between FSA, the Bucks County Children and Youth Social Services Agency, and the Bucks County Behavioral Health System.

continued on page 2



Preparing for a storm

Late summer is often a time of stormy weather as the hot winds of August give way to the cool breezes of September. This is also a time of stormy weather for agencies serving vulnerable families. Federal and State budget crises are leading to reduced services for many. Children will return to schools that have fewer teachers and limited support for those with special learning needs. Teens will face greater pressure to try drugs or alcohol while services promoting healthy choices close. Inexperienced parents will wait to enroll in programs that teach the basic skills they need to care for their children. Older adults will spend more of their limited resources for medical care and other services in order to remain in their homes.

Our Board and Staff are working on our Strategic Plan for the next four years. It will address how we will weather these storms. Our intent is to ensure the strength of existing programs and determine how new programs can fill gaps left when public funding is reduced. Our current services are making a difference. Our school based counseling reaches children and their parents in twelve schools. Our Teen Center engages youth in groups that confront drug and alcohol use. Our Parents as Teachers program educates families on how to develop early learning skills and to discipline children in a loving yet effective manner. Our older adult program links low-income seniors to affordable home based services that support independence.

Although these programs are successful, we know new approaches may be needed. Emerging issues include homeless children failing in school because of the trauma they experience; teens with disabling conditions feeling hopeless because of bullying; two families living together because of financial emergencies; veterans needing mental health treatment; people retiring sooner than expected because of job losses; and more. Our goal is to develop a Strategic Plan that is clear, flexible, and relevant. Some of our planning will involve you. Please respond when we ask for your feedback. You can help us prepare to meet any storm that develops.

~Audrey J. Tucker

continued from page 1

Through this program, staff helped Megan find a job that was “on the books” and a small apartment she could afford. They helped her understand benefits she was eligible to receive for herself and Kiera including daycare assistance. Megan was connected to outpatient therapy and other mental health resources.

Megan worked hard with the LINKS staff, and after 15 months, Kiera was placed back into the full-time custody of her mother.

But as excited as she was to have her daughter back, Megan felt a bit overwhelmed with being a full-time parent.

Parent Education eased the stress.

During home visits with Megan and Kiera, Parent Educators trained in the Parents As Teachers curriculum helped Megan understand the different stages of Kiera’s development. They taught Megan how to create a safe home; they taught her healthy ways to handle difficult moments that parents sometimes have; and they gave her tips for ways to bond with Kiera.

continued from page 1

The Parent Support Group is a weekly group providing parents with support in making positive changes in how they communicate with, nurture and discipline their children. The purpose of the support group is to improve family relationships and help parents make changes in their families before a crisis occurs.

Led by a professional facilitator, the Parent Support Group is a place where parents come together to share feelings, advice, and tips on being a good parent. In this friendly atmosphere, parents exchange creative parenting practices based on their personal experiences. Parents develop a lasting network of friends who can be an ongoing resource. The Parent Support Group is an affiliate of the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance.

In addition to giving lots of books to Megan and Kiera that they could read together, Parent Educators also brought food from the Family Service Food Pantry and diapers, wipes, and baby food from our Baby Pantry.

Megan, who is now studying for her GED, knows that because of the assistance she received from our programs, she is better prepared to raise her daughter.

We couldn't have helped Megan and Kiera without YOU.

Are you up for the challenge of helping more parents and their children?

*You can with an easy donation to our
Quarterly Challenge: Early Childhood Services.
See the back panel for details!*

Reduce your taxes AND support Family Service Association!

HOW? It's Easy!

If you or a loved one is age 70 1/2 or older, you can make a tax-free gift directly from your traditional IRA this year. It's that simple! Satisfy your required minimum distribution while supporting Family Service Association.

- **Reduce the amount of your income subject to income tax.**
- **IRA distributions do not count toward the limit on charitable deductions claimed against income taxes.**

Important: To make an IRA gift you must direct the custodian or trustee of your account to **distribute your contribution directly to Family Service Association.**

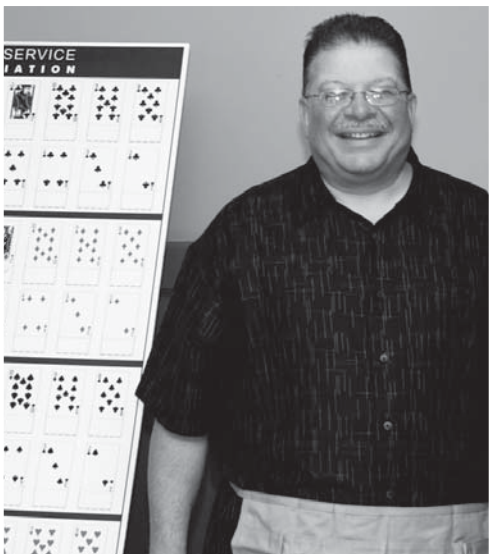
Contact us for more information on IRA Charitable Rollovers or other types of planned gifts.
Florence Kawoczka, Development Director 215-757-6916 x 208, or fkawoczka@fsabc.org

The above information is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to serve as legal or tax advice. For specific information about provisions of the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 affecting charitable contributions, please consult your tax advisor or attorney.

WHY I GIVE: Lou Altomari

Lou Altomari, owner of *Everything Plastic* in Philadelphia, has been supporting Family Service as a volunteer and donor for over 10 years.

I live by the mantra: "for those who live a privileged life, giving back is not a mandate; it is a responsibility." I gravitated towards Family Service because of the immense diversity of their programs. Family Service touches 6,000 lives a year from children to 100-year-old senior citizens, and everyone in between. That is powerful!



Lou volunteered his time to operate games of chance at this year's Carnivale Italiano.

I believe we need to care for our children and take responsibility for our seniors. This wonderful organization does that. I've seen the work in action; I have heard the success stories at their events. I have even referred people to the agency for assistance.

As long as I can continue to support Family Service in some manner, I will.

I believe that it is not about how much you give, it is about supporting the mission.

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.

Administrative Office

Cornerstone Executive Suites
4 Cornerstone Drive, Langhorne, PA 19047
215.757.6916 Fax 215.757.2115

Visit our website for satellite office locations.

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.

FSA Today is published quarterly by Family Service Association of Bucks County.

Board of Directors

President, Betsy N. Rendall
1st Vice President, Michael E. Sneed
2nd Vice President, Francis J. Sullivan, Esq.
Secretary, Diane E. Reed, CEBS
Treasurer, William P. Larkin, Jr., CPA

David E. Bass, J. Kevin Cauley,
Kristina Collmann Costello, Sheila E. Dawe,
Alina Denis Jarjour, Joseph R. Feilmeier,
James S. Krull, Michael J. Mattie, Margaret M. Mohr,
Gwen Scott-Hodges, Susan S. Soffronoff

FSA Chief Executive Officer

Audrey J. Tucker, MSW, LSW

Quarterly challenge

are you up to the challenge?

Early Childhood Services

Family Service challenges YOU to help more parents and children like Megan and Kiera. Our goal of **\$2,500** can keep families in our community united and strong.

Your gift of **\$25** can provide a family with basic baby supplies such as wipes, diapers and formula.

Your gift of **\$50** can provide a meal for the parents in the support group to share.

Your gift of **\$100** can provide a new parent with parenting education materials to increase their knowledge and confidence in parenting.

Your gift of **\$250** can provide one family with weekly parenting education sessions that can prevent child abuse and families from being separated.

Are you up for the challenge?

Visit our website www.fsabc.org/challenge today to make an online donation.



You helped raise \$55,000 for youth in Bucks County!

Thank you to the sponsors, donors, volunteers, and attendees who made the 12th Annual *Drive for Youth* Golf Outing a tremendous success! A special thanks to our Partner Sponsor, NFP, Renaissance Benefit Advisors. Congratulations to our winning foursome from Magellan Behavioral Health.

Because of You!

Megan was reunited
with her baby.

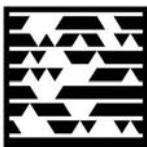
Page 1

Families have the help they
need to weather storms.

Page 2



4 Cornerstone Drive
Langhorne, PA 19047



... Strengthening Individuals, Families and Communities since 1953