



St. Mary's HOME FOR CHILDREN

Healing Lives, Restoring Hope – Since 1877

SPRING 2020

*The Doorway*  
A publication of St. Mary's Home for Children

## Introducing your editor

Hello everyone! I'm Susan Gale, the new Communications & Media Specialist for St. Mary's. I oversee this newsletter, the website, social media, and other communications. I feel privileged to do my small part in helping the many adults and children we serve. I look forward to sharing stories of St. Mary's impact on the community using my 20 years of experience in marketing and communications. I'd love to hear from you too! Tell me your story about how you came to support St. Mary's or give me some suggestions for this newsletter! Contact me at [sgale@smhfc.org](mailto:sgale@smhfc.org) or 401-353-3900 x241.



## Donor provides new website

For many years, St. Mary's Home for Children has needed a new website. Its old website, developed many years ago, was overly busy and made it difficult to find information. It was not the modern communications method our clients and donors require. But hiring someone to develop a new website can be expensive so we turned instead to a donor, who is also a Board of Directors member, Jim Paolino of RES/TITLE in Warwick.

Jim loaned his graphic designer, Kate to the agency. She worked with our staff to develop a modern website that will fulfill St. Mary's needs for years to come. Staff from every area of the agency participated in writing the information to appear on the site. In this way, St. Mary's got a new up-to-date website because a donor provided the resources to get it done. **You can see the new website at: [www.smhfc.org](http://www.smhfc.org). Thank you Jim!**



## Families need many different programs to find hope and healing

What do you do when your child comes to you and reports that someone you know is abusing them? This is the exact situation Brenda\* found herself in. She felt all the normal emotions a parent goes through: Is this real? How am I going to protect my child? Will my children be taken away from me if I report this?

Despite her fears, she reached out and was put in contact with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), which ultimately referred her to St. Mary's Home for Children for services. It was an extremely difficult time for Brenda and her family, filled with fear and confusion. But she had St. Mary's in her corner now.

Many families like Brenda's need access to multiple programs to find full hope and healing.

**"You have to listen and believe your children and you have to be there for them no matter what. St. Mary's Home for Children helped me be better prepared to help my children and myself." – Brenda**

Brenda's family was connected to St. Mary's residential program as well as individual and group therapy. During the process Brenda realized that she needed to deal with the trauma she experienced in her growing up years. She needed to do the mental health work alongside her family.

Many clients we see have untreated trauma from their past and when a new traumatic event happens in their family, their old trauma is triggered. Luckily, St. Mary's programs are all-encompassing, offering help to every member of the family.

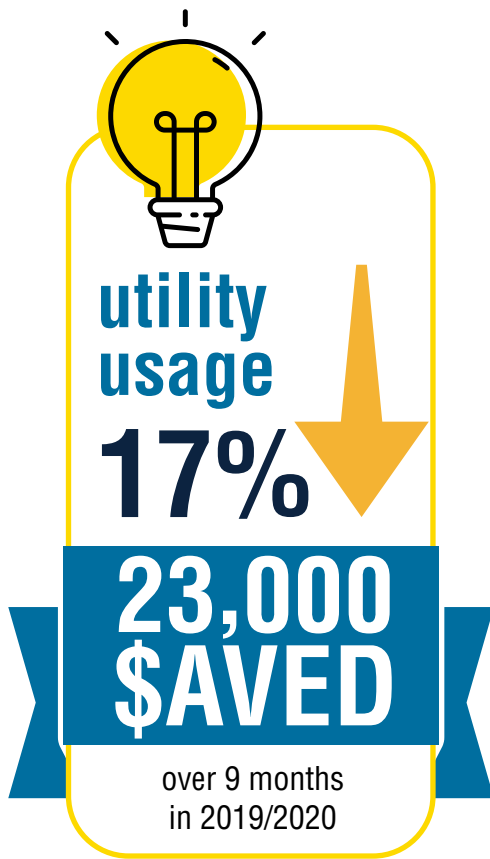
"Being able to offer multiple programs is an important part of St. Mary's ability to help all members of a family who have gone through trauma," said Carlene Casciano-McCann, St. Mary's Executive Director. "Sometimes, children need more immediate help so they turn to residential programs to stabilize them before they return home. And groups allow people to feel less isolated and give them the opportunity to relate to others who have been through similar trauma."

Today Brenda's children are doing well. They will likely need help for many more years but Brenda feels prepared for that now.



**See inside for how St. Mary's saved \$23,000 in utility costs...**

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: Energy efficiency saves \$23,000



St. Mary's Home for Children lowered its utility usage by an astounding 17% during nine months of 2019/2020, which equals a savings of \$23,000.

### How did we do it?

*By following our strategic plan.*

Out of the Strategic Plan came the Buildings & Grounds Committee, established to examine the needs of our physical campus and develop efficiencies whenever possible. This committee is led by Board Member Wayne Brown.

St. Mary's campus has five residential houses, a school, and two administrative/outpatient services buildings. That equals a lot of lighting, showers, etc., all of which require utilities such as water and electric. The costs add up quickly. Most of the buildings on our campus are relatively old and haven't yet been equipped with newer energy-efficient products.

The Committee got to work and brought in RISE, an agency which helps homeowners and businesses to evaluate and improve their energy efficiency. RISE spent a week on St. Mary's campus and replaced 80% of campus lighting with energy efficient LEDs, which are better for both energy savings and maintenance.

RISE also replaced shower heads with energy efficient ones and aerators on sinks. Aerators are found on faucets and add air to water before it comes out of the faucet, to minimize splashing and reduce the level of water consumption as less water leaves the faucet.

The results of this work speaks for itself. Lowering the costs associated with utilities means St. Mary's can put that money elsewhere in our buildings, which still need many additional improvements.

For St. Mary's, this kind of work is an important part of our being environmental stewards within our community, helping to save the earth for future generations.

## St. Mary's moves to a higher level of care for young people

St. Mary's Home for Children is now a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility or PRTF for three of its five houses – Hope, Horton, and Mauran.

A PRTF is a non-hospital facility offering intensive inpatient services through Medicaid to people with various mental health issues who are under age 21. The goal is to stabilize or improve a child's condition until therapeutic services are no longer needed and they can step down to another group setting, foster home or back home with their family.

Along with this change to PRTE, came new regulations and rules to follow. For St. Mary's, one of the results was moving to a 24-7 schedule of nurses on weekdays and weekends. This has allowed the agency to offer many more services to our young clients.

"It means much more face time with kids, not just in crisis or with medical needs," said Nicole Froment, Director of Nursing. "Our second-shift nurses can run more groups in areas such as hygiene, nutrition,

age-appropriate sexual health, and physical fitness."

Having an increased number of nurses available also means additional collaboration with St. Mary's residential staff – more people to work with the children whether they are in crisis or just handling everyday concerns.

Before coming to St. Mary's, many children have lived in multiple placements, making it difficult to sustain consistency in terms of medical care. They have often missed annual and specialty appointments.

Each child needs to be transported to a minimum of three visits (one to a doctor, two to dentists) per year. If they also need to see a specialist, that adds visits which can take as many as 3-to-4 hours with transportation time. Multiply that by the up to 40 residential children we can have living at St. Mary's at any given time, and that's a lot of staff time and transportation costs.

For Nicole, she sees the advent of PRTF as an opportunity for her nurses to play a leadership



role on St. Mary's campus – assisting other staff and modeling behavior for working with children who have suffered deep traumas which can lead to them acting out.

"It's all in the relationship and rapport you build with these kids," she said. "It takes unique skills and experience. You have to be self-aware and understand the impact you have on these kids."





All children deserve a

*Birthday Party*



## **DID YOU KNOW?** St. Mary's is a nationally-recognized expert in trauma services

St. Mary's Home for Children offers many different programs and services for adults and children who have experienced trauma, including sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and sexual exploitation. But did you know that St. Mary's is recognized around the country and here in Rhode Island as an expert in multiple areas of trauma treatment?

St. Mary's staff often speak at conferences and lead trainings. For instance, in the fall, staff from a Calgary, Canada, human services agency joined our team in a shared learning experience regarding how to implement and roll out the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI). Our team has trained child welfare agencies and other residential providers in several states throughout the United States. Building Bridges is a national initiative working to identify and promote practices and policies that create strong and closely coordinated collaborations between families and organizations serving them. This is designed to ensure that comprehensive mental health services and supports are available to improve the lives of young people and their families. St. Mary's

was the first agency to initiate BBI in Rhode Island.

Locally, St. Mary's staff visited the North Providence Police and Fire Department first responders to raise awareness of the complex trauma the clients we serve have experienced. And recently, Jessica Clark, Assistant Director of the Outpatient Department, presented at the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association's 20th anniversary conference about our extremely positive outcome data when using equine assisted psychotherapy with our clients.

In addition, St. Mary's Outpatient Department regularly offers a series of workshops each year referred to as the Shepherd Training Series. This typically consists of five workshops taught by St. Mary's staff that cover areas that both our clinicians and clinicians outside of St. Mary's can use to expand their knowledge around working with adults and children affected by trauma.

**Out of an abundance of caution, and to follow state mandates and guidelines, the Children's Friendship Award Event, originally scheduled for April 29, 2020, is POSTPONED.**

Please be sure to check [www.smhfc.org](http://www.smhfc.org) for the most up-to-date details. If you have any questions, please contact the Development Office at 401-353-3900 x262.



## *Your gift of \$1 a day can change lives*

Our **Residential Program** provides up to 40 children living here with a safe and healing home. It is important for us to provide as normal a life as possible—that includes visits from the tooth fairy, holidays and let's not forget birthdays. **Help 7 children celebrate their birthday party—complete with presents, themed plates, and a cake—with a gift of \$1 a day.**

Our **Shepherd Program** offers outpatient therapy to trauma survivors, providing them with healing and hope for a brighter future. Insurance doesn't cover the full cost of services provided by our dedicated therapists, leaving a gap. **Help us bring 9 sessions of therapy to children and adults with a gift of \$1 a day.**

In our **Campus School**, children receive play money as rewards for them moving in the right direction with behavior and learning. This currency allows them to purchase incentives, like toys, makeup, and jewelry in the School Store. **Give 1 month's supply of incentives and instill learning and self-esteem with a gift of \$1 a day.**

One of the best ways that we can address the immediate needs of our clients is in the form of **monthly contributions**. This is convenient and automatic; you can easily set it up with your bank or let us help you.

**Every penny counts and makes a huge difference.**

For more information about our Monthly Giving Program or to learn of other ways to donate, please contact Development Officer, Vangy Auclair at 401-353-3900 x262 or [eauclair@smhfc.org](mailto:eauclair@smhfc.org).

## Meet St. Mary's new staff

St. Mary's has brought on three new senior staff. "These operations, development, and IT positions will allow us to continue to advance our important work helping people to overcome trauma in Rhode Island," said Carlene Casciano-McCann, Executive Director.



**Rosette Martinez** was named Chief Operating Officer; **Evangelina Auclair** was named Development Officer; and **Eric McDuffee** was named Director of Technology.



## A Letter from the Executive Director



Carlene Casciano-McCann  
Executive Director

During this developing coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, I would like to assure you that St. Mary's Home for Children is focused on the health and safety of our clients, our dedicated staff members, and the community. We are committed to meeting our mission and ensuring that the needs of our clients are met safely and as effectively as possible as we navigate this evolving situation.

We are keeping apprised of the State's response to the novel coronavirus and are cooperating with state mandates and recommendations to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. St. Mary's took the following actions as of Monday, March 16, 2020:

- **George N. Hunt School:** School administrators implemented a distance learning plan and teachers are supporting our students by telephone daily.
- **Outpatient and Community-based Services:** Suspended all face-to-face office and community-based services, but are providing tele-health services to our clients over the phone or through video conferencing.
- **Residential Programs:** Reinforced good hygiene practices require staff to self-monitor prior to work; suspended all off- and on-campus visits between residents and family and off-campus outings for residents. Also increased the amount of cleaning/sanitizing done throughout campus.
- **Staffing:** Only essential personnel remain on campus. Other staff work remotely to ensure St. Mary's administration is able to continue providing services.

We recognize that these actions may be difficult for the families we serve but we are making these choices out of an abundance of caution to help mitigate the potential spread of the virus through personal contact. See more details about what St. Mary's is doing during this pandemic in the letter accompanying this newsletter. *Wishing you peace and good health.*



**St. Mary's**  
HOME FOR CHILDREN

Healing Lives, Restoring Hope - Since 1877

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*Produced by the Development Office*  
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For questions or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please contact Vangy Auclair, Development Officer at 401-353-3900 x262 or [eaclair@smhfc.org](mailto:eaclair@smhfc.org).

*\*Names and details in articles have been changed to protect the privacy of clients.*

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*We are keeping our kids  
safe and busy*

One of the many ways we are doing this is through art and craft projects. Your support will help us purchase art supplies.



*Art created by a  
St. Mary's child.*