



St. Mary's HOME FOR CHILDREN

Healing Lives, Restoring Hope – Since 1877

WINTER 2021

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

## Thank you for your holiday giving!

This year we received more than \$40,000 in donated in-kind gifts which made the season bright for the children we serve. Many of these donations will continue to give back as children arrive at St. Mary's throughout the year and have needs such as toys, art supplies, and gift cards for basic needs. We'd also like to say a special thank you for the Santa Claus drive by brought to us by Fire Marshal John Horan from the North Providence Fire Department with Joe Payette from the Greystone Social Club as Santa.



Greystone Social Club member, George Brown, pictured to the left of Santa.

## April 1 slated for 401Gives

Last year during 401Gives, we raised more than \$5,100 from 45 donors for St. Mary's. The entire United Way of Rhode Island project raised \$1.3 million for 366 nonprofits in RI. Let's beat those numbers this year! 401Gives takes place on April 1<sup>st</sup> and is a statewide day of giving. **One hundred percent of your contributions will benefit St. Mary's mission and provide basic needs for our clients.** For 24 hours, this online fundraising campaign allows you to donate easily and quickly. This year you can join as a volunteer fundraiser with us!

Join us on April 1st by visiting [www.smhfc.org](http://www.smhfc.org) and click on the icon seen below.



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## CLIENT STORY

### A Client in Her Own Words

The day I walked into St. Mary's I was a shell of a human being. I was existing in this world feeling hollow, and indifferent about my life. After suffering a lifetime of sexual and physical abuse, my sense of who I was, and what I had to offer was very broken. I was terrified, and I felt completely alone.

I had been convinced that if I shared my experiences with anyone, I would be disliked, thought to be disgusting and found guilty of causing the situations in which I was suffering. My very first session, I couldn't speak, when I tried to say why I needed to be there the words got stuck in my throat. I was so afraid that my secrets would get away from me, that I would lose control over who would find out about the traumas I had gone through and that I would be judged and even criticized for "allowing" the abuse to continue into my adulthood.

**"I know I am not done walking this journey through healing, but I am most grateful for the loving guidance I have been shown by the staff at St. Mary's – who continue to walk by my side."** – Nikki\*

My experience with the staff at St. Mary's has given me the strength to grow, to explore my worth, to learn self-care, and to stop blaming myself for the crimes that were committed against me. It has been through my telling that I have been shown how strong I am, how resilient I have been all along, and that I don't have to be alone to deal with all of the feelings that emerge while healing.

Being believed and having my emotions validated through my disclosure, have empowered me to live a safer, more fulfilling life. I have learned to set boundaries that protect me and to stand up for myself when I am being disrespected. I have been taught and encouraged to keep using my voice to speak my truth, and not to allow anyone to take what is mine ever again.

I know I am not done walking this journey through healing, but I am most grateful for the loving guidance I have been shown by the staff at St. Mary's – who continue to walk by my side.

*Learn how funding from a grant is helping kids manage their emotions.*





## Program Gives Children A Life-Long Tool Kit



Kim Gilbert, OTR/L

Every day we make little decisions. We like this kind of music, we can't wear clothes made out of wool, we need to exercise to relax.

But how did we learn these things? For many children, they are able to

learn what sensory inputs they like and don't like in their home. But for children who have suffered trauma and those living in residential housing, learning what sensory inputs they need to remain calm and what sensory inputs will trigger them is much harder.

St. Mary's has started a new agency-wide program to help these children. Called the Sensory Connection Program, it was started by nationally-known occupational therapist Karen Moore. The program begins with self-awareness and moves on to strategies for self-regulation, self-care, and self-healing – everyday life skills that children can use.

"It's a way to help people manage their feelings. It helps with self-regulation, helping individuals identify what they are feeling and what to do about it," said Kim Gilbert, an occupational therapist working as a consultant on the program. "It helps people feel more comfortable in their own skin. These are life skills that will allow the students to be on a bus, in a classroom, or at a job one day."

For example, in one classroom at the George N. Hunt Campus School at St. Mary's, a boy asks his teacher if he can "wear the hat." She answers yes and he puts on a designated hat and goes into the hallway where he is allowed

to run back and forth for a period of time. The hat signals to other staff that the boy is allowed to be running. Later on, the boy asks for the hat again and his teacher asks him to finish his math work first and then he can have the hat. He happily complies and remains calm and focused on his work while also getting his sensory needs met.

In another instance, teachers or parents might use sensory input to help a child who is normally sedentary or has low reactions to things, to be more alert and take part in activities.

Ultimately, the Sensory Connection Program is about a shared language to communicate what sensory inputs are needed and what ones need to be avoided. A child might say

they need "some space," before the program but after going through the programs be able to say they need "10 minutes of quiet" or "to do some pushups." It sounds small but is actually a huge leap for children who haven't had the chance to learn about their own needs for sensory inputs.

One of the main outcomes of a program like this is that the children learn to deescalate their own behavior, leading to better emotional regulation.

"We're giving them skills that allow them to have a more calm, comfortable life," said Gilbert.

*The Sensory Connection Program is generously funded by a grant from the CharterCARE Foundation.*



## Children's Friendship Award

### Virtual Event

Last year, the pandemic caused many nonprofits to pivot and host their face-to-face events on-line. St. Mary's was not alone in this.

Thanks to the generous support from event sponsors and donor contributions, we raised \$94,000--all dedicated to serve the children and families who have experienced abuse or trauma.

**Special thanks to our 2020 \$5,000 Supernova Sponsors.**



ERNEST CRIVELLONE

MAYOR & MRS. CHARLES LOMBARDI

**This year's event, scheduled for June 3, 2021, will be held on-line. For more event details, see the enclosed Save the Date postcard.**



# Meet our new school Administrator, Marty Morris



In 2020, the George N. Hunt Campus School went through a reorganization that put Martha “Marty” Morris in the top spot as the new School Administrator.

The Campus School is a special education facility that specializes in youth with “emotional disturbance” issues. While that is the special education moniker, many of the students ended up in their situations due to trauma such as sexual and physical abuse. This makes the Campus School unique in that it practices trauma-informed teaching.

Morris started her career as a kindergarten teacher in New York City. When a special camp opened up in Exeter as an alternative

to the state’s Training School, Morris came in as the Education Coordinator. Six years at AIDS Project RI was followed by 19 years at the Providence Center where she was teacher, the Special Education Director, and then principal. “A lot of what I bring to this program is from past experiences,” Morris said.

With her varied educational background, Morris brings her teamwork approach to the school, organizing staff into teams that can each give input on decision-making. This approach means the school now has an Education Team Leader to work with teaching staff as well as more problem-based learning for students and expanded use of technology.



## Campus-wide assessment underway

We are excited to report that with the generous donations of our Board of Directors and others, we have secured the \$65,000 needed to complete our Master Plan and have started on this journey. The Master Plan will be a roadmap to the physical infrastructure future of St. Mary’s. It will help ensure that our physical structure works towards our mission as hard as our programs and services do.



The company SLAM has been chosen to lead the Master Plan work. SLAM is a national architecture firm with integrated construction services, landscape architecture, structural engineering, and interior design.

To begin initially, SLAM and St. Mary’s placed “heatmaps” around St. Mary’s campus, where youth and staff placed dots to indicate if a space does or does not work well. This is part of the 5-month initial evaluation of St. Mary’s physical infrastructure to help make future decisions.

The SLAM team is also meeting with staff and other key constituents to get feedback on how St. Mary’s property works and areas that could be improved and made more client and community friendly.

***Stay tuned for future updates on this exciting Master Plan!***

## A Gift that Gives Twice, or More? Double your Donation Impact

Do you know if your employer offers a Matching Gift Program? If they do, your donation to St. Mary’s could be doubled or perhaps tripled—allowing us to serve more children and families impacted by trauma.

Some employers may offer spouse, retirees and even their Board of Directors this same valuable benefit. Besides this employee benefit, a volunteer grant program may be available where St. Mary’s could receive a cash donation based upon the number of volunteerism hours. Contact your Human Resources Department to learn if they offer a matching gift program and let us know when you make your gift.

We are grateful to the organizations who provide this employee benefit and are dedicated to serving their community.

Here is a small list of RI employers\* who have a Matching Gift Program:

AAA Northeast  
Aetna  
AMICA  
Bank of America  
Citizens  
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General Electric  
Gilbane  
Hasbro  
Movement Mortgage  
National Grid  
PepsiCo  
Pfizer  
Textron  
Verizon

*\*This is not a comprehensive list but a list based upon matching gifts which St. Mary’s has received or companies who have identified programs.*



## Recognition received for following best standards

Every four years, the Council on Accreditation (COA) takes a close look at St. Mary's services and programs to confirm we met or exceeded national best practice standards in 14 service and administrative sections. St. Mary's not only passed with flying colors but because we did not receive any out of compliance ratings in fundamental practice standards, we received what's known as "Expedited" re-accreditation.

"Congratulations on this amazing achievement," wrote Jody Levison-Johnson, COA President & CEO. "COA's program of quality improvement is designed to identify providers that have met high performance standards and made a commitment to stakeholders to deliver the very best quality services. COA is proud to recognize St. Mary's Home for Children as an outstanding provider, and we wish you the very best in your continuing work."



## A Letter from the Executive Director



Carlene Casciano-McCann  
Executive Director

Having just finished a successful holiday season during which our donor's generosity brightened the lives of those we serve, I find myself overwhelmed with gratitude for the kindness and support of our friends.

As we look forward to the year ahead, we will be fully engaged in a number of agency initiatives. During the strategic planning process, our Board and agency leadership recognized that our physical plant does not reflect the innovative work being done, nor does it serve our clients as well as we would like. As a result, St. Mary's has engaged in a five-month master planning process that will include input from

the Board of Directors, agency staff members, the youth and families we serve, and external stakeholders. It is our strong desire to create a soothing environment that is flexible and conducive to healing. (See article, Page 3.)

This year we continue to advance our work on race equity and Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards. We have enlisted the guidance of Michele Stewart-Copes, CEO of SEET Consultants (System for Education, Equity and Transition). We are going through a period of introspection and self-reflection. We will conduct an organization assessment and focus on improvement with a race equity lens and a multi-year commitment to full implementation of CLAS standards.

We are also looking forward to planning another virtual Children Friendship Award event slated to take place on June 3, 2021.

Master planning, race equity work, implementation of CLAS standards, fundraising goals, and a variety of other initiatives all work in concert to enhance the programs and services we provide. We look forward to a successful 2021 knowing that the St. Mary's community has the strong support of our friends, donors, Board of Directors and employees.



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

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NORTH PROVIDENCE, RI 02911-2647

### OUR MISSION

Partnering with youth, adults, and families, St. Mary's Home for Children fosters resilience and potential through a continuum of innovative residential, community-based, education, and prevention services.

Produced by the Development Office  
Vangy Auclair, Development Officer  
Susan Gale, Communications & Media Specialist

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).

401-353-3900 | [smhfc.org](http://smhfc.org)

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

## 2020 Awards

St. Mary's was recognized with a 2020 "Exemplary" **Worksite Health Award** from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island. This award is given to organizations that have successfully instituted worksite wellness programs to improve employee's health.



Sharron Costello  
HR Manager

**Congratulations to St. Mary's 2020 Employees of the Year Award recipients for their unwavering dedication and commitment to our mission.**



Yasmin Heras  
Clinical Administrative Assistant  
**5 years!**



Nicole Froment  
Director of Nursing  
**12 years!**



Marie Campbell  
Teacher,  
George N. Hunt School  
**12 years!**

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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