



St. Mary's HOME FOR CHILDREN

Healing Lives, Restoring Hope – Since 1877

SUMMER 2021

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

Take flight
on wings
of hope.



Children's Friendship Award raises \$153,000

The June 3, 2021 Children's Friendship Award Virtual Event was a rousing success. It has been viewed by more than 375 people so far and remains available online. This year's event raised more than \$153,000 after expenses – the most ever. Those funds will go directly into helping the children and families we serve. If you haven't watched it yet, visit our website to view the show! Thank you to all our donors for making this year's event a success. To see a complete list of sponsors or to view our virtual event video, visit www.smhfc.org/2021cfa

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Partnering with families to improve their children's lives

CLIENT STORY

St. Mary's is available to help children and families in need. But usually, those families have been working to help themselves for many years and just need that last bit of support to improve their lives.

Take Shannon, featured above left, for example. She spent years working with school districts to help her son, Allen, seen above on the right, who has a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. It was a long road as he acted out and was often treated like a troublemaker rather than someone with a developmental delay that affected his way of thinking and seeing the world. When Shannon was referred to St. Mary's, she found the school her son needed in the George N. Hunt Campus School.

"Allen was having a hard time in the public school systems. He was shut down in the classroom. There was a lot of bad things that happened. And I said, No, that's not going to be my son," Shannon said.

"St. Mary's knew what he needed just from the very beginning. I was so impressed. The principal, I remember I sat there and he was like 'Don't worry, he's one of our kids, we'll take care of him.'"

Another example is Kim and Lia. Kim traveled to two states before she discovered St. Mary's services for her daughter Lia, who is now a resident. Kim adopted Lia as a toddler from China. She knew by the third day that her daughter had major issues caused by the trauma of being abandoned as a baby in a country that at the time had a one-child policy.



Kim, right, with Lia, being interviewed for our annual event.

"I completely believed that I could love her out of it. She's just a baby. Love can fix anything right?" Kim said. "St. Mary's was really a godsend when it was the end of the line of what we could do for her. It's really amazing to see how far she's come."

So while parents like Shannon and Kim turn to St. Mary's due to life situations, they and those we serve are also strong and resilient in their own ways.



To watch these stories, visit smhfc.org/2021cfa.

Transition Services help students envision their futures

For many of St. Mary's special education students, trauma and/or mental illness have sucked away their confidence, leaving them feeling unworthy and unable to dream of an independent life filled with hope and promise. It makes it difficult for students at our George N. Hunt Campus School to envision options and plans for what their life could be after high school.

Because of this, and to meet a federal mandate for transition services as part of special education, the Hunt School has incorporated a full-time Transition Services Coordinator, Cheryl Pannozzo. Transitional services begin at age 14, when additional transitional information is added to each student's Individualized Education Plan or IEP. Students take various assessments to help them discover their strengths and weaknesses as well as things such as their learning style and career interests.

All of this information is then combined with programs such as "Career Chats" where real-world professionals discuss their careers, financial literacy classes, and "Informational Interviews" where students seek out people in careers they are

“Unless you can explore a job, how do you know that you'd like it? Just learning educational subjects is not going to ensure you have a successful life.” – Marty Morris



Tayla M. Carbary, owner of The Beauty Babes in North Providence applies lashes to a client.

that you believe in them. If they don't have hope that they can have a better future, then they won't be able to envision it.”

“We're helping students to think about where they are going,” said Pannozzo. “We highlight opportunities and give the students information and experiences they may not have gotten otherwise.” See student impact story on the right.

interested in. In addition, St. Mary's transitional services also connect students to organizations that can help them once they graduate such as local colleges or the Office of Rehabilitative Services.

All together, these transition services give students the help they need to see what their futures could be and that gives them a leg up to a better life.

“Transitional services is giving them time to explore a dream,” said Marty Morris, School Administrator of the Hunt School. “They need to know

Learning on the job

A recent transition services success story for St. Mary's George N. Hunt Campus school is a 17-year-old student who is on her way to becoming a Lash Technician through a certificate program at a North Providence salon called **The Beauty Babes**.



“Teaching lash classes is one of the most rewarding parts of my job. I feel so empowered to be able to help other women have this opportunity. Every class I teach is one on one, so students get the support, and attention that they deserve,” said Tayla M. Carbary, the salon owner. “Teaching this young woman was a true pleasure. She was well mannered, inquisitive, and determined to do well. I look forward to working with St. Mary's in the future.”

St. Mary's Transitional Services Coordinator, Cheryl Pannozzo, is so committed to her job that she even became a “lash model” when the student needed one. This student's story is what Marty Morris, School Administrator of the Hunt School, would like to see more of. She envisions a future of “job sampling” where students try different jobs to learn what they like and don't like while also becoming better workers.

SAVE THE DATE!
September 28, 2021
ANNUAL MEETING

See postcard for details.

New program meets diversity needs in our community



(left) Stephen Addy, Enhanced Outpatient Services Program Coordinator and (right) Jeiza Munoz, Wellness Coordinator

As part of St. Mary's commitment to meeting the diverse needs of our community, we recently established a new program in collaboration with the nonprofit Progreso Latino.

Funded by a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation, this new program is providing wraparound care coordination for members of the Latinx population who live in the urban core cities of Providence, Central Falls, Pawtucket, and others. These communities have been hard hit by COVID-19 and also face issues such as language barriers, immigration status problems, past trauma, and a lack of basic daily needs.

"This is an exciting opportunity to join forces between our two agencies and identify those who most need the help," said Jeiza Munoz, Wellness Coordinator who works for St. Mary's but spends at least two days per week at the Central Falls office of Progreso Latino helping clients. "There are so many vulnerable people out there who don't know where to go for services."

Munoz will take up to 15 client families at one time and provide assistance and education so these families can work to overcome the barriers they face. Some clients

came to the U.S. due to trauma they suffered in their home countries which compounds the difficulty they face when dealing with systems of help. In addition, many are under-employed, don't have health insurance, and must deal with understanding documents that may only be in English.

"They are struggling to access certain systems to get their needs met," said Stephen Addy, Enhanced Outpatient Services Program Coordinator who oversees the program. "Many of their needs are time sensitive and we are now able to provide the assistance they need to meet their basic needs."

Overall, the goal for the short-term program is for families to be supported on how to access services that will help them find jobs, receive child support, and meet other needs, but also become their own advocates within the systems they face. And when their mental health needs are identified, St. Mary's is here to provide the support they need.

"At St. Mary's outpatient program, families are building up their resource development," said Addy of the families they serve. "We have the potential to do some amazing work for families who are faced with a lot of challenges."



Carlene Casciano-McCann,
Executive Director

Expressing our Gratitude

Margaret Mead is quoted, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

YOU are our committed citizens who donate to St. Mary's helping to change our community's world— which are the children and families entrusted to our care. Thank you for your investment which allows us the privilege of witnessing transformational changes—whether it be helping a child escape from human trafficking, reuniting a child and mother, or helping an 8-year old child learn to read. These are just a few examples.

While we make it a practice to express our gratitude in a multitude of ways, the pandemic has offered us another creative way to connect with you: **Donor Gratitude Calls**. Carlene and Vangy have hosted 15-to-30 minute calls where our first order of business is to *thank you!* We want to get to know you, learn how you came to support St. Mary's, offer you updates on the exciting things taking place, seek your feedback and find out what programs you wish to learn more about.

We are committed to thanking you.

To schedule your Donor Gratitude Call, please contact:
Vangy Auclair, Development Officer
401-353-3900 x262
eauclair@smhfc.org
We look forward to thanking you!

Eliminating hygiene poverty

St. Mary's could not do what it does without the help of community partners. In the past year, one of those partners has made a difference for the children and families we serve: Amenity Aid.



The nonprofit organization was founded by Liz Duggan in 2013. As a business traveler, Liz donated hotel amenities to

shelters. When she discovered the high demand for hygiene supplies, she created a one-of-kind solution to ensure those in need have access to basic toiletries.

Since its founding, Amenity Aid has donated more than 200,000 hygiene items and works with 21 direct service organizations in Rhode Island. The goal is to eliminate hygiene poverty in the Ocean State and Amenity Aid is doing it!



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HOME FOR CHILDREN

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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

To give feedback, ask questions, or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please contact Vangy Auclair, Development Officer at 401-353-3900 x262 or eauclair@smhfc.org.

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

A Letter from the Executive Director



Carlene Casciano-McCann
Executive Director

“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping’.” ~ Fred Rogers

After almost a year and a half of navigating the impact of the pandemic as well as recognizing the negative messages we receive through the media on a daily basis, I sometimes take a “pause” from it to reflect on, and appreciate, the things in our lives that are meaningful – which brings me to the work that we do at St. Mary's and the amazing people who do it.

While reflecting, I find comfort in thinking about the helpers. Having the privilege of working at an organization whose mission it is to help, heal, and empower people who have been hurt and who also have amazing potential, I witness the compassion shown by our team every day to those we serve.

We broker in “hope” and behind all of that is a belief that we are all deserving, that we all belong, that we all deserve equity. When you choose to work in a field where your job is to help those who have been broken/harmed/betrayed/victimized, you must have compassion and a never-ending supply of optimism that your work is going to make a difference. We help people see that they are so much more than their abuse; that they have the potential for a better life and that they are deserving of the good people and good things that enter their lives – and that they no longer need to feel or believe that they are “less than.”

The pandemic has not slowed us down. Negative messages in the media have not affected our passion for helping. Our Board of Directors and donors have supported us every step of the way and we, the helpers, are stronger for it – and so are the children and families we serve.

Flowers make everything better

The long COVID-affected year was hard on everyone but at St. Mary's, our clients were cheered up considerably by What Cheer Flower Farm, a non-profit which grows, rescues, and gives away flowers to underserved people in stress because they believe everyone deserves a bouquet. Here are some of the amazing bouquets our clients have received. You can see What Cheer Executive Director Destenie Vital, on left, and St. Mary's Director of the Outpatient Department, Melissa Santoro, in the photo.



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