



FY20 ANNUAL REPORT



WELCOME

San Mar Family & Community Services is an innovative and leading child welfare organization with a mission to cultivate hope & well-being for children, families and communities. After 137 years, we remain a critical part of the safety net for families in our region by providing unconditional care. With all the progress over the past decade to our core services, our nationally recognized programs serve more individuals today than at any other time in our history! This report is a compilation of the key activities and outputs over the course of our 2020 fiscal year, which includes reporting from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020, as well as our successful annual financial audit. You'll learn more here about the transformative work occurring everyday providing unconditional care through our essential efforts:

Bester Community of Hope is designed as proactive support for the South End community in Hagerstown. It provides access to essential in-home services for families, free afterschool and healthcare programs along with efforts to strengthen neighborhoods; so kids can have their needs met while remaining in their home and community. Prevention is key!

The Jack E. Barr Center for Well-Being responds to significant family mental health needs with outpatient services from licensed therapists and psychiatric supports in western Maryland.

Treatment Foster Care serves children from the entire state of Maryland who cannot safely remain in their homes due to neglect, abuse, behavioral issues or due to family circumstances.

With several large programs, and endless efforts, our many unique parts come together to make one integrated team that is focused on achieving our organizational vision where kids are safe and nurtured, families are strong and resilient, and communities are connected and thriving.

Everything we do is possible through our partnership with the community, thank you for continuing to believe and support the work we do, we couldn't do it without you!





SAN MAR
TREATMENT FOSTER CARE

Dear San Mar Community,

Wow, what a year it has been! As we look back over the last year there is so much for us to be grateful for, and in this report you will see our 2019-2020 events and activities. First, I would like to introduce myself. I am Mercedes Robinson and I am the new Director for the Treatment Foster Care Team at San Mar. Ellen Savoy after 32 years of caring service, has stepped away from the Director of Treatment Foster Care role to enjoy a well-deserved retirement. While Ellen's daily presence will be missed, we are grateful for her time with us. Over the last year the Treatment Foster Care Program at San Mar has put great energy into growing and developing our programming to better support the Youth and Families we serve. Although COVID-19 has changed how we do business, it has not diminished our passion and dedication to serve the community around us. With great effort and intentionality, we have worked to enrich the skills of our staff and our foster families to ensure positive outcomes for the youth and families we serve. Our goal is to provide holistic services that are delivered from a trauma informed, culturally-aware framework.

Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report. As always, we are here, should you have questions or want to get involved. Please contact us.



Mercedes Robinson, LCSW-C

*Director of Treatment Foster Care
San Mar Family & Community Services*

SAN MAR TREATMENT FOSTER CARE

Placing boys & girls in foster homes since 1992

During the fiscal year of 2019 - 2020

- San Mar Treatment Foster Care served forty-eight (48) children and youth
- We had twenty-three (23) admissions and twenty-two (22) discharges.
- Of those who were discharged, fifteen (15) moved to a lower level of care
- There were only four (4) whose needs could not be met within our program
- 2 sibling groups were kept together in our families

RACE: TOTAL CLIENT POPULATION	
African American	13
White	22
Latino/Hispanic	8
Bi-Racial	5
TOTAL	48

Placing Agencies by County

Washington	11
Montgomery	14
Baltimore County	9
Frederick	5
Cecil	3
Allegany	2
Charles	1
Garrett	1
St. Mary's	1
Out of State	1
TOTAL	48

Gender and Age Ranges

Gender	Birth to 5	6-10	11-15	16-21	Total
<i>Girls</i>	1	4	11	17	33
<i>Boys</i>	3	6	3	3	15

WHO ARE OUR FOSTER PARENTS?

Our families reside in Maryland (required) and most live within a 30-mile radius of our campus, here in Boonsboro, Maryland (longer distances may be considered). Of our twenty-nine licensed families:

# of providers serving 10 years or more	# of providers serving 5-9 years	# of providers serving 3-4 years	# of providers serving 1-2 years	# of providers licensed during this fiscal year
4	7	7	7	4

Our children need to see the...



possibility

ADOPTIONS

San Mar celebrated with three families who adopted youth from our program in 2019. The current year and the COVID-19 has delayed the creation of adoptions, but we hope to share our stories of new "forever families" in 2021.

MORE FOSTER HOMES ARE NEEDED

Maybe you would consider becoming a foster parent. Perhaps you have been thinking about this for some time. We invite you to consider how you can make a difference in the life of a child or youth. ...showing a child that *their life matters.*

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

SAN MAR TREATMENT FOSTER CARE IS ATTENTIVE TO
THE UNIQUE POPULATION WE SERVE AND
PREPARES OUR STAFF AND FAMILIES TO MEET THESE NEEDS.

LICENSING AND RECRUITMENT



COLLEEN CARTER, LBSW
Licensing & Recruitment Coordinator

Colleen has faced a challenging year in recruiting new families but has adapted her methods to the changing climate in which we all find ourselves. Four new families were licensed in the fiscal year 2019-2020.

Colleen's personal outlook on life has kept her focused on the goal of completing the licensing process with five more families.

Recruitment efforts have been adapted to reach our community during these challenging times. Many have expressed interest in becoming foster parents which gives us much hope for the future of our children in care.

ADMISSIONS



BECKY CARPENTER, LBSW
Admissions Coordinator

Becky Carpenter, our Admissions Coordinator, works tirelessly to find a good fit for a foster child and one of our foster families. She speaks with workers and agency staff throughout the state of Maryland on a daily basis. The need is great and finding the best fit for the youth is challenging. Referrals constantly flood her inbox. She reads them and often follows up with a phone call to that county to explore a placement further.

Becky is experienced and adept in the interview process with the youth, too. The goal is always a successful placement for both the youth and the family.

OUR TFC TEAM



MERCEDE ROBINSON, LCSW-C
Director



BECKY CARPENTER, LBSW
Admissions Coordinator



COLLEEN CARTER, LBSW
Licensing & Recruitment Coordinator



AIDA LAZO, MSW, LBSW
Case Manager



JOE WOODBURN, LMSW
Case Manager



JAN GAMBY
Resource Coordinator

AIDA LAZO, MSW, LBSW

TFC CASE MANAGER

Aida Lazo was born in Guatemala and immigrated to the United States at the age of 14. As a young child she lived with her grandmother and then later, after her grandmother's death, lived with her grandmother's sister, her great-aunt. Aida's mother left her at the age of five to immigrate to the United States. Years later she returned and helped Aida in this same journey. One might feel that Aida's life could not have amounted to much, given the many obstacles she faced. Her amazing story is an inspiration for those we serve, built on hope and resilience.

Aida's personal experience, even before migrating to the United States, helped to shape her life and career choices. Aida's mother was only 13 years old when she gave birth to Aida. After leaving her with Aida's grandmother, her mother came to the United States. After some time in the United States, her mother obtained a Green Card which allowed her to travel back and forth between Guatemala and the U.S. It was on one of these trips, when Aida was 14, that she persuaded her mother to take her back with her. Although her mother was permitted to travel, Aida would enter the U.S. as an undocumented citizen. She migrated through Mexico and was taught the survival tactics she would need. She entered the U.S. by way of the Rio Grande River. Her mother had given her financial help to then take a flight to where she lived in Maryland, but Aida was detained and taken back to the border of Mexico. It was a few months later that Aida made this same journey again, crossing the waters of the Rio Grande. This time she made it into the country successfully.



Aida stayed with her mother and attended school in Maryland. At the age of 16, Aida and a young man named Jorge, who also lived in the same apartment building, fell in love and decided to run away together. After an unsuccessful first attempt they tried again and moved out of Maryland to begin their new life together. They returned to Maryland soon after the birth of their first child, a daughter. Aida's mother helped her apply for a Green Card which allowed her to work. Aida and her husband struggled to feed their young family, but one particular experience she was about to have had an enormous impact on her life. During a visit to Holy Cross Hospital, where she received prenatal care for their third child, Aida had the wonderful experience of meeting a Catholic nun, who talked to

Aida, but more importantly listened to her story and decided to help Aida and her young family. It was a little before Christmas and she asked Aida if they had enough food. Aida shared that they did not. The nun asked her to return days before Christmas and told her to be sure to bring a car. Food, clothing and Christmas presents were given to this young immigrant family. The heart of one Catholic nun, who saw a need and decided to help, was a moment in time which transformed the course of Aida's life.

Aida and her husband, Jorge worked hard and raised their family. Aida's devotion as a mother who wanted a better life for her children, filled her with a strength and resolve to give them more opportunities to succeed.

Aida wanted to guide her eldest daughter into a career that would be fulfilling. In the process of helping her daughter sign up to take a course to become a certified nursing assistant, she was asked if she wanted to complete the application also and to do the testing to take this course. Aida passed the test and began the course. She later began her college education at Montgomery Community College, and then transferred to Hagerstown Community College. A counselor there talked to her about a career in social services. Helping children had always

been her passion and she made a decision to become a social worker. Aida received her undergraduate degree in Social Work at Salisbury University and because of her high GPA, immediately applied for their Advanced Standing Master Level Program in Social Work. During her graduate studies she accepted an internship at San Mar in their Treatment Foster Care program and accomplished her dream of obtaining her master's degree in Social Work. She was offered a full-time position as Case Manager upon graduation.

"THE IMPACT THAT ONE PERSON HAD ON MY LIFE MANY YEARS AGO, IS THE SAME IMPACT I HOPE TO HAVE WITH THE CLIENTS I SERVE."

- AIDA LAZO

Anyone who knows Aida quickly sees that she is dedicated, knowledgeable, and change driven. She has overcome great adversity and many obstacles throughout her life to become the effective, vibrant person she is today. She brings so much to San Mar. Her own experience in migrating to the U.S., being fluent in two languages, and her love and concern for the children in her care, have made her into an arduous force and advocate for children.

As countless changes continue to unfold before our clients, Aida is always there to assist and help them with challenging transitions. She stated, "The impact that one person had on my life many years ago, is the same impact I hope to have with the clients I serve." Aida is certainly a great asset to San Mar Treatment Foster Care and to our community.

OUR FAMILIES

FOSTER FAMILIES	DATE OF CERTIFICATION	DATE ENDED
Jamie & Russell	7/5/2001	7/9/2019
Roberta & Charles	12/21/2015	
Veryle & Perry	6/30/2009	
Barbara	12/18/2019	
Terry	12/6/2010	
Belinda & Tim	10/10/2012	
Melissa & Rob	1/3/2013	
Sherri & Buck	12/13/2016	
Harriet	9/30/2016	
Dee	10/1/2018	
Jenn & Pattie	9/26/2017	6/28/2020
Ann	4/3/2015	
Brigitte & Leonard	9/1/2011	8/31/2019
Caitlin & Scott	10/18/2019	
Tavasha & William	6/6/2016	
Barb & Gary	3/12/2007	
Selena & Duane	6/28/2017	6/15/2020
Mary & Chuck	2/3/2016	
Carlee & Mark	3/11/2020	
Debbi & Joe	9/15/2011	
Kim & Keith	9/21/2011	
Leslie & Kim	3/1/2006	11/4/2019
Lake & Mike	9/23/2015	
Angela Norris	2/12/2020	
June	11/26/2007	
Cortney & Nathan	6/7/2019	
Elsie & Kevin	3/21/2019	
Grace & Richard	9/6/2007	
Marina & Chuck	2/1/2013	
Madelin	12/12/2018	

TERRY DECKER

FOSTER PARENT – 10 YEARS

Terry has been a Foster Parent with San Mar for the last ten years and we are so thankful to have her. We spoke with Terry about her experience over the last year as a Foster Parent. Here is what she had to say, *“This last year as a Foster Parent has been a learning experience and it has had its positives and challenges.”*



Terry stated the pandemic has been challenging for several reasons including trying to keep the family safe and healthy, and the emotional and mental toll it has taken on the youth in her home. Though it has been an adjustment she feels blessed and is proud of how her youth are managing the Terry states, “You are sharing precious cargo. It is absolutely imperative that you have those relationships for the youth to be successful”. Terry has an amazing ability to connect with biological families and engage them in the treatment process. She stated she feels an important part of being a Foster Parent is building a relationship with biological family members and helping youth regain relationships with their families in a healthy manner. To do this, Terry has taken a very intentional approach to her own training and development. Terry stated she enjoys learning and discussed more training opportunities on building relationships with biological family members and how to keep them a part of the team while their child or youth are in care. We are so thankful to our Foster Parents, such as Terry, and the work she has done for our youth and families.

MEET CAITLIN & SCOTT

Caitlin and Scott have been licensed foster parents with San Mar since October 2019. During one of their earlier meetings Caitlin shared that she and Scott had made their decision to become foster parents in response to a “call from the Lord.”

Caitlin and Scott are a young, active couple and would enjoy having a youth in their home with whom they can share some of these activities and adventures.

They desire to connect with children who are coming out of difficult places by providing a safe and therapeutic environment for them to heal and grow. Their lovely home is located in a rural setting, outside of Hagerstown.



**“WE UNDERSTAND
THE IMPORTANCE
OF COLLABORATING
WITH THE BIOLOGICAL
FAMILIES AND HOW
TAKING A HOLISTIC
APPROACH CAN CREATE
AN ENVIRONMENT OF
SAFETY AND STABILITY
FOR OUR YOUTH.”**

CAITLIN AND SCOTT



MEET LESLIE & KIM

**"PLEASE ADOPT AND MAKE A
FOREVER FAMILY FOR SOMEONE
SPECIAL AND SO DESERVING."**

Leslie and Kim Morgan served children in San Mar's foster care program for more than 13 years.

They adopted a daughter in 2008 and a daughter in 2019.

When asked about working with San Mar, Leslie said, "San Mar was a great asset during our adoption journey...."

Leslie added, "Don't be afraid to ask questions or to ask for help. You are not in this alone!"

Leslie and Kim's family is complete. They shared that, through the adoption process, they learned they were a strong couple and even stronger individuals.

We had the privilege of walking with them during two adoptions. Leslie shared how San Mar worked as a team and was on their side going through the adoption process.

Recently we were talking with Leslie and she shared how strongly they both felt about adopting through San Mar's foster care program. Leslie said "So many kids need a forever family and if we could help just one child it was enough to make a difference."



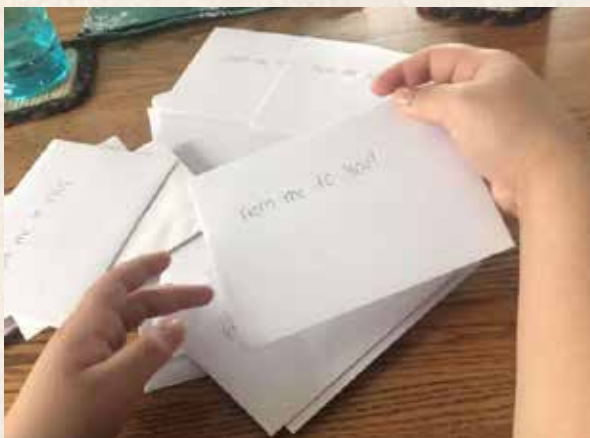
FOSTER YOUTH'S VIEWPOINT

I first came into foster care at a young age. I was 10 or so and when I was put in my very first home, as a kid who didn't grow up in America, I struggled a lot with myself and the perfect image I had in my mind.

I wanted everyone to fit into the role I had expected of them and wanted everything to be like that "white picket fence" I was always told about. That became my biggest problem, causing me to face many ups and downs in foster care. There were moments when I struggled. I would act out and disconnect from the people around me. I stopped showing people my feelings and eventually lost myself in the process. When a conversation became too hard for me to have, I ran away from it or refused to speak.

But there were moments where I did really well. It took me a while to realize I was the only person making things harder for myself. Once I realized that, I started maturing in a way I did not understand then. I started caring more about how I presented myself and what others thought of me and started becoming my own person. It's hard to describe but it was like a switch went off. I started getting better grades and even studied more. I started to do well academically. Though I was doing better there were still ups and downs. Even with these setbacks I learned that I am a determined person. Sure, foster care has been hard but if it wasn't for foster care I wouldn't be so sure I would have a bright future. I have grown to like people and learned how to work on myself in a positive way.

Basically foster care has been my 2nd chance at life and I'm not throwing it away. So, to any foster kid out there. I want to tell them to take this opportunity and make the best out of it and give it everything they got, because we have people to support us and they give us the strength to smile everyday through anything and everything.



**RIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS, THIS YOUNG LADY
TOOK THE TIME TO WRITE A SPECIAL NOTE OF
ENCOURAGEMENT TO EVERY FOSTER CHILD
AND TO EACH SAN MAR TFC STAFF.**

A LETTER FROM GLENDA

Dear San Mar Team,

It has been a year in a few months since I left the foster care system. Most of you know that I have moved out on my own. I am doing well living in Harford County. I have stepped out of my comfort zone and beautiful things have entered my life. I have learned the importance of self-care. I used to live my life with a full schedule and barely had time to just breathe. Now I take time for myself with hikes, reading a book, etc. One thing I learned from all the meetings that I had was to set goals. It was always important to set short term and long term goals. I could not imagine my life without setting goals. This is something that should never change out of the program. I had an amazing support system when I was in care. When I decided to move to Harford County, I needed a good support system. I have my sisters and I always know that my foster parents, Marina & Chuck, are only a phone call away. My emotional walls are also coming down. I used to think that it was the world against me. In reality it was myself against my thoughts. Slowly I have been more present with my thoughts and letting go of the heaviness that holds me back. San Mar has a very special place in my heart. Thank you for putting up with me.

Sincerely,

Glenda



OUR YEAR IN A SNAPSHOT

TGBT

JULY 2019

San Mar's annual 4-day bike ride on the C&O Canal – The Great Bicycle Tour (TGBT) always receives some assistance from the TFC Team. Our 2019 July ride was no different.



BOONESBOROUGH DAYS

SEPTEMBER 7, 2019

Neighbors in our community participated in our yard sale during Boonesborough Days in September, 2019. We enjoyed sharing about foster care and the great need for more foster parents. Some of our foster families participated that day, too.

TRUNK OR TREAT

OCTOBER 21, 2019

We had a fun afternoon and evening during Trunk or Treat. Cars were pulled into the field behind our agency and the children went to each car for their special treat. Afterwards, everyone went inside for some fun and games.



HOLIDAY DINNER

DECEMBER 2019

Every year we have a Holiday Dinner where we invite all of our foster families and staff. This was our first year to highlight the talents of our youth in a special "Talent Show." The event was a favorite for all.



ZOOM EVENTS

Faced with our new reality of doing business from afar in early Spring 2020, TFC turned to ZOOM to stay connected and engaged with our youth. Over the last year we have led support groups for our youth to explore how Covid-19 was impacting them and how they were managing in these difficult times. In these unprecedented times fun was still absolutely a priority for us, so we also utilized our zoom platform to host scavenger hunts and game nights where our clients could have fun and win prizes!!



THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT



We have been so fortunate to walk alongside our youth on the journey from adolescence to adulthood. Early this past summer two of our youth successfully graduated from High School. These youth have shown us that they are not defined by their circumstances and their resiliency shows as they move into the next stage of their lives. Both youth have joined the workforce and are currently working fulltime.



A SAN MAR INITIATIVE

Dear Friends,

2020 has been a year like no other in our lifetime. What seemed like overnight, the COVID-19 pandemic invaded the globe and drastically altered life as we knew it, grossly impacting children, families and communities everywhere. Resources became scarce, individuals and families were forced into isolation out of self-preservation and the systems around us stopped to plan for how best to safely operate. This unprecedented event quickly revealed its negative impact on society with the greatest impact striking our most vulnerable populations. Every day stressors were compounded with fear, uncertainty and difficulty in navigating one's day to day life. We watched the trends of child abuse and neglect, mental health issues and complications of substance use disorder rise, and it seemed like there was nothing that could be done to help our most vulnerable people.

However, some great things happened as well..... As we often see in the work we do, in times of despair and crisis, life changing opportunities occur:

WE CAME TOGETHER: Unexpected partnerships developed to address unmet needs, disconnected neighbors came together to support one another, chronic barriers were finally eliminated and systems worked at lightning speed. In many ways, we as a society were forced to see the value in collaboration and the inherent value of all individuals. We honored our interconnectedness and could no longer ignore the fact that we needed each other. While our country appeared divided as racial injustices were met with a lack of empathy and critical action, **WE CAME TOGETHER.** South End parents were empowered to create a family-friendly opportunity to teach their children love and the importance of equity. We saw an entire community, enriched with racial, gender, age and socioeconomic diversity, join in on this opportunity to publicly advocate and support a future safe for all. Parents became teachers and homeschooled their children (and their neighbor's children) by creating their own "mini-schools" in their home and worked collaboratively with teachers to provide continuity of learning. Families had the opportunity to provide on-going quality time together and were enlightened by assets in the community they had not previously recognized.

Highlighting these positive opportunities is in no way an attempt to minimize the devastation our communities faced but to recognize the strengths in all of us that became even more evident in the face of adversity. It is these strengths that will enable us to overcome the obstacles before us. Even as I write this letter, COVID-19 and its uncertainty remain. We have yet to realize the full impact it will have on the well-being of ourselves and others, but I have HOPE for our future because we have each other. I have HOPE for the South End of Hagerstown, and our commitment to this community is unwavering. Thanks to our funders, supporters, Board of Directors, volunteers and stellar employees, we are here to continue with our "Whatever It Takes" attitude as we persevere with our collective mission: Cultivating Hope and Well-Being in Children, Families and Communities. It is my HOPE that you will continue your journey with us or take the next step in joining an unstoppable movement.

With hope,

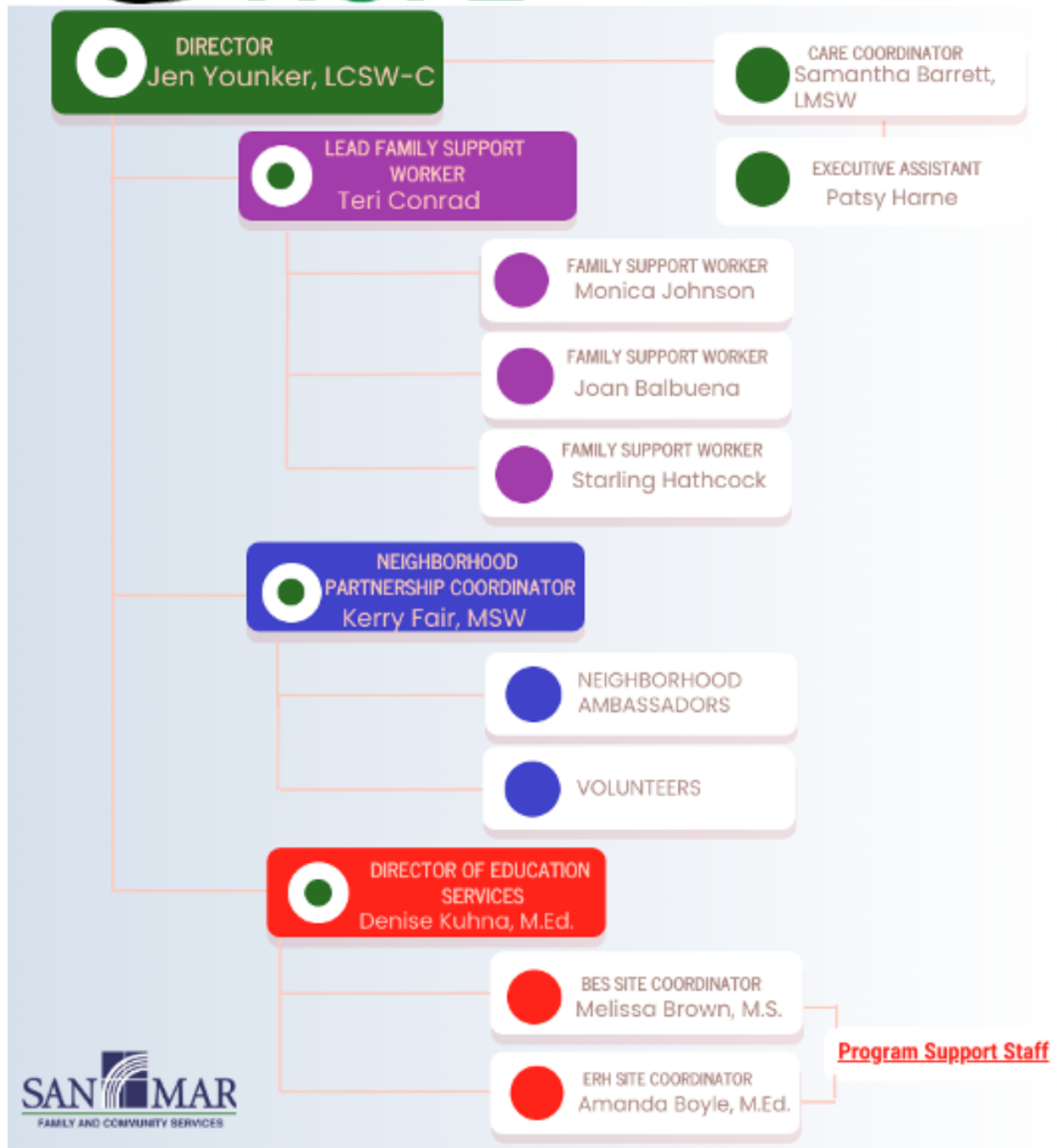
Jen Younker, LCSW-C

Director of Bester Community of Hope





Organizational Structure under San Mar Family and Community Services





THANK YOU INTERNS!

ViNiceia Carter

Masters of Social Work Intern from University of Maryland

Jennifer Holland

Masters of Social Work Intern from Salisbury University

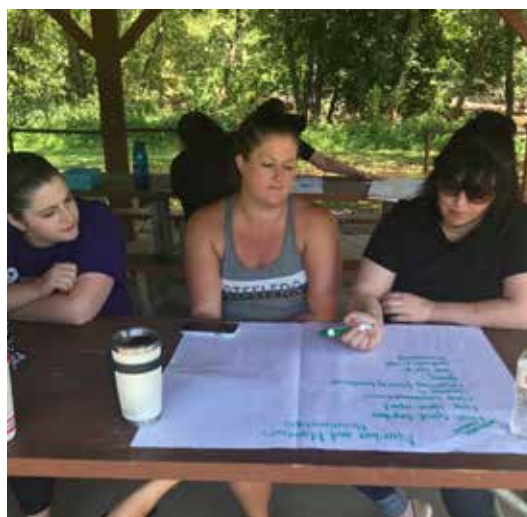
Megan Dusci

Bachelors of Social Work Intern from Shepherd University

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER ANNUAL STAFF RETREAT

Over the summer all Bester Community of Hope staff participated in a full day of staff development that incorporated all five of our Unconditional Care Principals with a strategic focus on cultivating and maintaining relationships. Relationships are at the center of all human interaction and engagement, therefore authentic and healthy relationships are the catalyst of the Bester Community of Hope effort. Staff spent the morning at The Kitchen Studio Cooking School in Frederick where they were faced with unique challenges requiring effective teamwork, and staff demonstrated that we are truly better together. It was quickly identified who within the team possessed skills in the kitchen, but when utilizing the strengths of all team members, a delectable meal was enjoyed by all. Everyone has strengths ... even if it's taste testing.

The afternoon was filled with a deeper dive into the stages of relationship development and the importance of relationship maintenance. Staff were given the opportunity to critique their current professional relationships and develop next steps in strengthening those connections. Each participant took risks as they were challenged through different fun and engaging activities because having fun is priority. By the end of the day, staff were reinvigorated and ready to continue doing whatever it takes to meet the mission of the organization: Cultivating Hope and Well-Being in Children, Families and Communities.



WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER

WITH A COMMON VESTED INTEREST, PARTNERSHIPS ARE FORMED TO STRENGTHEN HUMAN CONNECTION AND MAXIMIZE IMPACT. AS A COLLECTIVE IMPACT INITIATIVE, WE STRONGLY VALUE OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND RECOGNIZE THAT MANY OF OUR OUTCOMES ARE DRIVEN AND SUPPORTED BY THOSE COLLABORATIONS.

FY20 PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Box of Balloons has been partnering with Bester Community of Hope for years to bring the joy of birthdays to the children in Washington County. Our partnership has provided over 75 children's birthday parties in three years with the help of a large volunteer base. Empowering parents that may not have been able to provide a party to their children is why we do what we do. Bester and Box of Balloons have the same core values and goals, that is why I personally love working with the team." - Despina Rogers, Box of Balloons Chapter Leader



Discovery Station is a proud partner of Bester Community of Hope. We have enjoyed working with this organization to support families in Washington County. We've been fortunate to host multiple Parent Cafés at the museum. Parent Cafés are physical and emotional safe spaces where parents and caregivers talk about the challenges and victories of raising a family. The families that took part in these events had access to our educational exhibits, and it was a true testament of collective impact and the good work that Bester Community of Hope does. We were proud to also participate in Babypalooza by providing STEAM resources to the children that attended. From all of our interactions with the families that Bester Community of Hope supports, it is clear that this organization is providing much-needed support and resources to our community." - Brittany Wedd, Director of Discovery Station



BESTER COMMUNITY OF HOPE

OnTrack Washington County, Inc. is thankful to have Bester Community of Hope as one of its fifty and growing community partners addressing educational inequities and disparities in Washington County through a collective impact approach. When life as we know it came to a screeching halt in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bester team went into overdrive ensuring the children and families had the resources they needed to continue to engage in distance learning and reduce the backslide of learning loss when their educational system was disrupted. OnTrack happily contributed Student Play Plan kits from the Early Childhood Advisory Council, providing lessons and activities for the Spanish speaking families in the South End – a resource that was much needed and appreciated. Through generous funding from the Community Foundation of Washington County and in partnership with the Community Book Warehouse, OnTrack was also thankful for the opportunity to provide books and student learning activity care packages to the Bester team for distribution throughout the spring and summer. The partnership with Bester highlights the value and importance of collective impact to address the needs in a community, especially in the midst of a pandemic.” - Kim Duncan, Executive Director of OnTrack Washington County



RBC Wealth Management has continued to create magical holiday cheer and generously provided gifts for families in need in the South End. This annual tradition not only provides a meaningful holiday experience but continues to serve as a message of HOPE, compassion and joy for all children and families. Where there is need, there is opportunity. The great folks of RBC Wealth Management have created a one-night annual opportunity to come together to create beautiful packages and gifts that are delivered to parents to surprise their children with on Christmas morning. A special thank you to Jennifer Brandenburg, who ensures that this special occasion is one to remember!



Bester Community of Hope proudly supports the efforts of **Washington Goes Purple**. Almost all of the families we are able to serve are touched by addiction in some way, and the work that Washington Goes Purple is doing is making a life-changing impact for our community. Staff participated in several events hosted by Washington Goes Purple during Recovery Month including the Annual Recovery Walk in September and showed their support by wearing purple on “Purple Fridays” to promote messages of hope in recovery.



SITE VISITS

Bester Community of Hope welcomes special guests every year to share their work as creative agents of prevention in child welfare. In July, Charles County Department of Human Services Director Therese Wolf and Outreach and Chaplaincy Coordinator John Lewis visited to learn more about community engagement and community-driven efforts. Both reported that our work was “innovative” and “inspiring” as well as left with many ideas as they explored similar efforts in Charles County, Maryland.

The Administration for Children and Families grant recipients select two national sites identified as engaging in best practices and innovation work as it relates to the prevention of child abuse and neglect while maintaining permanency of families. Three grantees selected Bester Community of Hope and a visit was planned for March 2020; however due to the early threats of the coronavirus, only two were able to attend. Attendees included: Toni Spoliansky, Erica Reed and Pebbles Edelman from the Partnership for Strong Families out of Gainesville, FL; Dr. Robin Perry from the Institute for Child and Family Services Research; as well as Anthony Silverman and Claudia Menendez from Larimer County Department of Human Services in Colorado. Attendees spent 2 full days with staff learning about the history, philosophy and details of our work then joining in on the fun by participating in home visits and our quarterly Community Advisory Board.

CHANGE OF OPERATION DUE TO COVID-19

STARTING MARCH 16, 2020, BESTER COMMUNITY OF HOPE OFFICES CLOSED TO VISITORS AND STAFF WERE NOT PERMITTED TO PROVIDE SERVICES OFF-SITE TO THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WE SERVE. WE IMMEDIATELY BEGAN PLANNING HOW WE WERE GOING TO ADJUST TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL SERVICES TO THOSE WHO NEEDED US NOW MORE THAN EVER.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, information on resources in the community was rapidly changing, and Bester Community of Hope worked diligently to provide accurate and up-to-date information to the members of our South End community. Information was disseminated through our Facebook page, and our four community boards were used to provide this same information to those who did not have access to the internet. Boards were updated multiple times throughout the week to ensure resources remained current.

While the preferred venue for serving families is in-person, the agency made the decision to minimize in-person contact for the safety of the community and staff. Staff began visits with children and families via Zoom as it allowed for “face-to-face” engagement while maintaining necessary social distancing guidelines.

Family Support Workers rose to the challenge of being responsive to family’s needs during COVID-19. Extra efforts were taken to help parents navigate educational demands, as parents became teachers overnight and their home became their school. Our families continued to face many of the same challenges: death of a caregiver, parental incarceration, homelessness, domestic violence, substance use and mental health crises of both parent and child. Mental health concerns of parents and children became exacerbated by isolation, demands of home schooling and uncertainty of COVID-19 outcomes. Family Support Workers used their ingenuity and skills to maintain relationships, remain supportive and give HOPE to parents through virtual

home visits, phone calls and drop-offs of food and academic supplies. Families were provided opportunities for virtual social connections through events such as Parent Cafe and Community Coffee.

The South End 21 after school program also transitioned from in-person to virtual engagement. Despite the shift to a virtual platform, staff were able to continue providing enrichment and academic opportunities to the students in grades 3-5 at Bester Elementary School and grades 6-8 at E. Russel Hicks Middle School. In addition, the program provided students in grades K-2 weekly learning bags that contained a book and several hands-on learning activities that accompanied the book. South End 21 staff were able to facilitate a virtual Family Friday event by delivering a meal for students and their families as well as materials for an enrichment activity, and students and their families were then invited to create colorful artwork as a family during the after-school program. Bester Community of Hope staff participated in a caravan to drive around the catchment visiting students from afar.



Community partners have graciously remembered our Bester Community of Hope families throughout this time. Our office has been blessed with many food donations including Easter dinners that were donated by Downtown Rotary Club. Personal protective equipment for staff and families served were donated by the Community Free Clinic.

Pandemic or not, South End residents still savored remarkable successes: obtaining stable housing, the birth of a child, starting a new job, graduations and family reunifications. There is always HOPE!



FAMILIES

STATISTICS ON FAMILIES SERVED

- 119 referrals (Referral sources include Bester Elementary School, Washington County Department of Social Services, Washington County Health Department, Head Start, Jack E. Barr Center for Well-Being and self-referrals)
- 74 new families (205 children/156 adults = 361 family members) received services
- 101 families served total during the year
- 795 Home visits
- 2793 Linkages and direct services provided
- 63 Successful transitions

“All I can say is that BCOH was the one and only reason other than my own hard work that during these hard times I was successful in recovering from rock-bottom homelessness coming from some very traumatic events in me and my children’s life to having a home and full time job and loving stable family life.

BCOH is more than just an organization; they have become part of my family. Mrs. Starling will forever be the light of hope and happiness after such bad things happened.

Every time Starling came to us she was the reassurance I needed that I was doing the right things and guided me when I wasn’t sure. Again, I can’t say enough about Starling and BCOH. Thank you so much for everything. You kept me and my 3 girls together. We love you.”

– Parent response to Family Services Satisfaction Survey



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Family Support Worker Starling Hathcock represented Bester Community of Hope at the Washington County Human Trafficking Collaborative monthly and weekly sub-committee meetings, keeping up-to-date on victim services and other resources. Starling attended the Human Trafficking Summit in January and passed along valuable information to staff.

HOMELESS COALITION

Family Support Worker Teri Conrad represented Bester Community of Hope at the Washington County Homeless Coalition quarterly meetings. Approximately fifty community partners meet to review the coalition's dynamic services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and to share critical resources. Staff supported a Homeless Outreach Health Care Event at Aspiring to Serve. Most notably this year, Washington County Homeless Coalition became part of the Balance of State (BoS) Continuum of Care with six other counties across the State of Maryland. This move will impart new resources to Washington County homeless.

PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Parent Advisory Committee is a group of parents and caregivers who commit to provide feedback to the Community Triage Services team at Bester Community of Hope led by Family Support Worker Monica Johnson. The committee is made up of thirteen caregivers who joyously celebrated one year of partnership and service this past year. At a celebration dinner, members recalled a year of fun and feedback, training and collaboration, and many agreed to serve again in the year moving forward. "I know my voice matters," one member remarked as she recalled her service on the committee. Another echoed, "you guys listen. You've made changes based on what we suggest. As a single dad, this is the only place I feel heard."

This year members fulfilled Year Two goals of skill development and opportunities for leadership within the organization. Members of the committee became Bester Community of Hope volunteers; were trained in CPR, First Aid and Narcan administration; and all attended an in-house training on communication and advocacy. They examined the Bester Community of Hope Client Satisfaction Survey and provided valued feedback to the program director. They utilized recently acquired skills when they gathered around the table with members of the Washington County Department of Human Services to provide insight about their experiences with the Department.



"this is cool! It feels good to break bread with other dudes who are just tryna be there for these kids."



FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES

In addition to training and advocacy, the Parent Advisory Committee highlighted an underserved population in our community – fathers and father-figures. Members continuously advocated for father-friendly programming and sought out strengths-based initiatives on the local and national level. Bester Community of Hope responded to this feedback by completing a program self-assessment called the Father Friendly Check Up and by hosting an event for fathers and children called "Dude's Day." Dude's Day was a male caregiver led event that consisted of dinner, card games and a full house (pun intended). Men shared stories of resiliency and hope and, for many, this was the first time they had ever been acknowledged as valuable in the life of their child. One stepdad remarked, "this is cool! It feels good to break bread with other dudes who are just tryna be there for these kids."

Ultimately, this vision led us to launch "Dad's Café." A program of Be Strong Families, Dad's Café is a semi-monthly gathering for men that self-identify in a parenting role. Dad's Café focuses on networking, discovering strengths and seeking support to build those strengths. During the first Dad's Café, twenty-five fathers, uncles, grandfathers, and father-figures packed a meeting room at The Discovery Station Children's Museum and participants shared dinner with their children and one another. The children then explored the museum exhibits as the men shared conversation about protective factors and raising children in challenging times. It was more than just another support group; it was the beginning of kinship. The second Dad's Café was planned by members of the Parent Advisory Committee and Family Support Workers. Best of all, it featured a dinner prepared by the men! On the menu was Bill's famous spaghetti. "My sauce and parenting are kinda the same," Bill remarked. "If you take the time to put all the right ingredients together, it all comes out just perfect!" A total of three Dad's Cafés were held this year.

Despite the COVID-19 shutdown, the fatherhood initiative continued to gain momentum. Dad's Café happened in virtual format and gained the attention of local fatherhood practitioners who joined in to be part of the opportunities and solutions available for men with children in the community. Two practitioners were trained as table hosts for Dad's Café and one served as a community resource person. As we continue to strive to bring hope to children and families in the South End of Hagerstown, we recognize that ongoing opportunities are vital for the success of high-quality father-friendly programming.

PARENT CAFÉ

Parent Cafés are offered to create transformative change by developing and sustaining conversations that nurture the spirit of family, promote well-being and decrease child abuse and neglect.

Family Support Worker Joan Balbuena, in collaboration with multiple local community agencies, hosted seven in person and three virtual Parent Cafés. Locations, times and resources varied to increase participation and to address identified emergent community needs. Also, a total of five new table hosts were welcomed to the team, including two parent leaders, two Family Support Workers and one community partner

The COVID-19 pandemic hit and we were confronted with the challenging tasks of creating spaces like the ones offered in a Parent Café. As a direct response to the community's request, Joan completed a "Hosting Cafés Online" training provided by Be Strong Families. In April, we hosted our first Virtual Parent Café. We had twenty-seven participants between families and community members at this virtual event. These opportunities continued to be provided at least monthly.

To continue the support on a larger scale, Joan became a consultant to Maryland Family Network, the Strengthening Families Parent Café Certifying Agency for the state of Maryland. Through this partnership, Maryland Family Network was able to solidify their efforts for the virtual process of training Room Hosts and created a state-wide team that provides Virtual Parent Café support to other agencies and communities across the state. During the year, a total of five Maryland Family Network Virtual Parent Cafés were hosted. Joan continues to expand her knowledge by increasing her efforts in partnering with Maryland Family Network as well as Be Strong Families with the goal of hosting high quality virtual gatherings that contain the same benefits as in person Parent Cafés.



BABY OLYMPICS

Family Support Workers value opportunities for creative parent education. This year, Baby Olympics proved to be just that! Together with parents, the team identified eighteen Olympians under the age of 3 who participated in developmentally appropriate events derived from the CDC Developmental Milestone Guidelines. Events like the “tunnel scoot”, the “blankie crawl” and the “log roll” gave parents information about motor planning and executive functioning. Bonding activities such as the “lap swim” and “stand and clap” helped parents learn new interactive games to play. Local community resource providers such as Birth through Kindergarten and staff from The Hub at USMH attended and cheered the Olympians on to the finish line. After the event, babies and parents spent the afternoon in our family friendly lobby eating, playing and making new friends.



H.O.P.E. - HOPEFUL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENT ENRICHMENT

This initiative was designed to address the issues that Hispanic families encounter in their community due to language barrier, system disparity, lack of knowledge, social isolation and daily family struggles. H.O.P.E. was led by Family Support Worker Joan Balbuena and met in person consistently every Wednesday morning from October 2019 – March 2020. A total of nineteen in person and ten virtual sessions were held with ten families.



LEARNING PARTIES

Family Support Worker Joan Balbuena attended the Ready at Five training for Parent Leadership Learning Parties. This opportunity was designed by Ready at Five to support parents and family members as they take an active role in their child’s education and in schools, early learning programs and local communities. We hosted the four week Learning Party in August in collaboration with Hagerstown Area Religious Council, The Judy Center of Washington County and the Hub at USMH as a response to a group of parents’ request for advocacy training. Nine parents successfully completed the program.



CHILD FATALITY PREVENTION EFFORTS

■ **“Just Call” Identification and Reporting Training Video**

– In collaboration with High Rock Studios, the Washington County Department of Human Services, Casey Family Programs and Authentic Community Theatre, Inc., Bester Community of Hope produced a high-quality informational video on identifying child abuse and neglect as well as the role of local child welfare jurisdictions. Located on the Bester Community of Hope YouTube channel, the video is free for public access and can be used by other agencies as supplemental training material.



- **Annual Child Fatality Prevention Conference** – On Friday, July 19, staff from Bester Community of Hope attended the 3rd Annual Child Fatality Prevention Conference titled “Predict-Align-Prevent: Place-Based Predictive Analytics in Child Welfare”. The conference was sponsored by Washington County Department of Human Services, Bester Community of Hope and Casey Family Programs. Dr. Dyann Daley, founder and CEO of Predict Align Prevent, presented on the work she has done predicting the location of future child maltreatment using spatial risk modeling. We also heard from Meritus Health about data collected on child fatalities and their Safe Sleep Collaborative. Washington County Department of Human Services, Bester Community of Hope, the Washington County Sheriff’s Office and the Washington County Mental Health Authority presented on their efforts to help prevent child fatalities in the county.
- Bester Community of Hope provided multiple training opportunities to other community partner agencies on the identification, reporting and intervention of child abuse and neglect.
- Bester Community of Hope remains active member of the Washington County Child Fatality Review Committee, the Child Fatality Prevention Committee and the Washington County Infant Mortality Review Committee.

THE SUBSTANCE EXPOSED NEWBORN CARE TEAM

Bester Community of Hope collaborates with the Washington County Department of Human Services as well as other local stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Substance Exposed Newborn Care Team. The team's mission states that, "in all of our interactions with Washington County newborns and families, we will be guided by the following values: self-determination, human dignity, respect, advocacy and the non-judgmental provision of services." During this reporting year, the team:

- Connected with a variety of community agencies in order to better understand the client's experience when visiting agencies.
- Distributed 20 Pack-N-Plays and 2 Mama-Roos to partners for substance-exposed newborns. Partners that accessed this resource in 2020 are Meritus Labor and Delivery Unit, Washington County Department of Social Services, Washington County Health Department and Bester Community of Hope families.
- Facilitated public and community education for Washington Goes Purple and participated in the Recovery Walk.
- Acquired car seats for premature babies, medication lock boxes and Uber gift cards to enable families to attend post-delivery appointments.

TRIPLE P

The Family Support Team had the privilege to become accredited in the Triple P Positive Parenting Program. Triple P is an evidence-based parenting curriculum that assists parents and caregivers with their concerns about their child's behavior and teaches skills that they can apply to multiple contexts.

Staff traveled to State College, Pennsylvania over the course of three weeks to become accredited in Level 4 Standard Triple P, Level 4 Standard Teen Triple P, Level 4 Group Triple P and Level 4 Group Teen Triple P. Family support workers can assist caregivers of children of all ages through individual and group sessions.

CELEBRATING FAMILIES BASKETS

Affirming and celebrating families is core to our work. In June, Family Support Workers assembled beautiful (and useful) Fourth of July-themed picnic baskets filled with picnic fixings and activities the family could do together to celebrate the holiday such as a football, bubbles and glow sticks. An activity book to celebrate strong and healthy families was created, focusing on the five Protective Factors.

BRIGHT FUTURES CONFERENCE

Care Coordinator Samantha Barrett assisted with the planning and execution of the Bright Futures Conference hosted by Washington County Department of Social Services. The Bright Futures Conference is an event held for teens in foster care to provide information about various topics, and the theme for this year's event was job readiness. Teens were taught different skills such as resume building, money management and interview techniques. In the afternoon, every teen in attendance was allowed to pick an interview appropriate outfit and participated in a mock group interview with professionals from various businesses in Washington County. Everyone in attendance ended the day with ice cream from Antietam Dairy.



SCHOOLS

SOUTH END 21

In the fall of 2019, Bester Community of Hope kicked off the second year of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant awarded from the Maryland State Department of Education. Programming started Monday, September 16th and occurred daily at E. Russell Hicks Middle School from 2:30-5 pm and at Bester Elementary School from 3:30-6 pm. Students received an hour of fun academic instruction followed by an hour of creative enrichment provided by community partners. Meals and transportation were provided

in partnership with Washington County Public Schools and Casey Family Programs. In-person programming continued through Thursday March 12, 2020.

**“South End 21
provided hope when
our community was
divided and fearful.”**

*- South End 21 parent
survey response*

External Evaluator Shira Solomon reported, “despite a school year—and a society—that was abruptly and severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, South End 21 still managed to hold 152 afterschool days (111 of them at-school, 41 virtual), maintain a 92 percent attendance rate and host six in-person family events in School Year 2019-2020.” South End 21 served 173 students in FY20.

South End 21’s program goals are three fold; 1) promote college and career readiness in the South End neighborhood of Hagerstown, Maryland—a part of the Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) community that has lower academic achievement and greater socioeconomic disadvantages than the district as a whole, 2) provide students with academic support and recreation in a safe and nurturing environment, and lastly 3) to strengthen family cohesion and stability through access to educational and social services.

PROGRAM SUPPORT STAFF

- Dolores Agrinzonis
- Jerry Balbuena
- Ed Barrick
- Keegan Blom-Hill
- Alexis Broder
- LeeAnn Broder
- Tayonna Brown
- Susan Harris
- Lucy Nordyke
- Tyisha Richardson
- Deriel Riddle

PROGRAM TEACHERS

- Ms. Griffin
- Ms. Brenk
- Ms. Silver
- Mrs. Lopez
- Ms. Thompson
- Mr. Rau
- Ms. Tapley
- Ms. Talbert
- Mr. Novel
- Mr. Loughheed
- Mrs. Lopez
- Mrs. Fornwalt
- Mrs. Heebner
- Ms. Ballenger



**“Every child deserves a champion;
an adult who will never give up on
them, who understands the power of
connection and insists that they become
the best they can possibly be.”**

- Rita Pierson

BESTER COMMUNITY OF HOPE



PROGRAM ENRICHMENT FACILITATORS

BESTER ELEMENTARY

ZUMBA: NITZA RIVERA AND CHANDA THOMPSON

Zumba combines Latin and international music with dance moves, alternating fast and slow rhythms to help improve cardiovascular fitness.

Total Enrollment: 16 BES, 10 ERH



SERVICE CLUB: MELANIE GRIMMER

Ms. Melanie began the steps to renovate the Bester Elementary courtyard with her group of students by cleaning out old dirt, flower beds and debris around the court yard. Students painted one side of the flower boxes with beautiful masterpieces.

Total Enrollment: 14



SOUTH END HOOPS: HAGERSTOWN KIWANIS CLUB MEMBERS DAVE ELLIOTT AND EJ FULLER

Students developed leadership skills along with skills for the court.

Total Enrollment: 19

CYBER CLUB: KATE MCDANIEL

Students engaged in this fun and interactive club which had students learn about internet safety, coding and the use of virtual reality headsets.

Total Enrollment: 17

CREATIVE CLUB: KANIKA PINTO

Students engaged in this hands-on learning art club which incorporated literature, team-building and building confidence. Students created masterpieces utilizing various forms of art media. Students held an art showcase each quarter and invited their families to come view their work.

Total Enrollment: 20





BOARD GAMES: LINDA PALMER-SILVER

Students developed problem-solving skills while learning how to play different games. Students created their own games to share and teach others.

Total Enrollment: 15

CHEERLEADERS: MELANIE GRIMMER

Students developed skills incorporating leadership, problem-solving, team-building and cheerleading.

Total Enrollment: 18

STEP CLUB: CHANDA THOMPSON

STEP is a form of percussive dance in which the student's entire body is used as an instrument to produce complex rhythms and sounds through a mixture of footsteps, spoken words and hand claps.

Total Enrollment: 16

LEGO AND HAVE FUN!: SHEILA BROWN

During this club, students were provided LEGOs, and each week there was a different challenge for students to participate in. This club allowed the students to be creative by creating masterpieces by themselves or with a partner.

Total Enrollment: 17



ROBOTICS: PETER CRAIG

This interactive club provided students a place to explore an interest in both mechanics and electronics by designing, building and programming functioning robots using a variety of resources.

Total Enrollment: 13

PLAY YOUR HEART OUT: SHEILA BROWN

Students who participated in this club learned team-building, problem-solving and physical movement skills. Students were given sports challenges and had opportunities to introduce new sports games to their peers.

Total Enrollment: 20



CRAFTN' CREATIONS: DENISE MCILWAIN

Students participated weekly in making creations while Ms. Denise led conversations about being kind and practiced skills for character building.

Total Enrollment: 14

PICTURE THIS: MELANIE GRIMMER

Students embraced the art of photography through weekly assignments and team-building activities.

Total Enrollment: 16

SE21 OLYMPICS: MELANIE GRIMMER

Students engaged in weekly challenges that promoted physical health and team-building.

Total Enrollment: 20

GAMING CLUB: SHEILA BROWN

This club was per student request, and it gave students the opportunity to socialize and have fun together based on their hobby of playing electronic games, while discussing gaming strategies and preferences and practicing team-building skills.

Total Enrollment: 16

BASKETBALL: CHARLES WHITE

Students developed skills on the court as well as in leadership and teamwork.

Total Enrollment: 20

SEWING: SHEILA BROWN

Students enrolled in this club learned basic hand-sewing skills. Students gained a passion for sewing and created useful items like hair scrunchies.

Total Enrollment: 20

DRAMA: DELIA ZIELINSKI

Students were given the chance to experience the excitement and rewards of theatre arts while developing poise, social skills, confidence and the ability to work with others.

Total Enrollment: 13

GLEE: DELIA ZIELINSKI

Students participating in this club had the chance to learn and sing musical numbers while fostering a lifelong appreciation for music and musical activities.

Total Enrollment: 13

MINDFULNESS: MELANIE GRIMMER

This club helped students combat stress by teaching them to lead healthier, happier lives through simple daily practices during each club session.

Total Enrollment: 15

PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB: TYLER STINSON AND WINSTON DUMAS

Students had the opportunity to express themselves through digital photography. Students learned the basics of using a camera and the basic skills needed to take photos of different objects and landscapes.

Total Enrollment: 13



GRAPHIC DESIGNS: ANTHONY BOSTIC FROM DAD'S CONNECTION

During this time students had the opportunity to learn about the field of graphic and media design, through creating logos and designs for community events.

Total Enrollment: 11

SPORTS CLUB: ANTHONY BOSTIC FROM DAD'S CONNECTION

Students engaged in various sports. Learning the basics to basketball, volleyball, soccer, kickball and other sports.

Total Enrollment: 12

“Be that one caring adult – that person who changes a kid’s life with a simple, caring act. It starts with you, and it starts now.

– Josh Shipp

FAMILY FUN FRIDAY EVENTS - FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

SOUTH END 21 STAFF WELCOMED PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND FAMILIES TO JOIN THEIR CHILD IN A FUN FAMILY EVENT ONCE A MONTH.

BESTER ELEMENTARY



SEPTEMBER 27TH: TAILGATE PARTY

South End 21 students and their families participated in a tailgate in the parking lot of Bester Elementary. They enjoyed walking tacos, Gatorade, football shaped brownies, plus multiple activities to choose from such as a giant Jenga game, cornhole, frisbee and football. 41 students participated with 16 students bringing at least one family member with them.

OCTOBER 25TH: BOARD GAMES, PLUS CELEBRATED LIGHTS ON AFTER SCHOOL

South End 21 students and their families enjoyed a pizza night with their choice of games to play together. We also participated in the National Lights On After School. It is the only nationwide event celebrating after school programs and their important role in the lives of children, families and communities. The effort has become a hallmark of the after school movement and generates media coverage across the country each year. This initiative is to help draw attention to the many ways afterschool programs support students by offering them opportunities to learn new things. 57 students participated with 13 students bringing at least one family member with them.



NOVEMBER 15TH: BINGO

South End 21 students and their families enjoyed a pasta buffet bar night, and each person received a bingo card for a chance to win a fun prize. 55 students participated with 24 students bringing at least one family member with them.

DECEMBER 20TH: HOLIDAY GATHERING

South End 21 students and their families enjoyed a pizza and cookie night along with various winter and holiday activities set up at each table. Families could create an ugly sweater, play a holiday I Spy game or make some holiday slime. 41 students participated with 12 students bringing at least one family member with them.

JANUARY 17TH: PAINT NIGHT

South End 21 students and their families enjoyed walking tacos and brownies along with a step-by-step painting led by Ms. Kanika Pinto. We had over 100 people participate in this Family Friday event with 52 students and 30 students bringing at least one family member with them.

FEBRUARY 21ST: KINDNESS ROCKS

South End 21 students and their families enjoyed a pizza night and created "kindness rocks" that students and families could hide throughout the community to spread kindness. 44 students participated with 18 students bringing at least one family member with them.

E. RUSSELL HICKS MIDDLE SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 27TH: TAILGATE PARTY

Students and families participated in a tailgate party at E. Russell Hicks Middle School. 12 students and 5 families participated in this event.

OCTOBER 25TH: SPOOKY VILLE!

Students created Halloween themed art work that they then displayed around the school. 34 students and 7 families participated in this event.

NOVEMBER 22ND: TRIVIA NIGHT

Students and families were able to play trivia and board games during this event. 34 students and 1 family participated in this event.

DECEMBER 20TH: SNOW CRAFTS

Students created snow globes, painted snowmen and decorated ornaments. Students and families were served pizza which was provided by Lifehouse Church. 42 students and 7 families participated in the event.

JANUARY 17TH: BOARD GAME NIGHT

Students and families played board games and enjoyed each other's company. 31 students and 7 families participated in this event.

FEBRUARY 14TH: CARE ABOUT YOU NIGHT

Students created Valentine's Day cards that were dropped off at Coffman Nursing Home. Each student received a customized bag filled with candy. 38 students and 8 families participated in this event.

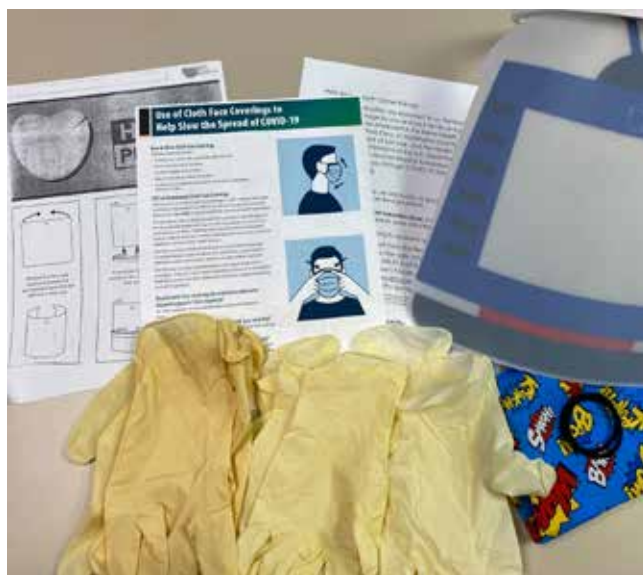


SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTER

The Bester Health Center is a school-based health center that is operated through a service collaborative with Washington County Public Schools, The Community Free Clinic and Meritus Health with funding through HRSA. 221 registered students had access to an on-site Nurse Practitioner for medical needs without ever needing to leave the school grounds. South End 21 Site Coordinator would check in weekly with both the school nurse, Ms. Tissue, and the Nurse Practitioner, Mary Perkins, to ensure that the health center was able to meet the needs of Bester's students.

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

Bester Community of Hope and Bester Elementary School co-hosted Wellness Wednesday sessions for parents, caregivers and community members from September to February in partnership with the Community Free Clinic and the Washington County Health Department. The group session participants selected the topics that they wished to learn about, and the organizers contacted experts to present information and answer questions. The sessions were held on the first Wednesday of the month in the Bester Elementary Café from 8:30-10:00 AM. Topics ranged from Helping Your Child be Successful in School to Accessing Family Health Care. Over the six-month meeting period, approximately twenty-seven families participated. During the time schools were closed due to COVID-19, Bester Community of Hope and The Community Free Clinic provided on-going video messages to students and families on ways to stay healthy during a pandemic.



COVID BAGS

In June, South End 21 staff delivered Bester Bear Care Bags to 137 families who were registered with the Bester Health Center. In order to provide families with the critical supplies needed to keep their household well, each bag contained eight pairs of gloves in varying sizes, a child's halo face shield, instructions and materials to make a bandana mask, updated information regarding COVID-19 and tissues. Families were very appreciative of receiving these supplies and the children enjoyed the opportunity to create their own mask!

NATIONAL SMOKE OUT

An anti-smoking, anti-vaping lesson was delivered to students that participate in South End 21 by Mary Perkins and Nicole Houser from The Community Free Clinic. Many students were under the misunderstanding that vaping was a safe alternative to smoking. Ms. Mary and Ms. Nicole provided facts and documentation to the students about the dangers of both smoking and vaping. The students participated in hands on demonstrations and active learning. Students then spent the next several weeks creating and illustrating books on the dangers to vaping.

HEALTHY NEW YEAR DANCE

To celebrate the beginning of 2020, the Wellness Committee at Bester Elementary, in collaboration with Bester Community of Hope and South End 21, organized a Healthy New Year Dance for the students and their families in the school's gym and cafeteria. Over 350 people attended this event making it the most successful event of the school year. The theme was Frozen, and the decorations, food and prizes matched the theme. Students and families were invited to make healthy New Year resolutions, create an ornament that featured that resolution, have their pictures taken at the selfie wall and indulge themselves in healthy snacks that included yogurt, fresh fruit, various juices and a selection of fresh vegetables. The event received rave reviews by all that attended.



SPECIAL EDUCATION COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Washington County Public Schools Special Education Community Advisory Committee provides the opportunity for parents, educators, community leaders and community resource agencies to work together, to provide meaningful input and to optimize the efficiency of special education. Our representative, Family Support Worker Joan Balbuena has been an active member of SECAC in the past year attending all ten committee monthly meetings as well as serving in the Advocacy and Special Events subcommittees. Through this involvement, Bester Community of Hope was able to lead efforts in providing the Special Education Showcase – a Washington County Public Schools Special Education Programs showcase and Resource Fair held at South Hagerstown High School directly impacting families of children with different abilities 0 – 21 years in the South End and areas adjacent.

THERAPEUTIC MENTORING

Interns worked one-on-one with students identified as needing extra supports and encouragement to be most successful. Two interns provided thirty-eight sessions of therapeutic mentoring to six students at Bester Elementary.

NEIGHBORHOODS



BETTER TOGETHER

Each month, residents and stakeholders came together with a common purpose in the community. Whether it was to clean the walk to school routes in preparation for the first Walking School Bus, updating and repairing a local basketball court or coordinating a food drop with the Maryland Food Bank, the neighborhood demonstrated that we truly are Better Together. A total of eight Better Together events were held during the year.

SUMMER LUNCH FOR PARENTS

Each summer, the public school offers free breakfast and lunch for people under the age of 18 years old. This worthy effort helps prevent hunger in our youngest members of the neighborhood, but food insecurity during the summer is also an issue for parents and guardians. In partnership with It's a Blessing to be a Blessing, an average of fifteen parents per day received a bagged lunch to eat with their child during the Free Summer Meals program at Bester Elementary School. One grandmother explained how she felt valued in the life of her grandson because she was noticed.

LUNCH BUNCH

Bester Community of Hope staff and volunteers assisted in serving lunch to an average of thirty-two residents of Potomac Towers fifteen times over the course of the year. Local houses of faith prepared the food for the residents. Those living in Potomac Towers frequently commented on how much it meant to them that they were getting a hearty meal and someone to visit with for the afternoon.

WALKING SCHOOL BUS

The Walking School Bus helps Bester Elementary School students arrive to school safely and ready to learn every Wednesday morning. This year, an average of sixty students met Neighborhood Ambassadors weekly at one of three Walking School Bus stops to enjoy games and activities based on monthly themes such as pedestrian safety and rules of the road. During the winter months, our theme was Go Big or Go Home and we welcomed community guests who had a big impact on the neighborhood, such as our local Fire Department and Ryan Smetzer from 96.7 LIVE. Fifteen Walking School Bus sessions were held this year.



BABYPALOOZA

On Saturday, November 4, 2019, over 600 people came to Bester Elementary School for the fourth annual Babypalooza! Designed to support families with young children and those who are expecting, the event offers a fun atmosphere to connect with local resources such as medical professionals, social supports, early learning programs, and more.

Access to local resources promotes Protective Factors for Strong Families, a goal of this annual event. Parental resilience, social connections, concrete supports in times of need, social-emotional growth of children and knowledge of parenting and child development each work together and independently and are the key to strong, healthy family development. Often, families cannot access these resources because they may not be aware of them, may not have transportation to get to them or may not qualify for the service. Babypalooza brings providers and experts directly to the community to lessen the barriers and create connections.

While children had their face painted with emoji's and superheroes, expectant mothers had their belly painted by local artist and parent, Sandy Gilmer. One attendee shared, "I saw this done last year and I wasn't pregnant then so I was hoping you were doing it this year, too!"

Parents and children shared play time together at the Early Learning Carnival, a new addition to Babypalooza organized by the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Several partners manned stations focused on various elements of developmental play. The Pediatric Movement Center offered an obstacle course while Discovery Station offered building and stacking with cups and giant blocks. Brittany Wedd, Executive Director, commented, "It was pure chaos and so much fun!" Parents received a booklet showing how to replicate each activity with everyday items they may at home.

"We don't have a lot of family around, don't qualify for a lot of assistance and today we got connected to so many resources."
- Chelsea Breton

The line for the "Take What You Need" section was constant as people found diapers, wipes, infant and toddler clothing, baby blankets and hats, family games, books and more as part of the offerings. Donations are received often at Bester Community of Hope and Babypalooza provides the right atmosphere to get these items to families who may be in need. Chelsea Breton said, "we don't have a lot of family around, don't qualify for a lot of assistance and today we got connected to so many resources." Her husband, Brandon, added, "and as a Dad I now get really excited about baby wipes!"

Each year, lunch is provided at no cost and this year featured pizza, fresh vegetables and dip and cupcakes. "Oh wow...veggies! I'm pregnant and I know he isn't getting the right nutrition" was the comment of one mother who explained she was financially strained and struggling to make ends meet. After enjoying lunch, the crowd anxiously awaited to hear the winners of the large lot of door prizes. A brand new crib, pack and play, travel system, safety set including video monitor, and baby bath set were a few of the grand prizes. A "Mom's Self-Care" and "Dad's Self-Care" set were also part of the prizes and each included a massage, shampoos and lotions, and something for fun, too!

BESTER COMMUNITY OF HOPE



BLOCK PARTY

For the 4th consecutive year, the South Side Community Block Party celebrated families and residents living in the City of Hagerstown, with well over 2,000 community members in attendance. This year, Bester Community of Hope, a San Mar initiative, partnered with the City of Hagerstown to support their Fall Fest activity, as well as the annual tradition Porch Fest, making for a full day celebration in the City Park area of the South End.

The event was highlighted by diverse musical performances and audiences entertained by ACM Nominee The Swon Brothers from Oklahoma, and Washington D.C. favorites The Chuck Brown Band. Forty community resource vendors were onsite to provide important information and linkages to local opportunities, including a free clothing giveaway, and free food tasting plates. There were endless free games and activities for families including paddle boat rides from River & Trail Outfitters, laser tag from XP Laser Sport, an obstacle course from Tiger Rock Martial Arts Academy, with games by the United States Army; but the center of activity at City Park was the brand new playground opened by the City of Hagerstown just in time for the day.

This event was made possible due to the support and commitment to strong families and supportive communities by the Washington County Department of Social Services, Alice Virginia & David W. Fletcher Foundation, and Casey Family Programs.





ENDING NEEDLESS VIOLENCE WITH OUR YOUTH COALITION (ENVY)

The City of Hagerstown continues to experience youth violence and unfortunate youth fatality. ENVY is a citywide coalition developed by local stakeholders, including Bester Community of Hope, to decrease the amount of youth and gang-related violence throughout Washington County, Maryland. Through an intentional strengths-based and youth-driven perspective, ENVY explored local and national data as well as best practices in addressing community violence. ENVY leaders reached out to Ernesto Olivares, Executive Director of the California Cities Violence Prevention Network, for guided expert consultation. This statewide nonprofit organization's goals are to foster the development and implementation of comprehensive citywide violence prevention plans that blend prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry; to educate state and federal policy makers about such comprehensive prevention plans; and to serve as California's resource for the development and implementation of such comprehensive citywide plans, with the twin objectives of reducing violence and helping build healthy communities that don't produce violence. Mr. Olivares joined the ENVY team and provided expert consultation in the structural development of the coalition and its strategic plan.



During intensive efforts to develop structure and clarity, the coalition concurrently planned and hosted its first youth event on February 27th. At four city locations, two of which were in the South End of Hagerstown, youth were invited to participate in a lock-in where food, entertainment, activities and mentor opportunities were provided. Bester Community of Hope hosted one of the sites located at the Community Gym in Frederick Manor and were joined by staff from the Hagerstown Police Department, Potomac Case Management, Life House Church, The Boys and Girls Club and the Department of Juveniles Services in facilitating an epic event for eighty youth. Additionally, Bester Community of Hope encouraged Frederick Manor residents to leave their front porch lights on that night to send a message to our youth that they are supported by their community. While future youth events were planned, they were postponed due to COVID-19.

"PANTRY ON THE GO" FOOD DROP

In partnership with the Maryland Food Bank, Bester Community of Hope staff provided a delivery of fresh produce to households in the South End of Hagerstown. Over 7,000 pounds of produce were delivered to 117 households.



COMMUNITY COFFEE

Community Coffee is designed to offer community residents a casual environment to discuss their ideas for their neighborhood and identify the needs or barriers faced. Community Coffee was held in-person the first Thursday of each month until the Governor's stay in place orders were issued. Then, the group began meeting more regularly using Zoom. Food insecurity, lack of positive adult interactions for kids, street safety and engaging fathers were just a few of the topics broached. As a result, a food drop in collaboration with the Maryland Food Bank was held and a resident driven group called "The Do-Dads" were created.

The Do-Dad's began as two fathers who regularly sat outside of Bester Elementary and encouraged students to have a great day of learning. They also engaged the males who were bringing students to school by offering a cup of hot cocoa and conversation monthly.

Once the Governor's stay in place order was issued, Community Coffee began meeting twice each week to offer a venue for connection. The group met Monday afternoons and Thursday mornings to provide a space for connection with others and sharing of information. It was also a safe space to seek or provide support during some of the most challenging times since March of 2020.

Laura Wilson, resident, Neighborhood Ambassador and guardian of two Bester Elementary School students, was excited to share plans to support a social justice family caravan to bring awareness to racial inequality with others at Community Coffee. She was met with support, encouragement and partnership for the event. On Saturday, June 6, a total of eighty-six vehicles drove through each neighborhood in the Bester community to show support and acceptance for the Black Lives Matters movement and supporting equity for all families.

NEIGHBORHOODS FIRST GROUPS

Neighborhoods First is an initiative of the City of Hagerstown which encourages residents of specific neighborhoods to work together for community ownership and building partnership with local government. Within the South End of Hagerstown, there are four active groups. Each group has a specific focus such as preserving environmental history, providing opportunities for neighbors to connect or neighborhood beautification. Neighborhood Partnership Coordinator Kerry Fair provided consultation, funding opportunities and supported initiatives led by the groups in the South End.

Over the summer, Bester Communities First, a group led by the father-daughter team of Ed and Samantha Barrick, held monthly opportunities for families in the neighborhood to come together through "Family Fun Days". The group offered games such as giant tic-tac-toe or volleyball, prizes for competitions such as potato sack races and lunch. Each month, more and more local families attended and connected with their neighbors. "I think it's good to know who lives in your neighborhood and to at least know each other's name – it makes it feel nicer and safer," said a resident of the Bester Communities First neighborhood.



In an effort to revitalize the Elizabethtown West group, which was added to the Bester Community of Hope catchment during the 2017 redistricting of schools, residents were invited to a series of meetings designed to increase positive neighbor relations and provide an avenue for discussion and solution seeking.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Several opportunities for residents to increase their individual and collective capacity and promote resilience were offered this past year.

- First Aid and CPR: Eight South End residents completed first aid and CPR training.
- Western MD Consortium: Seven South End residents completed the Consortium's orientation to job seeker services.
- Parent Support Groups: Eight to ten families attended monthly parent support groups facilitated in collaboration with Maryland Coalition of Families.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

The Community Advisory Board is comprised of South End residents, business owners and stakeholders who meet regularly to provide insight and direction regarding Bester Community of Hope efforts. During the course of the year, the Community Advisory Board helped to identify places and spaces for community art and other enhancement projects, provided feedback on programming and suggested areas of focus and as the pandemic impacted the spring of 2020, what areas of need were present in the community. Historically, this group has met quarterly during the lunch hour and while it was well attended by partner organizations, however it lacked the regular participation of South End residents. The first evening meeting was held in November to draw more resident attendance and offered childcare as well as dinner. More than half of those in attendance were residents and we continued to see an increase in resident engagement with the Community Advisory Board. The Community Advisory Board continues to meet quarterly alternating daytime and evening meetings.

SEPTEMBER: 21 PARTICIPANTS

- 13% were residents, 48% were stakeholders, no business owners

NOVEMBER: 27 PARTICIPANTS

- 75% were residents; 25% were stakeholders; 16% were business owners

MARCH: 27 PARTICIPANTS

- 64% being residents, 48% were stakeholders and 8% were business owners

JUNE: 25 PARTICIPANTS

- Virtual meeting

SOUTH END FAITH NETWORK

In the fall of 2019, faith based volunteer Bill Young met with ten houses of faith in the South End to gain a deeper understanding of each entity, its roles within the community and potential areas for collaboration to serve children, families and South End residents. Each representative shared their churches history within the neighborhood, current disposition, assets and challenges.

As a result, #SpreadHOPE Together Boxes were created to provide an opportunity for congregations to partner with Bester Community of Hope and provide a service to their congregation's neighborhood. The boxes, built by Ladders to Leaders, are stocked weekly with free family activities and information on parenting, child development and local resources. A limited number of these boxes have been offered to houses of faith in the South End with an installation occurring in late summer.

Additionally, Bester Community of Hope partnered with the Church of the Brethren during the holidays to provide a free meal to the community.

BESTER COMMUNITY OF HOPE

VOLUNTEERS

Bester Community of Hope heavily relies on those who generously volunteer their time to make our program successful. From neighborhood cleanups to the after-school program to maximizing the capacity and scope of our work, we appreciate every individual who has volunteered for us.

"I have been humbled to participate in the Bester Community of Hope's effort to empower residents become better parents, care more deeply about the children in their care, provide children with a safe place in which to grow and learn, take pride in themselves and their neighborhoods, and become neighborhood leaders. Participating in this effort has been a transforming experience that reminds me it is more blessed to give than to receive." - Bill Young, former Executive Director of The Alice Virginia and David W. Fletcher Foundation and current Bester Community of Hope volunteer

Bester Community of Hope works with individuals who align with our Unconditional Care core values and connects them with activities that are of interest. If you have ever had an interest in volunteering with our organization, please reach out. We would love to have you on the DREAM TEAM!





A LITTLE HELP TODAY

A LIFETIME OF DIFFERENCE

TO OUR COMMUNITY,

STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

The long term strategic goal of adding psychiatry support ended, as Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Meghan Sprague from Walden University completed her internship under the stewardship for Dr. Lourie and was hired on. The Center was awarded an extension to the Washington County Public School based grant. The Center brought on Kerry Fair, social work intern from Salisbury University, to complete the Center's first Lunch and Learn Series at the Washington County Free Library. The Center also selected an outcome measurement tool, allowing for clients to complete medically validated assessments throughout the therapy process. This platform also amplifies the ability to advocate for the preservation of telehealth and other policy goals, as the Center now has access standardized data.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

This year, the clinic experienced exponential growth in clinical and administrative staff, resulting in the added ability to expand its functions and partnerships. The Center began to serve the Washington County Sheriffs' Office Day Reporting Center by providing individual and group therapy services on site at the Day Reporting Center. We continued a focus on current natural populations, school based therapy, pediatrician offices, in addition to having an influx of clients transitioning over with their therapists from Villa Maria.

OPERATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

The Center experienced a shift in day to day operations in the Spring of 2020 due to the national pandemic. Despite the Center's changes, administrative staff and clinicians all rallied together to do "whatever it takes" to provide services to clients, changing their schedules and giving grace to clients that had technical difficulties or frustrations with the new way of life.

**"If one has courage,
nothing can dim the
light that shines
within."**

—Maya Angelou

LOOKING AHEAD

During a time of high demand for services, we remained focused on ensuring the highest provision of quality care for our community. Whatever it takes- Perseverance in the face of adversity is what matters. Our client's courage to continue to work with us during so many moving parts is admirable.



In Partnership,

Jerica

Jerica Washington, LCSW-C

Director, Jack E. Barr Center for Well-Being

OUR TEAM

THE CENTER'S TEAM EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT GROWTH

Our team is comprised of Social workers and Professional Counselors who provide individual and family therapy. Group work is also done with one stakeholder. Our administrative staff aids the providers in doing the work with their clients. Each team member brings a skill set to the team that is unique and special to their education and expertise. We have also added a part time therapist/clinical supervisor to aid the Director in supervision efforts.

San Mar Principles of Unconditional Care

Serving Size - 5 Core Values
Servings Per Container - Unlimited

Whatever It Takes - Perseverance.....100%

Better Together - Teamwork.....100%

Relationships Matter - Build Them.....100%

Having Fun - Make Time & Celebrate.....100%

Everyone Has Strengths-Build on Them.100%

INGREDIENTS: Long-term sustainability (personal and financial); Creative and Flexible; Valuing innovation; Never give up; don't lose hope, and whatever it takes is at the center of unconditional care; In the midst of crisis barriers are opportunities; Solution Oriented; Never Give Up; Grounded in perspective of the family and community - They both need to be a part of Better Together; Baby steps; Starting with the end in mind - Results matter; Customer Service; Willing to ask for help and know where you are strong; Building Strong Alliances; Shared outcome measurement responsibilities; Blended perspectives and goals; We don't need ten treatment plans; Family driven - Walking alongside; Services delivered in natural environment; Nurturing restorative process; Safety and trust first; Trauma Informed - Listening and Understanding; Treating clients and others as their own (What if it was my family?); Culturally competent; Laugh a little and help others laugh - Camaraderie; Providing abundant opportunities; Importance of joy in creating hope; Building emotional resilience; Helping people feel good, it's for all of us (the giver and receiver); Teach people how to have good clean fun; Self-care for staff and families; All people have potential and strengths - Inherent worth; No judgement, bias imposed regardless of past behavior; Use of strengths to support a foundation for healing and success; Best quality trainings - Enhancing your assets; Expect Nothing Less than the Best



2019-2020 BY THE NUMBERS

THERAPY CLAIMS

5,041

PSYCHIATRY CLAIMS

880

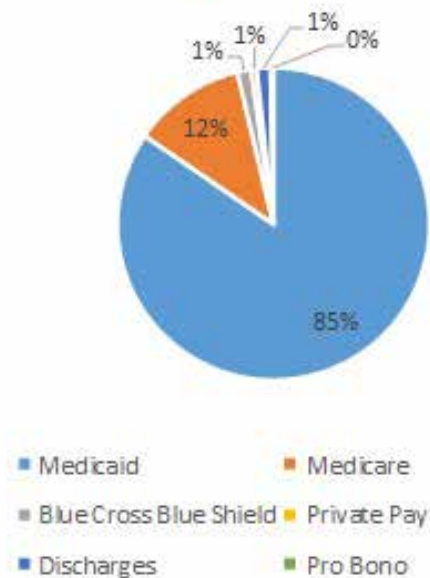
BILLABLE SESSIONS

2,130

REFERRALS ACCEPTED

200

Claims by Insurance Type



BETTER TOGETHER

FROM THE HERALD MAIL, BY JULIE GREENE

SAN MAR FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES HIRED FOUR THERAPISTS FROM THE RECENTLY CLOSED VILLA MARIA OF WASHINGTON COUNTY FACILITY, HELPING TO NARROW THE GAP IN MENTAL-HEALTH SERVICES LEFT WITH VILLA MARIA'S CLOSING.



The therapists started with San Mar on Aug. 1, a day after Villa Maria closed, San Mar officials said. San Mar also hired a longtime administrative assistant from Villa Maria. Since then, San Mar's Jack E. Barr Center for Well-Being has experienced substantial growth in the number of clients it is serving, said Jerica Washington, the well-being center's director.

The therapists' clients had the option of continuing with their therapist at San Mar, Washington said.

The well-being center was averaging 80 to 100 clients before taking on the former Villa Maria therapists, Washington said. Since then, San Mar is averaging 150 active clients, and that could expand to 200 or 250, she said. Catholic Charities of Baltimore closed Villa Maria of Washington County, its local outpatient mental-health center, at the end of July. The office off East Antietam Street was closed primarily for financial reasons, according to Kevin Keegan, director for the Family Services Division of Catholic Charities of Baltimore. Villa Maria's local office served between 100 and 200 clients at any given time, Keegan said. "We are struggling financially in a very significant way in Hagerstown, and just can't sustain (it)," Keegan said in June. San Mar CEO Keith Fanjoy said Melissa Phillips, Villa Maria's local program director, contacted San Mar to see if the nonprofit was interested in taking over part of the Villa Maria team. "Many people need mental-health services," Fanjoy said.

San Mar's Center for Well-Being, an outpatient mental-health clinic, provides individual and family therapy, Washington said. The center opened on San Mar's 8504 Mapleville Road grounds, north of Boonsboro, in October 2016. The expectation is the new therapists joining San Mar are serving a reasonable amount of families, which will help San Mar offset the additional staff costs, Fanjoy said.

Many of the clinicians affected by Villa Maria's closing have found other employment opportunities, Fanjoy said. In taking on the former Villa Maria workers, Fanjoy said, San Mar officials talked with the nonprofit's local team and identified San Mar's own needs. San Mar didn't take over all of Villa Maria's staff and services.

PANDEMIC & PERSERVERANCE

THE PANDEMIC HAS CREATED ISSUES OF CONNECTEDNESS - BRINGING UP DIFFERENT EMOTIONS IN ALL HUMANS, ESPECIALLY THOSE LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESSES. CONNECTIONS DURING THIS TIME WERE ESSENTIAL, AND BECAUSE OF HAVING STAFF ON SITE TO FIELD CALLS, CLIENTS HAVE RETURNED TO THE CENTER.

At the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Center experienced a decrease in referrals and clinicians seeing clients as some school based clients stopped attending or were discharged, due to decrease of symptoms and school closure. The Washington County Day Reporting Center, our partner to a large portion of clients, closed to outside vendors. All therapists transitioned to seeing clients on online platforms and in person sessions ceased. HIPAA compliant Zoom accounts were setup to access clients within their own homes. The Center provided telehealth guidance based on state and national guidance, and added electronic document signage via docusign for easy signatures for clients. The Center staff continued to work in the office to provide technical support for clients and providers and working through the daily changes that the state advised for safety, billing and services.

Our continued partnership with Community Behavioral Health proved beneficial as we connected on weekly support calls related to policy and billing. The Center experienced an increase in referrals from the Children's Doctor, Meritus Emergency Room and Psychiatric Department and word of mouth.



As the Nation began to open, the agreement with the Day Reporting Center ended in August. Adult Drug Court continues to be a provider for services connected to the criminal justice system. Our other partner with the courts, Adult Drug Court, initially ceased services but began again after advocacy work and the therapist willingness to continue services. In response to the pandemic, the federal Provider Relief Fund administered by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) allows Medicare and Medicaid providers to receive funds equivalent to 2% of all patient revenue. The Center has applied for Phase 1 and 2 of these funds and are awaiting the potential for a grant for lost revenue due to the pandemic.

In the spring quarter, the National Emergency and Telehealth waiver was extended by the Federal Government through October 25. This allowed all clinicians to continue provision of services via phone, zoom, and FaceTime. As clinicians continued to see clients, the need for in person sessions continued to increase. Weather, access to offsite location arose as barriers to care. As a result, the Center began to think through ways in which clinicians could see clients at the office in the safest manner. The Center Director began to research safety measures and precautions, along with the ways in which other mental health clinics were opening safely. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Occupational Safety and Health

Administration, The National Council for Behavioral Health, The Maryland Department of Health and Together We Rise Washington County and The National Council for Behavioral Health were advised in the creation of the Center's reopening plan. A need for offsite services began to rise, and more clinicians began to meet clients outside of their homes, outside of our office and in local parks. The idea that at some point, clients would need to come indoors for services continued to be in our minds, and a plan was developed for clinicians to see clients safely indoors was developed. Referrals for services continued to pour in, as depression, anxiety and issues with adjustments in work and school began to arise.



Despite the Center's changes, administrative staff and clinicians all rallied together to do "whatever it takes" to provide services to clients, changing their schedules and giving grace to clients that had technical difficulties or frustrations with the new way of life.

Mark was one of those clients returned to the area after relocating temporarily. He was with his therapist for six months when the pandemic began, and he experienced a decrease in hours. Forced to move back to his family's home, we lost contact. Mark called the Center in May, looking for help with getting reconnected to insurance, unsure if we would be able to point him in the right direction. When hearing a familiar sound on the other end, he explained how relieved he was that we "took him back". The Center offered him previous therapist or a new one. It is an honor to show a person in need that we care. The longevity, compassion and commitment to our community is vital, and we are grateful that it was evident during this time.

One therapist and client had the ability to do something they attempted to problem solve for months. Penny is a six-year-old client who had difficulty with zoom sessions with her biological parents and alone with her therapist. The therapist, after troubleshooting internet connection issues with the parents, was unable to connect and had to resort to phone calls. Penny asked the therapist during a call one day, "Can we meet one day outside at your office, since there's no school during the day?" Penny, the clinician, biological parents and Penny's brother were able to be there, and the clinician was able to truly see the love and how much Penny and her parent's relationship had grown, all from a day outdoors.

Kerry Fair completed her Masters of Social Work internship at the Center. During her time, she developed and implemented a Lunch and Learn Series at the Washington County Free Library. Lunch and Learns are monthly learning opportunities for participants of programs of San Mar Family and Community Services. At the first lunch and learn, 14 people attended to learn more about how the health of our hearts and minds are connected, the risks, signs and symptoms of heart disease and what we can all do to keep our hearts healthier. In addition, Kerry aided the Center in research and selection of an evidence based intervention model for children of incarcerated parents. Kerry graduated Salisbury University with a Masters in Social Work.



San Mar therapists and administrative staff participated in the Hagerstown Out of the Darkness Walk, a community effort to fight suicide, raise awareness, educate our community, support those who have lost loved ones, and support those with lived experience.

PSYCHIATRY



Psychiatry is the branch of medicine focused on the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. At the Center, its main function is the treatment by the use of medications.

Our approach in talking with patients and allowing them to be the lead in treatment, and collaboration with therapists is unique to the Center. Meghan Sprague, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Intern, accepted the position as Nurse Practitioner with the Center. This was a long awaited goal of the Centers, to allow for Dr. Ira Lourie to decrease his caseload, with the aim to fully retire. The Center has set up a Medical Director in waiting contract for Meghan, to continue under the supervision of Dr. Lourie until January 2021.

OUTCOMES

THE CENTER HAS ALWAYS LOOKED FOR BEST PRACTICES FOR CLINICS AND FOR INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS VIA OUR ACCREDITING BODY AND INSURANCE COMPANIES. OUTCOMES ARE SHOWN BY UTILIZATION OF ASSESSMENTS, TREATMENT PLANS AND SURVEYS. THE BARRIER IS TO ANALYZE THIS CLINICAL DATA AND UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF TREATMENT.

Previously, the Maryland Public Behavioral Health System (PBHS) required clinicians to utilize an outcomes measurement tool. As a result of the change in vendors within this system, we no longer have a tool. The CQI Director and the Clinic Director looked at our current Electronic Health Record, and a platform called Greenspace to use for outcome measurement, with a larger group of organizations.

The Greenspace platform offered an ongoing measurement of progress throughout therapy, leading to significantly improved treatment outcomes, providing the clinician more feedback on a client's progress in therapy, and the ability for a client to review their own progress in the change process. Greenspace was selected as a platform to use for outcome measurement. This system allows for clients to complete medically validated assessments throughout the therapy process. This platform also amplifies the ability to advocate for the preservation of telehealth and other policy goals, as the Center now has access standardized data.



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS HUB WEBSITE LAUNCH



In January of 2020, after many years of planning and discussion, San Mar launched the Community Solutions Hub website in partnership with Conduent Technology, with additional funding and support from Allen Twigg of Meritus Health and Courte Van Voorhees of the United Way of Washington County. The site, hosted by San Mar can be found at www.communitysolutionshub.org, and it is the foundation of a centralized data system intended to grow over time to provide several useful supports to Washington County, Maryland. The primary functions include neighborhood metrics, local resource guides via 2-1-1 and national promising practices proven to respond to local needs. The utility

for the community is broad including assessing local strengths and needs, strategic planning, finding grant dollars, communicating data, learning best practices, uncovering local resources and collaboratives, teaching, targeting efforts and so much more! As local organizations share data needs or information the site will grow and become more targeted to ensure more precise collaboration. San Mar CEO Keith Fanjoy explained, "Data is not the destination, but it should be one of many sources that inform our work. When we take the information in CSH and marry it to feedback of local people we should get a more accurate picture of where to best put our time and energy for a collective impact."

HB1300 – THE CONSORTIUM FOR COORDINATED COMMUNITY SUPPORTS PARTNERSHIPS

Over the past several years, with the evolution of San Mar into upstream focused work, we have taken a particular interest in the development of local systems of care and how local non-profits and community based organizations can best support local school systems respond to the needs of families and ensure children come to school ready to learn. After several years of dialogue with Strong Schools Maryland and other bi-partisan community organizations across the state San Mar entered a dialogue with Washington County Senator Andrew Serafini (R) and Baltimore City Senate President Bill Ferguson's office (D) to provide focused recommendations around the development of infrastructure to support family strengthening work across Maryland within The Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The

Blueprint, commonly known as the Kirwan bill broadly provided many educational recommendations but our involvement was solely on meeting the basic needs of families in a coordinated manner to help students succeed. With our written proposal added to the bill, we provided testimony at the joint session of the House and Senate on the



legislation on February 17, 2020. While the bill did pass both the Senate and House it was initially vetoed with the beginning of the pandemic by Governor Hogan. It does appear it will be overridden as is in 2021, which when done there will be a lasting legacy that San Mar has created across Maryland with the creation of the Consortium for Coordinated Community Supports Partnerships. But the work is not over, with the eventual override in mind we will be spending the remainder of 2020 focusing on the details of the current legislation to create a network of local collaboratives across the state, and make sure we got it right, and that it consistently puts families in the driver's seat of meeting comprehensive needs in their community as well as connections to acute care whenever needed. In 2021, we will return to the legislature with those additional revisions and hopefully continue to move closer to adoption of the strategy across the state.



**SAN MAR
DEVELOPMENT
FY20**

Dear San Mar family of supporters,

It was such an honor and pleasure to join the staff of San Mar in January 2020, and begin my journey with you in support of this amazing organization. If you're anything like me, starting something new is both tremendously exciting, and a little bit scary at the same time. I have come to recognize that as a positive sign of growth, and it is that forward momentum that we celebrate here in this Annual Report.

San Mar's rich history and proud accomplishments over the years are notable and certainly commendable. But I believe it's the bravery with which San Mar has looked to adjust its programs and mission to meet the changing needs of our community that truly sets us apart. Your ongoing support through challenge and change has been felt and continues to motivate us to do everything we can to keep children safe and give families the support they need to thrive.

Our donors are so much more to us than a list of names on a page! Each contribution represents someone choosing to share hope and make a difference in the lives of children and families, in order to make our community better and stronger. We are a family as we strengthen families together. The impact of your giving is seen most clearly in the stories shared from our three program areas – San Mar Treatment Foster Care, the Jack E. Barr Center for Well-Being, and Bester Community of Hope. I hope you are able to spend some time reviewing these program reports and actually feel motivated in return.

You have contributed so much to our success this past year, and my goal for the coming year is to expand and deepen our connection. Whether by email, phone, Zoom, or in person, I look forward to meeting many more of you! Building on the successes of the past and looking forward to what's to come, let's commit to explore together how we can lock arms in 2021 to bring life-transforming hope to so many more in our community.

With gratitude,

Elisa

*Elisa Hermes, CFRE
Director of Development*



DONOR RECOGNITION

WITH SINCERE GRATITUDE FOR YOUR GENEROSITY AND COMMITMENT TO SAN MAR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES, THE FOLLOWING LISTS WERE COMPILED TO RECOGNIZE THOSE DONORS WHO MADE GIFTS DURING THE 2020 FISCAL YEAR – JULY 1, 2019 – JUNE 30, 2020.

While every effort has been made to correctly recognize our valued donors, sometimes errors and omissions still occur. Please feel free to contact the Development Office at 301-733-9067 x250 to report a needed correction.

CHAMPIONS OF HOPE

These special donors make regular, recurring gifts through monthly credit card or electronic bank transactions, or through an employer's payroll deduction program.

Teresa Conrad	Luca Hawkins	Teresa Siefert
Kerry Fair	Elisa Hermes	Joan Weddle
Keith Fanjoy	James and Ann Marshall	Joseph Woodburn
Charles Garst	Traci Nelson	Jennifer Younker
Timothy Harrison	Ellen Savoy	

GUARDIANS OF HOPE

These exceptional donors have demonstrated their commitment by giving over multiple consecutive years.

TWENTY YEARS OR MORE

Bruce Anderson
Vicki Martin
James McComb
Thomas Perry
Kathryn Sortore
Joan Weddle

TEN YEARS OR MORE

Charles Garst
Timothy Hott
Rudolph Krumpke
David Temple
The Nora Roberts Foundation

FIVE YEARS OR MORE

Bonnie Baust
Bitner-Henry Insurance
George Brown
Mary Heizer
Jefferson Security Bank
Peggy Jones
Gloria Serrao

PARTNERS IN HOPE

These donors have made gifts through their estate or named San Mar as a beneficiary through a planned gift.

The Boerner Memorial Trust	Lena Given Estate	Mathias Foundation
Sylvia M. Barnhart Estate	Elaine H. Goldhorn Trust	Joan Weddle

DONORS BY GIVING LEVEL FROM 07/01/2019 TO 06/30/2020

\$5,000 AND GREATER

The Boerner Memorial Trust
Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Bricker, Jr.
James and Cynthia Holzapfel
Irving M. Einbinder Charitable Foundation
Martin-Marietta Aggregates
Mathias Foundation
The Nora Roberts Foundation

\$1,000 TO \$4,999

Mr. Bruce Anderson
Bitner-Henry Insurance Agency
Frank and Teri Cholewicki
Cumberland Valley Cycling Club
Mr. Keith Fanjoy
Mr. Brendan Fitzsimmons
Fulton Bank
Mr. Charles Garst
Hagerstown Lions Foundation
Mr. Tony Ingram
Keller Stonebraker Insurance, Inc.
Mr. Rudolph Krumpe
Dr. and Mrs. George and Connie Manger
James McComb
Ms. Susan Peterson
Rotary Club of Hagerstown
Smith Elliott Kearns & Co., LLC
The John R. and Anna L. Hershey Family Foundation
The Loats Foundation, Inc.
Mr. John Unger
Cindy Watkins
Mrs. Joan Weddle
William and Frances Young

\$500 TO \$999

Anonymous
Rebecca Birnie
Mr. Lawrence Brady

Mr. George Brown
Christ Reformed UCC
Brad Crist
CVAiC LLC
First United Bank & Trust
Randy Hancock
Mr. Daryl Henry
Karla Holm
Mr. Timothy Hott
Michael Kesecker
Barbara Ellen Knepper
Regan LeBlanc
Julio Mancuso
Mr. and Mrs. James Marshall
Peter McDonald
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Murray
Mr. Philip James Natsios
Phil Oliver
Mr. Howard Ories
Paddack Family Fund
Mr. Thomas Perry
Barbara Raimondo
Robert Rider
Elizabeth Rose
Helen Roth
Salem Reformed Church
Gloria & Gary Serrao
Rhonda Stouffer
Mr. Jon Stull
Mr. David Whitaker

\$100 TO \$499

AC&T Company
Mr. David Aikens
All Cool Refrigerant
Robert Allen
Amalgamated Local 171, UAW
Clopper-Michael Post 10 American Legion Auxiliary
Lauren Ayers



MRS. JOAN (JODIE) WEDDLE

"I can't think of a more important contribution that I could make than my contribution to San Mar. It gives me a great feeling to know that I am helping the children and families in our community who really need it. And I'm so proud of you all for having the foresight and courage to move in a new direction to make a difference. My giving will continue, and I wish it could be more."

- Joan (Jodie) Weddle

Jon Baker
Mr. David Bandy
Lucia Barker
Stephen Barrett
Bradford Bates
Ms. Bonnie L. Baust
Mrs. Catherine Beliveau



THE DARYL HENRY FAMILY

"I give to San Mar because I totally believe in their mission, and I believe that their leadership is innovative and forward thinking about addressing community issues. In particular, I'm very impressed with the programming they developed to address systemic issues that lead to children entering the foster care system."

- Daryl Henry

John Belo
Tracey and Todd Bowman
Sharyn Bradbury
Lynda Bradley
Mark and Sue Brandenburg
Ms. Carol Brashears
Adam Brill
Darren Brown
Mr. Christopher Bublitz
Mr. and Mrs Charles Butts
Anne Catherine Campinos

Mr. Donovan Carbaugh
Tracy Carr
Captain Benders Tavern
Ms. Carolyn Cecil
Church Women United of Washington County
Douglas Clark
Elizabeth Cleary
Kelvin Coates
Kelli Cobb
Benjamin Coffey
Gregory Collins
Mr. Paul Cordell
Philip Creek
Karen Cremins
Mr. Jason Crist
Crown Inc. of Hagerstown
Mr. Michael Cumberland
Don David
Ms. Nancy Deutsch
Karen Diener
Mr. Devin Donovan
Dorsey Brothers Floor & Wall Covering
Jennifer Dotson
Dublin Roasters Coffee, Inc.
Jean Duffy
Mr. and Mrs. J. Dennis Easterday
Joe Eckenrode
Deborah Edwards
Erie Insurance
Phil Falconer
Angela Ford
J. Travis Forsyth
Rachel Fouche
Yvonne Gish
Gary and Suzanne Glocker
Deborah Grant
Ned Greenberg
Kent and Terra Grove
Mr. Michal K. Hall
Mark and Kim Halsey
Mr. John Hamilton
Regina Hannon
Ms. Del Harmon

Laura Harper
Tim Harrison
Mr. and Mrs. George Harvey
Luca Hawkins
Mr. Thompson Hefelfinger
Elisa Hermes
Melissa Hetzer
Linda Horomanski
Mr. Charles Huff
Ed Hughes
Wynne Hurtt
Interstate Batteries of Potomac Valley
Item International America, LLC
Andelena Jackson
Jefferson Security Bank
Sherry Jo Matt
Mrs. Peggy Jones
Ralph Jordan
Ellen and Jeff Kaiden
Robert & Kathy Kaiden
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Kaufman
Jackie Kelley
Mr. John Kieffer
Mary Kurcz
Ladies of the Elks #378
Laura Leas
Ashley LeBlanc
Mr. & Mrs. LeBlanc
Little Heiskell Ski Club
Mrs. Barbara Lynch
M & M Electric Motor Repair, Inc
Vicki Martin
Mark McDonough
Diane McLean
Kenneth Miller
Diane Mock
Mrs. Shirley Motz
Michael Muldowney
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Muldowney
Mr. Matt Murphy
Ms. Traci Nelson
Jacqueline Nigh
Mr. Christopher Nyce
Mitch Oakley

Dianne Officer
Paul Ories
Brian Palank
Karrie Passmore
Ms. Jeannie Pellicier
Pepsico Foundation
Vincent Petrolle
David Piepenbrink
Jason Piper
Principal Financial Group
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Ms. Julie Riffle
Mr. Richard Saltos
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Allan Seidman
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Gordon Serrao
Katherine Shin
Melissa Sites
Michelle Smolka
Ms. Gail Snyder
Richard Sortore
Dawn Souders
Mr. Gerald Spessard
Staples Distribution Center, Inc.
Sam Stephens
Susan Stocks
Ron Suffecool
Jooyoun Tanaka
Mr. David Temple
Christiana Tiches
Nelson Torres
Tri-State Printing
Ms. Kim Tucker
Rudolph Turco
Daniel Ueberfluss
Asbury United Methodist Church
Dave & Sandy Vogel
Emily Wainwright
Eileen Ward



TGBT FINISHERS CAROL ECTON AND GLORIA SERRAO

"It is a joy to ride my bike, make friends, share experiences and do all of that while raising funds to improve the social, educational and mental health of my Maryland neighbors. Each year I ride, I discover more about San Mar and the work they do and that warms my heart and inspires me to ride again!"

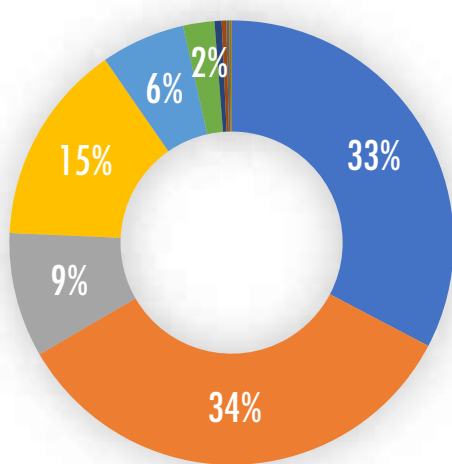
- Gloria Serrao

Stewart Waring
Ms. Cassandra Weaver
Weiss Brothers of Hagerstown Inc.
Amanda Wells
Wells Fargo Community Support
Christopher White
Dennis Whitestone
Joan Wicks
Mr. Noel Williams
Lesley Yeich
Doug Youngblood
Nina Yu

In addition to the donors listed, San Mar is equally grateful for the 402 additional donors whose combined gifts totaled almost \$15,000.

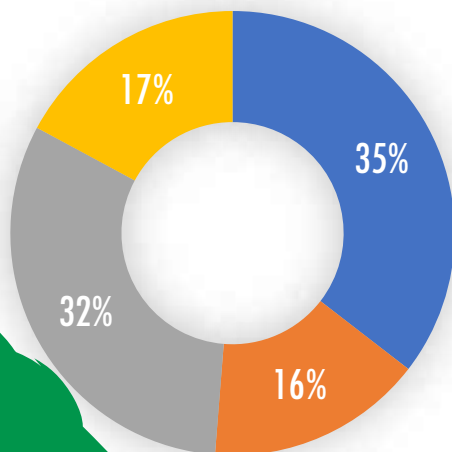
DEVELOPMENT AT A GLANCE

REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTION



- Fees - purchase of care
- Grants - other
- Payroll Protection Program
- Medicaid and Medicare
- Contributions and gifts
- Special event income
- Other
- Rental income - farmhouse and farmland
- Net assets released from restrictions
- Net investment income

EXPENSES



- Program A - Treatment Foster Care
- Program B - Jack E. Barr Center for Well-Being
- Program C - Bester Community of Hope
- Management and General

FINANCIAL

SAN MAR CHILDREN'S HOME, INC. AND AFFILIATES COMBINED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2020

REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTION

Fees - purchase of care	\$1,301,823
Grants - other	1,350,797
Payroll Protection Program	361,202
Medicaid and Medicare	584,451
Contributions and gifts	243,877
Special event income, net of expenses of \$43,589	90,622
Other	20,572
Rental income - farmhouse and farmland	13,125
Net assets released from restrictions	8,839
Net investment income	6,419
Total Revenues and Other Support Without Donor Restrictions	\$3,981,727

EXPENSES

PROGRAM SERVICES

Program A - Treatment Foster Care	\$1,360,611
Program B - Jack E. Barr Center for Well-Being	605,902
Program C - Bester Community of Hope	1,212,514
Total Program Services Expenses	\$3,179,027
Management and General	657,241
Total Expenses	\$3,836,268

Increase in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions **\$145,459**





Washington County
Department of
Social Services

THE ALICE VIRGINIA AND
DAVID W. FLETCHER FOUNDATION

