

## BFNC News, Winter 2002

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### **Contributions Ensure Success of Holiday Outreach Efforts**

As the year winds down, we want to take this special opportunity to thank you — our donors, volunteers and friends — for your extra help reaching out to our consumers this holiday season.

Nearly 100 volunteers turned out to help serve a traditional Thanksgiving meal to 1,000 guests on November 21 at the BFNC Moot Center. The Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner was again sponsored by **Citibank**, with help from the **Buffalo Niagara Marriott** (cooking 600 pounds of turkey!), **Ingram Brothers Catering** and the **Community Music School** (offering our featured entertainment). We extend our deepest gratitude to all our individual volunteers and volunteer groups from Citicorp, Tonawanda Alternative High School, UB's University Student Alumni Board, General Mills, Westminster Presbyterian Church and the HSBC Officer Training program for their help.

On Friday, December 6, teenage parents enrolled in the BAPPS program and their children were treated to a special Seasons Celebration party. The dinner and gift exchange were entirely sponsored by the **Presbytery of Western New York**.

BAPPS also held a dance party for teens enrolled in its Reaching Out case management program on December 13 at the Gloria J. Parks Community Center.

Finally, on December 19 and 20, local companies teamed up to share the spirit of the holidays with 1920 low-income households. The BFNC-Fleet Holiday Food Basket program celebrated its 22nd anniversary and was funded by **Fleet Foundation**, the **Peace Bridge Authority** and the generosity of our individual donors. **General Mills** also donated cereal for every family served, and **Tops Friendly Markets** became our newest partner by contributing 1900 loaves of bread. Volunteers from Fleet Works, the McAuley Residence, Catholic Charities, Tonawanda Alternative High, Remarketing Services of America and the Town of Tonawanda Y.E.S. program made easy work of the task.

We could not accomplish any of these wonderful projects without your continued support. Thank you to everyone for sharing from the heart!

## **NOTEWORTHY**

### **BAPPS Adds Riverside High to Community Outreach Sites**

The BAPPS program is involved in a new collaborative program with EPIC (Every Parent Influences Children) and Teen Wellness at Riverside Institute of Technology (BPS School #205). The Riverside "Lunch Bunch" will offer workshops and support to parenting and pregnant teens during students' lunch breaks. The school is located at 51 Ontario Street.

### **Moot Center Hosts VNA Immunization Clinic**

A Visiting Nurses Association immunization clinic was held on Thursday, December 5 at the Moot Senior Center, 292 High Street. The clinic offered influenza and pneumonia vaccinations for seniors and other residents of the Fruitbelt community. Our thanks to Kaleida Health's VNA Immunization campaign for coordinating the effort.

### **BFNC Reports United Way Campaign Success**

BFNC employees showed their generosity this fall through another successful United Way employee giving campaign. Together, full- and part-time staff raised \$25,101 in pledges for programs offered by the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County. The effort was led by staff liaisons John Senall, Barbara Dixon, Vivian Clark and Jessica Gant.

### **Volunteer Crew Helps Kids Voting**

We extend a special thank you to all the BFNC volunteers who helped with the **Kids Voting** project on Tuesday, November 5 at the Stanley Makowski Early Childhood Center on Jefferson Avenue. BFNC adopted the polling place and helped children fill out a special ballot for Election Day.

### **Judith Scanlon Remembered**

This November marked the four year anniversary of the death of Judith Scanlon, R. N., a former New York State employee assigned to BFNC's New Options Intensive Case Management program. Ms. Scanlon was killed during a client visit in the fall of 1998. She is remembered for her dedication to the nursing and social work fields, and for her strong client advocacy efforts. Coworkers and friends observed a moment of silence in her honor on November 24.

### **Love Leads the Way**

*A mother's story of courage and hope in the face of addictions.*

With a slow nod of her small head, a gleam in her eye and a smile she just can't restrain, eight-year-old Cynthia says volumes about the bond between a mother and her children.

The oldest of three siblings, Cynthia, along with her little sister Kendra, age four, and one-year-old baby brother Jack got a Christmas gift this year better than the latest "must have" toy. Such a simple present...it's the kind that most eight-year-olds have already had for years, and never even had to ask for. Yet in Cynthia's house, it was a gift that took hard work, tears and mountains of love to bring home. This Christmas, Cynthia, Kendra and Jack got their mommy back.

### **Finding Strength From Within**

For most of the past four years, Cynthia and Kendra only saw their mother Sarah Jenningen on weekends. They were taken away from her due to a battle Sarah began with alcohol and crack cocaine at the age of 25. Jenningen, now 32, says she fell into the addictions due to personal challenges. But as her addictions took charge of her life, her ability to be a good mother decreased rapidly.

Jenningen was then a resident of BFNC's Fruitbelt Towers apartments, an intensive supportive program for persons challenged by mental illnesses often accompanied by drug and/or alcohol addictions. Jackie Bobo was one of the building counselors who worked closely with her during her stay.

"To have seen Sarah at that point," offered Bobo, "She had a single focus of wanting to be a mother, and she put it at the top of her list. Nobody [in her social circle] believed in her ... so she had to believe in herself..."

### Stepping Forward, Stepping Back

Bobo explained that she and fellow residential counselor Morris Barber worked with Jenningen on redirection skills for her drug use and coping skills for her depression. Eventually Jenningen became trusting enough to visit them just to talk, whenever the need arose.

"We tried to remind her of all that she would lose if she didn't get her life stable again... and that even if she slipped a few times she could keep trying."

To make things even more challenging, Jenningen became pregnant with Jack in the midst of her other trials. She knew that upon her son's birth, he would be taken to live with her other children at her mother's home. And that in her condition, all she could hope to look forward to were brief supervised visits.

"It was a struggle everyday," said Jenningen, thoughtfully. "I wanted to see their smiles and achievements for myself instead of always asking others, 'How are they doing?'"

### Striving for Change with the Help of Friends

During her pregnancy, she immersed herself in a month-long drug rehabilitation program at Buffalo General Hospital. After coming back to her apartment, she continued to make steady progress. She took parenting classes and enjoyed supervised visits with the girls as part of a family reunification program.

BFNC's residential staff were also working to link Jenningen to the agency's Supported Housing program — a way for Sarah and her family to live together in an apartment of their own, while still having contact with support staff.

As a result of her efforts, Jenningen regained temporary custody of her daughters just prior to Jack's birth. Then, for a week or so after the February, 2001 birth, the family lived together at Jenningen's mother's home. On the outside, things seemed to be finally getting back together. Sarah's journey, however, was soon to hit another detour.

### Starting Over... Led By Love

Within the week of their reunion, the baby's blood tests had come back positive for the presence of drugs. All three children were quickly removed from Jenningen's care.

After several more stops and starts, she entered another 28-day intensive rehabilitation program in June 2001, this time outside the Buffalo area. She returned ready to try once more, and began another steady dose of group therapy and individual counseling.

An entire year passed before she was ready to care for the children. All the while she says she savored the visits she received, and spoke honestly to her girls about her life. "I needed to be straight with them ... I didn't want them to grow up and make the same mistakes I did," she said softly.

### Making a House a Home

Finally, in August, 2002, through close service coordination between BFNC, Erie County Family Court and the Buffalo Urban League's foster care program, Jenningen was reunited with her two daughters. The three were moved into a larger home through the supported housing program. After a successful three-

month trial period, Jack was brought home this November.

The family now lives in a cheery three-bedroom home. School projects and family photos are hung proudly in designated spaces. And the home is so neat and orderly, it could easily pass the strictest of white glove tests. "I learned that from my mother," explains Jenningen. "And I make sure the girls keep their rooms neat, or there's no TV."

Cynthia, an honor roll student, beams when asked about what makes life with Mom so nice.

"We have fun together," she explains shyly. "Now we can talk about things, play cards, make jokes and read books to each other."

Jenningen, herself, says she's eager to plant flowers in the spring. As she looks outside, she envisions a spot where a small swing set might someday sit.

### **Finding Focus, Maintaining Hope**

According to both Sells and Jenningen, the addition of such everyday "privileges" continues to help Sarah stay focused on her children, and her future.

"I see Sarah as a strong woman — a survivor — and having her children around her continues to give her a sense of purpose," she explained. "Her courage lets her keep getting to where she needs to go, regardless of how many turns it takes."

Jenningen says she is grateful for her own progress and offers her own advice to others faced by similar challenges. "If you just hold on, there's hope ... Keep coming back, and sooner or later you'll get it."

## **FUND DEVELOPMENT NEWS**

### **BFNC Joins Leave a Legacy**

Our agency has recently become a member of Leave a Legacy™ Western New

York, a community-wide collaborative effort of non-profit organizations, estate and financial planning professionals.

Leave a Legacy™ aims to promote gifts to charities through wills and estate plans. The initiative originated in Columbus, Ohio in 1994. It is uniting more than 100 communities throughout the U.S. and Canada to promote the importance of remembering special causes.

BFNC is pleased to be a part of this wonderful program that promotes philanthropy across our community. Please read the accompanying article to learn more about planned giving. We look forward to sharing additional articles with you in future issues.

For more information about Leave a Legacy™ Western New York, visit [leavealegacywny.org](http://leavealegacywny.org). online or call 879-0944.

### **Fund Development Committee Seeks Volunteers**

Do you feel strongly about the importance of BFNC's mission and services? Would you like to play a leadership role in ensuring that our programs can continue to help low-income and mentally ill persons across our community?

BFNC's Fund Development committee is a caring group of business and community volunteers just like you. The committee is always seeking fresh faces to lend a hand to its fundraising efforts. So why not consider joining them this year to share your own talents?

Your involvement may be on a specific project or event, or may be geared to your unique skills and interests. Persons of every experience level are encouraged to apply today. For more information, please contact Joseph Eicheldinger, chairperson, at 849-2543, or at e-mail address [joseph.g.eicheldinger@citicorp.com](mailto:joseph.g.eicheldinger@citicorp.com).

### **Business First Presents \$3,000 Proceeds from 40 Under 40 Awards**

As noted in our last edition, BFNC's Summer Fun Days program was selected as the 2002 beneficiary of the annual 40 Under 40 luncheon sponsored by Business

First, BFNC was recently presented the proceeds from the luncheon, totaling \$3,000 in funds for our 2003 summer program.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the newspaper's staff, their honorees and this year's guests for their kind generosity!

### **Because We've Been Given So Much...**

As a friend of the Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc., you're probably among the more than 90 percent of Americans who donate time or money to non-profit organizations. But did you know that only about 5 percent of all people remember these organizations when planning the distribution of their estate upon passing?

Planned giving provides an excellent opportunity for you to leave a legacy of your own. As a supporter of BFNC's mission, we would be very pleased to work with you to make arrangements that work best for you and your family.

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions regarding planned giving.

#### **Q. What is an estate? I don't have a lot of money or property!**

A. "Estate" is simply a word describing any money or belongings you have at the time of your death. Most people have an estate, even if they are not wealthy. Anyone can leave a gift to BFNC, as well as to their family.

#### **Q. What is a bequest?**

A. A gift passed on to another, as in a will; something that is bequeathed; a legacy.

#### **Q. How do I leave a gift to BFNC?**

A. Most people give by leaving a charitable gift in a will or trust, or by naming the Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc. as a beneficiary of an insurance policy or retirement plan such as an IRA. Some people donate something they

own, like a car, coin collection, or their home. Others leave a paid-up life insurance policy, retirement account or their financial investments.

**Q. Do I tell the staff of BFNC that I've left a gift to them in my will?**

A. That's up to you. Charitable organizations prefer that you let them know about gifts in advance. This way, they can recognize your generosity and possibly use your support to encourage others to do the same.

**Q. Who can help me in making a gift to BFNC?**

A. A professional advisor, such as a financial planner, an attorney, or an accountant, will get you off on the right foot by advising you on the various ways in which you can make a gift. BFNC's development office (852-5065) can also help you get started. According to the laws of New York State, an attorney should prepare your final will or estate plan.

**Q. Can I leave a gift in memory of a special person or for a specific purpose?**

A. A charitable gift is a wonderful way to recognize someone who made a difference in your life. You may also want to contribute to a special area of need at BFNC. This kind of memorial gift can be specified in your will.

**Q. Why should I leave a gift?**

A. You truly will leave a legacy by supporting BFNC through a will or estate. Your generosity could play a major role in the development and growth of our organization for years to come.

Everyone at the Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc. is very appreciative of your support. We hope that this information makes you aware of a very special way to leave a legacy of your own by supporting an organization that means so much to you.

**WELCOME ...**

To **James E. Miller, C.P.A.**, who was elected to BFNC's Board of Directors at its November 26 meeting. Miller will serve as treasurer for a three-year term. He is the operator of an independent accounting firm in Buffalo and has previously served as both president and treasurer of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation's Western New York chapter.

To **Linda Plinke**, newly named assistant director for Residential Services/ Apartments. Plinke comes to us from Phoenix Frontier, Inc., where she worked as a service coordinator for persons with traumatic brain injuries. She is a graduate of Buffalo State College, and has over 18 years of experience in the human services field.

### **Five Students win prizes in BFNC Poster contest**

Five Buffalo students were recently recognized as the winners of the 2002-2003 "First Things First" teen pregnancy prevention poster contest. Buffalo school students submitted a whopping 243 entries this year. Although the competition was fierce, we were pleased to award our first prize to Kati Schmidt, an eleventh grader at Hutch Tech High School. Kati received \$500 for her effort. Her poster will soon be featured on a billboard near her school and on Metro busses for a three-month awareness campaign.

Her classmate Vanessa Rodriguez, a senior at Hutch Tech took home second place honors. Rounding out the winners were Amanda K. Parisi, a senior from Mount Mercy Academy (Third Place); Brendaliz Escalante, an 8th grader at Native American Magnet School (Fourth Place); and Isoken C. Ogebemudi, an eleventh grader from Buffalo Traditional High School (Fifth Place).

We extend our special thanks to our media sponsors **The Challenger** and **Rocket Communications** for their help promoting the contest. Additionally we thank **Hyatt's All Things Creative** for their \$100 contribution of art supplies to the students at the Frank A. Sedita Academy. The students were recognized for submitting the most entries of any school.

Congratulations to all our winners, and to every student who submitted a poster this year! Watch BFNC's website ([www.bfnc.org](http://www.bfnc.org)) in the new year for details about the 2003 contest.

Thank you for reading this issue of BFNC News! Watch for our Spring issue this April. If you have ideas for future stories, or comments about this edition, please send feedback to [jcsenall@bfnc.org](mailto:jcsenall@bfnc.org).