The True Measure of Success
continued from page 3

I got a phone call later in the day of that CAPP event regarding the results of the HIV tests. One positive, 16-year-old female.

We’ve had a lot of successes in the CAPP program and I’m immensely proud of the work done by our educators, coordinator, and director. It’s not, however, the successes that keep me awake at night or get me going in the morning. It’s the face of a frightened young girl, viewed through the small opening of a closing door.

Comings and Goings

New Members of the BFNC Team:

Tamika Boykin
LMS/CAPP - Program Secretary
LaTonya Cole
RS/Relief - CRA Relief
Brianna Ferguson
ADMIN - Program Secretary
James Peterson
ICM - Case Manager

Erik Daniels
CM - Supported Housing/Residential Services
Renee Parisi
ICM - Supported Housing/Residential Services
Suzanne Sharpe
Assistant Director - Supported Apartment Program/Residential Services

Brooke Densing
Program Director, Financial Coach

Moving On:

Lenora Hall
Moot Center - Retired to Mobile, AL – Good Luck Lenora!
Isabel Molina
ICM - Moved to new position as a Nurse Practitioner with OMH – All the Best!

Promotions and Moves:

Good Luck Lenora!

Practitioner with OMH – All the Best!

ICM - Moved to new position as a Nurse

Satisfied client spreads the word about BFNC HOPE Center’s financial coaching

The BFNC Hope Financial Coaching Program is picking up steam as it becomes better known in the community. The following interview with program participant, Sheila K., illustrates why this program is becoming so popular:

Q. How did you hear about the center?
A. I wanted to look at my finances because there were things I wanted to change and needed help so I started looking online. I knew the United Way worked to help people so I started on their website and found a list of financial advisors. When I saw "work with a coach to help guide you" I thought that was something I could really use.

Q. What financial problems were you having?
A. Issues with student loan debt and other financial concerns, creating a budget so I could understand the “big picture,” and access to financial resources – at the Hope Center everything is under one roof.

Also, the lenders of my student loans sent me information that was hard to understand. Brooke Densing, my coach, was able to break it down so I understood the terminology. I was also living paycheck to paycheck and didn’t know how to manage my money.

Q. What were the results of your first meeting?
A. At our first meeting Brooke talked about what working with a coach would be like. She asked a lot of questions about my finances so she could work with me on goals. She explained the program and what my sessions might look like, plus what would be expected of me. We would work on a schedule of meetings together, but I would be the person who decided what we worked on and what paperwork I needed.

Q. Did you follow the plan and advice you got?
A. At first, I was really nervous when I saw my finances on paper, it felt very real to see my personal spending, knowing I’d have to make changes. Truthfully, it wasn’t as bad as I thought. After we set up a plan I was able to make choices about how to control my spending. I opened a savings account, so for the first time in my life I have a cushion, I’ve set up repayment plans for my student loans, and a budget so I can stay on track.

Q. What results have you achieved by following the plan?
A. I feel more confident and empowered to take control of my finances. It’s really hard to talk about finances, but it’s become a lot easier for me after working with a financial coach. I am able to understand financial terms, something I wasn’t able to do before.

Q. Would you recommend the Center to other people?
A. Yes – I have been recommending people to the Hope Center. The Hope Center can set you up with someone who will help you move forward, someone who understands what you are going through and will work with you step by step.

“Allia has worked very hard to stay on track, knowing that sometimes she might fall behind, forget a payment, or not stay on her budget, but she always has her budget to see what the plan is, plus, she can always meet with her coach to get back on track,” said Brooke Densing, program director and financial coach at BFNC’s HOPE Center.

Satisfied client spreads the word about BFNC HOPE Center’s financial coaching

Young BFNC worker puts education first

To say that Kamalah Poles is motivated is putting it mildly. She is beyond motivated. At 24-years-old, Kamalah has already been working for BFNC for 10 years. She began as a Summer Youth Worker in Summer Fun Days day camp, and is now a Residential Aide at Dewey House.

But what makes Poles really stand out, is the fact she has advanced her education while working, even while working full time.
BFNC News is a publication of
Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc., 97 Lemon St., Buffalo, NY 14204-1297
Phone: 856-0363 | Fax: 856-1432 | Website: www.bfnc.org

Our Vision
The Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers plays a major role in ensuring that anyone in Western New York who needs help and has no place to turn, or who has had trouble accessing services, or who has slipped through the cracks of the human service system, has a trusted place to go for help in taking the next step toward maximum independence.

Our Mission
BFNC prepares, equips and empowers individuals to address life management issues, and to improve the quality of life in their communities.

Executive Director
Ricardo Herrera

Officers
President - Eugene Partridge
1st Vice President - Verna Morton
2nd Vice President - Charles Syms, LCSW
Treasurer - Christopher Ruminski, CPA
Secretary - Estephine Greene, LCSW

Members
Cindy Dugas
Dr. Wesley Hicks, Jr.
Patricia A. Knight, SLA
Michael A. Mastroandrea
Geraldine Minter

Board of Advisors
Schuyler Banks
Genevieve Collins
Joseph E. Eicheldinger
Dr. Jeffery Grice
F. William Gray III
Calvin J. Haller
June W. Hoflich
Judith Jones, Ph.D.
James E. Miller CPA
James Morrell
John Perry
Jan Peters
Lauren D. Rachlin
Daryl Rasuli
John Reindl
Judge Robert Russell
William C. Schultz
Bonnie Smith
Olivier C. Young

Ricardo Herrera, Executive Director

Message from Executive Director
As the new executive director of BFNC, I’d like to share some of my background. A Social Worker by training, I spent 17 years working for the former Executive Director, Ms. Jan Peters, as the Director of Life Management Services. I left for almost two years before I was given the opportunity to return as the new Executive Director. For me, it feels like coming home.

We have begun to rehabilitate Neighborhood House, a building that is more than 50 years old, with the intent of re-tasking it to meet the needs of the community. Its new conference room is being used by Fruitbelt-based organizations and local partners including neighbors, residential coalitions, block clubs, faith-based organizations, and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

Our greatest worth to the Fruitbelt may be our organizational capacity and ability for long-term sustainability. We have been here for more than 60 years and - God willing - will be here for another 60.

The future offers many challenges and each one brings opportunities to evolve as an organization. Health Homes will change the way we deliver mental health and addictions services, however, they also allow for expanded growth into the coordination of primary and specialty medical care. We have organized our economic self-sufficiency and anti-poverty programs into the new BFNC HOPE Center. The HOPE Center offers free income tax services, credit counseling, debt recovery, financial literacy, and a variety of free legal advice via our partnerships with the U/B School of Law and the Volunteer Lawyers Project.

I ask for your support and prayers as I begin the next leg of the BFNC journey, having been passed the baton by the great lady and BFNC founder, Ms. Peters, who served faithfully for 30 years. I wish to publicly thank her for facilitating my growth as a professional and as a person.

Young BFNC worker puts education first continued from cover
“BFNC has been very supportive. They have always accommodated my class schedule with my work hours,” she said. Consequently, Poles has completed an Associate’s Degree in Social Science at Erie Community College, a Bachelor’s of Science degree from Buffalo State College, and is currently working on a Master’s in Adult Education at Buffalo State. Plus, she is an honors student.

Poles says her family has been behind her all the way. Each member is accomplished in his or her own way: her mother is principal of a school, her father heads up BFNC’s Free Tax Preparation service and formerly was the program director of the Youth Advocacy Program, and her sister is a graduate of the University at Buffalo.

“I just always wanted to see where my life would take me, so even when it got tough, I never gave up,” Poles said.

It will be interesting to see where Poles’ life has taken her 10 years from now – particularly if she keeps up at the pace of the last 10 years.

Events – Past and Future

Annual pre-Thanksgiving Dinner at BFNC’s Moot Center is a great success

The 32nd Annual BFNC/Citigroup Thanksgiving Dinner served 900 turkey dinners with all the fixings on November 15, 2012. Members of the community, BFNC seniors and participants in BFNC programs attended the event to have an early Thanksgiving Dinner and enjoy the entertainment.

Entertainment was provided by Pappy Martin and the Supreme Love Trio, and local merchants and restaurants donated raffle prizes. The turkeys were purchased at Camillo’s Sloan Market and cooked by the Emerson Culinary School on Allen Street. The staff at the Moot Senior Citizens Center prepared the food and Citigroup volunteers came throughout the day to serve meals.

Barbara Jones wins big in United Way drawing

Barbara Jones, a long-time employee of BFNC who serves in the accounts payable department, was recently the winner of a $1,000 gift certificate to Wegman’s for her continued contributions to the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County. Each year the United Way draws names for a wide variety of gift certificates from the list of workers who have made annual pledges to the organization.

Jones has contributed to the United Way for as long as she has worked at BFNC – since 1992. She was thrilled to be the recipient of one of the highest valued gifts given out at the ceremony.

The True Measure of Success

by Josh Exoo

At a recent Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (CAPP) event held at a Buffalo public school, students saw presentations on birth control and STDs; attended a health fair featuring local clinics, community organizations, and colleges; were served a healthy lunch; went to focus groups that gave them an opportunity to talk about their concerns; and received free HIV testing from the Red Cross. The afternoon of the event, a female student approached me and asked, “Mister, where the AIDS test at?”

As a teacher part of my job is to read young people and I could see that her face was etched with real fear. I walked her down the hall to the testing area and told her she was doing the responsible thing by getting tested. I asked how old she was and in a whisper she said, “16.”

“You’re pretty brave for 16,” I said. I opened the door and watched her disappear inside.

In 2008, when the finances of the U.S. were being drained by two wars and a devastating financial meltdown, teen pregnancy cost American taxpayers approximately $11 billion. However, antiretroviral therapy cost anywhere from $2,000 to $5,000 per month per individual, and of the HIV patients seeking therapy, 42 percent were on Medicaid and 24 percent uninsured. The cost involved in increased health care, loss of productivity, foster care, and incarceration rates for children of teen parents added to our government’s – and ultimately the taxpayers’ burden, but the hardship and emotional toll on families could not be calculated.

With much work and struggle on the part of our government and workers, not only has the economy begun to right itself – teen sexual health has begun to improve. Yet until there was a record low teen birth rate, according to the Center for Disease Control. Educators like myself and my colleagues at CAPP, which is supported by a five-year grant, have worked hard to bring comprehensive sexual education to young people all over Buffalo. It is never easy to start the conversation that is as personal, political, and controversial as sexual health, but we have found Buffalo wants what everyone else wants: kids who are happy, healthy, educated, and able to seize opportunities to better themselves and their community.

Continued on page 4