



Non-Profit
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Permit No. 26

February 2013

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Email agriffin@familiesfirstessex.org
Web site www.familiesfirstessex.org

Strengths Based

Phone: 518-873-9544
Fax: 518-873-9570
E-mail: agriffin@familiesfirstessex.org
Open
Monday—Friday 8:30 am—4:30 pm
Food Shelf
Mon, Wed, Fri 9 am— Noon
(special arrangements may be made for other times by appointment)
NOTE: Food Shelf will be closed on days that STAFF MEETINGS are held

EHS: Early Head Start
ETS: Educational Training Series
FSG: Family Support Group
FTAdk: Families Together in the Adirondacks
FTNYS: Families Together in New York State
LEICC: Local Early Intervention Coordinating Council
PCANY: Prevent Child Abuse New York
Rec Group: Recreation Group (in Port Henry)
TBA: To be announced
YE: Youth Empowerment



The food shelf is running low! We are in need of non-perishable food and/or cash donations. If you are interested in donating, please call 518-873-9544

Check out our Web site!
www.familiesfirstessex.org
Like us on facebook!
<http://www.facebook.com/familiesfirstessex>

- All activities will take place at Families First and children must be accompanied by adults unless otherwise noted.
- Activities are subject to change and may be closed, leaving them available only to families receiving higher level services (HCBS Waiver, ICM and Family Support).

Families First in Essex County
P.O. Box 565
196 Water Street
Elizabethtown, NY 12932
Phone 518-873-9544
Fax 518-873-9570
Web site www.familiesfirstessex.org

February 2013



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10-11 am Parents Supporting Parents	5 SafeTalk Educational Training 9-12 Families First Playgroup 9am-12pm Keeseville Elementary	4:30pm-6:30pm YE*	7 9:30am-12pm Ticonderoga Town Hall Basement Playgroup 4:15pm-5:15pm Port Henry Rec Group	8 Playgroup 9:30am-11:30pm Moriah Central Elementary Rm #218	9 Playgroup 9:30am-11:30pm Moriah Central Elementary Rm #218
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	10-11 am Parents Supporting Parents	12 Legislative Luncheon, Albany 9:30am-11:45am Available Forks Holy Name School Playgroup		14 9:30am-12pm Ticonderoga Town Hall Basement Playgroup Board Mtg. 5-7 4:15pm-5:15pm Port Henry Rec Group	15 Playgroup 9:30am-11:30pm Moriah Central Elementary Rm #218	16 Playgroup 9:30am-11:30pm Moriah Central Elementary Rm #218
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Presidents Day Office Closed	19 Playgroup 9am-12pm Keeseville Elementary	4:30pm-6:30pm YE*	21 9:30am-12pm Ticonderoga Town Hall Basement Playgroup 4:15pm-5:15pm Port Henry Rec Group	22 Playgroup 9:30am-11:30pm Moriah Central Elementary Rm #218	23 Playgroup 9:30am-11:30pm Moriah Central Elementary Rm #218
24	25	26	27	28		
	FTADK Meeting 9-10 FF 10-11 am Parents Supporting Parents	26 9:30am-11:45am Available Forks Holy Name School Playgroup		28 9:30am-12pm Ticonderoga Town Hall Basement Playgroup 4:15pm-5:15pm Port Henry Rec Group		

The final tally of children receiving Christmas gifts through our Holiday Gift Drive was 175. Last month I briefly mentioned how much we appreciated parents who took the time to jot a thank you note to the donors, but I'd like to expand on that just a bit. As each family picked up their gifts, we asked if they would like to sit down and write a quick thank you. Without fail, every single person was willing to do so. The notes were heartfelt, and many went beyond a generic thank you, to include a short and more personal statement about why it meant so much, such as a recent job loss, a difficult time in their family, how they'd like to pay it forward, etc.

Each postcard that we gave to a parent was coded so that we could match each one to the individual or group donor for that child. So, without names being exchanged, we could directly convey your appreciation to the person who actually adopted your child for gift giving. And as you may have guessed, those notes meant a great deal to the people who bought those gifts. We've only been doing this piece of it for the last couple of years, but it's a nice way to really bring things full circle. Everyone likes to be inspired by someone or something, and this way the inspiration can be mutual. So, thanks!

Did you make a New Year's Resolution? I typically don't, but I guess that you could say that I've begun the New Year with a resolve to capture more of the impact of the work we do. It used to be that in the human service world it was enough to just document that we provided x number of visits, billable hours, group events, etc. Those days are long gone, and funders now are much more concerned with what impact our work has on our target population. In other words, what outcomes are we achieving in our work with families?

This is one of the reasons we work with you in a goal oriented way—so that we can document changes that have taken place. So, in an effort to capture more outcomes, you may find staff people asking you on a more regular basis about knowledge or skills that you may have gained during the course of our journey with you.

Not only will this help us in being able to capture those outcomes more effectively, it may also help you, in terms of realizing just how many new skills you've gained, or new knowledge you've acquired. It's always a good feeling when you realize that you are getting better at something, whatever that might be.

The recent massacre in Newtown, Connecticut has initiated a national conversation on many things, but especially on guns. Sweeping changes have already been made, such as New York's new gun law, or are in the process of being made. The loudest and most heated conversation currently is regarding guns, but there are people who are trying valiantly to encourage the nation to discuss other facets of this and other gun related tragedies, including the need for more and better access to mental health treatment.

It's no secret that funding for community based mental health programs has become increasingly tight over the past several years, and that as funds decrease, services inevitably decrease as well, leaving families struggling to find and access the most appropriate services for their child and family. As a parent of a child with mental health issues, your voice should be heard. More than anyone, you can speak to the needs of your child and family. But where should you voice your concerns?

One way is to become a member of our local Families Together in the Adirondacks. This group is a Chapter of Families Together in New York State, which has done a superlative job over the last eighteen years or so to provide a unified, effective voice on behalf of families who have kids with mental health issues. If you want to join the dialogue on the needs of children with mental health issues, please consider coming to a Chapter meeting. Our next one is Monday, February 25, at 9 a.m, here at Families First. Hope you can make it!

Focus on Families First

Farewell, Brenda

By Anne Griffin

This month we said farewell to Brenda Sherman, pictured at right. Although it is a loss for Families First and our participants, Brenda will still be using her talents on behalf of children and families at Mountain Lakes Services.

Brenda came to us in 2002 through our AmeriCorps Program. She helped run playgroups, transported kids, and helped in any way we asked her to. We were impressed with her dedication and work ethic and when an opening came along for a Family Support Specialist, we hired her for that position. A few years later she took on skill building with youth and also provided respite care for many of our families who needed it.

I sat down with Brenda and asked her what she will remember most about her work at Families First. Brenda talked about her work with families and how much she enjoyed seeing them overcome obstacles and succeed in meeting their goals. In particular, she felt that she had learned to see families through their eyes, to see them where they are and not impose her own standards on them. Brenda believed that her work with families had made her a better parent, wife, friend, and a better person in general. It also helped her put her own life in perspective.

In reflecting on her more than 10 years at Families First, Brenda remembered how compassionate the agency and co-workers had been when her mother passed away, and how helpful and supportive Families First had been regarding Brenda's own son and daughter when they needed support. She also felt that during her work here she had learned how to not just accept change but to grow with it.



What I most appreciated about Brenda was her unwavering belief in finding the good in each parent or youth—her ability to find and focus on a child's strengths and to help that child shine. Every child that Brenda came in contact with benefitted from her natural warmth and accepting demeanor. She had a real gift for making children feel accepted.

Brenda's new position at Mountain Lakes Services will involve working one-on-one with both kids and adults out in the community to achieve their goals. She's looking forward to helping teach people new skills and to become successful community members. Best of luck to you in all your endeavors, Brenda! We'll miss you!

We interviewed six candidates for Brenda's position and recently made our final choice.

Tara Stockwell accepted the position and will start in mid-February. Our next newsletter will provide more of an introduction to Tara.

Christina tells me that we have 8 family members, 3 staff from Families First and 3 additional members from the Glens Falls region that will be attending the Legislative Luncheon in February to represent Families Together in the Adirondacks (FTADK). They have meetings set up to meet with Assemblyman Dan Stec at 10:00 am and Senator Betty Little at 11:00 am. Parents are preparing letters to leave with our Assemblyman and Senator which tell the story of each individual family and what affect their child's mental health has on everyday life, what services have worked well and what services are needed, and encouraging funding for those needed supports, including Families First. The Chapter hopes that each family that leaves a letter will get a personal response from Dan Stec and Betty Little. This sounds like a great piece of advocacy on behalf of families. It's not always easy to share your story, especially in the formal environment of a legislator's office, so those parents attending have our support and appreciation.