

Our Vision

*In the eyes of the community, Families First
will be synonymous with integrity, exemplary
service, and a compassionate approach.*

*In the eyes of families, Families First
will be a trusted partner offering
hope and bolstering stamina on
parents' journeys toward
improved emotional /
behavioral health for
their children.*

Families First in Essex County, Inc.
PO Box 565, 196 Water St., Elizabethtown, NY 12932
518-873-9544 www.familiesfirstessex.org



Families First in Essex County, Inc.

2021 Annual Report



From the Board Co-Chairs -

Dear Friends, staff and community partners of Families First:

As Co-Chairs of the Board of Families First it is our privilege to serve this outstanding organization.

In 2021 the Covid Pandemic continued to consume our daily lives and the challenges were ongoing for the staff to effectively support our clients. Not surprisingly, the team again rose to the occasion and found many creative ways to preform their work.

Managing through Covid in 2020 and 2021 has been daunting to say the least. In recognition of the outstanding responses to these many challenges the Board unanimously voted to award a one time bonus to the Families First team.

Early in the year our new CFO resigned and Families First faced another significant challenge. How would we recruit a qualified CFO? However, this situation had a silver lining when we found and contracted with DALLE accounting services. They are now professionally handling all the duties of the CFO at a reduced cost!

We also contracted with Paycom to handle all our payroll and Human Resources systems. These two new contracts have been a positive addition to our management team and the Families First organization.

As in 2020, this year most meetings and the Annual Board Meeting were held via Zoom. The Board created an elevator speech to help spread the word of Families First. This has been a great tool, as we have had to once again cancel the \$10,000 raffle which has been a way to spread the word about our work and recruit new Board Members as well.

Once again this year we were able to hold our Thanksgiving and Christmas drives. Thanksgiving dinners were provided via gift cards instead of the traditional food boxes. Christmas presents were provided for pick up to qualified families.

Families First continues to grow and serve new clients, that requires hiring new staff. In 2019 we served 174 families and 258 children, in 2021 we grew to 202 families and 271 children. Turnover and hiring in this environment is an ongoing challenge.

We welcomed Kip Thompson back and Ann Cammack onto the Board. They bring financial and legal insight to the board. Margie Emery-Ginn has stepped down and will be missed. Thank you for your many years of service as a board member.

The Board along with the Sr. Staff Administrative Team worked to update the Agency's Strategic Plan, with the main goal being readiness for Value Based Payment.

A heartfelt thanks also to our many generous donors. Your generosity is so important in allowing Families First to be the outstanding organization that it is.

Respectfully submitted,
Hillary Stransky and Sharon Cook



Despite the Coronavirus, we were able to squeeze in a few youth activities/groups during 2021!





Our Mission

***In the hopes and dreams of parents we find our work -
offering a hand in partnership to families who have children
with emotional or behavioral challenges -
That self-doubt give way to uncovered strengths,
despair be replaced with hope, and the once-diminishing dreams
for their children's success will blossom anew.***

Board of Directors -

Officers -

Hillary Stransky: Co-Chair, Essex
Sharon Cook: Co-Chair, Willsboro
Joe Bogardus: Treasurer, Keene
Karen Ashline: Secretary, Willsboro

Members -

Ann Cammack: Arlington, VA
Malinda Chapman: Ticonderoga
Linda Jackson: Elizabethtown
Sue Reaser: Westport
Audrey Sparre: Essex
Kip Thompson: Elizabethtown
Ken White: Westport
Shelley Winters: Moriah

Families First in Essex County, Inc.
PO Box 565, 196 Water St.,
Elizabethtown, NY 12932
518-873-9544
www.familiesfirstessex.org

Staff -

JoAnne Caswell, CEO
Tracey Serlock, COO
Anne Griffin, CDO & Director of Family Services
Robin Nelson, Chief Compliance & HR Officer
Kayleigh Wojewodzic, Clinical Manager
Paul Pulsifer, Compliance & Quality Assurance Manager
Mackenzie Lahue, Programs Manager
Deb Mitchell, Family Services Manager
Peter Casanova, Office Manager/Admin. Assist.
Stacey Vaughn, Health Home (HH) Care Manager
Brian Gay, HH Care Mgr./IT Manager
Tara Stockwell, HH Care Mgr./DS Professional
Ryan Yellott, HH Care Mgr.
Jennifer Deyo, HH Care Mgr.
Janelle Bausman, HH Care Mgr.
Kari Leclair, HH Care Mgr.
JoAnne Rice, HH Care Mgr.
Martha Stratton, HH Care Mgr.
James St. Denis, HH Care Mgr.
Mallory Finnegan, HH Care Mgr.
Judy Feigenbaum, Direct Service Professional
Jim Jaquish, Direct Service Professional
Kasey Rosselli, DS Professional
Jeanne Brown, DS Professional
Buffy Marcil, Family Peer Advocate/DSP
Robyn Anson, Family Peer Advocate/DSP
Lisa Sheehan, Family Peer Advocate/DSP
Kathy Drew, Direct Service Provider (DSP)/FPA
Jessica Thompson, DSP/FPA
Olivia Worden, DSP
Jeannie Calderon, YPA



a day of learning to sail on Saranac Lake with “Sail ADKs”, thanks to Captain Barry Brogan for the adventure.

Even so, we could never have anticipated the amount of work it would take to think through how we wanted the new system to be tailored to us, what workflows we would need to change or refine, and think of all the ways that we would like this new record to serve our needs. Our staff participated in thinking through what was called our “build” for both the clinical side and the financial side of our work. It was an immense, time-consuming project that hopefully, we will never have to do again, but that will help our staff more easily and accurately capture the fine work that they do on a daily basis, and help insulate us for future audits. It will also allow us to bill for claims in a simpler and more efficient way. In addition, it will help us move toward a more paperless program, as staff will be able to capture required family signatures electronically and upload copies of documents into charts. This work took place over the last quarter of 2021 and into 2022 as we prepared for going Live on February 1st of 2022. The transition was smooth and seamless, and staff were trained and are becoming accustomed to using this new EHR.

In the fall of 2021 we hired our first Youth Peer Advocate, Jeannie Calderon. We have utilized her in Wraparound families, which has been very effective. We also hired a second Other Licensed Practitioner, Jeanne Brown, who works part-time with us providing in home evaluation and counseling services.

We hosted our customary Thanksgiving and Christmas Gift Giving Drives in the final two months of the year. Ninety two families were served from the Thanksgiving Drive and two hundred and sixty three children received gifts for Christmas.

Overall, it was another challenging year in Direct Services, but we were grateful to be able to begin providing more in person services for the benefit of children and families. We know the challenges this pandemic has brought to families, but only fairly recently has the impact truly begun to be measured on the mental health of children and their parents. Providing supportive, mental/behavioral health community based services to children and families has been our mission since Day One in 1992. We remain committed to providing these much needed services in our traditional values based way.



Anne Griffin
Director of Family Services



# of Youth Served in 2021, by Program Type and Quarter:	1.1.21 - 3.31.21	4.1.21- 6.30.21	7.1.21- 9.30.21	10.1.21- 12.31.21
Health Home Care Management	171	171	164	190
Non Medicaid Case Management (NYS OMH)	0	0	0	0
Family Support Program (NYS OMH Aid to Localities)	7	10	5	5
CFTSS (program started 1.1.19)	92	86	91	85
HCBS (program started 4.1.19)	26	24	23	23

Wolf Pond, Newcomb, NY

Program Report (continued)

As the year began we were still coping with the Covid peak around the holidays. For the most part, we were delivering services remotely, using telehealth. Although some children and parents respond well to this method of service delivery, many children, in particular, struggle with engagement and attention. Our staff became extra creative in how they thought about teaching skills when engaging children through telehealth.

In March we were challenged with six staff resignations, four of whom were direct service providers. Losing a direct service provider is disruptive to families receiving service. Our preference is always to continue service provision without gaps by assigning new providers, however, losing so many in one month left us quite understaffed.

During the remainder of the year, we continued to be plagued by losing direct service providers. Losing staff did not appear to be unique to Families First, however, as that period in time became quickly known as The Great Resignation. It did cause us to think carefully about our orientation and training processes and to work very overtly to help new staff feel connected to the agency, which was difficult when most of us were working remotely and we needed to remain socially distanced.

In the spring we underwent an audit by the Department of Health, to ensure that we were complying with the Final Rule regarding serving children in the least restrictive environment possible. The auditor spent a great deal of time with Family Peer Advocate Robyn Anson, and Health Home Care Manager Brian Gay, discussing their service provision to a family that required intensive Home and Community Based Services. She also spent a considerable amount of time meeting with the family themselves, questioning them about our service provision. All of this was done remotely, in itself a challenge. We received positive feedback from this audit with no corrective action required.

July brought another audit by one of the Managed Care Organizations we contract with. This was conducted in person, and the auditor had an entire checklist of questions for us, as well as reviewed charts. Once again, we received excellent results, scoring 91%, 100%, and 100% in the three areas reviewed.

During the summer, we began providing some child and family social activities, which we had not been able to do in 2020. We provided a Beach Day in Ticonderoga, with families and staff in attendance, and a day of swimming and other recreational activities with families and staff at the Reiss Camp in Lake Placid. Our staff also began providing in person service on a regular basis.



Reiss Camp - Lake Placid, NY

For some time we had been frustrated with the Electronic Health Record (EHR) that we had used for years. Compared to newer systems, it was antiquated and not at all intuitive or user friendly. We put considerable time and effort into delving into how best to make it work for us with the advent of our new service programs in 2019, and the requirement that all services have Treatment Plans. Even our auditor had been frustrated with its difficulty to use! I wrote a grant to purchase a training package to help us better understand how we could make this EHR work more effectively for us. It was funded and we moved closer to purchasing a training package. But as we did so, we also began exploring other options, and three of us reviewed some demos from other companies.

We were thrilled with one in particular by Netsmart called myEvolv. It was intuitive, user friendly, and laid out in a completely logical format. After much consideration of costs and packages, with Board approval, in September we entered into a contract with Netsmart to provide our EHR for Direct Services. We also received approval from our grant funder that we could use the funds designated for a training package toward fees. Netsmart warned us up front how long the conversion process would take - a minimum of four months - and how involved a team of our staff would need to be.



From the Chief Executive Officer -

In 2021, Families First continued to struggle with the challenges of Covid. We were able to keep the office building on Water St. in Elizabethtown open to the public (with a mask mandate in place for most of the year) and we were able to provide a high percentage of face-to-face services to our kids and families, with some remote services delivered by zoom or telephone scattered in. We were unable to provide many large group activities (as the risk of Covid infection remained high). We continued to hold most of our large meetings (Staff, Board, etc.) remotely, via zoom and unfortunately have become used to doing business in a remote fashion. We certainly hope that 2022 will bring a new normal in the Covid world and allow us to move forward with more groups and face-to-face activities!

Despite all of these challenges we made some significant changes in 2021:

- We created a Middle Management Team of Staff, to take on some management, supervisory and administrative responsibilities (Kayleigh, Paul, Mackenzie, Deb), thanks for your willingness to learn and grow to meet the needs!
- We changed titles of our Sr. Administrative Team to reflect their new levels of responsibility (JoAnne, Tracey, Anne, Robin), thanks for all of your hard work!
- We contracted with DALLE Accounting out of the Albany area to handle our accounts payable, CFR and Audit prep work along with acting as our CFO, as our relatively newly hired CFO resigned in March. This has proven to be a highly effective choice, both in cost savings and excellent quality service in our financial needs.
- We contracted with Paycom to handle our Payroll and Human Resources needs in an offsite manner. This also is proving to be very effective and efficient. (thanks to Robin N. for becoming our expert in this system)
- In conjunction with our Board of Directors we instituted some significant changes to our Staff Benefits Package, giving staff more incentive to remain with Families First as long-term employees (see more details in the Finance Report).

In other news.....

- Families First was selected by the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH), to participate in a Statewide Learning Collaborative with eleven other Behavioral Health Organizations to work to provide recommendations on how to make the new Children and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS) sustainable for agencies, moving forward. We were also offered some learning/training opportunities and were able to offer some suggestions to the State, primarily in the form of much needed rate increases for services provided, which were accepted and have been approved by Medicaid.
- Families First had its first audit of our Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) by the NYS Department of Health (DOH), which was very successful. In addition, we completed multiple audits with our Health Home Agencies and did well on all of them.
- We continued to participate in the Essex County System of Care (SOC) Grant with multiple other local providers. Families First is primarily focusing on providing Wraparound services to Transition Aged Youth (TAY), 16-21 yrs. old. This is a huge need in Essex County!

A few significant challenges this year were:

- Staff turnover and trying to find and hire new staff to cover the increasing needs of youth with significant mental health challenges. In 2021 we hired 12 new staff (Tom Bull, Nicole Curcio, Ashley Lane, Shania Howard, Martha Stratton, JoAnne Rice, James St. Denis, Mallory Finnegan, Jeannie Calderon, Olivia Worden, Kasey Rosselli, and Jeanne Brown. But we also had 10 staff leave our employment (Courtney Farrington, Claire Lafountain, Meagan Lee, Michaila Callis, Nicole Meager, Nicole LaValley, Tom Bull, Nicole Curcio, Ashley Lane, Shania Howard). We will begin interviews again in early 2022 for multiple providers.
- We spent a great deal of time working with our Local Community Services Board and the NYS OMH, to create a proposal for how to use Aid to Localities Funds, so that we could offer more services to kids that do not have Medicaid in 2022. We are hoping that our plan will work and allow more flexibility for these needed services.

At the end of 2021, the NYS OMH was able to offer service providers some small Workforce Fund increases, which we gave to our staff in the form of bonuses and in addition they also created funds to enhance the work of Credentialed Family and Youth Peer Advocates, which will come out in early 2022 and will be given to those staff as a bonus. In addition, our Board of Directors chose to use some of their unrestricted raised funds to add to the bonuses for staff. This was greatly needed and appreciated!

With the new normal of a remote service society, there is never any down time, you are always on! This has taken some effort to get used to. We are struggling to find ways to be available for our staff and clients, while also maintaining some amount of sanity! The following saying seemed to sum it up -

“It’s 9am on a Monday and it’s already been a long week”.

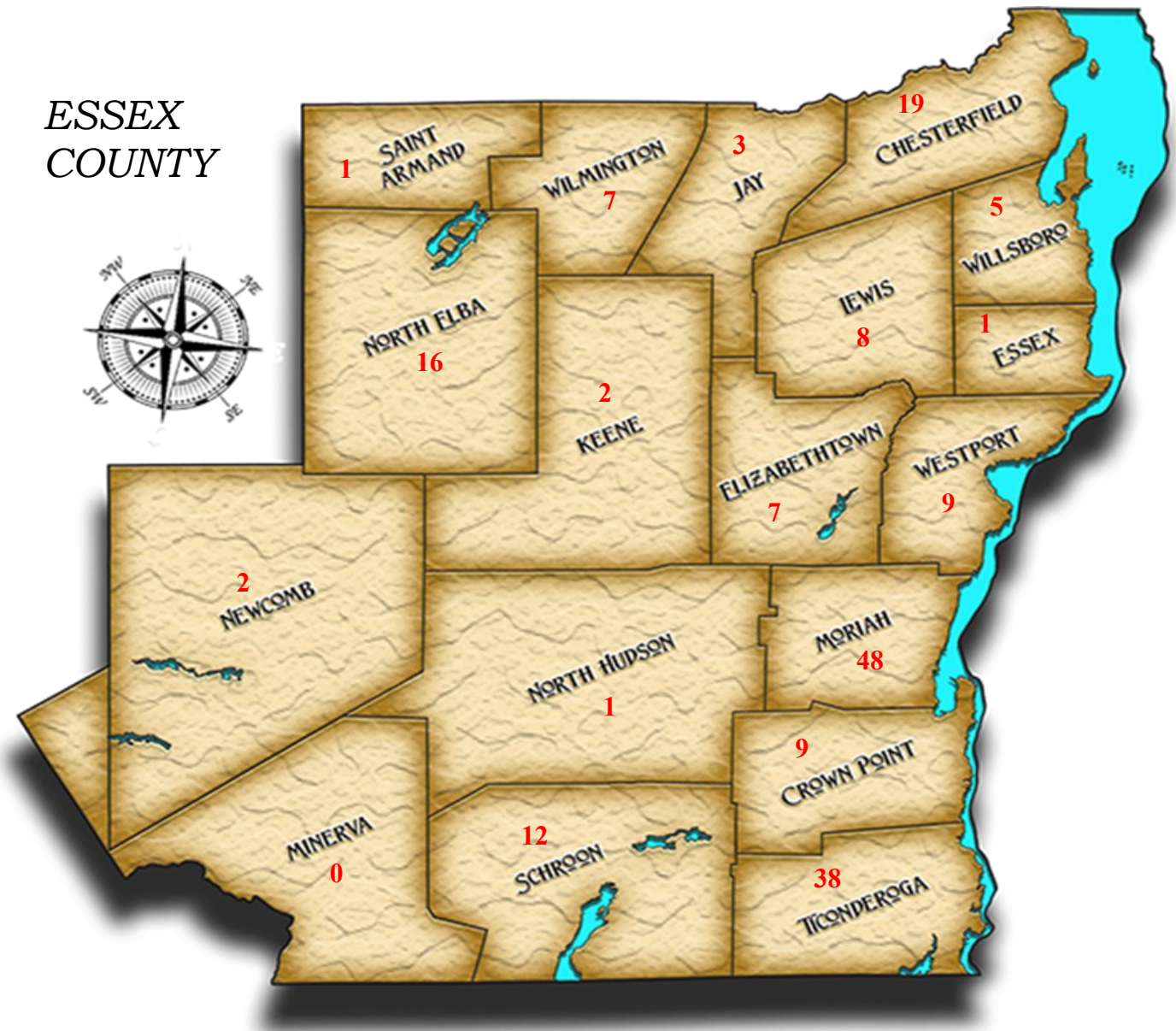
As we look forward to 2022, we are thankful for all of our donors, our staff and Board members, our colleagues at the other Community Agencies and the kids and families that we serve. With all of the challenges, hope and changes, we are ready, bring it on!

JoAnne M. Caswell, CEO



Number of Unduplicated Families, served in 2021,
(broken down by Town) - **202**

Number of Unduplicated Children/Youth within these families - **271**



Franklin Co. - **4** Clinton Co. - **7** Warren/Washington Co. - **3**



Program Report (continued)

We experienced unprecedented staff turnover. We hired several people and several people moved on. We struggled with finding qualified candidates to fill vacant positions. We speculate this high turnover was directly related to the COVID -19 pandemic and its restrictions, however we were never able to truly identify any trends. This has heavily affected our clients, as we have struggled with having enough staff members to provide the much-needed services. We continue to search for more providers and are still concerned that our clients are not receiving all the services they need because we are understaffed. We are hopeful things will begin to improve in this area soon, with a plan to re-evaluate our onboarding and orientation processes.

We are working toward developing efficient and productive infrastructure meetings such as Managers Meeting, Compliance/Quality Assurance, Best Practices, Admissions/Utilization Review, Care Managers, and Direct Service Providers meetings. The purpose of developing this infrastructure is to ensure quality service delivery, that the agency is audit proof, expand our client base and with the long goal of participating in value-based payment. With the goal of participating in value-based payment, we developed a strategic plan that would cause us to provide education to all of the stakeholders who participate in the running of our organization from board members to office staff. Along with education, we delineated the beginning steps to integrate the plan into the fabric of the agency.

We are always assessing our services to ensure that they are trauma-informed. During the year we participated in extensive trauma-informed and resiliency training from NYAPRS.

We developed and implemented an Admissions Committee that will allow us to streamline all of our service delivery processes. This will also assist us in setting and maintaining realistic and ambitious production standards.

Another need that we had been working toward for quite some time was being able to provide Wraparound services in our community. We sent a team of staff members for extensive training in the past and in 2021, as part of our System of Care grant, we implemented the program. We had four care managers coordinating these services for families with our Manager of Clinical Services as their supervisor. The program launched in March when we began to seek transition-aged youth to receive this service. We have enrolled families in our Wraparound Program, with a goal of serving 12 families, total, although we have yet to reach our goal. We are actively pursuing referrals to this program. When the program launched, we were able to serve transition-aged youth defined as ages 16 -21. Later in the year, the definition of transition-aged youth expanded to include 14-21. While transition-aged youth is the prioritized age group, we can serve up to four youth below the age of 14. The purpose for opening up the program for these youth who are below the definition of transition-aged is because Wraparound is a beneficial strategy for all youth in need, but the System of Care grant targets the transition-aged population. SPOA, in the past, had a narrow focus in terms of the youth we could serve. This focus was developed based on regulations ascribed to the programs we were running. Now that we work with Health Homes, the population we are able to serve has expanded significantly. This year the SPOA committee, in collaboration with Early Intervention and ACAP, purposely began looking at the 0-5 population with the goal of being able to provide mental health treatment and services to this underserved group.

There were many struggles in 2021. While we are happy to be fully operational again and we certainly continue to approach everything with the utmost caution and with the safety of our staff and clients in mind. We cannot help but reminisce about the obstacles we had to overcome in order to remain on an upward trajectory. We are pleased with our widespread progress regarding developing our infrastructure and growing our programs and services. We are proud of the results of the audits and hope to see more such success in future audits. We continue to achieve what we strive for and are able to have an optimistic view to the future because of the tireless efforts of our staff. Our staff is the lifeblood of the agency. Our staff allows us to live up to our vision of being synonymous with integrity, exemplary service, and a compassionate approach in the eyes of the families we serve and the community at-large.

SOC - System of Care

- coordinated network of, community-based services and supports, for children, youth, families and other community members who are experiencing challenges.

SOC in simplest terms =

"How a community takes care of its own"

SOC Framework Outcomes

Improved...

- Clinical and functional outcomes
- Behavioral and emotional strengths
- School performance
- Stable living conditions

Decreased...

- Suicide attempts
- Law enforcement contacts
- Inpatient care
- Caregiver strain

Respectfully Submitted by,
Tracey R. Serlock, Chief Operating Officer



Program Report

Starting 2021, we were still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the year, there have been ups and downs. We reopened the office in July, but outbreaks and surges kept us on our toes. Clients and staff members alike struggled with themselves and/or their families being infected with the virus, particularly as it mutated. Because of this, being able to maintain face-to-face contact with our participants continued and continues to be a challenge. We have been fortunate to be able to provide telehealth services across-the-board, but many providers and families do prefer the face-to-face experience. With that said, we are hoping the option will remain available after the pandemic rules, regulations and restrictions have lifted. After the initial shock of it all, and the ongoing struggles the whole world has been through, we decided to motor on at Families First. When the pandemic struck, we were in the development stage of creating a cohesive department for direct services. We have worked on many projects and have had some great successes and have found some areas that need strengthening.

Because of the pandemic, we found ourselves in the position of needing to rethink how we obtain new referrals. Many of our community partners were working virtually. Children were in schools only part-time with the focus not only being on learning but also on health and safety. In response to the new way of doing business, we decided to change the way we do outreach presentations in the community, focusing on education around Health Homes and our direct services as well as the journey of the referral within Families First. We started to meet with administrators of community stakeholders and partners to discuss how we can integrate our Health Homes referrals into their intake processes. We met with our local Department of Social Services to discuss how we can help their young clients with Medicaid through our Health Homes program and ultimately our direct services. By doing this, we can help the Department save money and reduce some of the need to manage so many children and families. When meeting with school officials, we have asked them to consider referring their at-risk youth to us for services and describing how our services can be supportive to their learning environment, rather than just providing the schools with general information. The most effective strategy in re-working our referral process was offering community providers a “permission to contact” form along with a direct link within the agency. This allows us to follow-through with the referral within 24 hours of receiving it.

Our Health Homes program is the economic mainstay of the agency. Families First is a Care Management Agency (CMA) for Health Homes. The CMA meets its own expenses and helps to fill the gaps within other areas of the agency. In 2021, the Health Homes underwent OMIG audits, which meant we had to coordinate chart checks and repairs. Whenever there is an audit, we learn something new. This time was no different. We also underwent an MCO audit with a stunning outcome of near perfect marks. Of course, no one looks forward to an audit, but this one was an experience that positions us for success in future audits, as we had a comprehensive tool to work with and were able to complete a substantial amount of work in preparation. We are always grateful for these learning experiences as it assists us in ensuring insulation against future audits.



We were asked to participate in the CCSI Learning Community, by the NYS OMH. The purpose was to identify best practices in the economic management of programs and to gather evidence for rate increases for the variety of services. “The CCSI Learning Community was designed specifically to provide organizations an opportunity to focus on activities that will assist in the successful sustainability of the program. Providers engaged in a focused, data-driven planning and design process to enhance business efficiencies and inform OMH (and state partners) of program operationalization through a data informed lens.” *This description is from a PowerPoint presentation developed by the Learning Community’s coordinator(s).*

In 2021, we were very busy with many other projects/challenges/goals:

Developing our middle management team in our agency restructuring project. We outlined expectations and changed supervision lines. We are very excited with how bright the future is looking!

A Youth Testimonial

I started working with Families First in 2018, when I was 16, after going to the hospital six times for mental health issues. I was living at home with my mother and older brother. My dad had recently moved out, there were stay away orders in place requiring my dad to have no contact with us. My dad was facing a short jail sentence. At that time I was not going to school, had a very tense relationship with my mother and brother, and was struggling to find safe ways to manage what was going on in my life.

Looking back I realize I stopped going to school because my mom really didn’t care, she would always tell me “it’s okay you don’t have to” or “you have all these problems and you don’t have to go” so I felt like I couldn’t achieve anything. I became used to not going and then felt out of place returning after being absent for so long. I spent a lot of time alone in my room, talking to friends.

At first Kayleigh (Case Manager) and Tara (Direct Service Professional) were supporting me to follow my safety plan and to go into the community as I was mostly isolated at home. The focus was often about avoiding crisis and hospitalization and finding new and safer ways to cope.

There were a lot of meetings with my mom at that time, she even received family support for a while, I often didn’t want to participate because they were just another person telling me what to do. I fired Kayleigh and Tara several times, and not in the nicest ways. They kept coming back and never gave up on me. For a long time we would meet, I would struggle and end up in the hospital, and then we would try something new next time to avoid crisis. Self-harm was a big thing in my life and something Kayleigh and Tara worked with me on... to reduce risk and find other ways to cope. I did briefly see a therapist and psychiatrist but they always wanted to send me to the hospital and medications made me feel really sick. We worked with the school to get me back in person, I did eventually go but was met with unkind peers and staff and didn’t return. There were police calls, a few instances where I left the state, custody battles with my parents that I was involved in, and use of substances.

I started to try harder when Tara and Kayleigh asked me what I wanted. I really wanted to play basketball... I got rewards for going to school, to see my best friend who lived a few hours away, and they provided me with other things I needed to feel comfortable at school when I did go. They kept showing up and when I was in need they supported me. As time went by there was more space in between hospitalizations and crisis... I went from monthly ER visits to every 4 months... then every 6... and as of today I haven’t been to the hospital for mental health issues since my 18th birthday, over 2 years ago.

Eventually I was living on my own and was homeless for a period of time, struggling with substance use and couch surfing. The crises I had were less about mental health and more about situations I was in and the fact that the only natural supports and peer groups I had were unsafe. I then turned 18 and decided to go stay with my grandmother. Tara and Kayleigh worked with me on my future goals and taking small steps to get there. There were a lot of setbacks (mom overdosed, dad car accident, asthma hospitalizations) but I knew I wanted to work and become my own person separate from my family. I was disappointed by my parents over and over when they didn’t offer support, begged me for money, picked up and sold my asthma medications for drug money, didn’t care for me or even call on my birthday. But this fueled me to focus and work harder.

I moved in with my boyfriend, got a job, eventually saved up and bought a car and re-engaged in schooling. I am taking GED classes and working regularly. I have worked really hard to set limits in my life and only engage with others if its healthy for me. Kayleigh and Tara have been very encouraging of this. I continue to be in regular contact with my grandmother and now have a good and mended relationship with my brother.

Tara and Kayleigh both held different roles at Families First but they were not separate roles in my brain. They were both responsive, helpful to have when something came up, unfazed, and non-judgmental to what was going on in my life or what decisions I made, good or bad.

Tara was able to move with me through the constant change, we were always adjusting to meet the need of the day and she was able to keep up to help me stay stable. Tara was an advocate and fought for my needs. Kayleigh was able to take the plans Tara and I made and present tangible supports and link me to resources and get me back on track. They were both relaxed and never judged me.

I am going to be successfully discharged from Families First in September. - “Jessica Monroe”

No Family Should Have To Struggle Alone

Development Report

We began the year in a hopeful place, in terms of the potential for hosting some of our annual events. Our Annual \$10,000 Raffle allows community members at-large to both support Families First and take a chance on winning a substantial prize with good odds. Friendraisers give us the opportunity to meet community members in small groups in a private home, where they can learn more about our work, and hear directly from a participant in our services regarding their impact. In addition, we have frequently hosted a small donor recognition dinner at our office in Elizabethtown, which provides additional opportunity for back and forth conversation about Families First and our services.

However, out of an abundance of caution, as summer approached we elected not to engage in these events for the second year in a row. We are hopeful that as the pandemic continues to ease, we will be able to consider these events once more.

We turned our focus to our annual appeal letter, small grants, and our annual Holiday Drives. This year we received grants from the Charles R. Wood Foundation, the Stewart’s Foundation, the United Way, and several gifts from the Adirondack Foundation, which are donor advised and are recognized in our donor list.

The Charles R. Wood Foundation gave us \$6,000 toward a training package for our Electronic Health Record, which we were able to divert towards our new EHR. Stewart’s gave us \$2,000 which historically we would have used for summer camp. This year, knowing that we might not be going to camp, we requested that it go toward the food shelf and/or Thanksgiving Drive as needed. The Essex Community Fund granted us \$3,600 through the ADK Foundation toward new laptops, which has become an ongoing need as we continue to add staff. We were also granted \$5,000 in ALICE funds from the United Way. These funds are directed flexibly to working families who may need assistance with pressing needs.

Our annual appeal brought in almost \$58,000 in unrestricted support, while our Holiday Drives raised \$4,790. Turkey donations were down considerably, and we do not know if this was pandemic or supply chain oriented.

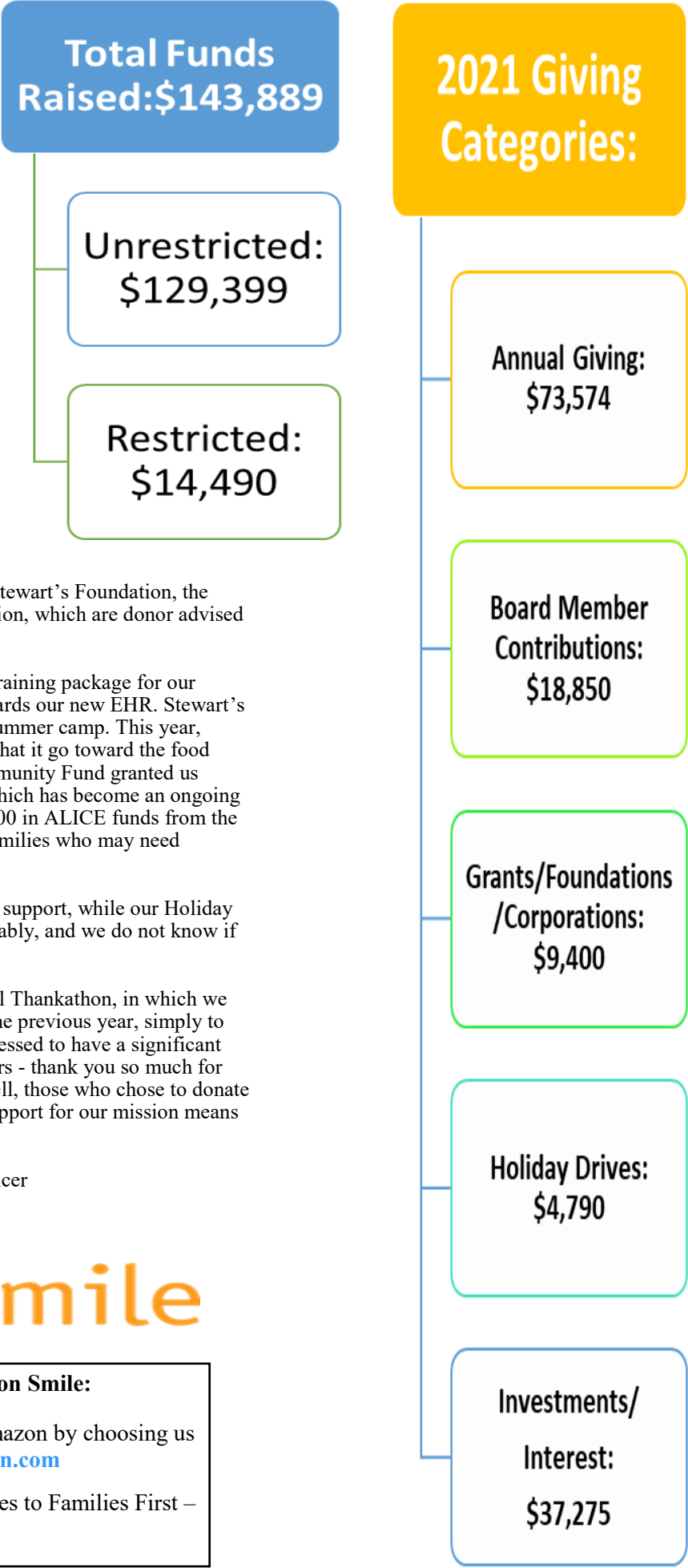


We closed out the year with our Annual Thankathon, in which we call every person that donated during the previous year, simply to thank them for their support. We are blessed to have a significant pool of very loyal and committed donors - thank you so much for your ongoing support! We thank, as well, those who chose to donate to us for the first time in 2021. Your support for our mission means a great deal.

Anne Griffin - Chief Development Officer



You Shop. Amazon gives - **Amazon Smile:**
Support Families First while shopping on Amazon by choosing us as your charity at smile.amazon.com
Amazon will donate 0.5% of eligible purchases to Families First – no fees, no extra cost.

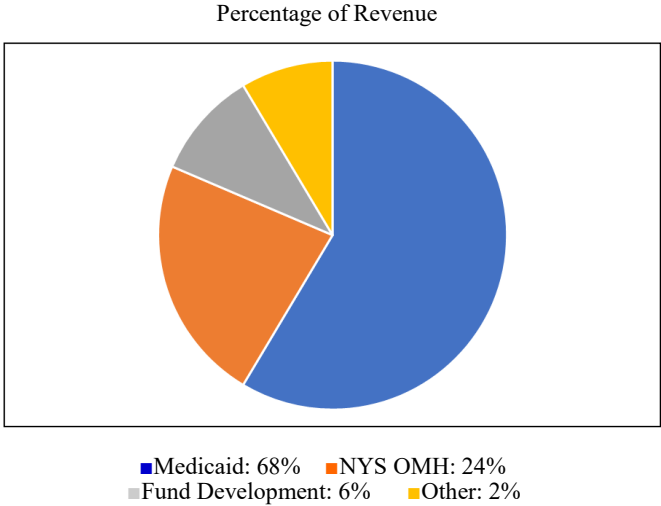


Financial Statement

Families First in Essex County, Inc., Condensed Financial Statements
Unaudited Year Ended December 31, 2021

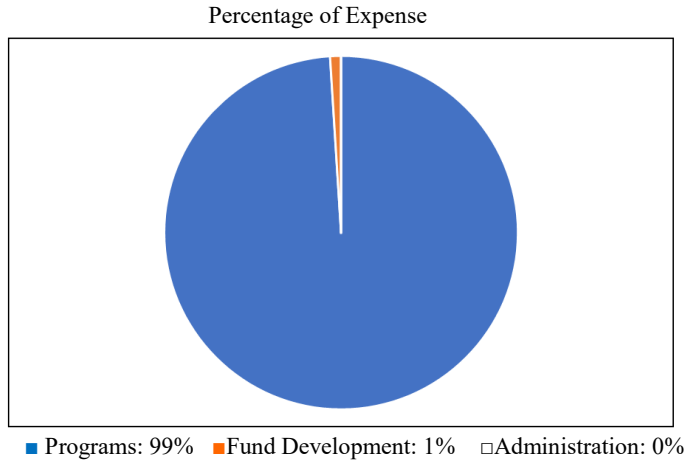
Revenues

Medicaid (Health Homes, CFTSS, HCBS)	\$1,582,590
Aid To Localities (NYS OMH)	\$ 558,169
Other (SOC Grant, UW ALICE Grant)	\$ 37,056
Fund Development (Restricted & Unrestricted)	\$ 143,889
Total Revenues	\$2,321,704



Expenses

Programs: (Health Homes, CFTSS, HCBS, Family Support, other)	\$2,205,178
Fund Development	\$ 30,155
Administration	\$ (7,352)
Total Expenses	\$ 2,227,981
Net Revenues	\$ 93,723



Fiscal Report

As the Finance/Audit Committee of the Board of Directors started their work in 2021, they had no idea how quickly they would run into a significant challenge and the need for some extremely important decisions. In March, our newly-hired CFO resigned her position at Families First and gave two weeks’ notice. As CEO, I quickly called an emergency Committee meeting and we began to plan for a new strategy. We did not believe that it would be possible to recruit a new CFO during Covid and on such short notice, so we began to reach out to our local not-for-profit counterparts for any creative solutions. We had been considering outsourcing things like payroll and some HR functions and wondered if anybody did the work of a CFO on an outsourced basis. After speaking with another local non-profit who said they were using a firm out of the Albany area for their financial services, I thought this might work for us. I reached out to DALLE Accounting in Watervliet, NY and set up a call to discuss what services they provided and if it might be a situation that would help meet our needs. Within a short period of time we had set up a three-month trial plan to work with DALLE. We very quickly realized that this was exactly what we had been looking for. During 2021, DALLE staff became a part of our team and were extremely helpful and responsive in managing the financial aspects of Families First. We have contracted to continue to work with DALLE for 2022. We also decided to outsource our Payroll systems and contracted with a company called Paycom who will also help manage our Human Resources function.



DALLE
ACCOUNTING AND CASH
MANAGEMENT, INC.

DALLE offers a team of accountants offering critical back office financial support to small businesses and non-profit organizations in a way that strengthens their organization and leadership. At DALLE we’ve created a special niche by providing strong accounting support and guidance plus regulatory compliance through a unique team-based model. Becoming the financial partner, you’ve always wanted while allowing the CEO to focus on the essentials.

Some other very important work overseen by our Finance/Audit Committee:

- A decision was made not to hold our annual \$10,000 fundraising raffle due to Covid uncertainties.
- A clean external Fiscal Audit of our 2020 finances resulted in no material weaknesses.
- Significant work was done in oversight of the Agency Investment and Endowment Accounts. The Committee reviewed the work and cost of our current investment manager and considered alternative providers. They decided to stay with Community Investment Services/ LPL Financial. They also reviewed our Investment Policies and Procedures and made a change to our investment ratios percentages, moving from 80%/20% to 70%/30% stocks/bonds. Both our Endowment and Investment Accounts did very well and are in good shape at the end of 2021!
- They worked diligently in reviewing the Agency Budget to inform the full Board as to our ability to add additional benefits for the staff (improved match in our 401k plan, better health insurance plan with higher premium amount paid by the Agency, and a new staff wellness benefit). They also gave financial approval for the Board to support the purchase of a new, much improved, EHR (electronic health record) system.
- They oversaw the growth in our Agency Budget with an increase of just under \$500,000 for 2022.

Thank you to the entire Finance/Audit Committee for their diligent work! (Joe Bogardus, Hillary Stransky, Sharon Cook, Shelley Winters, and Sue Reaser).

JoAnne Caswell, CEO & Joe Bogardus, Treasurer

2022 Budget - \$2,917,264

Medicaid: \$2,256,500	• Health Home Care Management, CFTSS, HCBS
NYS Office of Mental Health: \$471,125	• Family Peer Support, System Advocacy, Flexible Service Dollars, Non Medicaid Care Management, Outreach, Respite, Recreation & Fitness, Transportation
Fund Development: \$189,639	• Board Fundraising, System of Care Grant, Grants, Contracts, Interest

Annual Giving Report

Our Annual Giving Program runs from January 1 through December 31 each year. We recognize gifts made to the Annual or Endowment Funds and those gifts that were commemorative. A separate list recognizes donors, groups and businesses that supported our Holiday Drives. We regret that space does not allow us to list all those who supported our special event fundraisers. If you bought raffle tickets, or attended a fundraising event we appreciate your support and want you to know that each of these gifts has made a difference to Families First. Our apologies if your name has been inadvertently misspelled, omitted or incorrectly listed. Please call the Development Director for corrections.

Benefactors: (\$10,000 & Up)

Winifred Thomas **

Patrons: (\$5,000 - \$9,999)

Joseph and Linda Bogardus **

Daphne Hallowell **

Champions: (\$1,000 - \$4,999)

Adirondack Foundation - Essex Community Fund

Adirondack Foundation - Evergreen Fund *

Adirondack Foundation - Rhoades Family Fund *

Mary Elizabeth Alexander **

Babette Atz *

Cloudsplitter Foundation *

Barry and Sharon Cook *

Empty Bowl/Full Heart

Charles R. Wood Foundation *

George and Sam Chandler

Anonymous

Harold and Joan Feinbloom Family Foundation

Karen and Robert Ashline *

Keene Valley Congregational Church

Gerald Zahavi and Deborah Maxwell

Melissa Murphy **

Katharine Preston and John Bingham **

Clay and Sue Reaser * - In Memory of - Lee Kleinschmidt

Debora Rice and Dan Mason

Audrey Sparre

Stewart's Foundation **

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stransky *

Charles and Delia Thompson **

Wielandy Family Charitable Fund

Sponsors: (\$500 - \$999)

Ted and Catherine Blazer *

Rocky Bog Fund--Mr. and Mrs. Philip Bogdanovitch

Rogers - Carroll Family Foundation

Sponsors: (\$500 - \$999) - Continued

Monique Weston Claque **

Shelley Winters **

Margie and Scottie Emery – Ginn **

Janice Kyle and Hans Himelein **

Amy and David McNamara

Megan and Erik Young

Anonymous

New England Federal Credit Union

Patty and Peter Paine

Rolland and Donna Baribeau

James Rosenberg **

Sarah M Smith *

TrailNorth Federal Credit Union

Morris, Max, and Sarah Altman Trust

Supporters: (\$100 - \$499)

Robert Andrews and Margaret Wilson

John and Joanne Bartlett

Jim Kinley and Mary Bell

Dr. Laurie Bergamini

The Birch Store

S.E. and A.D. Bissell

Brian and Janet Bliss

Boquet Liquor Store-Terry McDougal **

Evelyn Brant

Timothy Brearton

Thomas Burleigh, Mr. *

Ann Burgess Cammack

Carol and Steven Valachovic

Champlain Contracting

Dr. Glen and Malinda Chapman - In Memory of - Dr. Ginger Weeks

Essex Community Church

Mount Moriah Presbyterian Church

Allan Clark

Tracey Colby

Catherine Conover Covert

Galen Crane and Cali Brooks

Jenifer Hale Deming *

Dr. and Mrs. Karin DeMuro

Therese Denton

Paul Dooling and Sandra Danussi

Supporters: (\$100 - \$499) - Continued

Susan Doolittle

John Doyle and Laura Sells-Doyle

Drs. Lorraine Duvall and P. Bruce Berra

Dominic and Melissa Eisinger **

Gail and Brad Else *

Erica and Peter Diestel

David and Bartel Fite

Len and JoAnn Folin *

Gap Foundation

Kirk Kellogg Foundation *

Rabbi Alec and Susan Friedmann

Dick and Susan Gaffney *

Henry and Michele Gasiorowski, MDs

Tobin and Susan Greschler

Jim and Sharon Hall

Bob and Carole Harsh

Evelyn Hatch *

Carla Hendrix

John and Peggy Hunn

Linda Jackson

Reverend and Mrs. Robert Johnson

Gregory and Carol Johnson

Bill and Meredith Johnston **

Wayne and Cathy Johnston

Richard and Joan Kelly **

Gilles Lamarche

Bernard Leerkes

Lussi Family

Timothy Mount and Lynne Macco

Malcolm and Judy Martin *

Sharon Martin

Anne B. McDonald *

William McMahon and Catherine LaRock-McMahon

Dr. Charles Moisan, Jr. **

Richard and Mona Morgan

Nick Muller *

Stephen Saxl and Alice Naude

Mr. and Mrs. Archie Nelson **

Mickie and Mike Parker

Charles and Gloria Pfund *

Elizabeth J. Pillard

Annual Giving Report - (continued)

Supporters: (\$100 - \$499) - Continued

James Pugsley **
Red and Annie Smith
Richard and Bethany Teitelbaum
Pete and Anita Sayers
Joyce Scovell **
Bev and Don Sears *
Dan and Betsy Senkowski
Katherine Sharp
Donald and Ellen Stiles **
Maria Stitt **
Richard P. Suttmeier **
Sylvia Norton and Joseph McCranel
George L. Topka * - *In Memory of -
Jamie Clark*
Charles and Anne Turek
Claude and Wanda Turner
Peter Weiland and Shannon Duffy
David and Mary Welch
Allison Whalen
Ken White **
Wade and Tracey Whitney
William and Mary Ellen Shakun
David and Heidi Yerkes
Bud Ziolkowski

Names in Bold are new donors
Names with an * are donors who have given to FF for 5 or more consecutive years
Names with an ** are donors who have given to FF for 10 or more consecutive years

Friends: (\$1 - \$99) - Continued


Jane Burleigh
Bob Claus
Janet and Bryan Coburn
Janet Cross
Judy Cross
Mr. and Mrs. James Cunningham
Jane DeBeauchamp
Scott and Lisa Decker
Ginny Delia
Stan and Barb Dickinson *
Maureen Ecclesine
Evelyn Patterson
Stephanie Frazier
Frontstream
Howard and Karen Glass
Norma Goff
Tony and Bunny Goodwin
Gordon Pratt Agency **
Laura J. Groshans
Lori Hall
Bruce and Nona Hoskins
Robert and Priscilla Hurd **
John and Karen Huttlinger *
Mary Ilacqua
Eugene and Theresa Ingleston *
Milton Dudley and Kathryn Kernan
Brian and Laura Kiely *
Col. George and Heidrun King
Kim Koch-Wright and Wayne Wright **
Terence and Mary Jane Lamb *
David and Lora Langston
Don and Jodi LaRock
Terry Lavin
Betty Light
George Maffey
James and Kathy Marshall
Patricia O. Marshall **
Bub's Pizza and Deli
Robert and Joanne McShane **
Linda Miller Clark
Michael and Carol Morris
Neil and Vicki Morse

Friends: (\$1-\$99) - Continued

Gay Olcott
Eugene and Janice Orlowski
Sherrell Osborn
Martha Lee and Frank Owen
Carol and Robert Palandrani
Gregory and Heather Perkins
Richard Arndt and Phyllis Perna
Hairs the Place *
Marlene Prescott
Jerry and Cynthia Pulsifer
LuAnn and Stacy Pulsifer
Peter and Lynne Reale
Mrs. and Mr. Vivian Reiner
Robert and Beverly Rice
Julie Robards
Matt and Caroline Roy
Walter and Dot Rushby
Elizabeth Rutkowski
Cynthia Schira
Nelson and Dianne Shapiro
Larry and Leslie Shipps *
Tom Smith
Sonja and Duane Finch
Donna Sonnett
Simone S. Stephens
Patti and Todd Stevens
Ms. Barbara R. Strowger
Anonymous
Rev. Bruce and Sarah Tamlyn
Jane Terlouw **
Kim Tiller and Philip McFadden
Town of Moriah Country Club
Helene and Larry Vanderburgh **
Dr. Francis and Anita Varga
Linda A. Warner
Ethel and Bernard Webb
Mona White

Bequest Society -

Anonymous
Winky Thomas
Trisha Forrest
Anne Griffin
Richard Kelly
Monique Weston Clague
H. Nicholas and Carol A. Muller
Helen Paul (realized)
Jamie Paul Clark (realized)
Henrietta Thomas (realized)



Holiday Drives: This includes businesses, individuals, groups or families who contributed to our Thanksgiving Food Drive, who “adopted” a child for Christmas giving, or made it possible for us to purchase gifts for teens. 100% of these contributions of food and gifts are distributed directly to families.



Thanksgiving

Boquet Liquor Store-Terry McDougal
Charles and Delia Thompson
Claude and Wanda Turner
Clay and Sue Reaser
Daphne Hallowell
Hairs the Place
Jackie and Skip Andrade
Judy Cross
Karen and Robert Ashline
Ken White
LuAnn and Stacy Pulsifer
Maria Stitt
Monette Stephens
Richard and Joan Kelly
Scott and Lisa Decker
Terence and Mary Jane Lamb

In 2021, 92 gift cards (to grocery stores) were given to families, in lieu of food baskets, due to the Coronavirus.

Christmas

Acadia Pezzolesi & Nick Vilardi
Adirondack Bank
Allan Clark
Amy Connor
Ausable Forks Volunteer Ambulance Service
Bowlwinkles
Carolyn Sicher
Champlain National Bank
Chazy Westport Communications
Chet and Sandy Woods
Dawn Maille
Darren Lawrence
Donna Farrell
Elizabethtown Lewis Emergency Squad
Essex County Public Health
Fitness Revolution
Ginny Miller
Hans Himelein and Janice Kyle
SUNY Plattsburgh, HDFR Organization
Housing Assistance Program of Essex County
Jackie Deyo
Jamie Marbut Hislop
Janelle Bausman

Christmas - Continued

Jerrica Pelkey
Karen and Rob DeMuro
Karen Ashline
Kari LeClair
Keene Fitness/Keene Central School
Keene Valley Congregational Church
Ken White
Lake Placid Pub & Brewery
Leslic Kopec
Lexie Hislop
Linda Hudson
Linda Pezzolesi
Lisa and John Sheehan
Lori Aikens
Malcolm and Judy Martin
Maria Stitt
Melanie Lincoln
Morgan Conley
Mountain Lake Services
NBT Bank
Norma & Arthur Rice
Northwood School
Olivia Harrison
Pat O'Dell
Pete and Anita Sayers
Peter Weiland and Shannon Duffy
Richard and Joan Kelly
Richard and Mona Morgan
ROOST - Lake Placid Chamber of Commerce
Robyn Anson
Sharon Haseltine
Sharon Wilson
Shelley Winters
Sue Reaser
Sun Community News
Susie Saska Taylor
Sylvia Norton and Joseph McCranel
Ted and Catherine Blazer
Thomas and Hillary Stransky
Tracie Hennessey
Walter and Dot Rushby
Whitney Jackson
William and Mary Ellen Shakun

In 2021, gifts were distributed to 263 kids (105 families) throughout the region.