

the family resource



News and Views from Family Resources

Fall 2004

Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace Children's Program Joins Family Resources



The late Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace put Allegheny County ahead of the national welfare reform curve in 1995 when she initiated the Fund for Children's Programs. She designed the programs with residents of the county's public housing communities after posing one question: "What do you need to keep your children safe?"

The overwhelming response from parents entering the workforce was after-school care and weekend and summer programs for their children.

Ms. Lovelace's vision for safe, enriching, and enjoyable activities for children in public and subsidized housing quickly became a reality. Her innovative idea developed into

a collaborative effort among The Pittsburgh Foundation, Allegheny County's Department of Human Services' Office of Children, Youth, and Families (CYF), the Housing Authority of Pittsburgh, and the Allegheny County Housing Authority.

continued inside...



FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Walter Howard Smith, Jr., Ph.D.

Protecting children from abuse, family and community violence, and neglect is the vision of Family Resources. A free, democratic society depends on children being able to grow up safe from harm in order to learn citizenship and fully participate in the opportunities of freedom.

Children exposed to violence will more likely have chronic health problems, perform more poorly in school, become incarcerated, and experience serious problems in social and family relationships. These consequences impact all of us. Whether we live in the poorest or wealthiest communities of America, millions of children growing up with the burden of violence cripples and burdens us all. Preventing child abuse is not a luxury for a free society. It is vital.

Family Resources focuses its mission on low-income, working-class, and middle-income families because many of these children have less access to high-quality family support and healthcare services. We prevent child abuse by reaching at-risk families with parent education, emotional support, child care, and psychotherapy. We make sure that mothers with young children have food, beds, and someone to talk to about their challenges and frustrations. We make sure that children who have experienced sexual abuse have safe families and a safe place to figure out how to heal. We help re-establish stability during family crises that place children at risk of abuse and neglect.

Our strategy is to combine more than 20 services to address the unique needs of each family we engage, reaching families in their homes and communities, at our offices, and at our 230-acre Family Retreat Center.

The addition of the Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace (BJWL) Children's Program to our comprehensive services for families builds on our vision for Family Resources by using many different strategies to keep children safe. BJWL services assure safety and enhance learning and citizenship by providing high-quality after-school care for children in public housing communities.

I am proud of the work of BJWL staff and the difference they make in the lives of children. I am pleased with the perfect fit BJWL has with our mission, vision, and traditional services. BJWL's coming to Family Resources has re-energized our work.

The staff and the board of Family Resources will relentlessly strive to protect children in families and communities. Lions, elephants, chimpanzees, and humans protect their young because it is fundamental to survival. People have told me that preventing child abuse is useless and the goal unreachable. I say we have no choice.

No matter how difficult, no matter how frustrating, no matter how daunting the task, a decent society protects its children from harm and violence. We will remain relentless.

BJWL continued...

The on-site programs, funded by CYF and managed and funded by The Pittsburgh Foundation, helped welfare recipients stay employed by filling in the cracks in their support system. They also engaged public housing residents in the creation, governance and implementation of the programs, and they helped CYF provide child abuse prevention services.

From 1995 to 1997, the programs were run during the summer, and in the fall of 1997 after-school programs were offered in eight housing communities. In 1999 the program evolved to include year-round activities for children ages 5 to 12. When Ms. Lovelace died in 2001, The Pittsburgh Foundation renamed the programs The Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace Children's Programs (BJWL) to honor her.

The long-term future and stability of BJWL is of paramount importance to The Pittsburgh Foundation. To assure its permanence, the board of The Pittsburgh Foundation sought a nonprofit home in the community. They chose Family Resources because its mission is consistent with the values, beliefs and goals of BJWL and because of its city- and county-wide presence.

On July 1, 2004, Family Resources welcomed BJWL and its staff of 93. Today BJWL operates 52 weeks a year, Monday through Saturday, and serves approximately 900 children in Allegheny County, including the City of Pittsburgh.

Rose Smiley, PhD, MPH, MSW, LSW, directs the program and is supported by her staff at the 18 public housing sites where the program is based and residents on the community housing boards.

Family Resources continues to promote the core values and fundamental beliefs of BJWL, including ensuring child safety and well being, family preservation, neighborhood stabilization, and strengthening the confidence and dedication of individuals and the community.

“The success of the program should go to Beverly, The Pittsburgh Foundation, CYF, and the countless number of public housing residents who believe in their communities. They realized that we as a society must take responsibility for helping kids to have a vision for their future as adults,” says Dr. Smiley.

Although most of the parents in the Northview Heights community never met the architects of BJWL, they are extremely grateful for its presence.

Patricia Bagley, program coordinator for the site in Northview Heights, knows how vital the program is to the families in all 18 sites. “To work in the BJWL program, you must love children, and everyone here does. We have 45 children enrolled during this school year, and over the summer months we have more.”

Mrs. Bagley beams when she surveys a group room filled with new computers purchased with funds from The Pittsburgh Foundation. A six-week computer course is offered to children, and they are taught word processing and other programs by instructors from the YMCA of Pittsburgh. Upon completion of the course, each child receives a certificate and takes home a reconditioned, upgraded computer and printer donated by the Pennsylvania Federal Property Division.

The reading room holds hundreds of books and word games bought with funds from the Heinz Endowments and The Pittsburgh Foundation. These foundations also provide financial support for certified teachers and tutors who coach students at all levels who need extra help with reading.

Robin* has been a resident of Northview Heights for three years. Her 11-year-old son Quinton was failing in school because he could not comprehend what he was reading, so Robin enrolled him in the reading program. “Quinton was so frustrated, and his grades were terrible. I was afraid he might drop out of school. The reading program was wonderful and set realistic goals for him. Before long, Quinton was reading everything and understanding it. I think he might make the honor roll this year.”

BJWL also offers opportunities for recreation, socialization and homework assistance.

Brenda*, a mother of three children between the ages of six and 16, has only praise for BJWL. “I have a full-time job, and I attend night school at Pitt twice a week, so I’m not home when my two younger children get off the school bus. I know they will be safe and well cared for by the staff because it’s like an extended family.

“My children love the cultural activities, the field trips, and the educational programs, too,” notes Brenda. “People here tell me how my children are doing. When parents know their children are in a safe environment, it brings tremendous peace of mind. A happy parent is necessary for a happy child.”

Sharon’s* daughter Angela is 15 now, and Sharon credits BJWL with helping Angela realize her potential. “Angela learned how

to deal with people, how to articulate her thoughts and feelings. The staff taught her how to conduct herself during an employment interview, and this year Angela had her first summer job at an amusement park. She’s so proud of herself, and she loved getting a paycheck. Now she’s talking about going to college.”

There are many BJWL success stories. Last year, Mrs. Bagley met two former participants of the program in the parking lot of Northview Heights. The young men worked in another city and had returned home to visit their families. Mrs. Bagley reminisced about their days in the program, and they recalled how she would put her arms around them and say, “I love you and want you to do well.” By the end of the conversation, both men volunteered to help Mrs. Bagley move furniture and clean the site.

BJWL is a perfect fit with Family Resources. Residents of the 18 communities served by BJWL can benefit from Family Resources programs, such as support groups, psychotherapy, The Nurturing Course, and the Parent-Teen Conflict Program.

“We are delighted with the association between BJWL and Family Resources,” said Dr. Walter H. Smith, Jr., executive director of Family Resources. “With our continuum of primary prevention services, family support and treatment services, we will be able to respond to the needs of many families in the communities served by BJWL.”

More information on The Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace Children’s Programs can be obtained from Dr. Rose Smiley, 412-363-1702.

**Names have been changed.*

FAMILY RESOURCES IN MCKEESPORT

Providing services to the residents of the Mon Valley



Seven years ago, Nancy* and her two young children visited the Family Resources office in McKeesport. Nancy was referred by the district justice when she filed a restraining order against her abusive husband. “You need to understand the effect your violent relationship has on both you and your children,” the district justice told her. “Family Resources has free support groups that can help you.”

The Family Resources staff listened sympathetically to Nancy and suggested she join a weekly Healthy Relationships support group facilitated by staff. There she met other men and women coping with similar family issues. The candid sharing among the support group members helped Nancy feel comfortable. Gradually, she became receptive to the idea that she could make life better for herself and her children.

Nancy’s transformation from an abused spouse to a self-supporting single mother was slow. The first thing she needed was an income of her own. A member of the support group suggested that she sell cosmetics from her home, something Nancy had never thought of trying before.

As Nancy began earning money, her self confidence grew. The support group encouraged her through her triumphs and disappointments. Four years later, Nancy found a full-time job, helping give her the courage to leave her husband. Today, she and her children have their own apartment, and they have a strong, loving relationship.

“We offer support groups and home visiting, plus we have programming such as The Nurturing Course and the International Outreach Program” says Rose Alexander Staples, supervisor of prevention services at McKeesport. Rose and her staff oversee a variety of parent support groups targeted to specific audiences.

A favorite is Mom’s Night Out, a program reminiscent of the “coffee klatch” of the 1950s. This group of mothers meets twice a month just to talk and relax. The moms can work on their craft projects, read, rest or listen to a guest presenter while staff members play

with their children in a separate room. “The program reduces the isolation some mothers feel,” notes Rose. “When they talk to each other, they realize they are not alone, and it helps them handle the struggles in their lives more effectively.”

The Parent/Grandparent Support Group, which meets twice a month, is a new program led by group members and facilitated by staff. The number of grandparents with custody of their grandchildren has increased dramatically, so there is a huge demand for this program. Rose observes, “Grandparents, parents and other caregivers need support. If a child’s mother or father is an unfit parent, the grandparents often feel responsible. They worry about their parenting skills, about being able to raise a healthy, happy grandchild. Our program gives them the opportunity to discuss their concerns and share their experiences.”

Parents Anonymous is a self-help group geared to parents who have hit, beaten or threatened their children as well as those who have expressed concerns about their own parenting skills or fear they may abuse their children. This group meets each Friday and is co-led by parents and a trained facilitator. “Parents Anonymous has taught our parents healthy techniques for disciplining their children and has helped them break the cycle of abuse,” says Rose.

The staff at McKeesport has learned a great deal from the participants of the weekly Teen Parent Support Group, particularly how to connect with young adults and help them become good parents. Rose comments, “Some of the girls have no idea how to care for a baby because their mothers never nurtured them. They really want to be loving mothers. We teach them childcare basics and answer their questions.”

In addition to the community, many of the young women and men participating in the Teen Parent Support Group come through residential programs for troubled teens. At first, some of the teens are reluctant to become involved, but soon they are eager to

meet each week. They often suggest topics for discussion, such as parenting, sex, dating, HIV, peer pressure, and drugs.

The teen parents also attend a 12-week Nurturing Course that teaches them how to develop healthy and non-abusive family relationships.

The McKeesport site offers a Playgroup each Friday morning. Caregivers with children between the ages of birth to five can bring their children for “free play” followed by singing, arts and crafts, and snack time. The adults have time for conversation and socialization, and they have an opportunity to engage in positive interaction with their children.

For parents with children aged two to five, there is a weekly Early Learning Group designed to be an intermediate step from home to pre-school. The group is led by parents and encourages a love for learning through play. It also helps children separate from parents and accept direction from others.

Family Resources International Outreach Program provides emotional and social support for isolated members of the community who do not speak English fluently. There is help with life skills, coaching in parenting skills, and advocacy in dealing with cultural and language barriers.

Rose recalls a family whose child was removed from the home by Allegheny County’s Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF) for child abuse. “The father was a Sudanese refugee who had disciplined his son according to his tradition. When the boy’s teacher saw bruises on him, she alerted CYF.”

Family Resources was called to intervene. Staff met with the distraught family and they talked about how discipline is viewed in this culture. The parents were very cooperative and receptive to help. After the parents attended the mandated Nurturing Course, they were reunited with their son.

The International Outreach Program assists refugees and immigrants from Liberia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Central and South America.

Staff also provides in-home visits for parents of young children and expectant parents. “We visit homes to give emotional and social support to isolated parents, including teen parents,” notes Rose. “We tell families about Family Resources services and programs, help them with life skills, and coach them in parenting skills and help them connect with support groups and other resources in the community.”

The McKeesport staff can be found at community health fairs and schools throughout the Mon Valley. During April, National Child Abuse Prevention Month, staff members are asked to speak to students about physical and sexual abuse. The local police departments and the social service departments of UPMC McKeesport and UPMC Braddock make referrals to the McKeesport site.

Family Resources offers outpatient psychotherapy services in McKeesport for children and families affected by child abuse. Services include individual, family, collateral, group, couples, and play therapy, group therapy for non-abusing parents, and therapy for adults who were abused or neglected as children.

In addition, Family Resources is now the lead agency for Community Connections for Families (CCF) in McKeesport. CCF ensures access to a wide range of services for children between six and 14 years of age who have severe emotional disorders and their families. This program includes outreach, parent support, advocacy in school and community settings, and parent empowerment.

To learn more about the services at McKeesport, or to enroll in a program, call 412-363-1702.

**Name has been changed.*

OUR FAMILIES SHARE THEIR STORIES

At the Ninth Annual Child Abuse Prevention Month Awards and Appreciation Benefit in April 2004, these parents shared their feelings about the important role Family Resources played in their lives.

Who is a victim in your eyes? It could be someone in your family, yourself, or maybe the person sitting next to you right now!

Nobody plans or wants to be a victim of domestic violence. I suffered physical and mental abuse in front of my children just about every day for years. Thinking as long as he does not hit the kids, it will be okay. They are young; they will never remember what is happening.

That was the single worst mistake and horribly wrong decision I have ever made in my life. My two beautiful girls are four and five, and they remember just about every beating I received. They remember details that I don't even remember. They were removed from me for one year until I got away from their father and proved that I could stay away. It was the hardest and lowest time in my life.

I learned to look through my daughters' eyes and see and feel their pain. The emotional damage we caused was astronomical. I now have my girls back and we could not be happier, although I know we have a very long, long way to go to recovery.

Family Resources Therapeutic Parents' and Children's Center has been a haven for all three of us. The teachers are so caring, recognizing what each child needs and helping them achieve their goals.

With my girls it has been self-esteem, caring about other people, and boundaries, and this is just scratching the surface of the type of things they can help families and children with. In addition to the Preschool,

my children have benefited from great play therapy sessions, where they get to play out what they feel without knowing it.

Both services have been a godsend to my family. I am encouraged to participate as much as I want to. I love to go and hang out in the classroom to watch them interact with their friends and teachers. It is wonderful. Not only can I participate by coming to the classroom, there are also family nights once a month. Families are encouraged to interact with the other families, and we talk about topics such as safety, body boundaries and child development.

Family Resources Therapeutic Parents' and Children's Center has helped to make my family whole again. They were here for me and my children, offering a safe place to talk about all of the violence we have endured. The teachers—Veronica, Abbe and Melissa—and all the volunteers in my eyes are angels.

— **Sandra***

Last year, our daughter, Julie*, who is now 17, was hanging out with the wrong crowd at school, cutting classes, doing drugs, lying and mouthing off at home. At school, she claimed that her mother had hit her. The dean of students called in CYF.

Meanwhile, to get high, she was using over-the-counter drugs—Nyquil, Sudafed—and other things that can act like LSD if you take enough of them. But those drugs can also kill you. One day, she cut classes and

left school with her boyfriend. The school called the police who found her crawling on a bridge. She was taken to the hospital. They told us she could have died from the overdose and she was monitored in their cardiac care unit for a few days until she recovered.

She was sent to a facility for drug treatment. At this point, we got involved with Family Resources. There was no way we could manage this situation without help.

Between all the medical appointments, court hearings, conferences at school, and everybody fighting at home, we were wondering how much more this kid could put us through. We had no time for ourselves. At work, they told me that if I missed one more day I was done.

The two counselors from Family Resources, Kim and Greg, were a godsend. They assured us that they would be there for the whole family, and they were. They said to call them anytime, day or night, if we needed help, and they'd call right back. And they did.

They helped intercede on Julie's behalf at her school and they were our advocate when we couldn't do for ourselves. They showed us how to let Julie handle things... not to think ahead for her and try to prevent problems but to let her take responsibility for her decisions.

We got a lot out of it. I was astounded at how they were able to develop a trusting relationship with everybody in the family. Julie is in a different school now and doing better. Her grades are great, and she's getting As and Bs.

Things aren't perfect but they're much better. We learned how to deal with our kids and still live our lives. I don't think there are enough words to explain how much Kim and Greg helped.

— **Chuck***

**Names have been changed.*

SENATOR ORIE SUPPORTS FAMILY RESOURCES

Family Resources is very grateful to State Senator Jane C. Orie of Senate District 40 for her support of an amendment to Governor Edward Rendell's 2004 Capital Budget that includes an allocation of \$925,000 for renovations to the Family Retreat Center.

We look forward to working with Governor Rendell to have the funding released.

Senator Orie represents those living in portions of northern Allegheny County and southern and central Butler County. She has led the fight for improvements in child abuse prevention as well as other family-focused issues. Her legislative initiatives and activities to combat child abuse and domestic violence have raised awareness in the Commonwealth and have helped direct more funding and attention to these areas. She annually sponsors resolutions designating April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.



Thank you, Senator Orie, for your continued support.

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Please tell your friends and family about iGive.com. This is a wonderful way to donate money to help Family Resources prevent and treat child abuse.

Family Resources Wish List

- Family Resources is seeking the names of professional and community groups that may wish to hear a presentation by staff.
- The International Outreach Program needs volunteers fluent in Spanish, Swahili, Arabic and Pashto.
- The Family Retreat Center needs sleds, toboggans, an electric dryer, portable cribs, metal flatware, playground equipment, and vacuum cleaners.

To learn more, please contact the Development Office at Family Resources, 412-363-1702, ext. 1168, or info@familyresourcesofpa.org



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You may use the form below to make a tax-deductible gift to Family Resources. Here's how your contribution will make a difference:

- \$250 provides a weekend retreat for a family of four
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If you would like to make a contribution in the form of a stock transfer, please call the Development Office at 412-363-1702, ext. 1168.

Thank you.

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- Community Connections for Families
- Crisis Intervention Services
- Parent-Teen Conflict Program
- Outpatient Psychotherapy Services
- Therapeutic Parents' and Children's Center
- Family-Based Mental Health Services
- Intake, Information, and Referral
- Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace Children's Program
- Child Abuse Prevention Month
- One Kind Word
- Professional Conferences
- The Parent Education Network
- Western PA Training Collaborative

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On the web: www.familyresourcesofpa.org
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