



# FAMILY HEROES

*of*

*2009  
Annual  
Report*

## NEW PROGRAMS

This past year, FAMILYConnections expanded its services and deepened its commitment to those people throughout Essex County who are living with serious and persistent mental illness. Located in its own brand-new homelike facility, Wellness House is an Intensive Outpatient (IOP) mental health program, which includes services for those with co-occurring substance abuse and/or developmental disabilities.



Based on the innovative Wellness and Recovery Model of the NJ Division of Mental Health Services, Wellness House is a new concept in care, in which:

- People with serious and persistent mental illness are treated as full partners in the planning of their care;
- Treatment is customized for each individual and delivered in a home-like setting, with respect and hope, and;
- Services include all the components necessary to empower participants to maximize their independence and self-sufficiency, supported by peers and family.



The newest member of our family of programs is StartStrong, a Therapeutic Nursery for Essex County children facing serious emotional and behavioral challenges. StartStrong is an intensive, nurturing, 5-day-a-week program serving children and their families with a rich array of services, including: individual and group play therapy; art, drama, and movement therapy; evidence-based child and family curricula; psychiatric services; speech & language services; yoga; round-trip transportation; and family nights and other parent supports.

Housed in a brand-new custom-designed facility in East Orange, StartStrong's multidisciplinary staff of 14 are dedicated to nurturing both the child and the family, so that children will benefit from decreased physical aggression, anxiety, depression, and other symptoms of trauma, while increasing their conflict resolution skills, empathy, self-esteem, and school readiness. Simultaneously, their parents will develop stronger skills in positive discipline, consistent limit-setting, effective family communication, stimulation of learning, and involvement in their children's education.

### PrePARE a Child Campaign Success

PrePARE is our award-winning preschool program to nurture children's social skills, impulse control, empathy, and safety, while also training both teachers and parents to better foster their children's success. But despite the program's proven success, we lost our funding due to the economic downturn.

Then a \$50,000 Challenge Grant from the Gail and James Kellogg Family Fund launched the PrePARE a Child Campaign in the Fall of 2009. Thanks to the hard work of our Board and the support of our loyal donors, this campaign not only met, but exceeded the challenge, and a total of \$122,000 was raised to insure that hundreds of local preschoolers will continue to benefit from PrePARE services, building their confidence, social and communication skills, and personal safety.

Nationwide research confirms that PrePARE's early-impact model improves reading and math skills and reduces future school problems, substance abuse and criminal behavior right up into adulthood.



## One of the best things about working at FAMILYConnections is being surrounded everyday by heroes.

Some people think of heroes as characters in great legends or famous figures of wartime – not ordinary people. But we agree with the scholar Joseph Campbell, who said there is no such thing as an ordinary man, woman or child.

More than four thousand heroes came to FAMILYConnections this year, and the battles they fought – against poverty, unemployment, physical & sexual abuse, addiction, and mental illness – require the same extraordinary strength of character and willpower that we associate with famous names in literature and history.

So we are saluting four of our heroes in these pages – four of the four thousand who this year had the strength to come to FAMILY Connections and change and grow and make their worlds better.

Another quality of heroes is that they put the well-being of others ahead of their own. So we want also to salute the dedicated staff of FAMILYConnections and the members of our Board of Trustees and President's Circle, all of whom dedicate their professional skills, their passion, and their precious time to ensure our success.

This year, that success has included all of the positive Outcomes listed later in this report. It also includes the first anniversary of our innovative Wellness House program for adults living with serious and persistent mental illness, and the launch of StartStrong, our brand new five-day-a-week

Therapeutic Nursery for children with severe emotional and behavioral challenges. In addition, we concluded a successful Challenge Grant campaign, raising \$122,000 to save our award-winning PrePARE program and thus ensuring that local preschoolers will continue to develop the social and emotional skills they need to grow and thrive.

So, despite difficult times, filled with economic uncertainty and unrest, we celebrate a year of success. Many thanks to our heroic consumers, staff and Board – and thanks also to all of you who donate to and support our work. Because the final quality of heroes is that they give of themselves for the good of others and the community. And your dollars are the driving force behind everything we do. You are the ones who make it possible for thousands of ordinary people to find their extraordinary, inner hero.

*“There is no such thing as an ordinary man, woman or child.”*



*Paula Sabreen*  
Paula Sabreen  
Executive Director



*Roger L. Manshel*  
Roger Manshel  
President, Board of Trustees



“I was 18 and pregnant and had no place to live. I was about to drop out of school and take the easy way out.”

The people at The Loft helped me see I didn't have to drop out. They talked to my teachers. They took me to my doctors appointments. They helped me find a place to live and came to my house.

At The Loft I realized that there are people who will help you. I found out what I wanted. And I found out that you have to work hard. Because if you do, you can reach your goals. At first, I felt like I couldn't fit in

going to school when I was pregnant – but I stuck it out. And I got my diploma. Now I'm working two jobs, I have my own apartment, and I'm on the Dean's List at Essex County College. The Loft was there whenever and whatever I needed. And they still visit me.

If you have a baby, you need to better yourself so you can take care of him. And when you have a good job and you're taking care of yourself and your child, that's the best feeling ever.

# FAMILY *of* HEROES



*Yveline*



Jeannette

## FAMILY *of* HEROES

“ I was raised in an emotionally abusive household. ”

**T**hen I married a man who was just like my father. We adopted our kids from the Ukraine when they were 15 months and 18 months old. It turned out both of them had pretty serious special needs.

At the same time that I was separating from my husband, we were charged with abuse and neglect and DYFS took the kids away. Stuff had happened that shouldn't have happened. I wasn't a strong person. The best thing was that they took my kids and got me to Reunity House.

When I got there, nobody believed I'd ever get my kids back. But I never missed a meeting and I learned to trust the counselors. They helped me learn things about myself. Every baby step of progress I made, they were there to cheer me on. They gave me my strength back.

I learned you have to take care of yourself first before you can take care of your kids. Now, for the first time, I'm really enjoying life and enjoying my kids. I'm capable of taking care of them in a calm way, even though they have very special needs.

I have great family and friends. And I have Reunity House. When I have a bad day, I talk to my supports and I just keep climbing up the hill. There's not a day goes by that I don't remember what it was like when I didn't have my kids. So whatever I have to do to help them, I just do it. And the bottom line is, we're together. And as long as we keep talking to each other and trusting each other, there's nothing we can't accomplish.



Alaizha

# FAMILY *of* HEROES

“FAMILYConnections helped me understand my feelings.”

### Great-Grandmother Nellie

Alaizha's father and mother weren't doing the right things. Her mother ran wild and her father is in jail. So when she was four years old, I went to Court and got custody of her.

Two years ago, we lost her great-grandfather, who was her father figure. That hit her hard. And I was concerned because she was running with some bad kids.

Since coming to FAMILYConnections, she's gotten over some of her wildness. She loves her counselors. She's very smart and she's definitely paying more attention to her studies.

I'm 84 but God gave me strength so I just do what I can. I try to teach her manners and how to be a good girl.

### Alaizha

In 6th grade, my great-grandfather died. I was acting out, getting suspended, getting into a lot of stuff, and not talking about what was going on inside me. I kept it all inside.

I'm a very emotional person and my counselors at FAMILYConnections helped me understand my feelings. I don't break down like I used to. I learned to express myself through talking and writing poetry and not through getting into trouble.

Now I have confidence in myself and I'm doing better in school. I'm a strong person after all I've been through. If FAMILYConnections didn't turn me around and help me find my strength, I'd probably be in big trouble now.

Kids should know: You're not alone. You need to talk to someone who listens and makes you happy. And express how you feel. If you draw, then draw. If you sing, then sing.

“When I came to FAMILYConnections, I hadn’t had a job in 2 years.”

I had no driver’s license. I had family problems, anger issues, substance abuse issues. And most of all, I wasn’t taking care of my kids.

In the StrongFathers program, I learned about my weaknesses – no motivation, never getting things done. They taught me about setting goals and I found I could set goals and do things one by one. I started getting things done and it made me feel good about myself.

Before, I didn’t want other people to tell me what to do. But my counselor made me believe I could change. He’s my inspiration. He helped me with my anger, so now I catch myself before it happens. I let things slide off my back.

He also connected me to a job. And most of all, he taught me patience with my children.

I’ve been clean for a year now. I got my license, got a job, got a car. And I got joint custody of my children. I have confidence in myself now.

I had to do it for my children. They’re my motivation and my strength. I’ve graduated from StrongFathers but I still go in to help the other men. I get support and direction and structure. Every time I go there, I learn something.

People say I’m a role model now. But I don’t see myself as a role model. I’m just a man trying to take care of his kids.

# FAMILY *of* HEROES Carnell





## EXAMPLES OF OUR OUTCOMES

| Program Name / Outcomes Measured   | Objective | Actual |
|--|-----------|--------|
| <b>PrePARE (Preschool Program for Social &amp; Emotional Development)</b><br>Children demonstrating increased social skills and decreased problem behavior   | 75%       | 93%    |
| Children demonstrating increased knowledge of personal safety skills and sexual abuse awareness skills   | 75%       | 92%    |
| <b>DREAMS of Essex (for Victims of Domestic Violence)</b><br>Reduce overall Post Traumatic Stress for participating children   | 75%       | 100%   |
| Improve parenting and coping skills of participating parents   | 75%       | 83%    |
| Improve family cohesion and stability of participating families  | 75%       | 83%    |
| <b>The Loft at Columbia High School (School-Based Youth Services)</b><br>Students who graduate from the "Bridge to Success" Summer Program who have 1 or fewer disciplinary referrals in the following school year | 50%       | 85%    |
| <b>Outreach to At-Risk Youth (Prevention Program)</b><br>Youth demonstrating increased knowledge of pregnancy and HIV-STI prevention skills  | 75%       | 90%    |
| Youth demonstrating increased ability and confidence in refusal skills relating to high-risk behaviors   | 75%       | 85%    |
| <b>Reunity House (Family Reunification)</b><br>Number of Families Reunified in 2009  | 34        | 35     |
| % of Families reunified in 2008 who remained stable throughout 2009  | 87%       | 92%    |
| <b>Outpatient Mental Health Services</b><br>Individuals/Families demonstrating improved communications skills and support of one another   | 70%       | 93%    |
| Individuals/Families demonstrating improved family roles & boundaries  | 70%       | 96%    |
| Individuals demonstrating improved ability to manage stress  | 70%       | 95%    |
| Children/adolescents demonstrating improved behavior in school and decreased criminal and/or severe acting out behaviors.  | 60%       | 93%    |
| <b>Outpatient Substance Abuse Program (OSAP)</b><br>Clients graduating from program drug and alcohol-free  | 75%       | 72%    |
| Clients reporting reduced family/partner conflict and improved family functioning  | 75%       | 81%    |
| Clients at graduation who had either obtained a full-time job or were enrolled in a job training program   | 75%       | 92%    |
| <b>Family Crisis Intervention Program (Youth &amp; Family Counseling)</b><br>Families reporting that their crisis had been successfully managed  | 75%       | 86%    |
| Juveniles demonstrating a decrease in delinquent behavior  | 75%       | 78%    |

# 2009 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2009  
(With Summarized Comparative Totals for  
the Year Ended June 30, 2008)



| <b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>            | Operations         | Unrestricted<br>Property & Eqpt. | Total              | Temporarily<br>Restricted | 2009 Total         | 2008 Total         |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Support:</b>                       |                    |                                  |                    |                           |                    |                    |
| Grants and contracts                  | \$7,738,605        | 0                                | \$7,738,605        | 0                         | \$7,738,605        | \$6,650,944        |
| Contributions                         | 252,636            | 0                                | 252,636            | 0                         | 252,636            | 274,894            |
|                                       | 7,991,241          | 0                                | 7,991,241          | 0                         | 7,991,241          | 6,925,838          |
| <b>Revenue:</b>                       |                    |                                  |                    |                           |                    |                    |
| Patient Fees                          | \$758,552          | 0                                | \$758,552          | 0                         | \$758,552          | \$659,214          |
| Special Events                        | 89,442             | 0                                | 89,442             | 0                         | 89,442             | 114,787            |
|                                       | 847,994            | 0                                | 847,994            | 0                         | 847,994            | 774,001            |
| <b>Total Support and Revenue</b>      | <b>8,839,235</b>   | <b>0</b>                         | <b>8,839,235</b>   | <b>0</b>                  | <b>839,235</b>     | <b>7,699,839</b>   |
| Net assets released from restrictions |                    |                                  |                    |                           |                    |                    |
| Satisfaction of program restrictions  | 148,307            | 0                                | 148,307            | (148,307)                 | 0                  | 0                  |
|                                       | <b>8,987,542</b>   | <b>0</b>                         | <b>8,987,542</b>   | <b>(148,307)</b>          | <b>8,839,235</b>   | <b>7,699,839</b>   |
| <b>EXPENSES:</b>                      |                    |                                  |                    |                           |                    |                    |
| Program Services                      | \$7,635,907        | \$105,704                        | \$7,741,611        | 0                         | \$7,741,611        | \$6,273,775        |
| Supporting Services                   | 1,201,862 "        | 48,878                           | 1,250,740          | 0                         | 1,250,740          | 854,618            |
|                                       | 8,837,769          | 154,582                          | 8,992,351          | 0                         | 8,992,351          | 7,128,393          |
| <b>INCOME (LOSS) FROM OPERATIONS</b>  | <b>149,773</b>     | <b>(154,582)</b>                 | <b>(4,809)</b>     | <b>(148,307)</b>          | <b>(153,116)</b>   | <b>571,446</b>     |
| NON-OPERATING REVENUES (EXPENSES):    |                    |                                  |                    |                           |                    |                    |
| Unrealized (loss) on investments      | \$(372,594)        | 0                                | \$(372,594)        | 0                         | \$(372,594)        | \$(202,412)        |
| Investment Income/(loss)              | (126,445)          | 0                                | (126,445)          | 0                         | (126,445)          | 106,402            |
| Loss on Disposal of Assets            | (20,542)           | 0                                | (20,542)           | 0                         | (20,542)           |                    |
|                                       | (519,581)          | 0                                | (519,581)          | 0                         | (519,581)          | (96,010)           |
| CHANGES IN NET ASSETS                 | (369,808)          | (154,582)                        | (524,390)          | (148,307)                 | (672,697)          | 475,436            |
| OTHER CHANGES:                        |                    |                                  |                    |                           |                    |                    |
| Capital acquisitions                  | (187,929)          | 187,929                          | 0                  | 0                         | 0                  | 0                  |
| NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR         | 3,645,514          | 1,101,670                        | 4,747,184          | 369,713                   | 5,116,897          | 4,641,461          |
| <b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>        | <b>\$3,087,777</b> | <b>\$1,135,017</b>               | <b>\$4,222,794</b> | <b>\$221,406</b>          | <b>\$4,444,200</b> | <b>\$5,116,897</b> |

Family Connections wishes to thank the following government agencies & foundations for their crucial support in 2008-2009:

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Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey  
Nicholson Foundation  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Orange Orphan Society  
United Way of Essex and West Hudson  
Turrell Fund  
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies of Essex  
Greater Newark Holiday Fund  
Kiwanis Club of South Orange/Maplewood

### Government Agencies

#### New Jersey Department of Children and Families

Division of Youth & Family Services  
Division of Prevention & Community Partnerships  
Division of Child Behavioral Health Services

#### New Jersey Department of Human Services

Division of Addiction Services  
Division of Mental Health Services

#### County of Essex

Youth Services Commission  
Office of Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, & Addiction Services  
Division on Aging  
Division of Housing and Community Development  
Children's Interagency Coordinating Council



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