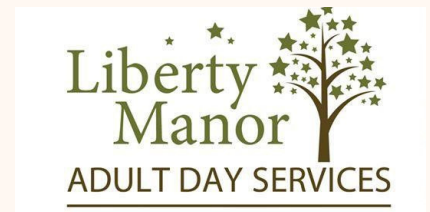


# FAMILIES UNITED NETWORK, INC

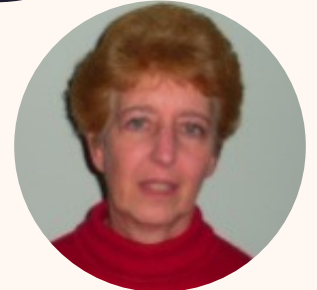
ANNUAL STAKEHOLDER NEWSLETTER 2020/2021



## OUR MISSION

Families United Network, Inc. is dedicated to strengthening families and providing children and youth with a safe, nurturing, community environment through a continuum of services, which focuses on reunification or permanency.

# Board of Directors



First Row: Robert Wagner and Thomas Neuhard

Second Row (L to R): Jim Ross, Mary Ann Tarantino, David Raker and Sharon Sutkins

Third Row (L to R): Joseph Smith, John Brunette, Sheila Ross and George Scott

## Our Services:

- Foster/Kinship Care
- SWAN & Private Adoption Services
- Residential Services & Life Readiness Services
- Shelter Services
- Drug & Alcohol Testing
- Unplanned Pregnancy Counseling
- Early Learning Care
- Resource Family Management
- Adult Day Services
- Private Adoption Services

# A Letter from the CEO

Last year I started with “This year has been a challenging year for Families United Network, FUN Academy, and Liberty Manor”. Little did I know that these challenges would continue to haunt us for the next twelve months. A pandemic that we thought was going to come to an end faded, but then came back stronger than ever, once again pushing us to our operating limits. We have grown and developed in so many ways. Amidst the pandemic, we continued to provide services to young children, teenage youth, the elderly, and those overcoming addiction. Although the way that we provide these services has changed in some ways, we continue to do so in a way that is compassionate, caring, and safe.

Programmatically we have seen changes that will affect the delivery of our services for years to come. In residential we closed our White Rose house in York, PA. Although this home had not been opened many years ago, its usefulness as a residential home for teenage girls in the York area had come to an end. We merged our South Central office in Mechanicsburg with our Harrisburg office. We found that now, as we operate more remotely in a hybrid style setting, the need for individual offices was less frequent. Now offices could be shared which would cut costs and improve our service delivery overall. In residential, we applied to become a “Specialized Setting” for teens that are in danger of becoming victims of sex trafficking. This means that we will provide an improved level of care and have an increased knowledge of how to care for the teens we have in our residential program that may be at risk. Finally, one of our biggest commitments has been the implementation of “Creating Presence”. Creating Presence, in short is an online organizational and clinical approach for creating trauma-informed, trauma-responsive, and trauma-resilient organizations. Over the course of the next year, we will be learning how to use this trauma-based approach to better serve our residents, children, elderly, employees, and community.

In spite of the difficulties COVID has brought us, and because of our resiliency we continued to provide services to all of our programs throughout the state. In foster care we served 727 children. In our residential program, which includes Ashler Manor campus in Muncy, Arborvale Manor in Millersville, and White Rose Manor located in York, we served 128 youth in our shelter, dorm, and life readiness. Our adoption services staff completed 913 units of services. Our drug and alcohol testing facility in York completed 4550 tests. FUN Academy, our early learning facility, served over one hundred children this year. Liberty Manor, our adult day services program, celebrated its third year of service. Currently, they have 16 participants, and we have served 23 total this year. I am so proud of all our staff that work so hard to provide the best care and services to all those that we serve. I look forward to another year of servicing our community.

Sincerely,





# LET'S TALK ABOUT: COMMITMENT

Article Written by: Kristin Meeks, Program Office Supervisor

This journey is never easy for anyone. It's not easy for the foster parent, it's not easy for the child, and it's not easy for the biological parents and family. However, the people who end up suffering the most in the system inevitably tend to be the children. We know for certain that early childhood trauma has a long term effect on the brain. The statistics regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences and their effect on children as they become adults is sobering. Parenting these kids is not an easy task as often their capacity to have a reciprocal, loving relationship with you can be impacted due to their past trauma. Yet, here we are, asking you to not give up, and often, to be selfless.

What changes outcomes for the better for these kids is quite simple; one caring, consistent adult in their lives. We want that adult to be you. Unfortunately, when kids bounce from home to home, they don't have that one adult in their lives. At times, it becomes their caseworker, which we never want. For a second, just appreciate and be humbled by the amazing impact (for the worse or for the better) you can have on the lives of the children we serve. Think about this impact and be inspired about the work you do every day. We want to support you in whatever way we can to be that one consistent, loving adult for a child or children.



Staff from North Central office accepting a donation from DWELL.

*"We have been working with Families United Network since 2017. They provided a home study service at that time for our international adoption and are currently working with us in their foster to adopt program. From day one they were understanding, accepting, and supportive and have been each step of the way. They ensured that each transition that was needed through the agency was smooth and flawless. We would not be where we are today if it was not for all their support and kindness. We would recommend FUN to anyone who needs guidance in making their dreams also come true"*  
*Proud Foster Dads, Scranton Office*



# A Client Who Didn't Give Up

by Kareema Burgess, Program Supervisor,  
Arborvale Manor

Our Life Readiness Program helps guide, coach and support males (age 16 to 21) in order to successfully live independently. Recently, a client really showed staff just how resilient he is. Upon arrival to campus, one young man was a tough cookie to crack, not trusting authority and very defiant. Shortly after placement, staff threw him a birthday party to celebrate turning 17. Never ever being sung to, he got very emotional. Staff continued to be patient and build trust with this young man. As time progressed, he started to trust staff and open up to them. This young man is currently successfully holding down a job while doing school work. He is on track to graduate from high school next year. Staff used this young man's strengths to help show him what he could achieve. He is hopeful for his future. He finds the joy of being at Arborvale to complete all his goals he sets for himself.



Three residential staff volunteering at a local community event this past summer.

**We're so proud!**

by Cassandra Schmidt, Clinical Treatment  
Supervisor

"Bella" came to Ashler Manor in August of 2018. At the time of her arrival, Bella was a very lost and confused child who had not been dealt the best hand in life thus far. Beyond the symptoms she presented due to her suffering throughout life, there was also a glimpse of the young person underneath those many layers who just needed people to believe in and support her. During her time at Ashler Manor, Bella put the needed time, effort and energy into her treatment to ultimately peel away the layers needed to leave our care with skills that could help her to achieve future goals. At the time she left Ashler Manor, Bella was a much happier and self-confident individual who had motivation to make her life her own. She was discharged to an independent living program where she continued to successfully apply what she had learned at Ashler Manor. Most recently, Bella graduated high school and was accepted into college to study Culinary Arts. To this day she credits her stay at Ashler Manor as the turning point in her life.

*Congrats*



# Child Preparation Success Story

STORY SUBMITTED BY JESSICA SHIELDS , PERMANENCY SUPERVISOR

"I have been working with a child since I began working at FUN in March 2019. He was my first case. During our first meeting, he looked me in the eye and said "You only come here because they pay you to." I told him I would prove to him that I work here to help kids, and not for the paycheck. Two years later, I have helped him transition through a new placement, listened to his frustrations about remaining in foster care, and provided him with outlets for his feelings time and time again.

We have worked together to strengthen his confidence in using his voice, and he was finally able to start standing up for himself and tell people what he really thought, not just what he thought they wanted to hear. His current foster mother has reached out to me and told me that the young man has expressed that Child Prep has been "the only good thing that came from foster care." I know my client will go on to do great things, and I hope him learning to use his voice will get him there." !

## Meet the Kloss Family

Meghan and Bill Kloss began their journey with FUN as foster parents in January of 2017. They had three biological children of their own at the time but had a genuine desire to become foster parents and open their home to additional children. They have had several placements throughout their time with us, though they ultimately adopted three amazing children! They welcomed Donovan into their home in November of 2017. When his younger brother, Morrison, was born, he was placed with the Kloss family upon discharge from the hospital in April of 2018. Not long after reunification occurred, the boys returned to their biological mother in the summer of 2018. By April of 2019, both boys returned to the Kloss family. When Meghan and Bill had a total of 5 kiddos once again, they felt that matching would be the best route for them to take. Though they initially looked at younger children, they took a chance when they first inquired about Shyla in late 2019. By February of 2020, they met Shyla for their first pre-placement visit. She moved into their home in early April of 2020 and she was adopted in November of 2020. Donovan and Morrison's adoptions were finalized in January of 2021. Meghan and Bill were deeply saddened to have to close after the finalization of Morrison and Donovan's adoption, as they had a total of 6 children. Meghan maintains that "We'll be back!"

**Story Submitted by: Tatiana Dueno, Permanency Supervisor**



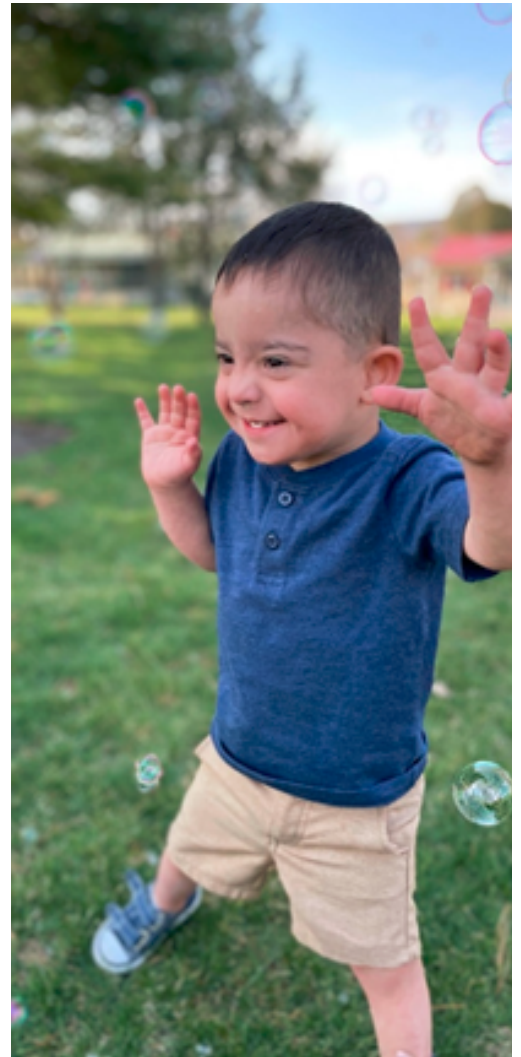


# A Message of Hope

*By Heather O'Neill, Private Adoption Supervisor*

Though 2020 was a difficult year for our families, the Private Adoption program is proud to continue supporting them as much as we can! Several countries shut their adoption program with the unknowns surrounding the pandemic. Families were left with little answers and no timeline on when they would be united with their children. As the year came to a close, we were able to see some families successfully travel to the country and bring home their little ones.

This is a beam of optimism for those still waiting. In the domestic adoption realm, there has been a serious decline in numbers across the board. This is not wholly unexpected when looking at the big picture and the effect the pandemic had on our social habits. However, we were able to make one placement this year. A beautiful, healthy baby boy was placed with the family who had adopted his sister. It was a beautiful moment for the family and the workers of FUN to be able to make such a special placement and maintain those family ties.



## My Adoption Story



Approximately four years into my international adoption, I was presented with the opportunity to be chosen for a domestic adoption. I told myself that I would not be chosen because I would be a single mom. The exact reason I did not opt for a domestic adoption originally, but I decided that I would not close that door. If God wanted to close it He could. I will never forget the day I was told I would be blessed with a baby. That day I had gone for a jog and prayed consistently for God's will and His plan for my life. I have known for a while now that He truly knows best and there is no greater plan for my life than His. When my phone rang, I reminded myself that I most likely was not chosen.

I suppose that's why when Heather told me that I had been chosen it took me a long time to actually respond and believe her. I cannot even remember how many times I may have asked "Really?" Incredibly, it was true, God had blessed me once again and I began to share the amazing news with my family. I have been with my daughter since the moment she was born and I have never, ever been this happy in my life. I praise God each day for this blessing. Many, many thanks to my social worker Heather. I am grateful each day and look forward to this life with my daughter.

**Story Submitted By: Stacey R., Domestic Adoptive Parent**



# Our Prayers Were Answered

***SUBMITTED BY HARRISON FAMILY, DOMESTIC ADOPTIVE FAMILY***

Our story began like so many others. We had been married about two years and we were ready and excited to grow our family. After a year went by and we were unsuccessful we decided to consult our doctors. A few more months went by and our doctors began to run some tests and encouraged us to seek a specialist, an IVF Doctor. We met with a new set of Doctors and that's right, more tests. After another year went by we began to feel defeated and attended what we decided would be our final doctor's appointment. We left this appointment knowing our true journey and our next chapter all started with adoption. Excited, we began to explore the world of adoption and found ourselves again waiting. We found our Home Study Agency (FUN) and chose an Adoption Agency. We began the wait for our little one and found that it was taking longer than we expected. As the months went by we began to ask ourselves had we been forgotten by our Adoption Agency? Were we not open enough in our choices? Should we change Adoption Agencies? All these questions began to come flooding in and we decided to speak with our Home Study Agency, Families United, to see their thoughts. After speaking with our home study social worker we felt heard, understood, and ready to make some changes in the near future. About a week later my husband's phone rang. It was our home study social worker with amazing news. A baby girl had been born and her mother was seeking adoption and the agency immediately thought of us. We couldn't believe it! Had we just become parents?! That night we waited anxiously until the phone rang again and yes we had been chosen and would be leaving early the next morning to meet our baby girl and begin this new chapter of life. That night we were unable to sleep and packed an entire SUV full of unneeded baby items. I actually remember asking my husband if I should take the entire case of diapers or not? Yes, I put the entire case in my vehicle.



The next day we made our journey to our baby girl and I could feel she was ours from the moment we found out. That was our daughter. Our full journey in growing our family took almost five years. Looking back now at all my worrying about the unknown, I laugh because this is exactly how it was supposed to happen. A little after our daughter turned one, we decided we were ready to expand our family again. We consulted our home study social worker and began the process again. Before we could finish and even choose an Adoption Agency we received another call. Our birth mother had just given birth to a baby boy and was again seeking adoption. Just like that our family grew and we made the journey again to adopt our son. Today, we have two amazing kids and couldn't feel more blessed. I believe this was the journey my husband and I were supposed to take. I hope our story touches at least one family and lets them know, yes this can be a hard, long process, but it is all worth it in the end. Your miracle is coming.





## Issac's Buddies

**- SUBMITTED BY RACHEL S, PRIVATE ADOPTION FAMILY**

So many of our friends recently have attempted to adopt multiple unrelated children and been turned down because of agency policy or social worker preference. Many others have been denied going out of birth order, or adopting teenagers regardless of how disabled they may be. It's been sad to see so many waiting children have interested families, but have their hands completely tied. It just makes me just want to thank you again so much for how you looked at our family individually and not with a black and white set of ideals. Of course it's hard, but adopting both of these kids was 100% the right thing for them and for us. I love the saying that "hard doesn't mean bad." I can't imagine life without them, especially if it was because of rules about birth order or adopting 2 at once. Of course it's not the most ideal thing, but it was right for us, and I hope you know that we thank you for it being possible for us.

**ISSAC'S FAMILY RECENTLY STARTED A MINISTRY CALLED "ISAAC'S BUDDIES". IT IS THE GOAL OF THIS MINISTRY TO HELP OTHER FAMILIES BY OFFERING GRANTS TO ASSIST IN COVERING COSTS OF SPECIAL NEEDS INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT THEIR WEBSITE AT: [ISAACSBUDDIES.ORG](http://ISAACSBUDDIES.ORG)**

# Beau

One of the very joys of working at FUN Academy, our early learning center, is the children! FUN Academy opened its doors six years ago. A few months later, a little boy named Beau started at the center. Beau was an adorable baby who loved to snuggle! Center Director, Danielle, loves all of the children, but developed a close relationship with Beau. This June, Danielle awarded Beau with his Pre-K Graduation certificate! Beau and all of the other graduates that day, left their imprints on our hearts! We wish all of our graduating class of 2021 the best of luck in Kindergarten this year!



Here is Beau on his first day at Academy. We told you he was a cutie pie!

Pictured below is Beau at his graduation with Academy's Director, Danielle Schmourer, in June 2021.





# THANK YOU!

BIG thank you goes out to Fry's Wildlife Creations for donating pumpkins to FUN Academy this past fall. This donation allowed for hours of fun for our children! As you can see in the picture to the left, there were a lot of pumpkins!



# VOLUNTEERISM

Our staff members from FUN Academy collected items for the MSG Sean Thomas Foundation for care packages for our troops this December 2020. Staff at FUN Academy strive to give back to the community and help teach children the importance of community.

# GRANT

Thank You



First Community  
Foundation Partnership

OF PENNSYLVANIA

FUN Academy Early Learning Child Care Center was grateful to have received a grant from United Community Fund for Lycoming County at the First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania. This grant helped to support FUN Academy operations during the pandemic. We thank you for your support during these unprecedented times.





## INTER GENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

A unique opportunity that Liberty Manor can offer their participants is activities with children who are enrolled at our early learning center, FUN Academy. Recently, FUN Academy, LLC and Liberty Manor celebrated National Grilled Cheese Day. The sandwich was made by our amazing kitchen staff. It was 24 inches long, 16 inches high and weighed 25 pounds! Pictured below.

## Teal Day

Our staff at Liberty Manor and a few participants celebrated World Teal Day for the Alzheimer's Association of America in November 2020. The staff believe in creating opportunities to advocate and raise awareness in our community. Pictured above is previous Director, Shannon and previous Activities Coordinator, Donielle from Liberty Manor.



Liberty Manor and FUN Academy love working together to create a difference in our community. Thank you to both Directors (pictured left) for their hard work in keeping our staff and clients served safe during this pandemic!

## OFFICE AND PROGRAM LOCATIONS

### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

276 ASHLER MANOR DRIVE, MUNCY  
DAVID SPRING, CEO/MANAGER

### RESIDENTIAL LOCATIONS:

LANCASTER- ARBORVALE MANOR  
MUNCY- ASHLER MANOR CAMPUS

### FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION OFFICE LOCATIONS:

ERIE • HARRISBURG • MOUNT JOY  
• MUNCY • PENN HILLS • SCRANTON

### EARLY LEARNING SERVICE LOCATION:

MUNCY- FUN ACADEMY, LLC

### ADULT DAY SERVICE LOCATION:

MUNCY- LIBERTY MANOR

### DRUG & ALCOHOL TESTING OFFICE:

YORK

## Professional Affiliations



Visit us Online at:  
[www.families4kids.org](http://www.families4kids.org)

Let us know how we are doing!  
Please take less than a minute  
to give us your comments  
on our Feedback Survey.



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