

## In this Issue Happy 20th Anniversary—Part 2!

We had so much great material for our 20th anniversary issue that we split it into two issues. Enjoy reading more interviews from our founders reflecting on 20 years of Healthy Families New York, see great photos of our 20th anniversary celebration at the Prevention Conference and learn about our Spotlight program, the Healthy Families Program of Herkimer County!

As always, feel free to send your comments to Ellen Butowsky at [ebutowsky@preventchildabuseny.org](mailto:ebutowsky@preventchildabuseny.org). Happy reading!

—Ellen Butowsky, PCANY

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## Program Spotlight *Healthy Families Program of Herkimer County*

The Healthy Families Program of Herkimer County began in 2007 as a partnership between the Office of Children and Family Services and Herkimer County Public Health Nursing. In 2013, Herkimer County Public Health sub-contracted with Kids Oneida, Inc. whose mission is to empower children, families and individuals who have high service needs and enable them to live in ways that are productive, healthy and meaningful. What a great fit for the Healthy Families program! Our program has truly been enhanced by joining Herkimer County Public Health with the Kids Oneida family.

Our service delivery area is much different than that of many other programs. Herkimer County can be described as:

- The geographical center of New York State.
- Laterally crossed by the Mohawk River, the Erie Canal, the NYS Thruway and the Railroad.
- The longest county in New York State - 83 miles north to south.
- About 220 miles from both Buffalo and New York City.
- An hour's drive from the capital city of Albany.
- 1,412 square miles of land area and 30 square miles of water.

All of these factors contribute to our need to be flexible and culturally sensitive. To be culturally sensitive in Herkimer County is to be familiar with rural poverty, low levels of education, and lack of employment skills. Program employees, training events and curriculum need to be relevant to primarily white, English-speaking families that comprise 96% of our county's population. Six out of seven staff reside in the county and are embedded in its work, neighborhoods, and educational and recreational institutions. To say that our community is close-knit is an understatement.

### **WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE**

Working in close-knit, rural communities requires our services to be adaptive and creative. Traveling to home visits can sometimes take up to an hour and winter weather in upstate NY can certainly be a barrier. Once we arrive at a home, it's important for us to be mindful of the family's culture, taking into consideration that we may have to be outside on a farm or on Main Street in a village.

Working and living in small towns and villages means that we are often neighbors of participant families and of our colleagues. This can make networking with other agencies more comfortable because we are familiar with one another and see each other frequently. It can also have the potential to create issues around boundaries. We make it a point to openly communicate about these issues with participants and staff on a regular basis. It is not uncommon to run into participant families during our time off or on weekends. On occasion, we are faced with serving families that are closely related either to each other or even to ourselves. We have learned through quality assurance reviews that word of mouth is the best advertising for our program. This is attributed to living in a small community. When current or former participant families tell their friends about us, that tells us we must be doing something right.

### **WHAT OUR FAMILIES SAY...**

"Healthy Families has impacted our lives and we can see a difference in our kids."

"Healthy Families has encouraged me to re-evaluate my parenting skills and try new techniques."

*Continued on page 8*

## A Note from OCFS

Happy summer, Healthy Families New York!

For many of our programs, this is a time for endings and new beginnings. Programs are witnessing families complete the program as target children transition to Head Start or Kindergarten. Rest assured that all those visits you made to support those parents to become wonderful teachers of their children, and provide the nurturing that children need to grow their brains and grow to their fullest potential has paid off! Thank you.

We continue to collect information from families who first participated in our randomized control trial in 2000. It will be great to see what impacts our program has had on families and their target children who are now 15.

The Office of Children and Family Services along with our partners in the Center for Human Services Research and Prevent Child Abuse New York are working hard on many projects including redesigning the HFNY website, reinventing the HFNY policy manual to correspond to the new best practice standards, and developing the fatherhood summit that will be held in November.

Healthy Families NY is continuing to grow. We extend a warm welcome to the Sunset Park community in Brooklyn as Lutheran Family Health Centers becomes a new HFNY site in July.

It was a long, cold snowy winter—enjoy the warmth of the long summer days!

—Bernadette



## the Link

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The Link is published twice a year as a joint venture of Prevent Child Abuse New York and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

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## Reflections *on 20 Years of HFNY*

Members of the PCANY Training and Staff Development team had a great time talking with HFNY staff that has been involved with, and instrumental in the development of, HFNY since the inception of the program.

### Lisa Galatio

Since 1995, Lisa has held all roles—FSW, FAW, Supervisor and Program Manager. She is currently the Director of Healthy Families Steuben/Kinship Family and Youth Services

#### ***As we begin a celebration of 20 years, can you remember the first year you were hired? Which stand out as your best memories?***

“We started out very small. We covered a small school district and within a few years we were able to expand and grow to a whole county. I just remember everyone being so excited because the focus was so different. Back then, it was cutting edge to be strength-based and really focused around the family. Meeting the family where they are was a new way to do things. Everyone was excited locally, and there was all the excitement at the state level. It has continued through the years, but at the time it was different to get so much support and training. We had the Core, and then we went to the PCANY conference and then the national conference and there was so much positive energy. It was very exciting and you felt really good being apart of it.”

#### ***What are you are most proud of in these 20 years?***

“I cannot think of one specific thing, but I’d say it’s all of the families. We have been able to be a part of their lives. We see how every generation improves a little bit. We run into people in stores who say, ‘Oh my gosh, I remember when you came to my house,’ or the moms and dads who still thank us. We get to see all the children grown. Sometimes I run the numbers and see how many families and home visits we have done and the fun things we have done with staff. Also, at the state level, I’m proud to see how many families we have helped and what we have developed within ourselves.”

#### ***What has surprised you? What did you not anticipate in your early years?***

“Everybody doesn’t welcome home visiting. Sometimes we have to work so hard to engage referral sources and get families to buy into it. I am not saying that’s the majority but that there is anybody who is reluctant—that is a little surprising.

#### ***What would you say are the three biggest differences between then and now?***

“I think the most obvious is the size of the program across the state. How much everyone has grown—and not just us personally and with our participating families, but the research. We are not a stagnant program. The core principles are still standing, but we are always reevaluating how we do things and why we do things, and making sure we are doing things backed by research, identifying what are best practices, and best for the families.”



*Left to right, Marlene Shiloh, Nancy Tucker, and Lisa Galatio*

#### ***What are you most looking forward to for HFNY in the next 20 years?***

“I just think to continue to grow so we are in every community in NY State. I hope that everyone in New York can get this program. HFNY is so progressive and we are always looking for the future. We start talking about fathers and then other people start talking about fathers. So I get excited when I hear people catching up to us. Federal people are talking about early childhood and the importance of education. This allows us to continue to be more validated and continue to grow.”

### Marlene Shiloh

Hired in 1995 as an FSW, Marlene is currently a supervisor with Healthy Families Steuben

#### ***As we begin a celebration of 20 years, can you remember the first year you were hired? Which stand out as your best memories?***

“We started in little rural Addison with 8 weeks of non-stop training before we could do home visiting. We had a very small space with 5 desks in it above the local sheriff’s department. I was a young mom myself and was excited to support families and cheer them on as parents. I enjoyed teaching them what to expect their child would be doing at different stages in life, supporting them to deal with stressors and offer them community resources to help them get through the tough times. I remember my first visit, taking out the San Angelo

*Continued on page 4*

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curriculum, and not being sure if I was presenting it right. But the family was very welcoming and had lots of questions for me. The parents had mental health issues and they lived in a small house with four children. Helping that family parent with all the stressors and mental health issues they had was very difficult on some visits. I learned that every family is very different—from their struggles to their triumphs, and to encourage all families to continue to look for the good in their own parenting style.”

***What are you most proud of in these 20 years? What has surprised you? What did you not anticipate in your early years?***

“It was so neat to see HFNY expand over the past 20 years from just a few sites to what we have today. I remember going to the first national conference in Chicago. That was so much fun, getting to meet people from other states doing the same work we are doing here in NY, learning new ideas and ways to teach more positive parenting techniques, to the curriculum we use, hands on activities. There is so much that I am proud of with HFNY.”

***What would you say are the three biggest differences between then and now?***

“Three biggest differences from then and now are, we have more sites across NY, we have more curriculum to utilize and work with families better, we have great technology that we didn’t before, and we have research that shows our work is really working.”

***What are you most looking forward to for HFNY in the next 20 years?***

“For us to continue to help more families in need of the support, and to be here for another 20 years, seeing this program continue to bloom and grow and be there for families.”

## Donna O’Brien

hired in 1994 as an FSW, and then became a supervisor

***As we begin a celebration of 20 years, can you remember the first year you were hired? Which stand out as your best memories?***

“Oh my... Excitement! There were three of us on a Cornell-funded grant. We flew by the seat of our pants, not sure how this would work. We were nervous and anxious – what if we do it wrong? We got our first referrals from a school district and a local hospital. We were fortunate – our agency was established and had other programs that were used to home visiting.”

***What are you most proud of in these 20 years?***

“Here we are 20 years later – we have a fantastic program. Our staff has such longevity, we’ve persevered; with all of the changes we continue to grow and do excellent work. We all still really like each other, and we continue to grow together, and we talk about challenges together.”

***What would you say are the biggest differences between then and now?***

“We have more of a direction – people in place – we’ve grown. We have OCFS, PCANY and lots of people cheering us and keeping us going in the right direction.”

***What is it that has kept you with HFNY for all these years?***

“It’s funny, I left for a couple years. I always felt welcome to come back, and it felt good that there was a place for me. I had started with our program as a volunteer. I had two young children, and it changed my life because I learned so much about being a parent, different ways to parent, and it molded me into the person I am today. When I came back I was so thankful because the way this agency is, it’s really one big family. The belief system that we have, this way of being family-centered and family-oriented, and what we believe families can achieve—this all makes it such fulfilling work!”

***What are you most looking forward to for HFNY in the next 20 years?***

“I’d like to see that the program has grown; that we have recognition of all the important work that we do and the changes we help families make in their lives. It’s amazing to hear from a parent that, ‘Without you, I wouldn’t be the parent I am.’ I hope the HFNY program will continue to grow; that would be phenomenal!”





## Rita Babie

FAW, Healthy Families of Rensselaer County, hired 1996

***As we begin a celebration of 20 years, can you remember the first year you were hired? Which stand out as your best memories?***

Thinking about the people that I was working with, a group of friendly and resourceful women. Initially I was a bit skittish about going into families' homes; I saw how easy it was for my colleagues, and they helped and supported me. Coming from a role of nutrition counseling, I had worked with families in a different capacity and had my own mindset. And because Healthy Families was different for me, it was also exciting. Educating parents about infant and child development, positive parent child interaction; I felt it was important.

***What are you most proud of in these 20 years?***

When I won an award and a tiara at a HFNY conference for having done the most assessments in NYS and was recognized for my commitment to serving the families in my community. It was unexpected, and I was very proud.

***What has surprised you? What did you not anticipate in your early years?***

I have gotten a lot from the families that I've worked with over the years, and I hope that I'm giving them as much. There are so many different perspectives and great ideas that the families have offered me that I have applied to my own life and family.

***What would you say are the three biggest differences between then and now?***

There were limited state forms and curriculum at the beginning. Now we have standard and universal documents, and it's important how everything is the same. When home visitors go from one program to another, it's the same and this makes life easier. Before, we needed to supplement a lot; we used parenting magazines, information we found on the Internet, and books, depending on the level of the parents' comprehension and their interests. Now the curriculum matches up well with their needs.

There is more support from the state; more interaction, not just with directors and supervisors, but also with the whole staff. The members of Central Administration ask, 'How can we help you be successful?' Kind of like the parallel process...how we are with families, they are with us. I think it's important to have that parallel process for support, and to be asked. 'How can it be done effectively,' and, 'How can we help you make it work' has made it a good relationship."

***What is it that has kept you with Healthy Families all these years?***

You hope that each generation gets better, and that by educating families to parent to the best of their ability, hopefully in positive ways, that will make a difference in our future.

***What are you most looking forward to for HFNY in the next 20 years?***

What I look forward to for HFNY in the next twenty years is that we will be able to offer our services to all families, regardless of whether or not they are considered high risk.



*Reflections continued on page 10*

## HFNY 20th Anniversary Celebration

HFNY programs and members of the state Central Administration Team celebrated 20 years of HFNY at the NYS Child Abuse Prevention Conference



*Celebrating our 20th anniversary*



*Caroline Cbant, HFNY Training Team, and John Heck, Center for Human Services Research*



*Ellen Butowsky, HFNY Training Team, Joy Griffith, founding HFNY coordinator, Bernadette Johnson, OCFs, and Peggy Sheehan, Healthy Schenectady Families*



*Peggy Sheehan, winner of the Ann Pitkin Award*



*Marisol Cirilo, Yaneliz Bueno, Rebeca Lucret, Rayza dela Cruz-Stitt, Buswick Bright Start Healthy Families*

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## HFNY 20th Anniversary Celebration

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*Rose Greene and Corrine Noble, Center for Human Services Research*



*Renee Hallock, OCFS*



*Bethany Hawkinson and Chrissy Martin, Healthy Families Madison County*



*Jean Cramer, OCFS, and the Healthy Families Jamaica staff*



*Fatima Horne, Wendy Bender, Caroline Chant, Tina Tison, and Ellen Butowsky, HFNY Training Team*



## Healthy Families Program of Herkimer County

*Continued from page 1*

“Healthy Families has helped me in many ways and is a great program. They have helped me and my family to grow and learn different parenting techniques such as proper discipline, playtime, and different ways to teach my children numbers, colors, and the alphabet. Healthy Families is an amazing program and I am glad to say they have been with me for the last four years.”

“Healthy Families is an amazing program that all families should utilize because it has helped us grow.”

“What I like about Healthy Families is that their program is teaching me to become a better parent and also allows me to parent the way I feel my children need. They don’t tell me that the way I do things is wrong, they let me make my own decisions.”

“This program has provided different techniques and ways to help with raising happy children and showing us that parenting doesn’t have to be stressful, but can be fun and enjoyable!”

“My home visitor helped show me ways to be a better mom and gave me a lot of positive hope when I had doubts.”

“Thanks to the Healthy Families Program, I have my self-esteem and self-worth back. I am a better and more positive mother to my children. This program has taught me patience, confidence, and strength. Because of those things, I am



*Featured from top center and then clockwise: Wendy Iamele, Program Manager, Katie Rockwell, FAW, Tracy Petkovsek, FSW, Arline Joy, FSW, Margaret Gokey, Supervisor, Erica Johnson, FSW, Crystal Bass, FSW*

gainfully employed and happy. This is a wonderful program with many benefits.”

“Healthy Families has helped me with my self-esteem, social skills and helped me to play with my son and lead a productive life. They support me and give me information on my child’s health and development. I think all families should have this program available to them.”

### **WHAT OUR TEAM MEMBERS SAID WHEN WE ASKED THEM WHAT THEY LIKE ABOUT THEIR JOB:**

**Wendy Iamele, Program Manager**—“I love that every day is a new adventure with our team and our families! It is fantastic working with such caring, dedicated, creative, compassionate people that have such a wide range of skills and abilities to help families achieve their goals.”

**Margaret Gokey, FSW Supervisor**—“Conducting home visit observations and seeing great FSWs at work and families responding positively.”

**Katie Rockwell, FAW**—“I love the flexibility, independence, networking with other agencies, helping families and babies!”

**Crystal Bass, FSW** —“Seeing families accomplish so much and being able to reflect it back to them (from the Kempe assessment and the Family Goal Plan) at visits to show them how many tools they have learned and are implementing.”

**Arline Joy, FSW**—“Offering education and information that families ask for or find useful.”

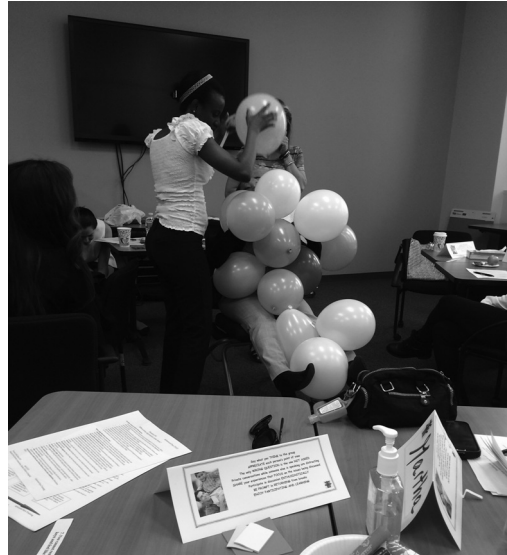
**Tracy Petkovsek, FSW**—“Being able to work with families and see them progress is just one of the things I love about my job. Even if the family only takes baby steps, I still find that very rewarding. I love knowing that I am there to support, help and guide families when they are in need. I find my job truly rewarding each and every day.”



PCANY offered Advanced Training Days across the state on “Working with Families where there is Depression.” This is a hard topic, but the Training Team made it fun!



*Westchester Healthy Families Supervisor Vivian Cuevas and Trainer Ellen Butowsky*



*Central Harlem FSW and Program Associate Hadjaratou Diallo*

## Welcome James Porter!



Hello Link readers! I am very excited to join the PCANY training team as a Training and Staff Development Specialist. Previously I was a Supervisor at Ulster County Healthy Families for three years. Prior to that, I worked as a case manager and later supervisor in the therapeutic foster care program at Abbott House for over ten years. At Abbott House I saw first-hand the impacts of child abuse and neglect, and experienced how challenging it can be for young people who have experienced abuse to turn their lives in a positive direction. I am truly grateful to be a part of the Healthy Families solution; a child abuse preventive program that works. In addition to my work with PCANY, I offer personal development workshops for high school and college students throughout the Hudson Valley. I live in Kingston with my teenage son and our dog, and I love taking in all that this beautiful area has to offer: our many art museums and galleries, great food, music, poetry readings, and abundant parks. I very much look forward to supporting Healthy Families staff in the coming months, and hope to meet you soon.

## Rosemary Miller

FSW, CAMBA's Healthy Families Program, hired 1996

***As we begin a celebration of 20 years, can you remember the first year you were hired? Which stand out as your best memories?***

I first started at the CAMBA program in 1996, when it was a new program. Because it was a brand new program, there were a lot of things that had to be done to get started. One thing I remember is that I didn't know how much the community needed this service, and it was overwhelming in the beginning.

***What are you most proud of in these 20 years?***

I have been able to be a positive influence in so many women's lives, and some of them still call me to tell me how they're doing. One young woman in particular is doing so well; I worked with her at a low point in her life, and I was able to give her encouragement and boost her self-esteem. She ended up going back to school and is working for a home visiting program now, as well as working on her master's degree.

***What has surprised you? What did you not anticipate in your early years?***

What really surprised me was how many forms there are! Of course I understand why and what they are for, but especially at first it was just so much paperwork.

***What would you say are the three biggest differences between then and now?***

A big difference is the way so many things have become universal and standardized across the state in all the programs. I think this has helped funders to see that the program really works, and the funding feels more secure now.

***What kept you with Healthy Families all these years?***

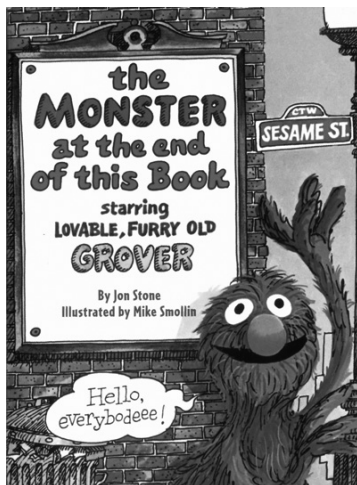
What has kept me here is the fact that you can really see change in the families. The information we give them changes the way that they bond with their kids, and the parents feel empowered. The grandparents see the benefit too, and it really helps the whole family.

***What are you most looking forward to for HFNY in the next 20 years?***

First of all that it's still here and going strong! I would also like to see it expand culturally; there are so many other cultures and languages we could be reaching. I would really like that.



CAMBA's holiday celebration



## Book Corner

### *The Monster at the End of This Book* by Jon Stone

***Submitted by Rebeca Lucret, Supervisor, Bushwick Healthy Families***

Loveable, furry old Grover is scared to reach the end of the book so he continuously makes up excuses and "places" obstacles to challenge the reader's ability to turn the page. The book is a humorous depiction of moving forward (turning pages). The reader essentially helps Grover discover that the only one at the end of the book is just him and not the monster Grover had feared. This book is just good 'ole fun.

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## The Roving Reporter

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Imagine you fall asleep and wake up 20 years later, what does HFNY look like?

"In 20 years, home visiting will be so normalized that every family in New York will have some type of home visiting support from Healthy Families New York – either the Healthy Families America model or a less intensive prenatal or ‘Welcome Baby’ home visit."

—Peggy Sheehan, *Healthy Schenectady Families*



"Every state in America would utilize the approaches of the program and it will increase the number of loving and caring families who promote healthy and happy children."

—Makeda Holt, *Buffalo Home Visiting Program*

"Healthy Families will change within 20 years in that it will be in every county, state-wide."

—Jaime Shortsleeve, *Healthy Families Delaware County*



"Healthy Families across the map of New York State and a screen in the hand of every pregnant woman!"

—Shelbi Collin, *HFNY Clinton County Early Advantages*

"The basics will not be different; our families will still be struggling and giving birth the old fashioned way and their children will still need love, patience, understanding and kisses the same way. Since I'm an optimist, I can see a future where funding for Healthy Families has been greatly expanded because of the overwhelming evidence that it works. The model will also include a "mental health" home visiting component that incorporates short-term cognitive therapy, and avant-garde therapies such as neuro-biofeedback. In 20 years the powers that be will understand that intensive healing has to take place in order to break the intergenerational cycle of child abuse and neglect, and that the government's investment in Healthy Families will eventually result in less and less need for it."

—Lise Kennedy, *Healthy Families of Sullivan*





# the Link

Summer 2015



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## *In the* Next Issue

### HFNY Programs Choice!

It's your turn to select the focus for the next issue of the Link! Do you have a theme you think would make for a great issue? Talk to staff within your program and come up with an idea. Let us know what inspired you to send in that particular theme, and also why you think it is something other programs will want to read about. We will select an idea, and highlight the program that submitted it in the next issue. You will get to see your idea researched and discussed, and shared across the state system, and beyond!

Please send your idea before September 15th to Ellen Butowsky at [ebutowsky@preventchildabuseny.org](mailto:ebutowsky@preventchildabuseny.org)

We hope to hear from all of the programs! Good luck.