

**From the Desk of Sue**  
**Susan Atwell, HFNY Unit Manager, Office of Children and Family Services**

As one year has ended and a new one has begun, I wish for you joy and lightness of heart. May you have a beautiful New Year; I hope you can make this one special for all you hold dear.

I was exploring a new website for the support of home visitors and found a wonderful presentation on "Understanding Hope as an Intervention Strategy." As Desmond Tutu said, "Hope is the belief that there is light despite the darkness...that the future can be different, and I can do something about it." Hope is believing this can happen for ourselves, and for the families we serve. In this presentation, hope was determined to be measurable, learned, developed and strengthened, and to makes a difference in life and health outcomes.

One measure of hope was demonstrated by believing you can find many pathways around daily barriers you encounter. The presentation included how home visitors can encourage families in finding multiple pathways by asking questions and providing support, not by forcing a single solution. This presentation reminded me of all of you in Healthy Families New York and the work that you do every day to help families.

Also on the website was a presentation about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), including several training clips. One of the most fascinating clips was about anxiety and depression. While the presenter said many valuable things about this topic, I found it very interesting that many people who are feeling depressed do not feel connected to anyone. The presenter described an intervention called social prescribing, or "forming a tribe." This involved having a group of individuals work together on an activity, rather than talking about how miserable they were. This group decided to build a garden. As time went on, they began to rely on each other. When a member of the group didn't show for the activity, others reached out to find out why and to offer support. In essence, they were forming a tribe. The point was that the feeling of isolation was part of the reason for the depression and anxiety. Establishing a connection with others alleviated their symptoms. In the end, it was healthier to be "a we or an us" than an "I."

So, as we enter the new year, remember that in Healthy Families we are always a "we," and we always have "us." We can find many pathways around our barriers together and therefore, we always have hope! You can find these Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals trainings at <https://institutefsp.org/>.

Wishing you all the best in 2020,

*Sue*



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**Weekly Correctional Facility Support Group Facilitated by Madison County Healthy Families**  
By Jill Williams and Lisa Mitchell, family support specialists, Madison County Healthy Families

Our Madison County Healthy Families Program has been working within the Madison County Jail for two years. This idea was brought forth by one of our home visitors when she started visiting a mother who was incarcerated. Through conversations with this mother and witnessing first-hand the environment in the jail, the home visitor began to seek additional ways our program could both provide guidance and support to people who were incarcerated and to find additional venues to obtain referrals for our program. Thus began the development of our weekly support groups.

Our groups run continually, meeting weekly for four weeks with women, then weekly for four weeks with men, and then starting up again with the women, and so on. During the first week, we survey the knowledge the members have of resources in our county and of their support systems. For example, we identify their knowledge about housing, 12-step programs/groups and relationships with children. During the following weeks we provide information on any and all services that they may need to re-enter our community.

During Week 1, we provide information on trauma and how trauma affects the developing brain; this is a topic that lends itself to much group discussion. We introduce the concept of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to help the men and women identify their own trauma. Several handouts are reviewed to reassure and validate each participant that their childhood experiences were beyond their control. Handouts such as *Stress and Early Brain Growth: Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences*, *Nine Functions of the Prefrontal Cortex*, *The Brain isn't fully mature until age 25+*, and *Judgement is Last* are used. We leave the group members with packets that they can work on throughout the week until the next session. This then opens up conversations for the next three weeks for topics such as fear and anxiety, trauma and trauma lines, and the roles family members adopt in families where there is addiction.

Through these groups, the two facilitators have developed a strong sense of their community and its realities. In addition, they have brought more awareness of our program to people who can benefit from it. We are proud to be sharing key principles of child development and the importance of parent/child interaction, the value of a strong family and information about community resources. With this information, we have seen that the process of reentry into the community is smoother, and it is our hope that with that will come less recidivism.



For more information,  
please contact Lisa Mitchell  
at [lmitchell@capmadco.org](mailto:lmitchell@capmadco.org),  
or call our office at  
(315) 697-3588, ext. 30.

**Family Storytime – Promoting Literacy**  
Emily Girgenti, program coordinator  
Family Service League, Inc./Healthy Families Suffolk



“Children sit with rapt attention as a parent reads  
*¿El Canguro Tiene Mamá?*”



On September 23, 2019, Healthy Families Suffolk of Family Service League, in partnership with the Brentwood Public Library, held a family story time event for program participants. Healthy Families organized this event to not only promote literacy among children and their parents, but also to foster a stronger connection between families and the free resources available through their community library.

A total of 18 children and their parents participated. The event occurred at Family Service League’s Iovino South Shore Family Center in Bay Shore. A children’s librarian from the Brentwood Public Library attended the event to share information regarding the youth programs offered at the library and also led the children in reading books in both English and Spanish. Program staff organized crafts for the children to complete with their families, and parents also volunteered to read aloud to the group, encouraging an interactive experience for all. Healthy Families Suffolk hopes to expand upon this event in the future by collaborating with the other public libraries located in its target communities.

**Ready, Set, GO!**

Tina Tison, PCANY

**Q-Tip Snowflakes**

It’s winter here in NY, and that usually means snow! Sometimes it’s just too cold to go out and play in it, though, so here is a fun little craft to do with children indoors. Explain to children that no two snowflakes are alike, so they can make theirs any way they want! Give children both full and cut Q-tips and, of course, younger children may need help with the glue. When you are done, punch a hole on top, loop some yarn through and hang them up to create your own indoor snowfall!!

How to make the Q-tip snowflake craft:

1. Have an assortment of both whole and cut Q-tips and encourage kids to create their own snowflakes. It would be helpful to provide examples of some you have already made.
2. After children form their snowflake, use the glue on blue paper for them to draw the snowflake using the glue. Younger children may need you to put the glue on the paper.
3. Place the Q-tips on the glue.
4. When glue is dry, cut the blue paper around the snowflakes in the form of a circle.
5. Punch a hole at the top of the snowflake.
6. Loop ribbon through hole, tie and hang up!



**What you'll need:**

- Many Q-tips
- Glue
- Scissors
- Blue paper
- White ribbon
- Hole punch

## Warm Welcomes



### **Christine Callahan, Research Scientist, CHSR**

I joined the HFNY evaluation and research team at the Center for Human Services Research in June on a part-time basis, working specifically to roll out a financial literacy pilot plan with interested HFNY sites. I share my time between CHSR and the University of Maryland School of Social Work/Financial Social Work Initiative in Baltimore, MD, where I am a research associate professor. I work on financial stability and financial empowerment interventions for individuals, families and communities, as well as research on these, and am also involved with training social workers and other helping professionals in addressing financial distress and connecting with helpful interventions. I also worked for nearly 20 years as an oncology social worker at the NIH Clinical Center in Bethesda, MD, where I provided counseling, resource linkage and discharge planning services for patients enrolled in clinical trials at this federal research hospital. I received my M.S.W. from Virginia Commonwealth University and my Ph.D. in social work from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. My husband and I relocated to upstate New York from Arlington, VA, in 2016, and I love hiking, kayaking, running, walking...and movies! I am so pleased to be a part of CHSR and look forward to working together.



### **Samantha Fields, Training and Staff Development Specialist, PCANY**

I feel honored to be a part of the PCANY training team. It has always been my passion to help others learn and grow, and I am especially passionate about working with families as well as bonding and attachment. I sometimes refer to myself as “a social worker since birth” because I have always taken on a protective role with children, confronting bullies as a child and taking care of younger children in school and in my family. I have always been interested in learning more about what makes people tick and how people ultimately become who they are.

I have also always felt a calling to help others bear their burdens. I started my professional career in outpatient mental health, providing individual and family counseling to clients of all ages after receiving my M.S.W. from NYU’s Silver School of Social Work. I also worked as both a therapist and a supervisor in the Multi-Systemic Therapy-Substance Abuse program at Sheltering Arms for four years, working specifically with youth ages 12-17 who exhibited oppositional or high-risk behaviors. During my time in these roles, I learned more about how family and community dynamics impact long-term outcomes and found myself saying over and over again, “I wish I could have helped this child earlier.” It felt like an answer to a prayer when the opportunity arose to direct the Healthy Families Jamaica program. As a program manager for the past five years, my experiences confirmed what I already believed: that primary prevention is essential for the health of our youth and communities and that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” I am excited about the opportunity to grow and to support the HFNY network in this new role!



## Margaux Hoagland, Research Scientist II, CHSR

I joined the HFNY evaluation and research team at OCFS's Bureau of Research, Evaluation and Performance Analytics as a research scientist this past September. I am working on all things HFNY and am particularly interested in trending data and analyzing relationships over time. I grew up in Central New York but moved to the Capital/Saratoga County Region more than 10 years ago as a freshman at Skidmore College. I received my bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in business and worked as an analyst at a local market research company before deciding to get my master's in data analytics from Southern New Hampshire University. Before coming to OCFS, I was a research analyst for a firm that consulted with state and county governments in the child welfare, juvenile justice and early education realms. When I am not at work I love to ski, hike and camp, unless the weather is unpleasant, in which case I'll happily take a book or a board game instead!



## Maile Ray, Research Scientist, CHSR

I joined CHSR in January 2019 as a research scientist for the HFNY project. A primary feature of my current work is analysis of the curricula delivered at home visits and coordination of a committee to evaluate and potentially update this curricula. I also work on HFNY data analysis and reporting to help evaluate and improve the program. My prior work also primarily focused on working with vulnerable populations. My postdoctoral work concentrated on cognition, inflammation and asthma in the elderly at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City. I received my doctorate in epidemiology from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. My dissertation work centered on smoking among teenagers and young adults, examining depression and experimental smoking, and socioeconomic status. I also researched mortality in people with HIV/AIDS. My work has been published in *AIDS* and the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. Before receiving my doctorate, I received an M.P.H. in epidemiology and social and behavioral sciences from the Yale School of Public Health and a B.A. in sociocultural anthropology from Yale University. In my spare time, I enjoy hiking, camping, kayaking, music and playing with my two cats. I am very happy to be a part of the HFNY team.



## Our families are happy to be part of HFNY too!

*"I just wanted to give my daughter everything I could as a parent and it was nice because I was offered this information that was so helpful."*

*"I got to meet other people from the program and everyone was just so nice and so kind. It was just so great to know that I had that support."*

*"It helps in so many others ways than what you might see initially on the surface. It is a strength based program. It's positive and you could at least allow for the first initial visits with an open mind and go from there."*



<https://www.healthyfamiliesnewyork.org/HomeVisits/quotes.htm>

## The Book Corner

### Strategies for Reading Books with Social-Emotional Themes with Children

*-adapted from materials created by the Boston Children's Hospital*

Talking about feelings by using children's books creates a safe and supportive environment for children. Here are some ideas for home visitors to encourage parents to support their child's mental health and well-being while they have fun reading books together.

- *Ask questions and draw attention to the way a character is feeling and the way a character expresses these feelings.*

#### **For example:**

"He looks sad to me. What do you think?"

"To me, her face seems angry because of the way her eyebrows are bunched up."

Some children may see a direct link between their feelings and the story and volunteer what they think. Others may need the parent to be more concrete and ask specific questions.

- *Focus on feelings AND what the character did about those feelings. This will help children think not only about how they feel, but how to express it.*
- *Some children may not want to talk. Not every child will want to talk about the book or their feelings. Some may need to think about the story and hear it more than once before commenting on it.*
- *Listen and reflect. A parent's actions provide a powerful example for their child. Encourage parents to be aware of how they model respectful communication and expression by helping their child feel good about their reaction to the story.*



### Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

JUDITH VIORST  
Illustrated by RAY CRUZ



**Gina Garito**

**FRS/FSS, Healthy Families Jefferson County**

One of my very favorite books of all time is "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day" by Judith Viorst.

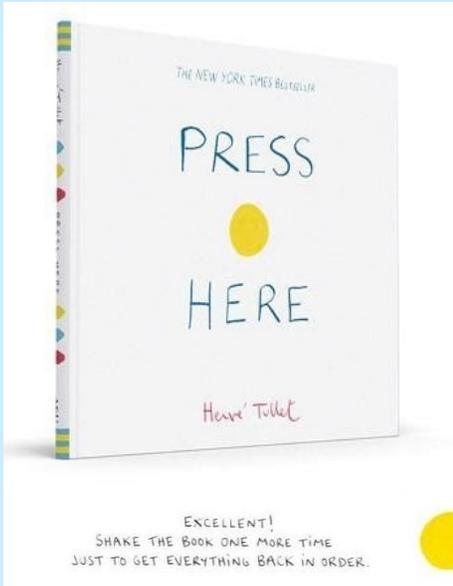
When I was teaching preschool, this book was the most requested during circle time because the children loved the expression in my voice when I read it. The emotions Alexander goes through on his bad day are so relatable to all children that it makes it fun to read out loud in sad, mad and exasperated voices. They also loved it because they could all join in on the terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day line - with lots of enthusiasm!

This book was a great lead to discussing the bad days we all can have, when everything seems to go wrong and how it happens to everyone - moms, dads, siblings, friends and teachers. My own two children also loved this book, and we read it over and over at bedtime.

Talking about our feelings isn't always easy, but after reading this book, it makes it a little easier to see how feelings belong to everyone. And sometimes, you just have to sleep in your worst PJs and dream about moving to Australia!

*Cont'd on next page*

**Stephanie Gillette**  
**Supervisor, Healthy Families Jefferson County**



“Press Here,” by Hervé Tullet, is an interactive and engrossing book for any toddler level and beyond. It is fun to read and promotes colors, patterns and positional directions. As a preschool teacher, while I read this book to my class, every child is engaged and anticipating the next page in the story. It gives children the chance to participate physically, which encourages interaction between the reader and the child. Reading to children can sometimes be a challenge depending on their attention span and experience with someone reading to them. However, this book allows the child to be a part of the book, which can get them and keep them engaged.

Reading to my own children are some of my most enjoyable memories as I watched their wonder and excitement. “Press Here” is a book that can create that magical moment for kids to start and sustain an interest in reading. Reading to and with children leads to the development of imagination, bonding, brain development and language; it is an all-encompassing activity that brings joy to all involved. Any chance to read to a child is an opportunity to give them positive connections.

**Research Corner**  
**Curriculum Delivery at HFNY Programs, 2018**  
**Maile Ray, Research Scientist, CHSR**

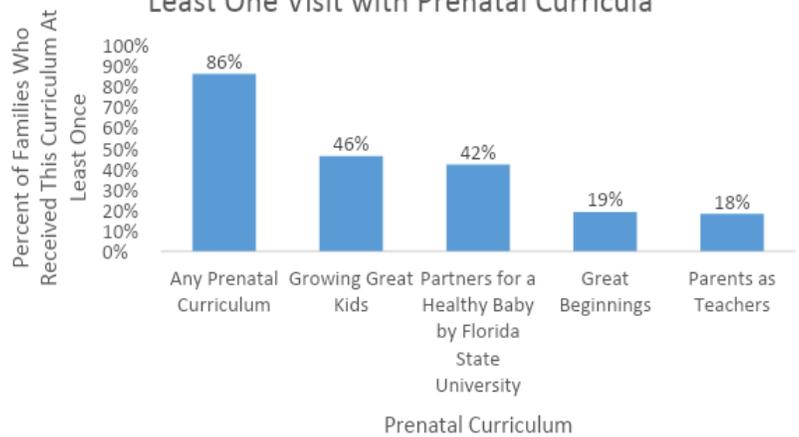
The curricula delivered during home visits is a critical component of Healthy Families New York (HFNY): the content supports family/staff bonding, teaches parents about child development and encourages positive parent/child interaction. We examined the overall use of curricula across HFNY and explored the use of prenatal-focused curricula during prenatal home visits.

Of the 73,000 home visits conducted in 2018, 74 percent were recorded as including at least one curriculum. And of the 5,381 families with visits in 2018, 92 percent were recorded as having at least one curriculum-based visit. These results demonstrate that home visitors are making a marked effort to deliver curricula during home visits.

Use of curricula with a significant prenatal component during prenatal home visits was then investigated. The prenatal period is a particularly important one for preparing parents for their baby’s arrival, building needed skills and connecting parents to resources. The prenatal curricula considered here included *Growing Great Kids*, *Partners for a Healthy Baby by Florida State University*, *Parents as Teachers* and *Great Beginnings Start Before Birth*.

Eighty-six percent of the 1,345 prenatal families received at least one visit with one of these curriculum (see Figure 1): *Growing Great Kids* and *Partners for a Healthy Baby by Florida State University* were the two most commonly used. Similarly, 62 percent of home visits with prenatal families were recorded as using at least one of these curricula. This high rate of prenatal curriculum implementation represents a critical success in addressing the needs of these families during this important period.

Figure 1. Percent of Prenatal Families Receiving At Least One Visit with Prenatal Curricula



GET YOUR COMMUNITY READY FOR THE  
**2020 CENSUS**  
 AND SHAPE YOUR FUTURE!



April 1, 2020 is Census Day for the next decennial census; the nation's once-per-decade, constitutionally-mandated count of every American, regardless of their citizenship status. The decennial census is one of the nation's most important programs. New Yorkers' fair share of federal funds for programs essential to health care, education, housing, economic development and transportation, as well as our congressional representation in Washington, all depends on an accurate and fully-counted census response.

Be sure we get the funds we deserve! In 2020, everyone in New York will be invited to complete the 2020 Census. The census is important because it supports Head Start, child care, the school lunch program, WIC, Medicaid and other programs we use.

**WHY GET COUNTED?**



**PROGRAM FUNDING**

SNAP, School Lunch Program, WIC, Child Care, Head Start



**OUR DEMOCRACY**

Number of seats in Congress, Electoral Votes, Redistricting

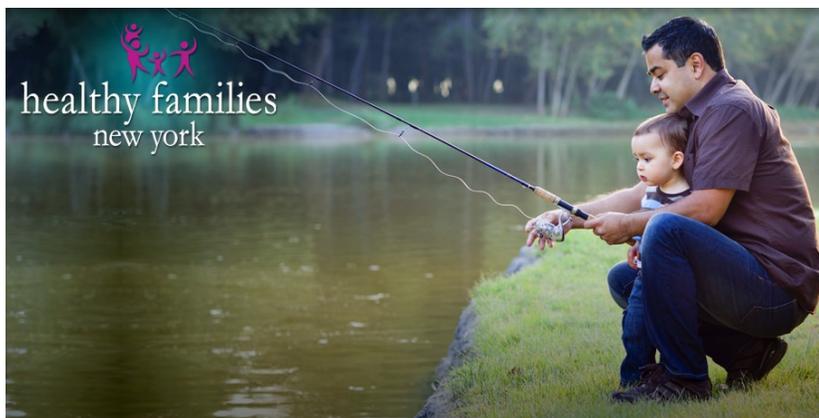


**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Jobs, Planning, Resources, Transportation

For more information & resources, visit [BIT.LY/NYCENSUS2020](https://bit.ly/NYCensus2020)

**NEW YORK KIDS COUNT**  
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**EDITOR**  
 Erika Leveillee  
 Prevent Child Abuse New York  
**MANAGING EDITOR**  
 Ellen Butowsky  
 Prevent Child Abuse New York  
**BUREAU OF PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**  
 Bernadette Johnson  
 NYS Office of Children & Family Services  
**HEALTHY FAMILIES NEW YORK UNIT MANAGER**  
 Susan Atwell  
 NYS Office of Children & Family Services  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
 Timothy Hathaway  
 Prevent Child Abuse New York  
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**GOVERNOR**  
 Andrew M. Cuomo  
**ACTING COMMISSIONER**  
 Sheila J. Poole  
**SUBMISSIONS**  
 ebutowsky@preventchildabuseny.org  
 PCANY  
 4 Global View, Troy, NY 12180  
 518-880-3400 / 1-800-CHILDREN  
 NYS OCFS  
 Division of Child Welfare and Community Services (CWCS)  
 52 Washington St. 335N, Rensselaer, NY 12144  
 518-402-6770

[healthyfamiliesnewyork.org](https://healthyfamiliesnewyork.org)