FAMILY CENTERS IS ALL ABOUT CONNECTING the dots that lead to successful outcomes. Through counseling, guidance, teaching and coaching, our professionals and volunteers connect with our clients to facilitate personal breakthroughs and accomplishments. Our team is determined to create innovative solutions that lead to long-term positive impacts.

Recognizing the crucial role literacy plays in our communities’ overall success, Family Centers merged with Literacy Volunteers of Stamford/Greenwich on July 1. This program is now a vital component of our Fostering Independence Center of Excellence, and it will enhance our other self-sufficiency services.

We recently partnered with Beacon Communities and DOMUS to expand Literacy Volunteers’ reach by opening a new literacy lab and providing other vocational programs at the Chester Addison Community Center in Stamford.

Family Centers was able to deliver life changing assistance this year to more than 23,500 children and adults by working with more than 50 strategic partners who share our mission of empowering children, adults, families and communities to reach their potential.

We work with Charter Oak Communities to tackle and overcome the many obstacles facing residents of public housing. Our School Based Health Centers deliver medical, behavioral health and dental care to public school students in Stamford, and we are constructing our fifth School Based Health Center at Cloonan Middle School. A generous grant from the Arcadia Foundation allows all of our Health Centers to benefit from a Health Educator/Lifestyle Coach who will work with teens and their families on living habits and preventable conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

The Fairfield County Information and Technology Collaborative, our technology partnership with Family & Children’s Agency in Norwalk and FSW in Bridgeport, is entering the next phase. We are creating a combined technology staff and implementing new systems intended to better serve the client data and information needs of the partner agencies. This collaboration has yielded huge savings and will continue to do so for years to come.

Excellence in program delivery and operations remains a top priority at Family Centers. This is evident in the daily efforts of our professional team and the results that follow. For the seventh consecutive year we have received Charity Navigator’s highest rating of Four Stars for sound fiscal management and a commitment to transparency. This places Family Centers among the top performing charities in the nation.

The strength of Family Centers is drawn directly from those who invest in our mission. This year our generous donors contributed over $3 million. All of these funds were invested in programs that benefitted children and families who could not otherwise have afforded the various forms of help they needed.
A sampling of their stories can be found in this report. The stories illustrate how a comprehensive approach enables people to connect the dots that ultimately help them achieve their personal goals.

As one year closes, a new one begins at Family Centers. Our dynamic team of 200 professionals and thousands of volunteers will continue to design and deliver creative programs that provide solutions to the challenges facing today’s families.

We look forward to strengthening our partnerships and providing our contributors with exceptional returns on the charitable dollars they entrust to Family Centers.

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*Deceased*
## Financial Report

### Support and Revenue
- **Government Grants**: 38% $4,241,962
- **Program Fees**: 32% $3,609,986
- **Contributions & Special Events**: 15% $1,703,734
- **Foundation Grants**: 7% $811,532
- **United Ways & Community Funds**: 5% $572,434
- **Distribution from Endowment**: 3% $379,694

**Total Support & Revenue**: 100% $11,319,342

### Expenses
- **Bright Beginnings**: 53% $5,995,205
- **Families in Crisis**: 34% $3,840,172
- **Fostering Independence**: 13% $1,475,996

**Total Expenses**: 100% $11,311,373

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### News

**Family Centers and Literacy Volunteers Announce Merger**

On July 1, Family Centers announced a merger with Literacy Volunteers of Stamford/Greenwich to create a comprehensive network of services designed to meet the self-sufficiency needs of Fairfield County residents.

"With Literacy Volunteers now a part of Family Centers, we are able to provide more people with the vocational training, literacy and education services they need to improve their lives," said Laurie Host, Family Centers’ Board Chairman.

All Literacy Volunteers’ services will remain intact, and will bolster Family Centers’ extensive roster of self-sufficiency programs. Literacy Volunteer’s three full-time and three part-time employees will join Family Centers’ staff and operate the program as part of the Fostering Independence Center of Excellence. Several Literacy Volunteers Board members will also serve as Family Centers’ Directors, Senior Advisors and committee members.

"This partnership is very exciting, as our programs are a wonderful complement to Family Centers’," said John Raffaeli, Chairman of Literacy Volunteers of Stamford/Greenwich’s Board of Directors. "Since Literacy Volunteers has a longstanding history of working with Family Centers, this transition is expected to be seamless for both our staff and our clients."

Literacy Volunteers of Stamford/Greenwich offers free literacy, job skills training, English language instruction and adult education services to more than 500 Fairfield County residents each year. Programs are facilitated by a team of more than 120 volunteers, who donate more than 11,500 volunteer hours each year. Computer classes, financial literacy services and work readiness program are also offered.

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**Photo above:** Literacy Volunteers Program Manager Lucia Cook goes over some writing techniques with student Akiko Oda.
These lists represent gifts to Family Centers between July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013. We apologize for any errors or omissions.

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Connecting the Community to Great Results...

The following are excerpts from Family Centers’ 2013 Results Cards, which are compiled by program staff each year to track client outcomes and success rates.

89% of the Housing Resource Program’s clients were placed in affordable housing throughout Fairfield County within three months of intake.

91% of families served by the Intensive Family Preservation Program were able to prevent their children from being removed from the home due to abuse or neglect.

88% of the clients receiving services from the Reaching Independence Through Employment (RITE) program were able to increase their level of employment.

69 families living in Stamford public housing were able to avoid eviction thanks to the self-sufficiency assistance of the Community and Supportive Services Program.

100% of Head Start Preschool families participated in at least one school-sanctioned literacy-related activity during the year.

Nearly 11,000: The number of individual therapy sessions offered by the Counseling & Mental Health Services Program.

More than 23,500 children, adults and families were served by Family Centers’ programs last year.
Almost 200 children between the ages of six weeks and five years were provided a quality preschool experience thanks to the Early Care and Education Program.

More than 1,800: Number of home visits performed by Nurturing Families Network staff to help at-risk families prevent child abuse and neglect.

More than 11,500: The number of volunteer hours donated by Literacy Volunteers’ tutors to provide literacy, ESL and job readiness support to Fairfield County residents.

100% of the parents served by the Reconnecting Families program reported learning the skills necessary to better care for their children.

More than 5,300: Number of nurse practitioner, social work and dental visits performed by the School Based Health Centers.

100% of Center for HOPE clients have reported that therapy has helped them cope with a loss or a critical illness diagnosis.

2,174 volunteers donated their time and talent last year to help Family Centers further its mission.

More than 92% of teens served by the Young Parents Program remained in high school or earned their diplomas.

95% of active Stamford CARES clients remained current in their HIV/AIDS treatment plan.

72% of Friendly Connections participants report that the program is essential in helping them maintain their independence and remain in their own homes.
STARTING HIGH SCHOOL CAN BE A TRYING TIME for any teen. Learning the ins and outs of a new school, navigating the nuances of social circles and balancing the demands of an increased class load are often arduous tasks. So, when Melissa Beerwa learned she was pregnant midway through her freshman year, she was faced with a host of additional stressors she never expected.

Having never spent much time around babies, she doubted her ability to care for one of her own. Melissa also feared that her friends, teachers and neighbors would judge her for becoming pregnant at such a young age. More importantly, she worried she would never realize her dreams of attending college.

Sensing her anxiety, a counselor in the community suggested Melissa contact the Nurturing Families Network for the support she needed to adjust to this major lifestyle change. Each week, a Nurturing Families Home visitor would spend a few hours with Melissa to prepare her for the baby’s arrival and answer her parenting-related questions. Melissa also received the prenatal education necessary to ensure a healthy delivery.

Thanks to the Nurturing Families program, Melissa was gaining the confidence she desperately needed to be the best mother possible. But what she was missing was the support of a peer network. She found it in another Family Centers service, the Young Parents Program (YPP).

Through regular groups held at her school, Melissa met other pregnant teens and realized that she was not, in fact, alone. The YPP also offered additional parenting and prenatal instruction, while outlining various continuing education and vocational options.

Both the YPP and Nurturing Families program were there for Melissa once her daughter, Isabella, was born. While Melissa felt prepared to step into her new role as a parent, the first few months of Isabella’s life were especially stressful. After several trips to the emergency room, doctors confirmed that Isabella suffered from an autoimmune disease which makes her unable to fight off infections. Isabella’s condition prevented her from entering a daycare facility, and forced Melissa to postpone her return to school.

In order to keep up with her schoolwork, Melissa enlisted the help of an in-home tutor. Her YPP counselor worked with her to ensure that all work was completed. A Nurturing Families home visitor and a YPP volunteer would also stop by Melissa’s home each week to provide any necessary support and help stave off isolation. As a result, Melissa is in a much better place these days. She marvels at how quickly Isabella is developing and is planning to attend nursing school when she graduates next year.

“Having a baby when you’re young is hard, but I’ve managed to work through all the obstacles with the help of Nurturing Families and the YPP,” she said. “It’s great to know that you have someone to turn to with concerns about the baby. I feel like Bella and I are really cared for.”
“With all of my kids, I have always tried to show them the importance of education. I think that when parents work together with the school and do the same things at home that the kids do in the classroom, it makes learning much more effective. I’m so glad that Head Start has welcomed my involvement. I appreciate the way that they’ve taught Mark to love school.”
Angela Sanchez, Greenwich Head Start Parent

“Henry’s progress over the past nine months is amazing. As a teacher myself, it’s important that he spends his days in an environment that promotes developmental, social and fine-motor growth. The Warburg Center has exceeded my expectations!”
Abby Redmond, Early Care and Education Program Parent

“As a small business owner, receiving free education and professional development services means so much. These services are not available anywhere else, and everything I’ve learned through Care to Care has helped me become a better child care provider.”
Davette Stephens, Care to Care Client

“As a kid, I never felt comfortable in my own skin. The support that I received from the School Based Health Centers not only helped me get in touch with myself, but it equipped me with the tools I need to grow and achieve success in the future.”
Susana Cuartas, School Based Health Center Client

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davette stephens, care to care client

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abby redmond, early care and education program parent

“As a kid, I never felt comfortable in my own skin. The support that I received from the School Based Health Centers not only helped me get in touch with myself, but it equipped me with the tools I need to grow and achieve success in the future.”
susana cuartas, school based health center client
“I’ve never had children, so Gail is like a daughter to me. Having her in my life helps me stay active – which is so important.”
Vivian Penachio, Friendly Connections Participant
(with her Friendly Visitor Gail Albrecht)

“I’ve always prided myself in being an independent person. But I’ve come to realize that everyone needs help sometimes. Family Centers was there during one of the darkest times of my life. Their support gave me a renewed sense of strength and I honestly look forward to the future.”
Lisette Forde, Housing Resource Program Client

“Was tough for me to be out of work – especially, as a parent. Not be able to give my kids what they need just killed me. But the RITE program helped me get back on my feet and secure a stable job so that I can support my family again.”
Frantz Batoh, Reaching Independence Through Employment (RITE) Client

“Losing my job was probably one of the hardest experiences I’ve ever had to go through. Thankfully, Family Centers was there to guide me though the process of receiving the benefits I needed to support my family during this tough time.”
Nemours Thelemaque, Community and Supportive Services Program Client

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- Whitney Emmerich
- Ed Emanuel
- Susan Emanuel
- Carie Emery
- Ethel Eliza Kraus
- Sue Elly
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- Paul Foster
- Joe Fawley
NO ONE HAS EVER ACCUSED

Kelita Victorin of being afraid of hard work. After graduating high school in her native Haiti, Kelita set out to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse. Despite the demands of caring for her young children, she endured years of rigorous training and eventually earned a license as a nurse practitioner. Kelita quickly found a job in a local hospital, where she enjoyed the fast-paced nature of the job.

Shortly after her first child was born, Kelita and her husband decided their family would have a brighter future in the U.S. So, despite not knowing anyone outside of their small Haitian village, the family set out for Stamford. While Kelita imagined that she would face some difficulties adjusting to her new life in America, she did not expect the culture shock she would experience.

With no family nearby and a limited command of the English language, Kelita soon began to feel isolated and depressed. Since her nursing certification was not valid in the U.S., she could not find work. To make matters worse, the language barrier prevented her from finding the help she needed. For several years, Kelita quietly suffered and her determination slowly deteriorated.

When a caseworker from Family Centers knocked on her door to introduce the Family Self Sufficiency Program, Kelita sensed that things were going to turn around. With the help of her new caseworker, Kelita quickly made plans to complete English courses, seek out scholarship opportunities for an LPN training program and find full-time employment.

Over the next few months, Kelita began to check items off her self-sufficiency “to-do list.” Her caseworker referred her to Literacy Volunteers, where she practiced in conversational and written English. The Reaching Independence Through Employment (RITE) program helped Kelita create a resume and guided her through the job search process. She also took advantage of the RITE program’s free computer classes.

Kelita has a new found sense of confidence these days, and is hopeful about her future. She recently found a part-time job as a Certified Nursing Assistant, and is working toward finding full-time employment. “The goal-planning and support that I’ve received from Family Centers has been instrumental in helping me adjust to my new life in America,” she said. “For a long time, I was lost and had nowhere to turn. But Family Centers gave me the tools to give my kids the best life possible. I am very thankful and indebted to them for that.”

Fostering Independence
FOR AS LONG AS SHE CAN remember, Aisha Alamri looked forward to the day when she would become a mother. After coping with infertility for almost four years, she and her husband, Wadah, were overjoyed when their first son, Jaleel, was born in 2009. Just a few months later they learned their family would be expanding yet again, as a second boy, Kareem, was due the following year.

Sadly, Aisha’s storybook life took a twist often seen in Hollywood movies. While she was changing Jaleel’s diaper one day, the baby rolled and fell off the changing table. Aisha immediately brought Jaleel to the hospital, where a CT scan showed no signs of brain trauma. But when Jaleel suffered a seizure five days later and had difficulty breathing, a follow-up CT scan revealed severe head injuries that were not detected earlier.

Since Jaleel’s injuries were consistent to those caused by Shaken Baby Syndrome, doctors were obligated to those caused by Shaken Baby Syndrome. To make matters worse, Kareem was also placed in protective custody immediately after his birth. Searching for support during this dark time, Aisha turned to Family Centers’ Counseling & Mental Health Program.

With the help of their therapist, Aisha and Wadah learned how to lean on each other to cope with the stress and sorrow of being away from their children. Therapy also gave the Alamris a place where they could talk freely about their fears and their family’s uncertain future. After a long legal battle that included countless testimonials from medical experts, it was determined that Jaleel’s injuries were caused by hydrocephalus – a condition common in infants that causes an increase in cerebral fluid. Aisha and Wadah were acquitted of all charges, but now needed to undergo a lengthy process to bring their boys home. They began working with Family Centers’ Reconnecting Families program to prepare for Jaleel and Kareem’s eventual return home. Together with their case manager, Aisha and Wadah focused on making their apartment an ideal place to raise two toddlers. The Alamris were also offered additional support and counseling they needed to be the best parents possible.

Once it was determined that Jaleel and Kareem were no longer at risk, Family Centers helped ensure the reunification process went smoothly. Supervised visits slowly turned into one-on-one outings for the family. As Aisha and Wadah continued to prove they were responsible parents, the boys were permitted to spend the night alone in their parents’ home. After nearly a year and a half of hard work, Aisha and Wadah had their family back together.

With her boys at home and her legal troubles behind her, Aisha says she breathes easier these days. Having seen how life can turn itself upside down in an instant, Aisha now takes the time to enjoy every minute of motherhood. She also took steps to provide a better life for Jaleel and Kareem by earning a Bachelor’s Degree in Social and Criminal Justice. “Losing my children was a horrible experience that I hope no one ever has to go through,” she said. “Family Centers’ support and guidance got me through the worst period of my life, and was instrumental in reunifying our family.”
“There was a huge void in my life after I stopped working. And I still sometimes miss that old life, but through therapy I have come to relish the memories while moving forward at the same time.”

Sybil Cigal, Counseling & Mental Health Program Client

“Losing a child is a horrible experience for any parent, but the violent way in which Neil died caused a kind of pain that was indescribable. Our friends and family were incredibly supportive, but the shock and sorrow that was reflected in their faces made the healing process difficult. Being able to talk to someone who understood the complexity of losing a loved one was very comforting. There will always be a huge hole in my heart, but I would not have found some peace without the Center for Hope.”

Heidi Godleski, Center for Hope Client

“Drugs caused my life to spiral out of control. The risk of losing my kids was a real wake up call. Family Centers was there with the parenting education and support I needed to get my life back on track. I’m focused on my kids much more these days, and I can’t thank Family Centers enough for saving my family.”

Amber Scaturchio, Intensive Family Preservation Program Client

“There was this fog, like a huge grey cloud, over my head following Frank’s death. But as the weeks, months and years went on, and I continued going to The Den, the cloud has slowly and steadily lifted. Of course, I still have highs and lows but the swings aren’t so dramatic that they’re day-ruiners.”

Marilyn Pozzuto, The Den for Grieving Kids Client
Our Volunteers

NOT MANY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE GIVEN the opportunity to try out a prospective career path before entering college. However, through a hands-on senior internship, Melissa Horowitz was able to do just that by volunteering at the Greenwich Head Start preschool. While she expected to have lots of fun interacting with a host of curious three and four-year-olds, she never expected to discover a passion for Early Childhood Education.

Melissa’s experience as a Head Start volunteer helped solidify her interest in becoming a preschool teacher. Following her freshman year at Washington University in St. Louis three years ago, Melissa intended to return to the Head Start classrooms for the summer. The staff was so thrilled to have her back that they offered her a summer teaching job while she completed her degree in education.

Over the course of the four summers that she taught at the Head Start program, Melissa acquired more responsibilities as a teacher. While she did a lot of observation and mostly aided the teachers on a day-to-day basis during that first summer, Melissa now helps create weekly lesson plans and regularly leads classroom activities.

Helping young children gain the educational building blocks they need to succeed in school is something Melissa takes very seriously. In addition to putting in a full day in the classroom, she regularly uses her free time to research art projects, lessons and other learning exercises to engage her students.

Now in her senior year at Washington University, Melissa is confident that her experience at Greenwich Head Start will prepare her for a long career in education. She is currently working on her elementary education certification, and plans to student-teach in a St. Louis fourth-grade classroom this fall.

“I am so grateful for having the chance to be part of the Head Start community,” she said. “Being able to have a hands-on volunteer opportunity helped me realize a hidden passion for teaching. This has been one of the most amazing experiences of my life and I can’t imagine leaving this place.”
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Brandon Campbell

Family Champion Award

“For the past several years, Brandon has worked to ensure that Toyota of Stamford’s community outreach efforts benefit our most vulnerable families. Whether he’s collecting holiday gifts for families in need or organizing fundraisers to create a preschool scholarship fund, Brandon has made it his mission to give back to the community in which he lives and works.” — Bob Arnold, President

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