

Families Together

In Partnership with Albany County Department for Children, Youth & Families in Albany County

Winter 2006



In Partnership with Albany County Department for Children, Youth & Families

Albany Family Center

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518.432.0333

Colonie Family Center

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Hilltown Family Center

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Visit us online at
www.ftnys.org/albany

In This Issue:

System of Care.....	1, 3
Evaluation Update	1, 2
Words of Encouragement	3
The Family Centers	4-5
Youth Update.....	5-6
Community Spotlight	7-8

Families Together in Albany County: System-of-Care

We have begun our third year of grant funding. Our Hilltown and Colonie Family Centers are fully operational and serving children and families in their community. We are actively looking for a site in the City of Albany that will meet the needs of the community. Our Parent Partners are providing information, referral and support to family members of children with emotional or behavioral issues. Families entering into the system-of-care will participate in a Circle-of-Support meeting which brings all family members and service providers together in order to develop a strength based, individualized plan for the child and family.

We have begun conducting parent education and support groups in the Hilltown and Colonie sites. We are pleased to announce the addition of two clinical staff that will support the Parent Partners as well as provide knowledge of a full array of services in

Continued on page 3...

Evaluation Update

All *Systems of Care* throughout the United States are part of a congressionally-mandated national evaluation. There are multiple components of the national evaluation, implemented at the local and national levels. The Center for Human Services Research at the University at Albany is conducting the local evaluation. The two main local studies are the Cross-Sectional Descriptive Study and Longitudinal Child and Family Outcome Study.

The **Cross-Sectional Descriptive Study** describes the demographic, diagnostic, and functional characteristics of all children and youth who receive services through Families Together in Albany County. Information is collected at intake by Parent Partners at family resource centers or by the clinicians at the Children's Clinic at Green Street. We don't collect any identifying information, like name or social security number. We put all the data together and report it in aggregate, or grouped form. From January through September 2006, we collected information on 306 children and youth. Here is an example of some descriptive data we've collected on these youth so far.

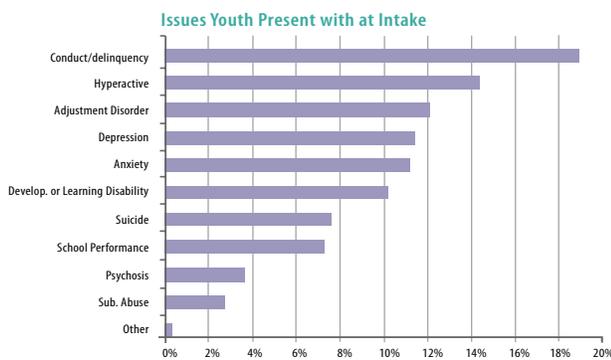
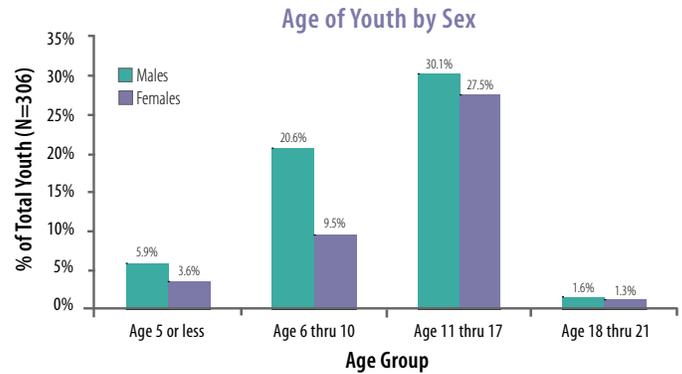
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Evaluation Update, continued

There were more boys than girls who came in for services: there were 178 boys compared with 128 girls. *The chart to the right* tells us that the majority of youth, both boys and girls, were age 11 through 17 (30.1% boys + 27.5% girls). Half of the youth who came in for services were boys ages 6 through 17.

The chart below shows us that youth presented for services with lots of different kinds of issues, like conduct or delinquency issues, hyperactivity, depression, and anxiety. Of course, youth can and often do have more than one issue.

In fact, the youth who came in for services averaged 3 issues each for a total of 875 issues. The percentages in the chart are based on the total number of issues.



The **Longitudinal Child and Family Outcome Study** is an opportunity for families to give input on the services they have received through Families Together in Albany County and how services may help move families toward their goals. The outcome study measures changes over time in youth clinical development and social functioning, strengths, educational performance, stability of living arrangements, delinquent activities and engagement with law enforcement and substance use. The study includes an assessment of family functioning, family resources and strains experienced by caregivers of children with social, emotional and

behavioral concerns. We also ask families about the services they receive and their satisfaction with those services.

Families who are eligible for local system-of-care services through Families Together in Albany County are eligible for the outcome study. However, because so many families are served, not everyone will be selected for this study. Even if a family is selected, enrollment is completely voluntary. One caregiver per family is enrolled and youth age 11–21 are eligible to participate (under 18 with their parent's permission). We have 2 interviewers, Liz Cataldo and Corinne Noble. Liz and Corinne will call an eligible family within 30 days of intake to explain the evaluation and, with permission, set up an appointment for the interview. The confidential interviews are conducted every 6 months for up to 36 months at a place convenient for the family, usually in the home. Each adult interview takes about 2 hours; youth interviews take less than 1 hour. We understand this is a big commitment. To show our appreciation, we offer a choice of gift cards after every interview. Adults receive a \$25 gift card for the first interview with a \$5 increase at each follow-up interview and an extra bonus if all interviews are completed. Youth receive a \$15 gift card or movie tickets to start out with and increase up to \$25 per interview with a bonus at the end if they complete all interviews.

We take the confidentiality of families' information very seriously. We never identify families enrolled in the evaluation, neither verbally nor in any written report. Just like the descriptive study, we group together all families' responses for reporting purposes. We never mention names. We enrolled 72 families into the outcome study through September 2006. We hope to enroll a total of about 250 families by the end of 2008.

We would like to say a big **Thank You** to all of the families who have joined the outcome study to this point! We know the interviews take a long time and ask many questions. We appreciate the time you spend with us sharing your family stories.

There is an Evaluation Advisory Group that helps guide the evaluation and will also help interpret results and make community presentations. If you are interested in learning more about this group or the overall evaluation program, please contact **Dr. LuAnn McCormick**, Evaluation Program Director, at lmccormi@pdp.albany.edu or **442-5731**.

Words of Encouragement

Using positive verbal reinforcement to promote a healthy self esteem in our youth with special emotional and behavioral challenges.

Parenting is a wonderful challenging journey of struggles, conflict, laughter and joy. Parents need as many “tools of the trade” as possible to develop a positive self esteem and to help promote better behaviors in the children we cherish. We often receive well intentioned parenting tips from our family and friends that do not always give our children the success they need.

For example, positive words of encouragement for a job well done:

I knew you could do it!

That’s great!

However, our children may not know what behavior or action was the subject of the special praise. Use verbal encouragement with concrete examples of the behavior you want to see again. This takes just a little bit more time but the results may surprise you.

For example:

It was so thoughtful of you to bring me my papers.

How does the bus ride make you feel?

I knew you could finish your homework neatly.

Families Together in Albany County: System-of-Care, continued



Apple picking with (Top row L to R) Alicia, Heather, Kasey, Aaron and (Front Row) Aubrey

Albany County. Please visit our Web site to find out community activities in each of the location: www.ftnys.org/albany

We recently sponsored Rusty Clark from the University of South Florida to provide training on Transitional Youth. We are happy to announce that it was well attended by the various cross systems players through the adult and child serving systems. The task now will be to work collaboratively in order to change how we serve the 16-25 year old youths in Albany County. The Mental Health Planning Committee is working on a “White Paper” to address the challenges in providing services to these youth that meet their individualized needs and strengths.

The NYS Office of Mental Health has a new initiative “Clinic Plus” and we are excited about the opportunity to provide assessment and services to children aged 0-5. Albany County has opted to target younger children in this initiative as Clinic Plus offers an unprecedented opportunity to intervene early and effectively with children and their families needing help. The implementation of the Clinic Plus initiative fits perfectly within our system-of-care development and allows for a strengthened partnership with Parsons Child Guidance Clinic.

Albany Family Center

The Albany Family Center is proud to announce the addition of two new staff members. Pattie Forbes and Will Babarczy started in September of this year. They bring with them their personal knowledge and understanding of families with social, emotional or behavioral concerns. We are pleased to announce that with a bilingual staff member on board we will be able to serve Spanish speaking families in their native language. Despite the lack of a permanent site for the Albany Family Center, families are being served in the city of Albany. We have been working with families to provide emotional support, educational opportunities, community resources and referrals to other needed services. As this year progresses, we will continue to meet with various organizations throughout the City of Albany, as well as with the numerous schools in our City – in effort to social market our services and to improve the system-of-care for the youth and families living in Albany.



L to R: Will Babarczy, Laurie Rivera and Patti Forbes

Similar to our other Centers in Colonie and the Hilltowns, the Albany Family Center is staffed by parents of children who have social, emotional, or behavioral concerns. Laurie Rivera, Lead Parent Partner for the center believes that having parents as staff members is what will benefit families the most. “Having been there and done that leads to an instant trust among other parents to help break down barriers. Parents dealing with crisis need to know that they are not alone. We are here for them,” said Rivera.

To learn more about the Albany Family Center, please call **(518) 432-0333**. Our Parent Partners can be reached at the following extensions: **Laurie Rivera, 19; Pattie Forbes, 16; and Will Babarczy, 24**. Please feel free to visit us at our temporary home, located in the statewide office of Families Together in New York State at 737 Madison Avenue Albany, New York 12208.

Colonie Family Center

System-of-Care at the Colonie Family Center

Susan Bredice, Lead Parent Partner

Many people have asked me, “What is family support?” or, “What do you do at the Family Resource Center?” My answer is that I work in a system-of-care and we work with families to provide information, referrals and support.

A system-of-care is about partnership—a partnership made up of families, service providers, teachers and others who care for children. Together, the team develops an individualized service plan that builds upon the unique strengths of each child and each family. Once needs are identified, a family may participate in a circle-of-support meeting which involves an eclectic approach through collaboration with community service providers, and is a family

centered, goal oriented support meeting to address the concerns of the family.

Here in Colonie, Parent Partners have been working closely with families, service providers, schools and the community to build a strong network of support for our children and youth. “The success of our system of care process is driven by the knowledge, dedication and personal experiences of the Parent Partners and the joint efforts with community providers,” said Patti DeVost, LCSW for Families Together in Albany County.

To learn more about the Colonie Family Center, please call **(518) 218-1030** and a Parent Partner will provide you with the information that you need.



L to R: Sue Walter, Krystal Maisonet, Sue Bredice and Trish Washburn

The Hilltowns Family Center

At the Hilltown Site, we have brought together multiple agencies to develop plans to help children and their families succeed in their own community. We have offered free educational seminars to parents and caregivers to help them better understand their children's disabilities and learn how to better advocate for what is best for their children.

During the summer, a weekly support group was held at the Hilltown site. Discussions were held on a number of topics, including whether or not to medicate a child, Attention Deficit Disorder, Autism, and how to work with the schools to access the best education for your child. Families Together provided child care and dinner for the families so that parents were able to participate. "The Parent Support Group was helpful in many ways," said Patricia Lee, a Hilltown resident and parent. "Families received input on what services were available in our community, but the best thing about the Parent Support Group was learning from all the other families who were brought together," said Lee. With the support group being such a huge success, we have decided to continue it on a monthly basis. Please call us at (518) 872-1460 to register for the Parent Support Group.



Mary Beth Peterson and Amy Anderson

We have also been conducting in partnership with Albany County Department of Social Services a Food Stamp and Medicaid application day. This happens on the second Wednesday of every month. Please visit us online or call us for more information, we would love to hear from you.

Youth Update

It has been an exciting and fulfilling year for the Youth Empowerment Project. This past year we have worked on community service projects including a community garden, a car wash fundraiser and weekly opportunities to provide peer-to-peer support for each other.

We also had a great deal of fun this past year fishing, going to the movies, a summer barbeque, and even a wonderful trip to the Great Escape.



*Matthew Canuteson,
Youth Coordinator*

I would like to take this opportunity to revisit the mission and values of the Youth Empowerment Project. The purpose and mission of the group can be simplified into three goals or reasons we have a group:

- To provide opportunities for youth to interact with each other and address issues of mutual interest and common experience. These activities are facilitated by young people and their peers and are intended to increase socialization as well as enable young people to develop positive and healthy relationships with their peers. These services are always voluntary and active participation is a choice.
- To encourage youth participation and provide opportunities for youth to have a voice in their own service provision.
- To allow youth to participate in the decision-making process of child-serving systems in regards to policy and practice.

The Youth Empowerment Project is what is known as a youth-directed program. This means the program is supported by adult professionals and/or staff who help carry out necessary administrative functions. Youth are involved in the planning and implementation of the programs, which includes the decision and planning process of what activities will take place and the agendas for the weekly meetings. Although adult staff may be responsible for assisting youth to schedule and plan for activities, the youth ultimately decide what the needs of their peers are in the community.

I am excited to see our Youth Empowerment Project grow – and I look forward to meeting and working with more youth from across Albany County.

To learn more about the Youth Empowerment Project, please call Matthew at **(518) 432-0333 ext. 23** or email mcanuteson@ftnys.org.

Youth Update, continued



Above, from left to right: Dominick planting a shrub; Mark Gibson, part-time Youth Advisor working hard on our garden; Heather picking an apple at Indian Ladder Farms; Left: Aubrey and Kasey play with their new best friend, the X-Box 360

What If? *By Michelle Colman (Colonie Youth)*

What if monsters lived on the earth
What if there was more to life than just giving birth
What if time could be put on pause
What if effect came before cause
What if someday California broke off from the United States
What if somehow people were never late
What if kids suddenly made all the rules
What if all the intelligent people became complete fools
What if you turned purple when you were happy
What if you became powerful when you felt crappy
What if monkeys could fly
What if we could reach the sky
What if you could drive at the age of 10
What if there were no longer any men
What if planes constantly ran out of fuel
What if the whole world began participating in a duel
What if all the books were burned
What if nobody ever learned

What if the ocean was pink
What if rocks could think
What if feet grew out of our heads
What if people stopped sleeping in beds
What if nuclear war was the new trend
What if electric power came to an end
What if "hello" really meant "goodbye"
What if every word people spoke came out as a lie
What if there was no good in anyone
What if life was never done
What if everyone had millions of dollars
What if dogs put humans in shock collars
What if nothing was what it seems
What if reality was what happens in our dreams

What if all the "what ifs" became true--
What if that happened? What would we do?



Community Spotlight

Krystal Maisonet began her role as Parent Partner in August, but her relationship with Families Together began long before that. Krystal originally came through our doors at the Colonie Family Resource Center looking for help for her family. "Families Together helped me open doors to services I never thought I had access to and helped me build better relationships with my children's school," said Krystal. From her personal and professional experiences, Krystal became an ideal fit for the Parent Partner position at our Colonie Family Resource Center. "I am glad I can help families find direction to the services that they need. I understand what it is like to feel frustrated and opening one door to have another shut, but Families Together can help, and I am proof of that," said Krystal.

"Our kids are so important, each of them deserve to receive any and all services they may need to give them the stepping stones to a successful future. We are here to provide that for them at Families Together," continued Krystal.

Krystal was born in California and raised in Idaho. Krystal resides in Colonie with her husband Mike and their three children.

To contact Krystal, please call **(518) 218-1030** or email kmaisonet@ftnys.org



Patricia Lee came to our Hilltown Family Center searching for direction to services for her three children. Patricia and her husband Brian adopted three beautiful children, all with special needs. "I was struggling with the schools, but Amy and Mary Beth with their strong advocacy skills, were able to provide the resources and the direction I needed," said Patricia. Amy Anderson and Mary Beth Peterson, Parent Partners for the Hilltown Site attended school meetings with Patricia and taught Patricia how to successfully become her own advocate. "Families Together has helped me, and I will continue to use this valuable resource as my children grow," said Patricia.

When Patricia is not busy with her three young children, you can find her at our monthly Parent Support Group meetings, or attending our Hilltown Steering Committee.



Tom Hogan, Colonie Parent

"Tom Hogan is a great dad," said Sue Bredice, Lead Parent Partner from our Colonie Family Resource Center. Tom is a single dad who loves his son. Tom and his son were one of the first families to come through our doors in Colonie looking for support. "I like coming to Families Together to tell you the truth, it's a place I come to a lot, because I need help, and Sue helps to ease my stress," said Tom. Tom's son aspires to play the banjo, while Tom is a singer/guitar player for a locally based band named Corn Bred – who frequently performs at community fund raising events.

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Community Spotlight

Hola, soy **Will Babarczy**, va a ser un gusto trabajar con ustedes.

Will Babarczy joined our Albany Family Center as a Parent Partner this past September. Will was born and raised in Peru and worked towards helping families, children and youth by establishing medical and dental clinics, child protective programs and planning fun recreational activities. At an early age, Will was exposed to some mental health and substance issues within his family. These experiences in Will's personal and professional life have prepared Will for his role as Parent Partner. Will now resides in Albany with his wife Jaimie and their baby daughter Emily.

"I want families in Albany to feel safe and cared for. I will do what ever I can to help our families through compassion and by providing and directing families to the services that they need," said Will. Will, who is bilingual, is also excited at the chance to help those families who speak Spanish in Albany. "I do not want Spanish speaking families to feel isolated just because English is not their primary language," said Will. Estamos aqui para ayudar a las familias de Albany...visitanos y permitenos escucharte, conocerte y apoyarte.

To contact Will, please call **(518) 432-0333 ext. 16** or email wbabarczy@ftnys.org.