



# SOLUTIONS

Summer Newsletter | 2020



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# Agency HAPPENINGS

## CYFS Recipient of \$100,000 through Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund Grant for COVID Impacted Families

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has especially been hard on those in our communities with less resources and support systems. CYFS was thrilled when we received a \$100,000 grant through the **Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund** to help where we were seeing the most need. This fund was established by the United Way of Illinois and the Alliance of Illinois Community Foundations in collaboration with the Office of the Governor and was focused on providing support for the state's most vulnerable populations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to CYFS COVID Relief Grants Coordinator, Jeff Turnbull, "Within a month, we were able to fulfill 175 requests for families in desperate need of food, rent, child care, and utility assistance. We have seen significant numbers of families in crisis due to the pandemic and this funding has been so impactful for those that are truly in need." While the majority of the funds were used for food and/or utility vouchers, there were some other needs that emerged that we were thankful of having this resource to provide to families in need. Our Macomb staff distributed care packages that contained hygiene items, fans, school supplies, outdoor activities and arts and craft activities all designed to help families financially struggling and to help kids keep busy and engaged during the pandemic in our rural communities. CYFS has also helped additional families thorough grants from the **Community Foundation of Central Illinois, John M. Scott Health Care Commission COVID Relief, The Moline Foundation, and United Way of Champaign County**. Thanks to all our community partners!!

## CYFS Enters Progressive Partnership with Moline Police Department

We are proud to announce CYFS has entered into a new and innovative partnership with the Moline Police Department to pair social workers together with Moline officers for enhanced services throughout the Moline community. The purpose of this new agreement is to increase access to social work services to individuals that come in contact with the police department who present the need for social work referral or intervention. Moline Police Chief Darren Gault said, "Having the CYFS social workers inside of our police operations will be a valuable addition and important partnership in public safety in Moline. I am grateful for CYFS answering our call for enhanced social work collaboration." CYFS Chief Operating Officer Tony Riordan confirmed the unique partnership has the potential for significant impact for the community. "Chief Gault reached out seeking a collaborative solution to the complexity of community policing challenges faced each day by his staff. We have operated the 24/7 on call youth crisis response programs for over 40 years with local Illinois QC law enforcement. It is a natural progression to expand to try to quickly engage other adults and families in need to provide critical support alongside our first responders. Solutions today require creative collaborations serving all with dignity and respect and we will strive to do so each day."



## No CYFS Annual Concert for a Cause This Year ... but You Can Still Help Support the “Just Like Me Fund” This Fall!

In following the guidelines established to help keep us all safe from COVID-19, CYFS sadly had to cancel our annual benefit concert in May. We want to give a heartfelt thanks to our sponsors: **Lenny the Lawyer, F & M Bank, John Graham and Associates, Kuhl Insurance, CEFUCU, RSM US LLP, Uftring Weston, Lanz Heating and Cooling, Inc., Entec, TSI, and Wiegand Plumbing Inc.** who are standing by us and have transitioned their sponsorships to help us raise money this fall for our **Just Like Me** project. This special project provides enrichment activities every year for kids who have experienced abuse or other trauma and just want to feel a little normalcy. This year, the fund has helped provide kids with new bicycles, allowed children to take virtual music lessons, and helped teens who are leaving for college get the items they need for their college dorm rooms. So stay tuned and watch for how you can donate to this project in our upcoming virtual campaign for Just Like Me later this fall!

## CYFS Executive Director Trish Fox Receives 25 Women in Leadership WEEK-TV Award

We are proud to announce CYFS Executive Director Trish Fox was named to this year's **25 Women in Leadership** by WEEK-TV. This award recognizes women who have demonstrated unswerving dedication to the betterment of their community at large, their company and their family. CYFS Board President, Michael O'Melia, Professor Emeritus of Social Work at St. Ambrose University sums up how Trish serves as an inspiration and role model within her sphere of influence when he stated, “Trish’s leadership in response to the health crisis of COVID-19 has been inspirational. She is focused on the mission, organized and meticulous yet flexible and open to ideas, knowledgeable in her own right but without hesitation to elicit the expertise of others, humble in her appreciation of the efforts of staff and volunteers, and sensitive to the needs of agency clientele – all while maintaining an optimistic outlook and a long term view. *Now that’s a leader.*”



## CYFS New Member of National Council for Adoption



The National Council for Adoption is the leading global adoption advocacy organization and has become the authoritative voice for adoption. We are proud to announce we have been invited to become a member of this organization. In order to be considered for membership, agencies need to meet a set of high quality standards of practice. According to CYFS Director of Licensing and Adoption, Mary Kay Collins, “Within the mission and vision of the CYFS Adoption Program is our promise to always stay contemporary in our adoption practice and to promote awareness of the adoption experience. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of our adoption team, we have accomplished this within our local communities throughout the state. Becoming approved as a member of the NCFCA allows us to take our commitment even further. We now are able to collaborate with other adoption service providers and make a difference on a much broader national level.” To learn more about our Adoption program, visit our website at [www.cyfsolutions.org/services/adoption/](http://www.cyfsolutions.org/services/adoption/).

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# CYFS Persisting THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

Reflecting back on early 2020, few of us could have envisioned that we would be facing a world pandemic and the multitude of challenges it presents. Like other essential healthcare providers, we at CYFS haven't skipped a beat in delivering critical services to thousands of children, families, and individuals in need.

- Our **Youth, Family and Community Outreach** program has continued to respond to run-away and homeless youth and their families in crisis through our 24 hour a day program hotline. According to YFCOS Program Coordinator Doug Braun, "Many of our clients are struggling right now. Health concerns, loss of income and the reality of being cooped up in close quarters has increased stress and the opportunity for family conflict and so we have focused on increasing our communication with clients. In fact, with our 24 hour crisis line, a YFCOS staff member is always there to help problem solve."

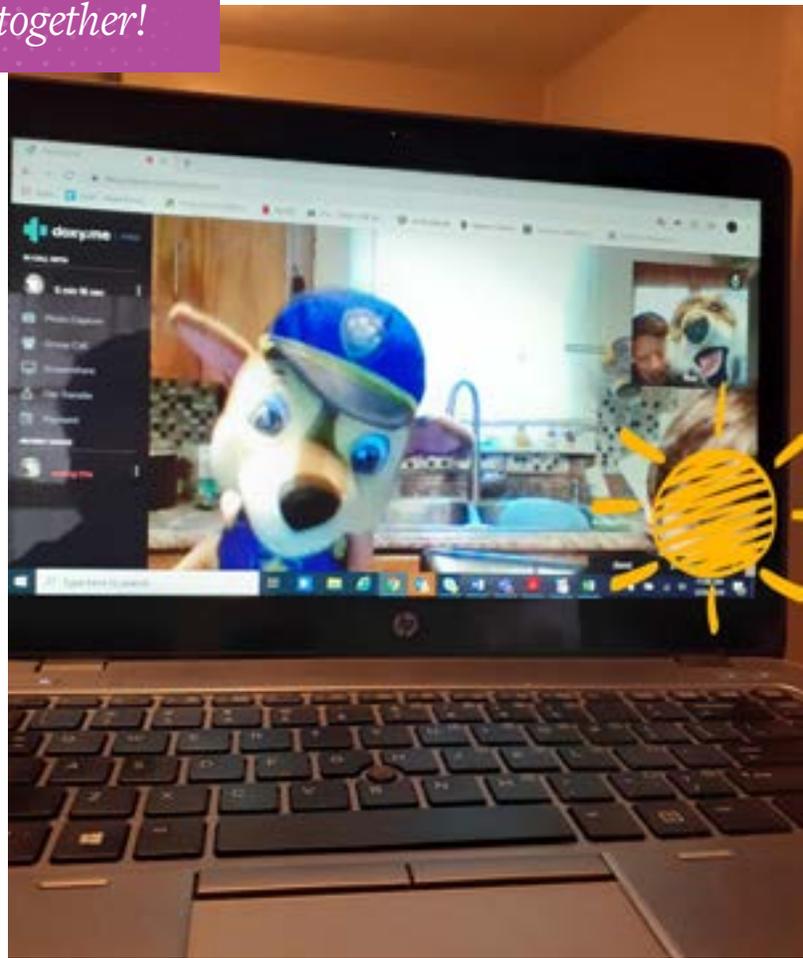
- **Guardian Angel Home** has continued to provide a place where severely traumatized boys heal, cope and thrive in a safe, caring, structured and therapeutic setting. Guardian Angel Program Coordinator Scott Hassett stated, "We have been very proud of the youth in how they have adjusted to wearing masks and having to remain on-grounds. Our team here works hard to set a positive tone regarding our new normal."
- Our **professional counseling team** has also continued to create positive change for children, couples, individuals, and seniors through telehealth video and phone services. We have also continued to provide in-person crisis response for mental health emergencies. Behavioral Health and Counseling Clinical Director, Pat Carlson noted, "We have been going through an extraordinarily stressful period. Our therapists have offered a safe environment for people to sort out what they are experiencing and what they can do to live their most fulfilling life."
- Our **social workers** have also continued to ensure the safety and well-being of 1,500 abused and neglected children in our **child abuse prevention and intervention** programs through a combination of in-person, audio, and video contacts. Director of Family Centered Foster Care and Intact Services Heather Goff stated, "Our most vital concern from the very beginning was to ensure all children remained safe. We immediately went to work ensuring all of our foster families and biological parents had access to technology in order for us to engage with them virtually if COVID-19 prevented in-person contact." Despite the pandemic, children and families served by CYFS experienced permanency outcomes that are among the best in the state of Illinois.
- And our **Adoption program** has continued to assist families in the lifelong journey of infant, special needs, and sibling adoptions. Says Licensing Program Coordinator, Mary Kay Collins, "Our staff have been creatively working with community partners to find solutions. Whether it meant virtual meetings



We were so grateful for the many volunteers who made fabric masks for our essential workers early on in the pandemic.



*This is achieving solutions together!*



with attorneys or expanding our capacity to secure electronic signatures for documents, our team has been innovative and persistent in finding solutions, one challenge at a time.”

What we have been most thankful for is the **outpouring of support** from community members throughout our service locations. From the many silent heroes who made hundreds of cloth masks, to those that volunteered to make videos, reading favorite stories or doing art projects for our youth in care, to those that have donated funds to help us continue our work, it is individuals like you that have helped keep our communities strong during this most trying time. From all of us at CYFS, thank you for believing in our mission and for achieving solutions, together!

*Above left:* Guardian Angel Residential Home staff continued to safely meet in teams to review residents’ goals and progress.

*Above right:* Our teams found creative ways of maintaining mandatory trainings for our essential workers, even holding meetings outside!

*Bottom left:* While many of the state courts were closed during COVID, that didn’t stop some of our adoptive families from celebrating their special day becoming a forever family.

*Bottom right:* Virtual Theraplay has become the norm for our Behavioral Counseling program.

# Agency HAPPENINGS

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## CYFS Announces the Appointment of Three New Board Members

The CYFS Board is comprised of community members who are strongly aligned with our agency values and mission. We are happy to announce the appointment of the following three new Board members:

**Mary Byram** is from the Quad Cities area and brings her experience in sales, human resources, and public relations to our Board. Mary is an Executive Pharmaceutical Sales Specialist with AstraZeneca. She has provided training programs on sexual harassment, drug and alcohol awareness, team building and time management. An active community volunteer, Mary has worked with Junior Achievement, Handicapped Development Center, American Heart Association, United Way, and Catholic Charities.

**Darlene Prince** brings extensive social work and human service administration experience to the Board. Darlene has over 30 years of experience in Illinois and Georgia in the areas of HIV/AIDS, mass incarceration, foster care, and serving the developmentally disabled population. Currently, Darlene is a Clinical Medical Case manager with AID Atlanta, Inc. In addition, she serves as board co-chair of a 501 c3 non-profit entitled THE RE-ENTRY CONNECTION, INC, where for the past 10 years she has assisted in the mentoring of formerly and currently incarcerated women.

**T.J. Williams** is the owner of TJ Trained Wrestling Facility where he trains youth and high school age athletes year round in the sport of wrestling. He is a mentor and role model to youth, high school, and college wrestlers. In addition, T.J. is the head wrestling coach at Tremont High School in Tremont, IL. One of his top goals and expectations for student-athletes is to graduate high school and apply their wrestling knowledge & training in their everyday lives.

Executive Director Trish Fox stated, "All three of our new Board members are strongly aligned with our agency belief in the capacity of people to work together to successfully address challenges and achieve solutions. We are very grateful to be adding each of their unique experiences and expertise to our CYFS team."

## CYFS Foster Care Program Makes Big Impact with Children and Families in Crisis

We are excited to announce that over the last year, our child welfare team helped **349** children achieve a safe, loving and forever family with parents they can trust to care for them! Even more hopeful is that **57%** of these children in care were successfully and safely reunited with their families. The work our team does - engaging families and helping them make lasting changes - illustrates our guiding belief that when someone in crisis has access to the right support and the tools to heal, cope and thrive - lasting positive solutions are possible. Take for example Shawna, who grew up in the foster care system. After childhood filled with trauma and abuse, Shawna turned to drugs and was incarcerated for drug possession. However, upon her release, Shawna was committed to turning her life around. Her CYFS caseworker proudly stated, "I couldn't be more proud of Shawna. She completed every part of her parenting plan including drug rehabilitation and now wants to mentor other women who have lost their parental rights due to drug abuse. Shawna admitted she had a problem, used the tools we provided to improve her life and her parenting and now has been reunited with her kids. Change is powerful."

# Donor SPOTLIGHT: Steve Collins & Heidi Huiskamp Collins

**W**e at CYFS are inspired by the gratitude of our donors. None of our programming could endure without firm roots planted in a supportive community. We simply could not accomplish our work without the support of people like you who share our vision. We were able to spend some virtual time with two of our longstanding supporters, **Steve Collins** and **Heidi Huiskamp Collins**. Here is snapshot of that conversation:

**CYFS:** *When did you first become involved with The Center for Youth and Family Solutions and what attracted you to our cause?*

**Steve:** I was acquainted with some of your staff members and was moved to support your mission early on in your history as I wanted to sustain much-needed services for children in the foster system.

**Heidi:** I was introduced to your mission later, after Steve and I got married, and discovered that The Center for Youth & Family Solutions “checks the boxes” for several of my philanthropic passions: working towards better mental health outcomes and lifting up “at-risk” children.

**CYFS:** *What inspires you to give to our agency?*

**Steve:** I am inspired by the dedicated staff that strives every day to improve outcomes for the individuals served by the agency.

**Heidi:** I am “lit up” right now by CYFS’ latest venture to partner with the Moline Police Department to address mental health, poverty, homelessness and racism by providing direct service providers to address calls in the City of Moline that may be better served by a mental health professional than a well-meaning, but not as well-equipped public servant.

**CYFS:** *What motivates you to stay involved with CYFS?*

**Steve:** I am motivated to stay involved with CYFS as I can witness to the fact that the need for the agency’s services only increases over time.

**Heidi:** I get great joy in giving to CYFS and the evolution of creative and impactful initiatives that address the growing and complex needs of our QC community that I so love.



**CYFS:** *What part of our work interests you most?*

**Steve:** I am most interested in CYFS working towards better outcomes for “at-risk” children. It is my favorite part of the agency’s work.

**Heidi:** I am most moved by the latest initiative between CYFS and the Moline Police Department to address imperative community needs like better serving those in the midst of a mental health crisis, de-escalating family/spousal domestic calls and reaching out to youth in critical situations.

**CYFS:** *What do you hope our organization will achieve in the near future and in the long term?*

**Steve:** I hope CYFS becomes sufficiently-funded over both the short and long-term so that they can grow and serve more individuals who are in need.

**Heidi:** My dream is that the CYFS and Moline Police program will expand to our entire region and become a model of best practices for communities all over the U.S. as we strive towards the desirable common goals of better mental health outcomes for those of all ages, racial justice, homelessness and poverty.

*A genuine thanks to Steve and Heidi for their unwavering support of our mission and for helping us to achieve solutions!*