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## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala a Success!

Family & Children's Society celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala at the DoubleTree Hotel in Binghamton on May 20. More than 100 people attended the event, proceeds from which benefit the people Family & Children's serves in the community. The evening included a social hour, dinner and remarks from Rev. Janet Couper Watrous, granddaughter of Family & Children's Society founder Esther W. Couper.

The Esther W. Couper Memorial Award, established in 2001, was presented at the event – the honor is bestowed on a community member who exemplifies outstanding service and dedication to the children and families of the community. The Leadership Award and the Aide of the Year Award were also presented at the gala (see awards article, page 2). Entertainment was provided by pianist Rick Pedro and by the Scott Freeman Band, and a basket raffle rounded out the evening's fun and fundraising.

Special thanks to the event's sponsors, including Magic 101.7 (gold level), Coughlin & Gerhart, Excellus, M & T Bank and Security Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York (silver level), and Air Temp Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.; BlueStorm Technologies, Inc.; Brown & Brown Empire State; Chemung Canal Trust Company; Delta Engineers, Architects & Land Surveyors; KDC Consulting Group, Inc.; Levene, Gouldin & Thompson, LLP; Mengel Metzger Barr, LLP; NBT Bank, NBT-Mang Insurance Agency; and United Health Services (bronze level).

Thank you to the planning committee members for organizing the evening: Board members including Theresa Bailey, Resource Development Committee Chair Katie Legg, Joann Lindstrom, Nancy Nestlerode, Linda Persons, Gene Raymondi, Kari Ryder-Morton, Patti Salati and John Spencer, community members Tish Davis and Melissa Klinko, and staff members including CEO Lisa Hoeschele, Executive Assistant Diane Kubik, Administrative Assistant Ingrid Maniates and Development & Marketing Director Carol Tytler.

## From Rev. Janet Couper Watrous' Keynote Speech

Watrous carried on a family tradition as speaker – Society founder and her grandmother Esther Couper was the guest speaker at the 50th anniversary gala! For nearly 25 years, Watrous served as a parish priest, a member of the bishop's staff, and a school and college chaplain in Raleigh, NC. In 2011, she returned to Binghamton to serve as the interim rector at Christ Episcopal Church.

Family & Children's began when a small group of people realized there was a problem they wanted to address in their community. It was the late 1930s, and Binghamton was welcoming significant numbers of European immigrants, drawn to the jobs available in local manufacturing.

The Junior League sponsored a home survey project, asking newcomers directly about their most pressing needs. As working parent after working parent explained they had no child care for their pre-school children, the first priority was clear. At this time, Catholic Charities was the only social services provider. My grandmother spoke with their leadership, and was told an additional provider would be welcome. Rooms were rented and Family & Children's began offering services.

My grandmother lived in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, going from a pony cart to men on the moon. Her story of helping her community inspires me to live a meaningful life. At the heart of a meaningful life is attention to others, and finding connections with those who seem very different. Having the support of a caring community makes all the difference. In my life as a pastor, people have said to me over and over again, "It makes me feel so good that you just listen." Family & Children's Society is an ear to the community, telling us where needs are great and acute, and giving us the opportunity for creative, caring responses. We do this by having a staff devoted to our mission, continually refreshing and welcoming new therapies, and bringing relief and comfort. The absolute best thing we can do for this community of ours is to care for its children, its parents, victims of abuse, and those who are alone, mentally ill or suffering with aging or addiction. The best way I know to do that is to support the Family & Children's Society.



Watrous at the podium with Board President David Tanenhaus.

### Client Testimonial continued

second year he worked through OTEC. His team picked a neighborhood lot in Binghamton and one in Endicott to plant gardens. He explained, "I liked watching unused areas grow into something because of what we did – and we got to help the community out. I learned that I really like team activities. That's still my preferred way to work – using a team approach and working together to get an end result."

OASIS was a family affair for Bridges – both his brothers were also participants. Bridges' parents appreciated the program and its value, knowing that their children were receiving help with homework, school and career mentoring, and a safe place to be while they were working. Bridges highlighted the fact that OASIS staff and volunteers reached out to his whole family, offering help to everyone as needed.

The program came full circle for Bridges when he returned as a volunteer during his time as a student at SUNY Broome and after: "My role was mostly as a mentor, talking to students who are on the same path I was – making the wrong choices, hanging out with the wrong people. I can encourage them to keep going to OASIS, to build good friendships, and do more than the troubled path they're on will allow. I encourage everyone there to stay with the program and talk to as many of the volunteers as possible. OASIS welcomes everyone without judging and can help you out a lot in life."

### Let us help you or a member of your family.

We provide expertise in the following areas, and most services are covered and paid for by insurance, Medicare or Medicaid. The Family & Children's Society offers:

- Elder Counseling
- Family Homes for the Elderly
- Family Mental Health Clinic
- Home Care – Home Care Aide Service, Health Homes, Vocational Incentives
- Nursing Home Transition & Diversion Waiver Program
- OASIS After-School Program
- School-Based Programs
- Sexual Abuse Treatment

turn to us!

## Annual Awards Presented at Gala Event

**Lillian Levy, Esq.** was named Family & Children's Society's 2016 Esther W. Couper Memorial Award recipient. The Couper Award was established in 2001 to recognize outstanding service and dedication to the children and families of our community. Levy was nominated and selected for giving selflessly and tirelessly to the Greater Binghamton community, not only through her service as a member of the Family & Children's Society Board, but through board service to the American Red Cross, the American Lung Association, the Boys & Girls Club, the Boys & Girls Club Foundation, Danielle House, the Goodwill Theatre, the Jewish Community Center and the YWCA of Binghamton. Said Nominating and Board Development Committee Chair Joann Lindstrom, "Lillian has helped lead our agency through many difficult times, including business disruption as a result of water damage to our Binghamton office and several leadership transitions."

Two other awards were also presented at the gala/annual meeting, including the Leadership Award and the Aide of the Year Award. Congratulations to Vocational Incentive Program Coordinator Wendy Hitchcock, recipient of the Leadership Award. Hitchcock was hired to develop the program, which began with just a few participants and now helps nearly 100 people in the community. Said Home Care Services Director Andrea Quezada, "Wendy stood out as an exceptional leader in 2015. She has not only worked countless hours to make this program successful by developing community relationships, but is also a team player and assists in the Health Homes program when needed. Her willingness to go above and beyond is extraordinary. Her dedication to the agency and her clients is outstanding and we paid tribute to Wendy with this award." Congratulations to Home Health Aide Kay Keltos, who was named Aide of the Year. Said Home Care Services Assistant Director Penny Donato, "Three words come to mind when we think of Kay: grace, poise, and dignity. She has worked for the agency for 24 years and has also served in our In-Home Mental Health program. She does an outstanding job maintaining a safe and healthy environment for her clients and exercises keen judgment with firmness and compassion. We consider it a great honor to recognize Kay for her years of service and special care of our clients."

Congratulations to all three award winners!



CEO Lisa Hoeschele (left) and Board President David Tanenhaus (right) present the 2016 Esther W. Couper Memorial Award to Lillian Levy, Esq. (center).



Leadership Award recipient Wendy Hitchcock accepts her award from CEO Lisa Hoeschele.



Aide of the Year Kay Keltos (left) with her husband Cecil.

## Spotlight on Family and Children's Society's OASIS After-School Program

THE OASIS (OPPORTUNITIES AFTER SCHOOL TO IMPLEMENT SUCCESS) AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM OFFERS AT-RISK TEENS IN THE UNION-ENDICOTT SCHOOL DISTRICT A SAFE AFTER-SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ENRICHED WITH WORKSHOPS, TUTORING AND MENTORING. THE SUMMER TEEN EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE FOCUSES ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SKILLS, COMMUNITY BUILDING, YOUTH VOICE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

Since 2006, Family & Children's Society's OASIS Program has offered Union-Endicott students age 13 to 18 a safe, engaging and enriching program at no cost to families. OASIS focuses on providing academic support and tutoring, goal setting, career and college exploration, workshops based on youth interest, pregnancy prevention education, physical activities, nutrition education, civic engagement projects and field trips. The program operates out of the Teen Center at the Boys & Girls Club of Western Broome from 3 to 6 PM Monday through Friday during the school year.

OASIS is supported by interns and volunteers from student organizations at SUNY Broome and Binghamton University, as well as community members and OASIS graduates. Said OASIS Founding Director Holly Welfel, "Since 2007, we've been working with faculty, interns and student organizations from SUNY Broome and Binghamton University. It's amazing to see students who seek a rich experience and gain it through their time spent at OASIS. It's common for people to extend their commitment beyond a single semester. Many of the college students form relationships with our teens and seek ways to strengthen the program. Through this work, OASIS youth expand their understanding of higher education and positive decision-making that will affect their future goal-setting. We are extremely grateful for our interns and volunteers – they bring such insight, passionate dedication and fresh excitement to the program."

OASIS also offers a summer employment program called OTEC (OASIS Teen Employment Challenge) in partnership with BOCES Summer Youth Employment Program, the Endicott Police Department and the Village of Endicott. The program operates four days a week for six weeks each summer. Students must apply through BOCES' Summer Youth Employment Program, and the 25 students selected for the available slots work 25 hours per week on a variety of projects in Endicott. The youth-driven projects include community beautification and improvement, staffing the OASIS tent at the National Night Out, assisting with building handicapped ramps through the Ramp It Up program, working in the Central United Methodist Church clothing bank, and assisting with code enforcement.

For the 2016-2017 school year, OASIS is seeking workshop leaders and tutors willing to work with teens. Do you have a skill or passion to share? Prospective workshop leaders meet with Welfel to discuss a potential topic and formulate a plan for a six- to eight-week workshop that meets for an hour each week. Prospective tutors also sit down for an initial meeting to discuss their expertise. For more information or to get involved, contact Welfel at (607) 427-3750 or [hwelfel@familycs.org](mailto:hwelfel@familycs.org).

### At a Glance:

**Program founded: 2006**

**Clients served: an average of 160 students per school year and 25 per summer**

**Staff: Founding Director Holly Welfel, Program Coordinator Amanda Vesely, interns and community volunteers**

**Referral sources: word of mouth, Union-Endicott School District**

## OASIS Student Testimonial

**Here's one participant's story about how OASIS made a meaningful difference for him and his family.**

Dylan Bridges, now 24 and a customer service representative for Time Warner Cable in Binghamton, was in on the ground floor of OASIS, starting with the program the year it began. "Two girls I knew were participating, and they said I should give it a try. The program was just opening up, and I was kind of on the fence about going. I was almost 15, hanging out with the wrong friends and making some bad decisions. Looking back, deciding to participate was good for me – it kept me out of trouble, helped me with schoolwork, and in many ways helped me graduate. The mentoring and adult role models were the most beneficial aspect – that kept me away from the bad side of high school," he said.

Bridges participated in the OASIS after-school program from 2006 through his graduation from Union-Endicott High School in 2009, and the OTEC summer employment program after his sophomore and senior years. The summer after sophomore year was spent working with Cornell Cooperative Extension, planning community beautification projects that he helped execute the

*Continued on back page*