Somerset HOME for Temporarily Displaced Children

NEWSLETTER ■ SUMMER 2002

Member: Somerset County United Way and United Way of Plainfield, North Plainfield, Scotch Plains & Fanwood.

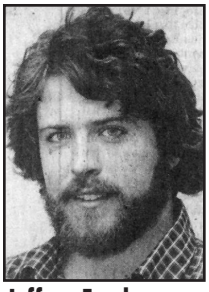
ACCREDITED COA

49 Brahma Avenue ■ Bridgewater, NJ 08807 ■ 908–526–6605 ■ www.somersethome.org

20 Years and Going Strong

It was May 3, 1982 when Jeffrey Fetzko started as executive director of the Somerset Home. But it was ten years earlier that Jeff was first hired as a youth counselor. He was there to welcome clients when the Somerset Youth Shelter first opened its doors.

After six years of part-time work, Jeff left. He had completed his undergraduate degree in social work at Rutgers University. Subsequently, he worked in three other social service agencies and was the assistant executive director at Hunterdon Youth Services when fate came calling.



Jeffrey Fetzko as new Somerset Home director in 1982.



Jeffrey Fetzko today

He was asked to apply for the position of executive director by a Somerset Home board member who knew his reputation for being a tremendous advocate for runaway and homeless youth and his ability to develop solid programming. "I wasn't really looking for a job at the time. I had a full plate and was also working on my graduate degree in social work at Rutgers. I half-heartedly sent my resume and didn't think too much about it. After I was offered the job, I realized it was a great opportunity and one I couldn't pass up," Jeff said. "I've never regretted that decision."

A former board president and one of the decision makers at the time of Jeff's hiring as executive director, Jean Kasman, was at the Barbara Harley concert this June. "I knew immediately he was the right person for the job," she told the current board President, Donna Manuelli. "He was passionate and so full of energy. After seeing him tonight, I don't think much has changed." It's obvious Jeff

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A Song, a Singer and a Special Evening

The Somerset Home has many friends and supporters. Art Richards is one of the extraordinary ones. In 1955, while stationed in the Philippines, Art was captured and survived torture to bring back information that prevented a raid on one of our nuclear arsenals. He made a promise to God that if he came home alive, he would give something back in return. His promise was to help children.

Art kept his promise and was inspired to write the lyrics of a song called "A Whisper Away." In early 2001, he contacted the New Jersey Country Music Association's (NJCMA) award-winning songwriter, Barbara Harley, and NJCMA member Al Lind to help him put the words to music. Art told Barbara that the song project was very close to his heart. He promised that if she recorded "A Whisper Away," he would sell the CD and the proceeds would go to disadvantaged children.



Barbara Harley Singer/Songwriter

Barbara and Al agreed to help, and they waived all of their royalties on sales of "A Whisper Away" so the proceeds go to Art's selected charities for children.

Several months ago, Art had another idea to help disadvantaged youth. He contacted Barbara Harley and Al Lind again and asked if they would be willing to do a benefit concert for Somerset Home. Once again these kind-hearted musicians said "Yes." Art's church, the Presbyterian Church at Pluckemin, agreed to host the concert on June 15.

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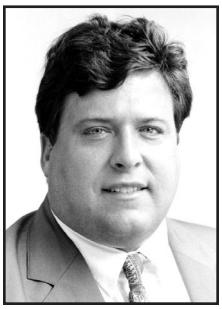

Jeffrey Fetzko

A Message From The Executive Director

I'll never forget "Charlie" who turned 18 and walked out the door of the shelter seventeen years ago. I knew in my gut he wasn't ready for independence – even though he'd made some strides, like getting a job in a movie theatre and was being responsible about working. I knew when he left he didn't have a place to live and couldn't afford an apartment on his own.

That day, I knew I couldn't watch another 18 year old kid walk down the street with nowhere to go. That was the beginning of the creation of the transitional living services at Somerset Home in the mid-'80s.

> ***"How can we expect kids who have grown up in substitute care to be prepared for independence? These youth have had little, if any, emotional support, and are usually educationally deficient…"***

Since then, we've provided 350 older adolescents housing through the Passages Transitional Living program including education about jobs, saving money and other life-skills necessary to be independent through the Pathways Life-Skills Education program. We now see more of these youth leaving us better prepared for independence.

But being better prepared and being prepared are not the same. How can we expect kids who have grown up in substitute care to be prepared for independence? These youth have had little, if any, emotional support, and are usually educationally deficient to the point that there is a good chance they have not completed high school by age 18. Expecting these youth to complete high school and attend college without the support of a caring adult is unreasonable and foolhardy.

Through strategic planning, Somerset Home stakeholders concluded the solution to this problem is to create a new, less restrictive residential program for 18 to 21 year olds. The program will allow as many freedoms as possible while ensuring responsible behavior toward their education, jobs, health and living quarters. The new program, called My Place, is slated to open the fall of 2003.

Another impetus for this new program was the number of 18 to 21 year old homeless youth being "found" by Somerset Home's Street S.M.A.R.T. street outreach team. Eighty-eight percent of youth being served by Street S.M.A.R.T. are within that age range. A disturbing number of these homeless youth had spent most of their childhoods in foster care or other substitute care placements.

If you'd like to read more about this disturbing trend, a 2001 study by the Garden State Coalition for Youth and Family Concerns can be found at www.gardenstatecoalition.org – click on the Bridges to Independence report.

We look forward to achieving this next milestone on behalf of runaway and homeless youth and thank you for your continued support.

Jeffrey Fetzko, ACSW, LSW, CFRE
Executive Director

Board Members

Thank you to all our Board Members for their dedication and service.

Donna Manuelli *(President)*
New Jersey Turnpike Authority

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Dr. Thomas Divilio
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Drew Hurley, Esq.
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20 Years and Going Strong

(Continued from cover page)

is still as committed to helping at-risk adolescents and pursuing excellence as he was in 1982.

Having Jeff at the helm is about the only thing that's the same after 20 years. The organization has flourished under Jeff's leadership:

- Somerset Home has expanded from one program to four (the Somerset Youth Shelter, Pathways Life-Skills Education program, Passages Transitional Living program and the Street S.M.A.R.T. street outreach program);
- The Somerset Home has helped over 4,000 abused youth to build better lives;
- Over $23 million has been raised to benefit the youth and families that the agency serves;
- Staff grew from 10 to 45 and made an across-the-board upgrade of skills and capabilities;
- The operating budget has grown from $160,000 to $2.5 million; and
- The agency recently received accreditation from the Council on Accreditation.

In addition to his work at the Somerset Home, Jeff has also served his community through hundreds of hours of work with county, state and federal agencies and groups.

As long as there are kids who are abused, neglected, homeless or in trouble, Jeff Fetzko will strive to provide them with options. Jeff says, "Who would imagine that twenty years later, I would still be here, still challenged, still energized and still supported by the board of trustees and staff? Thank you for this wonderful experience, I look forward to each day with great anticipation and excitement."

A Song, a Singer and a Special Evening

(Continued from cover page)



CAT Country 96 DJ Jeff Austin awards a door prize to a little girl at the Barbara Harley concert.

Jeff Austin from Cat Country 96 FM was master of ceremonies for the concert. Art's wife, Shirley, made wonderful homemade baked goods and provided beverages.

Attendees were treated to an evening of beautiful music, including many songs from Barbara Harley's new CD, "First Glance," and cover songs from Stevie Nicks, Janis Joplin and Deana Carter. The highlight of the evening was when Barbara and Al sang "A Whisper Away." Jeff Austin had a drawing for country music CDs that were donated by his radio station. It was a delightful evening. The appreciative crowd donated over $400 to Somerset Home.

Jeff Fetzko, Somerset Home executive director, was at the concert and commented, "We are very thankful for supporters like Art Richards, Barbara Harley and all the others who made the benefit concert possible. We are looking forward to working with them again in the future."

To purchase "A Whisper Away," visit Barbara Harley's website at www.harleytunes.com.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the families and friends of the following individuals for whom a living honor or memorial has been requested:

In Memory Of

Lee P. Amos
John Ballouz
Joseph M. Brown
Caroline Carothers Silverman
Archie Chiles
Audley A.Ciamporcero, Jr.
Michael Cryan
Gerald Doherty
LN Fisher
Catherine and Edward Healy
Connie Hermes
Liz Eibes
Rosemary Keenan
Thomas Kucker
James Patrick Lennon
Carol Anne Marshall
Katelynn Mastrella Loalbo
Tracey A. Roche
Essie Tatt
Raymond R. Trombadore
Frieda Watson
Marjorie H. Yates

In Honor Of

Joseph Antonello Sr. and Rose Antonello
Anne Bradley-Sosis
The Dempsey Family
James Dowden
Ray Fantuzzi
Carol Jean Floegel
Jay Geller, M.D.
Chelsea Greenberg's Bat Mitzvah
Ted & Delores Johnson
Krause Family
Hillary Lederman's Bat Mitzvah
Pastor Gary Marsh and Pastor Jennifer Bowden
Barbara Michaels
Our daughters, Kate & Kim Nordstrom
Zigmund Rodzajewski's 30 year service anniversary with Bristol-Myers Squibb
Those we love

One Of The Many...
Shelter Resident is a Running Success

She always loved to run. "Angela" used to compete in local neighborhood competitions and in after-school programs. After seventh grade, difficulties in her personal life kept her from joining a school track team. That changed this year when Angela came to the shelter and was enrolled at a local high school as a sophomore. With prompting from staff, she decided to join the winter track team.

When Angela showed up at the first team meeting, the track coach came up to her and said, "We'll have a good season now that you're here." He had heard about her capabilities from the gym teacher. Angela felt great because everyone had confidence in her from the moment she walked in the door.



After difficulties from home prevented "Angela" from consistently attending track practice and meets, she returned to competitive running while a resident at Somerset Youth Shelter.

With all that support, it's not surprising Angela fulfilled the prophecies. She received ribbons for 2nd and 3rd places at the East Brunswick relays in December. She progressed a great deal in winter track and received her varsity letter. By the time spring track came, she and her relay team were winning more medals and ribbons. She improved her time in the 400 meter run from 64.4 seconds to 62.5 seconds and in the 100 meter run from 14.1 seconds to 12.5 seconds. Her team broke the school record for the 4 x 2 (800 meter) relay. Angela's name is now a regular in the sports section of the local newspaper. She says of the team and herself, "We came a long way."



"Angela" has received numerous awards and medals.

Angela has gotten more than ribbons and medals from her track team experience. "I've learned to take a loss for a loss and a win for a win. I like to see how hard I can push myself. It's also great to see some of my other teammates have the same passion I do."

Anne Bradley-Sosis Awarded Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) Designation

The CFRE Professional Certification Board has awarded Anne Bradley-Sosis the professional designation of Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE). Anne, associate executive director of Somerset Home, joins over 4,000 professionals around the world who hold CFRE designation. Individuals granted the CFRE credential have met a series of standards set by the CFRE Board, which include tenure in the profession, education, professional achievements and a commitment to service to not-for-profit organizations. They have agreed to uphold a code of ethics and the Donor Bill of Rights. Additionally, candidates must pass a written examination testing the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of a fund-raising executive.



Anne Bradley-Sosis

"The CFRE process was developed as a way to identify for the public and employers those individuals who possess the knowledge, skills and commitment to perform fund-raising duties in an effective, conscientious, ethical and professional manner," states Simone P. Joyaux, ACFRE, and Chair. "Achievement of the Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) credential demonstrates the level of commitment on the part of Anne to herself and the profession as a whole."

The CFRE Professional Certification Program is an independent credentialing program conducted in cooperation with leading philanthropic associations. The CFRE Board is made up of representatives from various types of fund-raising settings and also includes members of the public representing the interests of donors.

Anne, who began with Somerset Home in 1986, lives in Hopewell Township with her husband Steve, 2-year-old son Clay and 10-month-old daughter Tyla.

Tips for Parents...When Teens Don't Listen

By: Stacy Essex, MSW, LCSW, Somerset Youth Shelter Program Director

So often I see parents complain their teenager doesn't listen to them. The parent says that they issue consequences when their teen breaks a rule, such as coming home after curfew or being disrespectful towards the parent, and the teen simply ignores the punishment. After talking with the parents and the teen, it often becomes clear to me the parents are putting rules in place for the first time.

Adolescence is a time for rebellion. It's natural for teenagers to push the limits. Parents need to establish rules and expectations of appropriate behavior from day one. Parents need to address inappropriate behavior as soon as it starts because it simply doesn't work to first set limits once your children become teenagers.

Discipline and respect should start from the beginning and will make parenting your teen easier for you. If your child is old enough, age three or older, explain why you are telling him/her to do whatever it is you are requesting. And remember, respect is a two-way street.

If you find yourself with a teenager who isn't listening to you, and you didn't discipline your teen as a child, there is still hope. Be honest with your teen. Tell him you know it's difficult to follow rules now when he never had to before, and admit you should have set limits earlier. Everyone makes mistakes, and admitting to your child you made a mistake will allow him to feel more comfortable telling you when he's made a mistake. Also tell your teen you have learned from your mistake and you're now going to do the right thing and set limits. Seek professional help if you need it by calling your local mental health center.

Passages to the Great Outdoors



Ten Somerset Home residents, along with their chaperones, were treated to a weekend camping adventure at Wildcat Mountain in Wawayanda State Park in Hewitt, New Jersey in June. Above is the group in front of Ferber Lodge, where they got organized before moving into tents at campsites without bathrooms or running water.



During the weekend, the group learned to set up camp, cook over a campfire, and protect themselves from bears. Other activities included "ropes" exercises (shown here), hiking and other team building activities.



Of the ropes exercises, one of the campers commented, "It's a lot of fun but it's not easy. We helped each other and got a sense of accomplishment when we completed the challenge."

Seventh Annual "Bid for Better Futures" a Success

Bargain shoppers, adventure seekers and people who like to be pampered were in their element at "Bid For Better Futures", a charity auction for the Somerset Home for Temporarily Displaced Children. The auction took place on May 9th, 2002 at Bristol-Myers Squibb in New Brunswick, NJ. The event drew about 200 attendees and earned over $50 thousand for Somerset Home programs.

The event began with a cocktail reception and silent auction. The Hillsborough High School Jazz Ensemble entertained with live music, as attendees enjoyed wine and a sumptuous buffet. Some of the most hotly contested items included spa packages, packages designed with Mother's Day in mind, and items for active folks like the "Jeep Jamboree", a fun-filled weekend outing. Other popular items included tickets for Giants football games and a New Jersey Devils hockey stick signed by Ken Daneyko. Other guests were competitively bidding for a homemade Italian dinner and a personal chef service offered by Chef Connie Rousseau. Marsha Montgomery, auction co-chair, noted "We were especially pleased to have Chef Connie attend the auction. She is an inspirational lady who is also a foster care success story."

Auctioneer Alfred Finocchiaro hosted the live auction that included exciting getaways to London; Naples, Florida; Washington, D.C. and Bar Harbor, Maine. One of the more unusual offerings was an "A&E" package that included an overnight stay in the Big Apple in the hotel (The Plaza Athenee) where all the A&E celebrities stay, a tour of the A&E studios, an opportunity to watch an interview being taped, dinner with A&E producers and a show. Dennis Flynn, auction co-chair noted, "this was a unique package and got a lot of interest."

"The success of this event rests with the tireless efforts of the committee and our generous sponsors especially Bristol-Myers Squibb, our host for this spectacular event," said Jeff Fetzko, executive director.

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Participants at the live auction "hit a home run" by bidding on a baseball signed by Derek Jeter. The live and silent auctions raised over $50 thousand for Somerset Home.



The silent auction featured a variety of over 100 items on which to bid.

4th Annual Somerset Home Run for Runaways



Saturday November 9, 2002

Duke Island Park, Bridgewater, NJ



5K Run
2 Mile Nature Walk
Kids' Sprints

Post-race picnic and barbeque, live entertainment

For more information, contact Robyn Cody
(908)526-6605 (days)
or visit www.somersethome.org

Somerset HOME *for* Temporarily Displaced Children

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