

HEALING



MAGAZINE

2022 Vol. 27, No. 1

Voices *of KidsPeace at 140*



Plus:

- ACEs and Compassion Fatigue
- Talking to Kids About Climate Change
- Navigating Special Education



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A smiling man with a full red beard and a gold crown is holding a young girl in a white and yellow striped shirt and a pink tutu. The girl is also wearing a small gold crown. The man has tattoos on his arms. A large pink balloon is in the background.

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Healing Magazine is a publication of:

KidsPeace

c/o Creative Services Department
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Schnecksville, PA 18078-2574

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About KidsPeace

KidsPeace is a private charity dedicated to serving the behavioral and mental health needs of children, preadolescents and teens. Founded in 1882, KidsPeace provides a unique psychiatric hospital, a comprehensive range of residential treatment programs, accredited educational services and a variety of foster care and community programs to give hope, help and healing to children, adults and those who love them. Learn more at www.kidspeace.org.

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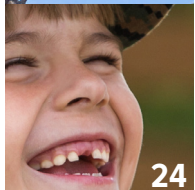
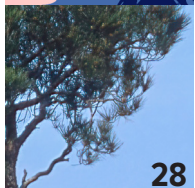
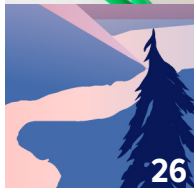
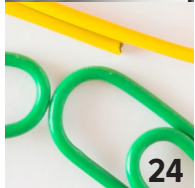
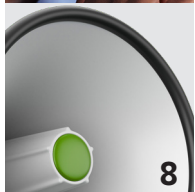
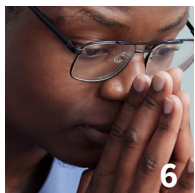
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If you are a professional in the field of mental health, education or parenting, we welcome your submission. *Healing* articles should be about 1,200 words and consist of practical, clinical information about children's mental health that can be applied in the home, classroom, community and/or office setting.

Ideas for articles can be sent to healing@kidspeace.org. *Healing Magazine* reserves the right to edit all manuscripts.



Providing practical, clinical information to families and children's professionals



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Dear Friend of KidsPeace,

In 1882 a smallpox epidemic ravaged the working-class neighborhoods of South Bethlehem, PA. A local industrialist named William Thurston recognized the need to care for children orphaned by the disease, and founded the Thurston Home for Children.

Today the organization Thurston started is known as KidsPeace, and in this edition of *Healing Magazine* we mark our 140th Anniversary by allowing our organization's people to talk about their experiences, dreams and hopes. In the Spotlight section "*Voices of KidsPeace*," we give individuals connected to our organization the chance to tell their stories in fourteen essays - one for each decade of our history. From executives to direct care workers, from supporters to former clients, their essays paint a picture of who we are nearly a century and a half after Thurston's initial philanthropy set us on our path.

(Also as part of our anniversary celebration, we've introduced a brand-new section on our website that looks at the organization's development through the prism of six distinct eras - see it at www.kidspeace.org/history.)

It's an interesting coincidence that this anniversary comes as we deal with the ravages of another disease - COVID-19. This issue includes thoughts on how the pandemic has underscored the importance of resilience in meeting the challenges of mental health - for both client and caregiver. We also have the second part of Linda Goldman's examination on how to talk with kids about another difficult issue - climate change. And our Therapist's Corner feature details a possible correlation between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and compassion fatigue among caregivers in adulthood.

For the past 25 years we've published *Healing Magazine* to provide practical, clinical information to children's professionals, parents, educators -- really, anyone with an interest in helping kids grow, thrive and succeed. In my view, the voices highlighted in this issue provide that audience with insights that are both valuable and inspirational, and I thank each of them for sharing their thoughts as part of our anniversary activities.

And as always we're interested in YOUR insights as well. If you have comments on any of our articles, or an idea for articles in future issues, please let us know at healing@kidspeace.org.

In the meanwhile, enjoy this issue of *Healing Magazine*!

Michael W. Slack

Michael W. Slack
President and CEO



ACEs and Compassion Fatigue

By Emily S.

What can cause someone to question the very place that they work, their professional growth, and ultimately who they are within the world of human services? Having been in this field for many years, I've found that there often is a commonality between work performance, the clientele that someone is working with, and the therapeutic professional's own experiences.

In the human services world we attempt to work with clients that have been through things that many cannot grasp, but we often don't think about how this is going to affect us and our own trauma. This is something, though, that we should be talking about, thinking about, and considering when deciding to take the very therapeutic roles that we are pursuing. It might not always be fun to talk about but it remains highly important.

How do we know if this is something to be concerned about? Well, there are some signs that can indicate that there is more going on than maybe meets the eye. We are going to take a look at the correlation between compassion fatigue and Adverse Childhood Experiences.

ACEs and Their Impact

First, let's discuss the very experiences that can ultimately and unknowingly affect us within our professional domain and personal life. Adverse Childhood Experiences (or ACEs) are identified within something called an ACE scale, which according to Jasmine Brosnan (2019) *"are measured by counting experiences of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as neglect, domestic violence, and others"* (1). It is stated that *"the original ACE study was conducted at Kaiser Permanente from 1995 to 1997 with two waves of data collection"*

("About", 2021, p.1). It has become one of a number of assessments that are provided today through doctor's or pediatrician's offices, therapy offices, and rehab centers.

Why do this assessment, though? Because by identifying the difference and the potential risk of trauma one may be better prepared to treat said patient. Research has found that *"the higher the number of ACEs a participant had experienced, the higher the possibility that the participant would experience negative health outcomes"* (Brosnan, 2019, p.3). These negative outcomes can be anything from heart failure to hepatitis; what we are going to discuss is something that can be directly linked to the very work that we do: compassion fatigue.

It is stated in the thesis by Jasmine Brosnan that there is a correlation between people who have had such experiences in their past and those who go into the field of

human services. According to Brosnan's (2019) article she reports that *"higher ACE scores in employees isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, human service agencies often market for, and recruit, individuals that have a similar history as the client base they will be serving. These recruitment efforts are thought to be helpful in ensuring empathetic services being provided to those in need"* (2); meaning that the more that we may have experienced, the more connection we may have.

While this may be true it still poses the question: When do we say "Enough is enough," and make sure that we are taking care of ourselves?

More than "Just Tired"

Compassion fatigue is one of the more significant ways that individuals within this field continue to have questionable self-care and lack of growth. While we all know what it feels like to be tired, many do not often realize that there is the potential for an actual cause of this. Compassion fatigue is best defined *"as secondary or vicarious trauma ... the emotional and physical exhaustion that results in a reduced ability to empathize or feel compassion for others. Healthcare workers, even the most dedicated, are prone to compassion fatigue"* ("Compassion", 2020, p. 1). So to put into perspective, we are being told about trauma while having our own trauma and experiencing a response to it. (While we all know about this transference, sometimes it can happen without a person even realizing that it has occurred).

How would a high ACE score predetermine someone to have a higher likelihood of compassion fatigue? The first way to identify this is to understand how it works. When thinking of ACEs we think about the trauma that has occurred previously in one's life. When thinking about compassion fatigue we consider the idea that this trauma has resurfaced which has caused then a response to occur. A lot of us might say we would just keep going even though we may not feel totally ourselves. What is the worst that can happen? By allowing our compassion fatigue to continue we may find ourselves in a situation of burn-out. Burn-out is an extreme case of fatigue which can

often lead individuals to lack in everything from professional skills to their personal lives at home. Often people describe this as depression which often does not get better until someone decides to leave this position. I have personally discussed this with people who often report that similar aspects of their lives "lightened" when they were able to find a new position.

So what do we do if we feel as though we are starting to show some compassion fatigue? Just because we may be starting to feel this way, it does not mean that we are not going to be able to work through this. Within my understanding, the early stages of compassion fatigue often will show itself through certain signs, such as disinterest or feeling overwhelmed. This means that we have the ability to stop what is progressing and take the time to work through how we are feeling and what is truly being asked of us. Things such as taking the time to know that you need a break, or doing a self-care activity for yourself which can simply be taking a shower or cooking something that you like. Take the time to look at the case-load that you have, and how it is affecting you. This might be a good opportunity to make sure that you are enjoying the work that you are actually doing, and to make sure that this is where you want to be even with your past experiences.

All in all, the key to addressing this is knowing yourself. The idea that we are all going to respond the same is not true. Some individuals who may have an extensive ACE score may be able to be in the field lifelong without any response. Another individual may be in the field for a month or two and have a response to the clients that they are working with. Compassion fatigue is a difficult thing to address on your own. The idea is making sure that you are able to take a step back, know your limits, and understand that you are not alone. Let someone know what is going on, find a support system to talk to, and make sure that you are always keeping up on your self-care. ◀

Emily S. has a master's degree in psychology, and currently serves as Clinical Training Manager in KidsPeace's Organizational Development and Training (OD&T) department.

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Voices



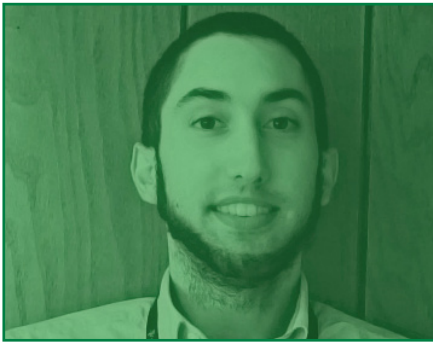
of KidsPeace at 140





By Christian Burggraf

When a Dream Becomes a Passion



At KidsPeace, our mission statement explains how our goal is to give Hope, Help and Healing to children, adults and those who love them. As an employee that works directly with the children in mainly crisis situations, I strive to be more creative and effective than the day before. Typically, at KidsPeace every day will be something new and stimulating, exciting and impactful, difficult but rewarding, especially when given the opportunity to make a difference in a child's life. It's truly remarkable.

Before my time at KidsPeace, I always knew that working with children was my dream but it wasn't until I started at the KidsPeace Berks Campus and began working with our children, that I instantly knew it was my passion! The people that work here are

great and the culture at KidsPeace is family-oriented, but the children have made the biggest impression on my career decision. The children are coming from broken homes, abusive relationships, depressing socioeconomic backgrounds and situations that are not meant for kids! Sadly, it is not their fault that they are in this position. It is our responsibility to provide a safe haven, a structured environment where they feel safe, and sometimes a friendly, compassionate hug while saying nothing more than *"I am here for you, we will get through this together."*

Outside of KidsPeace, these children are given labels, not opportunities to be successful. They are told they are a waste of time, a waste of an education, or simply don't deserve a chance. In reality, they are just misunderstood children, who should be given a fair and equal chance at life. Almost daily, these children will face some type of crisis situation which could be mentally, physically or emotionally challenging. Most of the children that we provide services for will face taxing obstacles from the minute they wake up to the moment they get to rest for the night. That is why the approach we take while caring for children with mental and behavior health challenges

is so important. They need guidance, structure, accountability but they also need compassion, to know their voice is heard, a snack when they're hungry and most importantly, they need to know and understand that we will not disappoint them or give up on them the way people in their past may have.

Overall, KidsPeace is like a garden bed and the children are all the different and unique flowers that blossom on their own time. Magic Johnson once said, "All kids need is a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them." KidsPeace believes in them, and I do too. ◀

Christian Burggraf is Head of Crisis Response at KidsPeace's facility in Berks County, PA

"...the children have made the biggest impression on my career decision."

Hospital Teams Guide Families Through Crisis

By Barbara Willman and Audrey Medina

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“Emotional pain is not something that should be hidden away and never spoken about. There is truth in your pain, there is a growth in your pain, but only if it’s first brought out into the open.” – Steven Aitchison



Clients and their families often come to KidsPeace Children’s Hospital in a state of crisis, many times unaware of their child’s mental health needs, unfamiliar with the mental health system, and unsure of what to do. Families have to quickly manage their emotions from the time they receive a call from a school that tells them that their child is being transported to the Emergency Room for evaluation, or when they go to the Emergency Room and are told that their child is recommended for inpatient hospitalization, because they need to think about the next step.

At KidsPeace, as soon as a child is admitted, they are assessed to help identify their needs and establish goals that their treatment plan will address during hospitalization. Every child that is admitted is assigned a treatment team - typically including a psychiatrist, clinician, nurse, case manager, and utilization care manager, and in some cases a physician assistant or certified registered nurse-practitioner (CRNP). In addition, a child interacts with other direct care staff, such as mental health technicians, Expressive Therapists, and possibly a Behavioral Consultant. The purpose of the team is to provide continuity in care from admission to discharge.

One of the initial barriers to treatment is trust. From the beginning, staff members seek to build a rapport with both parents and child, and provide consistent updates and communication with the parents. By doing so, they help parents and children develop trust, not only with their treatment team but the mental health system in general.

Once admitted, the child has daily interactions with various treatment team members, such as mental health technicians (MHTs) and clinicians. The MHT staff establish a safe environment and provide daily structure for the child. MHTs have to be knowledgeable in child development as they work with children with different needs. After family or individual sessions, children may need continued support from their MHTs. MHTs also help children practice the coping and communication skills they learn during their hospitalization.

The clinician assigned to the child meets with them and contacts the family; this initial contact with the child and family is very important in the trusting relationship during individual and family sessions. The clinician will develop a treatment plan which provides goals for the child. With support from the MHTs, clinicians also provide daily group therapy to help the child develop new skills that they will need to be successful in a community setting. The clinician’s role is to help children identify the cause of their stress and anxiety and how to manage their situations differently.

One of the biggest barriers to developing a trusting relationship has been COVID-19. Due to the pandemic, many programs in mental health have had to limit contact with outside individuals. As a result, families have been unable to interact with their children directly, so clinicians had to develop new tools and techniques to improve contact and interaction with families and children, such as video conferencing.

As soon as a child is admitted, the treatment team begins working on a discharge plan. Discharge planning will include a mental health level of care recommendation, aftercare services (ranging from outpatient individual therapy to more intensive in-home services), and a safety plan. Based on the recommendation, the Case Manager will work on identifying the needs to obtain services. At discharge, the family will meet with the clinician and nurse manager and receive discharge paperwork - including a copy of the treatment plan, any nursing instructions on medications, and a safety plan. Families will also receive information on aftercare services and appointment times.

At discharge, our hospital staff has a common goal - to ensure families feel that they have been provided with all the tools and resources to ensure a smooth transition by the child back to their community. ◀

Barbara Willman is a clinician and **Audrey Medina** is a case manager at KidsPeace Children’s Hospital in Orefield, PA.

“One of the initial barriers to treatment is trust. From the beginning, staff members seek to build a rapport with both parents and child...”

The First Step for Families Seeking Help

By Jacqueline LaTorres



When I first started in admissions in 1994, KidsPeace had 450 beds between the Orefield and Bethlehem campuses, and we had two community group homes. Today, KidsPeace's Pennsylvania residential treatment program has about 145 beds in Orefield.

Each day, my department receives many referral packets and phone calls from county agencies, managed care companies, and families - many of those desperate for help. I spend much of my time educating families and referral sources on how to get help, describing KidsPeace programs and the services we offer, and telling people about a typical day in residential. There are many days when a parent says to me, *"I have called ten facilities and you are the first to explain the process to me. Thank you."* Those days, I know I did my job.

Once the referral is accepted, my job is to help the referral source get the client admitted. This entails obtaining demographic information, school information, health history, custody, funding and then completing an assessment with clinical information. We document all this information electronically to ensure program staff knows the full history of the client.

The most difficult part of my job in recent months is how families are experiencing longer waits for a bed to become available, as the number of families seeking help is greater than our available beds. Throughout this time, I've been getting to know the families on a personal level - listening and helping them to feel comfortable about where their child will eventually be admitted. I also often speak directly with the client who is going to be admitted, making that person feel at ease too. I love being able to talk about many of our tenured staff from programs and our doctors who are very invested in the client's care.

The development of this relationship with families is key so that by the day of admission, I can just welcome that family and make the transition to this level of care as smooth as possible. I know by the looks on people's faces when they arrive on that day that they are relieved that help is now in sight.

Ultimately what I find rewarding is getting that family and client started on their journey to treatment. No matter the situation, if accepted or denied, many times the most important aspect is just being kind to someone in need. Kindness and knowledge to help someone is what links families and agencies to the next step of their client's healing. ◀

Jacqueline LaTorres is an Admissions Specialist with KidsPeace's residential treatment program in Orefield, PA



"The development of this relationship with families is key so that by the day of admission, I can just welcome that family and make the transition to this level of care as smooth as possible."

Impact at Every Level of KidsPeace

By Caren Chaffee

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I started at KidsPeace in 1999 in our local foster care program. I loved having the opportunity to meet and work with so many different foster families and youth. I was inspired to see the impact our foster families have on the kids' lives and the individual growth and progress made by each youth. I watched these youth, who had come from backgrounds of trauma and crisis, blossom and grow with the help and support of their foster families and my colleagues.

Two and a half years later, when I was given the opportunity to transfer into a fundraising role, I was torn. Would I still have an impact on the youth and families? Would I still feel inspired if I wasn't working directly with foster families and foster youth? Would the work I was being asked to do truly make a difference to them?

I quickly learned that the answer to each of these questions is "Yes." My new experiences showed me that the impact that KidsPeace has on children and families happens at every single level. Every individual who extends themselves to the youth we serve, whether it is directly or

indirectly, makes a difference. I began to recognize and acknowledge the "butterfly effect" in our everyday work: the decisions and actions of every person at KidsPeace influences the outcomes for each of the youth in our care.

My role within KidsPeace has changed through the years, but the lesson I learned after first transferring from a program office to a support department so many years ago still follows me in each of my interactions with funders, legislators, foundations and volunteers. Many of the people with whom I speak about KidsPeace will never be fortunate enough to meet, talk with or even see the inspiring and resilient children that KidsPeace helps. But they each have an incredible opportunity to impact these children's lives. Each decision they make and action they take can influence the outcomes for a child working to overcome crisis, no matter how far removed they feel they might be from the youth in our care.

At KidsPeace, every one of us has a job to do and a mission to fulfill, and every one of these jobs and every one of our roles is critical to the children we serve. At KidsPeace, we have a unique and wonderful opportunity to not only work with youth, but also to tell their stories to others who can help in countless ways. And at KidsPeace, directly and indirectly, in every role and at every level, we can change lives. ◀

Caren Chaffee is KidsPeace's Director of Grants & Advocacy.

"My new experiences showed me that the impact that KidsPeace has on children and families happens at every single level."



Taking on New Challenges After the Pandemic

By Rachel Bousquet



I began my education career in 2005, and as I think about the education environment at that time (staff, students, parents, and community), there is really no comparison to navigating the challenges we face with children in schools today.

I ask you to take a moment to recall your experiences in school. *What was your day like? Who were your friends and teachers? What were you worried about and what made you happy?* Now, imagine being a student attending school during a pandemic: You begin your week swabbed for COVID. Your teacher checks to ensure you are wearing your mask properly. You are kept socially distanced from your classmates in a “pod” that might or might not include all of your friends. Your contact with peers from other grades or schools is limited, and who only knows for how long? Finally, looming over everything is the uncertainty that your classroom or school could close at a moment’s notice as COVID cases continue to rise.

These are only a few of the obvious ways COVID has impacted our children most in just the school setting. As children across

our country and the world maneuver rules, regulations, and constant changes as it pertains to the pandemic, we cannot discount the impression that it has left on our children’s mental health. Data from the federal *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)* found that one in five children have a diagnosable mental disorder, but only 20% of those children received care from a mental health provider. With unpredictability becoming the new reality that taxes children and their families, the resources needed in the schools and our communities are becoming limited to support these critical needs.

I am so incredibly proud to be a part of the KidsPeace organization that has met this challenge from the start and throughout the pandemic. I have seen amazingly dedicated professionals who have supported clients and families in many inpatient and outpatient settings. These services include individual and family therapy, related services, case management, early intervention and school services, hospital and residential settings -- all of which are critical for the continued care of a vulnerable population of youth.

Thus, truly taking on the *challenge*, KidsPeace is committed to bring awareness and services to our clients, families, and each other through this unprecedented time and beyond. ♦

Rachel Bousquet, an educator and former school superintendent, is Executive Director of KidsPeace New England.

“...one in five children have a diagnosable mental disorder, but only 20% of those children received care from a mental health provider.”



22 Years, and Never Looked Back

By Ken Garavaglia



I am extremely proud to work for an organization that provides support to kids, adults and families across our ever-growing/adapting continuum of care.

Reflecting back on my 22-year career at KidsPeace, it's easy for me to answer why I started here. I suppose it is the same reason that I am a volunteer firefighter and a softball coach. Plain and simple, I like helping people! I have always felt that I could form great connections and build trusting relationships to offer a helping hand towards better days ahead. Perhaps it stems from being adopted and starting out the first part of my life living in an orphanage or growing up living on the same street as a maximum security facility for kids (which I ended up working at for many years). What I can tell you is that I didn't know back then that KidsPeace would become the organization at which I would thrive, maintain and hopefully finish my career.

I started at KidsPeace as a Treatment Team Supervisor for a Specialized Community Residential Treatment Program on 11th Avenue in Bethlehem, PA. I loved working on the milieu and being involved in the treatment process, the activities and all the accomplishments. So many years later, I can still remember all the names of the kids!

But marriage and having kids ourselves caused me to look at other positions where I could find a more typical Monday-through-Friday schedule with regular working hours. Since I had accumulated all this knowledge and experience in working with kids, I transitioned to a position within our Organizational Development and Training Department. Teaching and preparing new employees for their respective jobs was a great fit and, although I missed the direct care element, I was happy. I rose to a supervisory position within OD&T, then was contacted by our Marketing/Customer Relations Department and learned about the opportunity of becoming a Customer Relations Liaison. The combination of having direct care experience and knowledge of our programs, and the comfort level I had developed with talking to people as a result of facilitating so many trainings made that an easy transition for me.

From there, I have never looked back. It is a great feeling talking with parents and any potential referral source to provide help and resources in their time of need! Now as Director of our Customer Relations Department, I am delighted to oversee a team that shares the same passion for helping others.

There are so many great people and positive memories that I have. With such a solid leadership team in place and the commitment of all the direct and non-direct employees here, I find myself always looking forward to what KidsPeace will achieve each and every year. ◀

Ken Garavaglia is the Director of Customer Relations at KidsPeace.

"I find myself always looking forward to what KidsPeace will achieve each and every year."



A Voice for Kids in Georgia

By Babbie Mason



As a Georgia Board of Associates member, it's my hope that I can continue to serve KidsPeace in a way that benefits the kids. But my connection to KidsPeace has developed into something much greater. Every time I am on the KidsPeace Campus, it isn't long until I am greeted with laughter, hugs, special gifts, funny stories, high fives, and all the great things that friendships and memories are made of.

It is a privilege to serve as a member of the Board of Associates for KidsPeace Georgia. I have the joy of working with others in my community who offer insight and assistance concerning projects at the campus. However, the best part of my role is just hanging out with all of my friends there. On a fairly regular basis, I get to participate in special events that take place on the campus. I've attended a nail painting party with the girls, holiday dinners, singing our favorite songs around the piano and special events that help to inspire and motivate the kids to discover their strengths, their gifts and talents.

At the most recent Thanksgiving Dinner last fall, one of the kids at KidsPeace came to me and requested that we form a choir to perform for the big Christmas Banquet. As a professional singer and former middle school choral director, I was super excited about the idea of working with the kids to make that happen. Our Executive Director, Lou Shagawat, gave us the green light to get the kids together to form the choir. I was blown away when sixteen kids came to the rehearsal, including a student who accompanied us on the guitar. On the night of the Christmas banquet, history was made when the kids took the stage to debut the Georgia KidsPeace Choir. Their performance was amazing. They looked like stars and sounded like a choir of angels as they sang *Jingle Bells* and *Silent Night*.

A wise person once said, *"Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you; spend time with them and it will change your life."* That is certainly true. My friends at KidsPeace are impacting my life in countless ways. ♦

Babbie Mason is a two-time Dove Award-winning Christian singer, songwriter, author and TV talk show host. She lives in Carroll County, GA.

"I have the joy of working with others in my community who offer insight and assistance..."



Advocacy for Kids Through Partnerships

By Jessica Mendez



Over the last few years, children's mental and behavioral health services have become harder than ever to locate here in Virginia, as well as across the United States. So many more kids are needing services and we have had to become creative in locating those services for our youth, especially during the pandemic.

Through our partnerships with local Departments of Social Services we have been able to add service lines that assist in keeping kids safe while they are awaiting beds at mental health facilities (which can take up to seven days to identify - in many cases, meaning seven days in a hospital emergency room). Also through partnerships with other community providers, we have been able to immediately help our youth who are in desperate need for management of anxiety, depression and ADHD medications through a trauma-informed provider.

One young man (at the time only five years old) was on the verge of getting suspended from school and held back from starting kindergarten until the following year due

to his extremely impulsive and aggressive behaviors. Through our community partnerships we were able to get him in and seen by a provider within a week, rather than waiting seven months for his 6th birthday. Because of this, this young man has gone from needing 20 minutes time to settle enough to complete 30 seconds of a task to now only needing 30 seconds to settle enough to complete 20 minutes of a task.

Having these conversations and partnerships in the community have increased the number of success stories we are seeing coming out of KidsPeace, and we are also seeing the children in our care stabilize much more quickly than waiting up to nine months to see a psychiatric provider. Knowing that KidsPeace is able to be there for these youth who are sometimes at their darkest point in their lives, reminds me just how great the work that we do is. We are there to support these youth through just about anything, without judgment, and this is why so many of our youth who have left us still call the office to talk and to let us know how they are doing.

This, to me, is what KidsPeace is about - Relationship and Belonging. One of the lessons I've learned over the years is that it takes a village to care for these kids, and we are ever so grateful for our KidsPeace village! ♦

Jessica Mendez, MSW, is Virginia State Manager for KidsPeace Foster Care and Community Programs.

"...through partnerships with other community providers, we have been able to immediately help our youth..."



Blending Families Through Foster Care

By Faathyma Clark



People often misunderstand what foster care is about. One of the most important (if difficult) aspects is the relationship built between the biological family and our KidsPeace staff and foster family. We need the family and children to understand that we are here to help, and to trust us.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kingston office of KidsPeace received a referral late one night for a family of five children - who would be sent to a shelter if we couldn't place them. Without a moment's hesitation we had two families step right up; one home took the eldest two boys and the other home the youngest two boys. (The youngest child was placed in a county home.)

This case was different for us because the biological mother on the case spoke Spanish and very little English and the biological father had been deported to Mexico prior to the start of the case. Despite this, our team did everything possible to make sure the family still received all services available.

The foster parents and staff made sure to communicate in Spanish as much as possible, using Google Translate because they did not speak Spanish. The children were included in every family vacation, being able to experience so many different things for the first time! Their culture was included in the households as well; cooking meals the children liked, having the children practice speaking Spanish and listening to music they listened to at home.

The foster families made extra effort to include the biological parents in every step of the way. During the children's entire foster placement they continued to have visits with their biological mother as well as virtual visits with their father and frequent visits with each other. The foster families rooted for them and encouraged the biological mother at every court case; they sent her pictures and told her how the children were doing. It was amazing to see.

The foster families even helped the biological mother find housing and, just about 15 months later we were able to send the children home to her! It was so heartwarming to see foster care do exactly what it is supposed to do ... but the story doesn't end there.

The foster families continue to be a resource for the biological family. And KidsPeace, through our Community and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS) and Health Homes programs, have been working with the family weekly on life skills, normative experiences, school support, and food support, among other things. This has not only strengthened the family's sense of trust with KidsPeace, but also helped them find and use the resources they need to be successful.

Working and/or dealing with foster care is not always rainbows and sunshine. However, it's stories like this that make it all worth it - because it reinforces people's trust in the system as a whole. ◀

Faathyma Clark, MPS, is a Community and Psychiatric Support and Treatment Counselor in KidsPeace's Kingston, NY office.



"The foster families made extra effort to include the biological parents in every step of the way"

Walk-ins: A Welcome Service in Community Programs - Outpatient

By Neville Tomlinson

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“Most persons have reported that the walk-in helps them avert a life-threatening crisis or help avoid going to the ER.”



Often when a person is in a mental health crisis they find themselves in a life-or-death situation. They generally feel helpless and stuck, and for some who can't find help, the outcome could be devastating.

It can take days and even weeks for a person in crisis to get help from a mental health provider. In the medical field there is the option of the Emergency Room (ER) - but most persons in mental health crisis don't usually think of the ER or an urgent care facility as an option for them.

KidsPeace has sought to resolve this problem for the communities that we serve, and in 2014 walk-in assessments were made available at our outpatient sites in the Lehigh Valley and Monroe County in Pennsylvania, starting with our Allentown Green Street location.

Walk-ins are free assessments for persons in mental health crisis, including children and adults - with no appointment needed. They come into our offices from anywhere between 9 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday. During the 15 to 30-minute session, a master's level clinician meets with them individually or as family, and completes an assessment to deescalate the mental health crisis and determine the appropriate level of care. The assessment includes a safety plan with several resources from the

surrounding communities listed for the client to access as needed in the future. The clinician then makes the contact with the level of care within our area where ongoing treatment is provided. Common recommendations are for outpatient, acute partial hospitalization, or inpatient hospitalization, based on the person's presenting needs.

The general outcomes of walk-ins include preventing harm or injury to self and others, relieving family stressors and providing feelings of peace of mind and wellbeing for clients and families. Most persons have reported that the walk-in helps them avert a life-threatening crisis or avoid going to the ER. For example, feedback from clients include:

- *“KidsPeace was professional and quick to get my son an evaluation”*
- *“Very respectable and helpful”*
- *“Staff was very helpful in offering strategies and explained things clearly. Overall a comfortable atmosphere allowing patients to open up and confide”*
- *“We are very grateful for the peace of mind that the therapist has given, and for the care given to our son”*

These are just some insights into what clients experience during a walk-in assessment. I feel proud and a sense of enduring accomplishment in knowing that we here at KidsPeace have continued to touch the hearts and minds of many with compassion, help, healing, transformation, and an infusion of hope in their times of despair. ◀

Neville Tomlinson supervises programs at KidsPeace's Green Street Outpatient office in Allentown, PA. For more information about the walk-in assessments and other outpatient services and locations, visit www.kidspeace.org/outpatient-services

Drawing on Direct Care Experience to Spread the KidsPeace Story

By Jason Haller



In my role as “Customer Liaison” I share information about KidsPeace programs and services to a variety of healthcare organizations and social service providers across southern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. My work brings me into contact with hospitals, county mental health offices, private counseling practices, and parents of kids in need of our services.

Prior to taking this role I had held a few different positions at our Orefield Campus: recreation counselor, teacher in our on-campus school, assistant facilitator with an experiential education program, and a variety of other roles on the housing units. Now in my work in marketing, I rarely work with kids as much as before. While the hospitals, county mental health organizations, and private counseling practices I speak with are certainly interested in meeting their client’s needs, it’s when I speak directly with parents that I’m most reminded of my time working with kids in our direct care programs.

When I talk to parents they are worried, nervous, frustrated, and hoping so much that KidsPeace can be the answer to their children’s mental health needs. They’re unsure of themselves, and at times they have no idea who to talk to or where to start seeking services. I do my best to help them understand what KidsPeace can do for them, and try to guide them to the next best steps for treatment options.

When I worked with kids in the direct-care programs, I can say that I noticed the same emotions that I now see in parents: worry, nervousness, frustration, and hope. Many of the kids also were unsure of themselves, and at times they had been through a number of services and programs that have not always served them well. I did my best to help them benefit from KidsPeace programming and watched as treatment helped them overcome their challenges.

I think by seeing and hearing, and most importantly remembering, my efforts at outreach are influenced by the interactions I’ve experienced in direct care. And I know that the work I do, while removed to some extent from the treatment, is helping to build bridges between parents, their children, families and the treatment they are seeking. ◀

Jason Haller is a regional customer relations liaison for KidsPeace.

“...it’s when I speak directly with parents that I’m most reminded of my time working with kids in our direct care programs.”



Giving Back From Career Experiences

By Gwen Hofmann



My journey with KidsPeace started over twenty years ago, and like most great adventures, there were twists and turns in the path along the way. Luckily, I have met some pivotal people who helped me in each new stage, as the work we do takes ongoing learning and continued personal growth. I've been blessed to work throughout the various services KidsPeace offers, which put me in the midst of many life-changing people and experiences.

I started my career in KidsPeace Children's Hospital before navigating different parts of Community Programs, support departments, foster care services - ultimately landing in our training department. I use my own experiences within the company to help convey to new employees the significance of continued learning and connection that our kids and our staff teach me every day. I've learned from watching our kids grow that change can be good, that resilience is in all of us, and it is never too late to try something new. I've learned from coworkers that we must remain open to feedback, be flexible, and that it is equally important to take care of one another as we care for and protect our children. Both our kids and our staff teach me that the work we do and the way we treat others, does make a difference - even when we don't see it in the moment.

"I've learned from watching our kids grow that change can be good, that resilience is in all of us..."

In training, we instill in our teams the importance of trauma-informed care, being proactive and preventative, using the least amount of restriction necessary to manage any situation, and most importantly, the foundational principle of building healthy relationships. Our trainings are comprehensive, and our trainers also work in programs so that we may continuously convey that we must put in equal, if not more, effort towards our teams' growth when sowing the seeds of trust and feelings of safety in our children and families. Learning is a two-way street and if we open our minds and our ears, stay present in each moment, we can empower one another to make the positive and safe changes for ourselves and our communities. We must remember that there will be challenges and mistakes with each success in the journey. Our children and our staff continue to teach me humility, empathy, gratitude, patience, and resilience every day.

This company, the services we provide, and the people within have profoundly changed me, both professionally and personally. Every day, I am reminded of the importance of positive connections when working with children and families who have experienced varied levels of disruption, crisis, and trauma. While my path is my own, I choose to take the lessons I've learned and put them into each training I lead and each interaction that I have as I intersect the paths of others on their ever-changing journey through our Continuum of Care. ♦

Gwen Hofmann is a regional training manager in KidsPeace's Organizational Development and Training department.



Healing By Making Someone's Day

By Brigitt Barlow



Working at KidsPeace with youth that have endured trauma has been a wonderful experience.

Many of the youth come into the program sad and hurt, experiencing low self-esteem and a lack of trust of adults. Staff have to work hard to gain trust by establishing a relationship with the youth, which is a key aspect during their stay.

This can be a very stressful job but can also be enjoyable. Seeing a youth light up when you walk into a room and engage in a conversation, taking a youth for a walk, playing cards, playing one on one in a basketball game: these are all highlights that can make a youth's day as well as mine. The growth and healing that comes from youth that complete the program is very impactful. They leave feeling secure, confident, accomplished, a positive sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. Many will continue to work on themselves upon discharge.

I have had many memorable experiences at KidsPeace in working with children. One of my best memories was the go-cart races. Each unit worked together on their go-cart so that it could be ready for the day of the race. Everyone had so much fun working together and preparing the go-cart for the race. On the day of the race, we piled into vans and went up to the Orchard Campus.

Each unit took turns racing each other and all the youth were having a great time. They asked me to ride in the go-cart so that I could be part of the race. I was really nervous about it but I agreed to do it. My heart was racing as I got into the cart and took off. It was so much fun and the team I was on received a trophy. The youth were so excited that they won, and at the end they bestowed the trophy upon me. I still have it and it is a constant reminder of the great day. Many youth don't have the opportunity to engage in fun activities and this truly allowed them to be children.

Sometimes, we don't necessarily know the impact we make on a youth until they are either about to leave or when they have actually been discharged. I have many cards and pictures that I have received which are special to me and I often look at them as a reminder. It brings a lot of joy to me when a youth that has been discharged calls to let me know how they are doing. It truly makes me feel that I am making a difference in a youth's life.

KidsPeace has given me the opportunity to work with youth, make a difference, and help them to heal. ◀

Brigitt Barlow is program manager of the Pioneer Center treatment program at KidsPeace's Orchard Hills residential campus in Orefield, PA.

"The growth and healing that comes from youth that complete the program is very impactful."



KidsPeace Saved My Life

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Have you ever thought that you were useless? Have you felt like dying and unwanted? Ten years, 3,650 days, 87,600 hours, and minutes you wouldn't believe!! That's how long my youth was taken from me - but that all changed the day I went into KidsPeace.

Hi, my name is Katrina Hughes. I'm 32 years old and this is my story on how KidsPeace changed my life. This is my story and I'm not afraid to tell it.

15 hospitalizations ... two group homes ... three residential placements: that's how many times people gave up on me. But that all changed in 2005 the moment I walked into KidsPeace.

I will never forget my first day at KidsPeace. I did what Katrina wanted to do and tried getting kicked out. They brought me to the hallway, held me so I couldn't hurt myself and one of the staff, Trish, kneeled down and said, "You can act out all you want but you're not going anywhere, missy, you are

here with us." Believe it or not, that was the first time in 15 years I felt wanted. It felt like the other places destroyed me and KidsPeace helped me become whole.

I never met a program like KidsPeace. When I first entered KidsPeace I was on twelve different medications, and I was always sad or mad. (Staff member) Christina was the first person to make me smile since right before my brother's death. When I was in KidsPeace I learned dignity, respect, character, honesty and much more. My favorite thing I learned there was music therapy - I still use it to this day, it has saved my life on numerous occasions.

I wasn't perfect when I graduated the program. I messed up a lot, even developed a drug addiction - but I can proudly say I'm almost five years clean now. When I finally used in life the things I was taught in KidsPeace, life became just a tad bit easier to grasp on and deal with problems.

I never thought I would be writing this. One day I wanna help kids the way KidsPeace helped me for years. I would tell them, "NEVER GIVE UP!!! So if you think or feel that you cannot change, if you feel like giving up -- Don't! I promise if you have hope, anything is possible!"

Katrina Hughes, a former client of KidsPeace, now lives in New Jersey and is training to become a crisis counselor.

*When I was in KidsPeace
I learned dignity, respect,
character, honesty and
much more.*



PLEASE

HELP

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DIFFERENCE

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www.kidspeace.org/donate



Supporting Parents & Families in Navigating Special Education

By Lindsae Kish

Becoming a parent is equal parts beautiful and nerve-wracking and every person's journey into parenthood is unique. As parents, we are given guidance from doctors on how best to care for our children and support them as they are growing and learning; we are also informed when our child may not be meeting developmental milestones. While each of our journeys is different, one thing they have in common is that parents and caregivers plan, prepare and raise children to the best of their ability, given the tools and knowledge that they have.

One thing that we can't feasibly plan for are all of the "what ifs" - *What if my child can't see or hear? What if my child doesn't learn to talk? What if my child has a disability?* Emily Kingsley said it best in her famous essay *Welcome to Holland*: Having a child is like planning for a vacation to Italy. You spend months preparing and planning and when the time comes, there's a shift in the flight plan. You get off the plane and suddenly you realize that you aren't in Italy, you've arrived in Holland where you must stay. It's not terrible, it's just different - and not at all the trip that you planned and prepared for.

Entering the world of special education is much like the change in flight plan to Holland. You may be aware that your child is having difficulty in school, and you talk with the teacher about how to help. After several parent teacher meetings, you find yourself having discussions with your child's teacher(s) about needing evaluations to identify what may be leading to the difficulty that your child is experiencing. When the evaluations are complete, you receive them prior to the meeting and you read through them and try to make sense of the information. The process is an emotional one because as a parent, you are not only learning new information but you may also be mourning hopes, dreams, aspirations and ultimately the future that you wish for your child.

Before you have had time to process your thoughts and emotions, you find yourself in a meeting with a bunch of teachers, administrators and professionals. You are asked if you received a copy of your rights and procedural safeguards, and of course you say "yes" because you remember it was in the folder with the evaluations, but you didn't really understand what it meant, and your only focus in this moment is that

all of these people are here to review in detail your child's struggles, skill deficits and areas of need.

At the end of the meeting, this team makes the determination that your child qualifies for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). You agree because you want what is best for your child but, to be honest, you are still reeling from all of the information that was just laid at your feet in a room full of strangers. Your child has been qualified for an IEP, given support(s) that will help them in school and you were given this lengthy document called "procedural rights and safeguards"...

... But what does it all mean?

Navigating the IEP process

Here are our top five recommendations for students and families receiving special education services.

1 A student's IEP team is composed of educators, specialists, the student and their family. We encourage students and families to **view this team as a partnership** and healthy partnerships require **open, honest and respectful communication**.

2 Ask your child's school administrator or special services administrator to schedule a time to **meet with you to review the procedural rights and safeguards**. Bring paper, take notes, and ask questions. **Make sure that you feel good about your understanding of the document as a result of this discussion.**

For families residing in Maine we recommend reviewing the "companion document" created by the Maine Department of Education. (www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.do/files/inline-files/englishcompanion.rtf) If you live elsewhere, check your state's Education Department website for similar information.

3 Ask your child's school administrator or special services administrator **if there are any supports available through the school** such as an advocate that you can access if you have questions or would like support at the IEP meeting.

4 **Seek out resources within your community.** No matter where you are at in your special education journey, there are a variety of resources available to support and help you be an active participant in the IEP process. We recommend the following national resources that can help you connect with ones in your area.

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/>

<https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/Special-Education-Toolkit/Special-Education-Toolkit-Resources>

5 Prepare for IEP meetings by **reviewing your child's current IEP prior to the meeting**. Make notes on it for questions you want to ask, any new information you want to add to parent concerns, information about your child's strengths, skills they have and what skills you'd like them to work on.

Navigating special education is a daunting task for families and access to support and guidance is very dependent on what systems are in place within the child's school and local community, and how information about accessing those resources is provided. Given the nature of the work that we do here at KidsPeace, we have a shared understanding of the emotional toll that this process can take on families and, with that in mind, we aim to serve as a resource to families, our local communities and community partners.

Though this probably isn't be the journey that you planned for as parent, it's now the path that you find yourself walking down with your child. Give yourself permission to feel every emotion, be kind to yourself, know that you aren't expected to have all of the answers and feel empowered to ask every question you have.

And always remember: you are your child's biggest advocate and often times, their voice in this important process. ◀



Lindsae Kish is a BCBA and an Assistant Special Education Director for KidsPeace. She is a graduate of the University of Maine and Kaplan University and holds a master's degree in Psychology. Lindsae came to KidsPeace in 2012 and worked as a Behavior Analyst in both residential and education programs before moving into Special Education administration in 2021. In her current role, she oversees a KidsPeace Special Purpose Private School that serves students from preschool – 12th grade in Old Town, Maine.



Talking to Kids About Climate Change (Part Two) By Linda Goldman



use and ways to dialogue.

Part 1 (Healing Magazine, Fall/Winter 2021) suggested tools for conversation on key climate change matters that invite children to share feelings and participate in caring for Mother Earth (<https://www.healingmagazine.org/talking-to-kids-about-climate-change-part-1/>).

In Part 2, Goldman expands on these strategies and explores age-appropriate approaches to climate change challenges through discussion, activities, and action at different stages of development in a respectful and meaningful way.

Adapted from *Climate Change and Youth: Turning depression and anxiety into activism*. 2022. Routledge. www.grievingchildren.net

In the continuing discussion of talking to kids about climate change, the idea that children are too young to discuss issues about the world they live in is indeed replaced with words to

Developmental Understanding

Many youths of Generation Alpha (2011 to present), Generation Z (1996-2010), and Millennials (1981-1996) feel an enormous burden that is up to them to save the planet. This burden of savior is reflected by activists of all ages. They are inspired to action through movements such as Fridaysfor-future and global strikes. We must instill the idea that adults are listening to their pleas for the planet and joining them in action.

Luna is an eight-year-old that exemplifies the charge of Generation Alpha. Her art-work embodies her profound goal of rescuing Earth from catastrophe, as illustrated in her collage, *Save the Earth*.



Figure 1. *Save the Earth* Goldman, 2022

The second image is a self-portrait, where Luna expressed her feelings in Spanish. “Quiero salvar la tierra”, translated as “I want to save the Earth.” Luna drew herself as a superhero, like so many children who feel their purpose is to rescue the planet.



Figure 2: *Superhero* Goldman, 2022

Very Young Children

Preschoolers may not be able to absorb abstract concepts surrounding deforestation or fossil fuels, but they can acquire a love of nature. Taking a hike, relaxing in a hammock, looking at the night sky, and watching the changing seasons are initial steps to solidify a deep connection with nature. Youngsters can plant flowers, and

make sure they have water and sunlight. Caring for pets by feeding them and giving hugs helps kids realize all living things - people, animals, and plants - need love and care to grow.

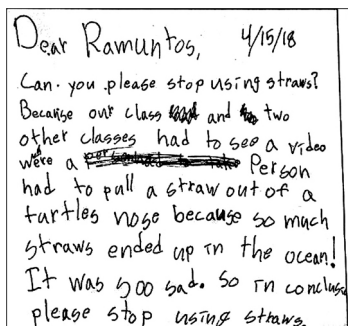
Adults can model and reinforce helpful actions. Thanking a preschooler for turning off lights, or picking up trash, highlights the concept of caring for the environment. Anthony, age 5, came home from school and begged his dad to compost. "Don't worry," he told his father. "I'll explain everything to you, so you know how to do it. I'll be in charge of the project!"

Elementary and Middle School

Discussions can begin with dispelling climate change myths and then building developmentally appropriate concepts. The blanket analogy imagery is helpful in explaining global warming. *"Our world is protected by a layer surrounding the Earth, like a blanket that keeps it at just the right temperature. With global warming, there are more and more blankets being put around the Earth. We can't just toss them off. So, we're figuring out how to change back to the right kind and number of blankets (Gurwitch in Shinn, 2021)."*

This discussion can extend to personal choice, action, and the idea of everyone working together for a healthy planet. Suggestions include turning off water and lights, not using plastic straws, recycling, riding bikes instead of using cars, and even joining the Meatless Mondays Movement in many school cafeterias.

Riordan wrote a letter in third grade to a nearby restaurant, with a plea to stop using plastic straws because it hurts the turtles. The owner read his letter and did agree to stop.



Dear Ramuntos, 4/15/18
Can you please stop using straws?
Because our class and two other classes had to see a video where a ~~person~~ Person had to pull a straw out of a turtles nose because so much straws ended up in the ocean!
It was so sad. So in conclusion please stop using straws.

Figure 3: The Letter Goldman, 2022

Aria Jolie, Generation Z, is a young climate activist who wanted to help save bees. Her grandfather joined her in a bee project. The following image portrays Aria's joy as a junior beekeeper being a part of the solution.



Figure 4: The Beekeeper Goldman, 2022

High school and young adult

"You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words."

-Greta Thunberg UN Climate Summit, NY, September 2019 (Davis, 2019)

By the time young people reach high school, they have gained a wealth of knowledge about eco-anxiety and depression. Developmentally, this age group also seeks peers for support. Many become activists and educators. Greta Thunberg, *Time Magazine's Person of the Year* (Felsenthal, 2019), has carried the torch for her generation, speaking out on the urgent need to meet climate challenges. Like Greta, many other youngsters have become spokespeople for disseminating information and educating all generations. Validating their intelligence and passion is paramount in any climate change conversation.

Young people feel despair about not being heard, anger about apathy, and hopelessness because they perceive a frightening future. Engage youngsters on these feelings. Ask why they are afraid, and what actions can be taken together to create change and hope. Examples of slogans carried by youth protestors are:

You will die of old age; we will die of climate change.

No intelligent species would destroy their only home and planet.

Elena, a young college student, expressed her love for the beauty of the planet and the creatures that inhabit Earth through artwork. She was inspired to paint a lovely turtle and explained her drawing.

After seeing the ways that human interference has affected the turtles, like our use of plastic straws that often find themselves in the ocean, I was driven to create something that advocates for turtles. They don't have a voice themselves! -Elena, Age 19



Figure 5: The Turtle Goldman, 2022

Generation Z member Hank Greeves, a senior at Bethesda Chevy Chase High School (B-CC), shared goals of the High School Environmental Science Club. Its mission is to impact students by educating, creating posters, lobbying, cleaning the environment, and initiating projects. The tree project involved the objective of planting 240 trees to offset the impact of the school's paper usage. The outcome was quite a success. Hank explains he wants to leave high school with a framework for action surrounding climate challenges.

"Before I graduate this year, I want to write a letter to anyone that will read it - stressing the ideas and projects created by the club, and the ability we all have to continue these activities in future years.

We did the paper project to show we don't need to use so much paper, and we can make up for all the paper used. People need to be asked, 'How can you do your part?' I want to leave the school with a legacy of power and the idea that we are ultimately here to do something (Goldman, 2022)!"

(Continued on page 34)



Resilience: Same As It Ever Was, Despite COVID-19

By Chris Ferry

COVERD changed everything in our lives, from how we greet each other to how we blow out candles on a birthday cake. Undoubtedly this has been an interesting two years, a time where everyone needed to adapt, change, and pivot as a result of the pandemic. I often think about a line from a Talking Heads song that puts it all into perspective.

And you may find yourself living in a shotgun shack

And you may find yourself in another part of the world

And you may find yourself behind the wheel of a large automobile

And you may find yourself in a beautiful house, with a beautiful wife

And you may ask yourself, "Well, how did I get here?"

Say what you want about the American rock band that lasted from the 70s to the early 90s, but that one line "Well, how did I get here?" kind of sums up my experience with COVID. Billions of people around the world experienced severe economic distress. Businesses and schools shifted to new delivery platforms. Prevalence rates of

anxiety and depression skyrocketed. Social distancing, isolation, changing regulations, masks, shots....

And yet, amid all that uncertainty, I can't help but think about the beautiful and encouraging resiliency displayed by family, friends, and associates. To understand the power of resiliency, though, we first have to shine a spotlight on stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. As we are all aware, the world is not a still photograph – it is a motion picture.

Stressed and anxious in an uncertain world

The line between stress and anxiety often gets blurred. Both speed up the heart, trigger rapid breathing and cause muscle tension. The difference is that stress is caused by an existing factor and anxiety is stress that continues after that stressor is gone. In other words, stress is a *response to a threat* in a situation and anxiety is a *reaction to the stress*.

Uncertainty, meanwhile, refers to situations involving imperfect or unknown information. Whether it is in relation to climate change, disease outbreaks, financial

instability, or natural disasters, every media headline seems to assert that things are uncertain. Uncertainty defines our times and as humans we are naturally curious. We seek to understand, predict, and control; this helps us learn and keeps us safe. Not knowing is an uncomfortable experience and uncertainty can feel dangerous because we cannot predict with complete confidence what will happen. Uncertainty feeds our stress and anxiety, and how you react affects your mental well-being.

Roger Crawford, motivational speaker and former tennis player, sums everything up for me with this passage about change: "*Change is inevitable; therefore opportunity is possible. Take advantage of the opportunity that change brings. Look at the change you are facing as an opportunity instead of a risk. Uncertainties generate challenges, but they also represent an opportunity.*"

Resilience = Control

We like to live our lives in our comfort zone and our subconscious likes this because it is the "known." Embracing change is about stepping into the "unknown;" our subconscious doesn't like the unknown, so it will resist. There is no escaping the

fact that change is a disruptor and it feels uncomfortable and scary. However, it is our power of choice that enables us to activate positive change in our lives. We cannot control some events in our life, but we can control *how we allow* those events to influence our lives.

This brings me to power or resiliency and the impact it has had on my life and many others. Resiliency is the ability to respond, absorb, and adapt. It is not simply about bouncing back from adversity - it's about dealing with disruptive forces while adapting to changing circumstances, eventually leading to the experience of thriving. When stress, adversity or trauma strikes, you still experience anger, grief and pain, but you're able to keep functioning both physically and psychologically.

What makes us resilient is a complex mix of genetics, psychology, social and cultural influences, as well as our spiritual strength and our mindfulness. Some seem to be born more resilient than others, but resiliency can be learned and that is empowering. Thus, stress, anxiety, and uncertainty can present an unparalleled opportunity to learn and grow.

A Foundation of Mindfulness

Many books and theories talk about ways to build resilience and steps needed to utilize this hidden power within us all. For me the best way I've found to become resilient is to practice mindfulness.

Mindfulness is the basic human ability of being fully present in the moment; being aware of the situation and what you are doing. This is NOT simply relaxing. Mindfulness requires an active component of awareness that asks us to question our thoughts and emotions. It gives us the ability to pause and observe. Within that pause, there's space for new perspectives which can break our habitual reactivity to stress, anxiety, and uncertainty.

When we shift from obsessing about a problem to assessing our response to the problem, then we can open ourselves up to possibilities and solutions. For some this is a significant change to how you see and engage with the world, but with practice

it will afford the opportunity to regain a sense of balance and become open to possibilities.

How many of you have waited in line at your local coffee shop for what seems like an eternity while getting annoyed and frustrated? This happens to us all, but next time challenge yourself to use this time to sit in stillness, monitor all around you and open up your senses.

- Look around and explore the different colors, the artwork, the people.
- Listen to the frothing of the milk and the cups clinking.
- Smell all of the incredible aromas.

In every moment of waiting lies an opportunity to notice your surrounding with all of your senses.

Taking a mindful walk or hike is another great way to practice mindfulness and build resiliency. Mindfulness is about bringing your attention to the present moment. When taking a mindful walk or hike, the emphasis is about becoming aware of your surrounding and how your body and mind feel while moving. To practice, pick a trail and focus on immersing your senses into the experience.

- Walk for 5 to 10 minutes and pause to tune into the sounds.
- Walk another 5 to 10 minutes and pause, this time focus on feeling the air hit your face or the sun warming your skin.
- Another 5 to 10 minutes you pause and open up your sense of smell; taking in the flowers, trees, grass... Repeat and now pause to only focus on the colors you see all around you.

- Finally, bring all of your senses together and finish the walk as one with nature.

Conclusion

The one constant thing in our lives is change and you can't avoid unexpected events; that's why they are called *unexpected!* However, if you ignore the challenge of change, you will be denied the opportunity to learn and grow.

Resilience and mindfulness won't make your problems go away, but they can give you the ability to see past them, find enjoyment in life and better handle stress. Resilience and mindfulness are about cultivating a sense of calm, clarity and stability, even when things are stressful and overwhelming. The goal isn't to eliminate stress, worry, or anxiety, but to manage it. ◀



Chris Ferry, MA, NCSP

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Director of Pennsylvania

Community Programs and North Carolina Residential Services. In this role he oversees four outpatient, three partial hospitalization and four autism-specific programs – which together provide services to more than 5,000 individuals each year. He currently leads KidsPeace's effort to establish a behavior health urgent care/facility-based crisis treatment center in Fuquay-Varina, NC. He has been on the KidsPeace staff since 1998.

"...I can't help but think about the beautiful and encouraging resiliency displayed by family, friends, and associates."



Making Healthcare Access Seamless for NY Foster Kids

By Samantha Higgins Tiano



With over 400,000 children and youth placed in the foster care system within the United States (more than 15,000 in New York State alone), foster care plays an essential role in providing temporary, safe and nurturing homes for children while their biological parents and family are unable to care for them.

Access to comprehensive, high quality health care is essential for these children, many of whom have higher rates of birth defects, developmental delays, mental and behavioral health needs, and physical disabilities than children and youth from similar socio-economic backgrounds outside of the foster care system. In addition, children and youth in foster care also have a high prevalence of usage of inpatient and outpatient mental health services, at a reported rate of 15 to 20 times higher than the general population.

The impact of the trauma they experienced is deep-rooted within the youth and families served in foster care, and it is therefore essential that there be immediate access to services upon a youth's placement in foster care, with no interruption in the provision of services.

Article 29-I: an advancement in care

Beginning July 1, 2021, under NYS Public Health Law Article 29-I, New York State enrolled all its children and youth placed in foster care in Medicaid Managed Care. At the same time Voluntary Foster Care Agencies (VFCAs) statewide were given the opportunity to become a licensed health care facility provider through Article 29-I, by offering five Core Limited Health-Related Services (CLHRS).

The CLHRS services play a vital role in assuring that: all necessary services are provided in the specified time frames; the child and the child's parents and caregivers are involved in the planning and support of treatment; information is shared appropriately among professionals involved in the child's care; and all health-related information and documentation results in a comprehensive, individualized Person-Centered Treatment Plan.

CLHRS services include:

- A VFCAs Medicaid Managed Care Liaison, who is responsible for ensuring a coordinated approach among the Medicaid

Managed Care Plans, the 29-I Health Facility and the local departments of social services in order to monitor access to health care for children in foster care.

- A Clinical Consultant / Supervisor, who oversees and works with treatment providers to establish treatment goals, review all health care information and medical records, review and approve health forms, and communicate with caregivers including biological parents and foster parents.
- Nursing services that include providing intake assessments and routine screenings, as well as training and support in relation to developmental, medical, and psychiatric needs.
- A licensed behavioral health practitioner (LBHP), who helps establish treatment goals and provides counseling and clinical interventions.
- Lastly, there is a Medicaid Treatment / Discharge Planner who assists with medical appointments, as well as assuring the exchange of health information for treatment purposes, discharge planning and documentation.

With the addition of Article 29-I, VFCAs can also feel increased confidence in accepting referrals who require more intensive medical and mental health needs, knowing they will have these additional professionals as part of their treatment team.

A good fit

Not all VFCAs have elected to become Article 29-I providers. But with the growing need of accessible and comprehensive health care and mental health services within our own communities, KidsPeace FCCP knew that becoming a licensed health care facility was exactly what was needed to care for and assist the clients and families we serve, and to build upon the quality of treatment already being provided by our foster care team.

By 7/1/2021, each of the three KidsPeace New York foster care offices were providing CLHRS services outlined in Article 29-I. The services fill the existing gap between mental health and medical needs for each client within the voluntary foster care agency.

Treatment providers are able to work together with the KidsPeace foster care treatment team to reduce the severity of any identified needs, by arranging and/or providing targeted treatment and preventive supports through an array of services which are related directly to the child's ability to successfully function within their home, school, and community environments.

The family connection

One key component of foster care is understanding the importance of the role biological family and kinship caregivers (those who may not be related by blood or marriage, but have a close relationship that is considered to be family), have in supporting family connections that are essential to a child's health and well-being.

According to data derived from the Children's Bureau, an office of the Administration for Children and Families, when children cannot remain safely in their home, placement with relatives and kin — both formally through the child welfare system and informally through family arrangements

— can increase stability, reduce trauma, and help children maintain a sense of family, belonging, and identity.

The inclusion of kin and extended family members in case planning expands placement and permanency options for children and youth when in-home care is not feasible. Maintaining relationships with relatives and kin can help provide a sense of belonging for young people in care.

In addition to bridging the gap among service providers, Article 29-I also bridges any gaps in contact and communication among the child's biological parents, foster parents or kinship providers. By providing targeted services and communicating these needs with the child's current and future caregivers, timely and effective discharge planning is provided throughout the entirety of the youth's foster care placement.

By extending existing foster care supports and services with the addition of the 29-I health-related services, we are working towards strengthening the overall placement and discharge of the child or youth by ensuring timely service needs are provided from their first day of placement. In addition to building on their strengths through individualized treatment planning, the addition of services also work with those who care most about the child, including the foster parents, the family of origin and any potential kinship caregivers.

Conclusion

In less than a year's time, KidsPeace and the clients and families whom they have served in the state of New York have greatly benefited by the addition of Article 29-I health-related services.

From being able to accept medically fragile client referrals with the addition of nursing services, to being able to provide timely safety planning with the addition of clinical supervision, to having a licensed health professional to coordinate individualized and person-centered treatment goals that include involvement and feedback from the child's caregivers, and finally, having a discharge planner who is able to work with the child's family or origin or other identified permanency option to ensure a successful

discharge from foster care: the impact of the targeted teamwork has benefited not only the youth, but those whom are working with them and caring for them.

As the number of foster care referrals continue to rise in New York, so does the need for intrinsic coordination of services to both clients and families served. With the help of the 29-I program (as well as our other amazing community programs comprised of CFTSS and Health Homes), KidsPeace Foster Care is able to stay true to its core values of community, quality and excellence. By working together to establish a treatment team that addresses each and every need of the youth in placement, KidsPeace and other VFCAs are able to ensure that permanency, safety and well-being are made a priority from the day of enrollment until the day of discharge, and beyond.

KidsPeace is eager to witness the added benefits of these services and how they can continue to improve the quantity and quality of the current foster care services provided to clients and families. Through the use of a diverse multidisciplinary team, KidsPeace Foster Care and Community Programs can continue to work together to enhance the wellbeing and positive outcomes of the clients and families served by providing something each of us can benefit from: endless layers of support. ◀



Samantha Higgins Tiano

is a Regional Manager for KidsPeace Foster Care and Community Programs in the Kingston and

Westchester offices in New York. In this role she oversees programs such as therapeutic foster care, CFTSS, 29-I, and Health Homes across ten counties in the Hudson Valley region. Samantha started her career with KidsPeace in 1998 as a summer intern at the Berks Campus in Reading, PA while attending Kutztown University. After making her way to the Hudson Valley in 2000, she continued her career with KidsPeace as a foster care Family Consultant and Program Manager before assuming her current role as Regional Manager.



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Recognizing a Decade of Serving Military Families

By Chris Sylvester

Benchmark anniversaries often spark thoughts of remembrance and reflection. As KidsPeace continues to celebrate our 140th anniversary in 2022, we recognize inspirations and initiatives responsible for the growth of our Continuum of Care, which provides a path forward to expand our services and treatment offered to youth, families and communities.

One such initiative was our decision to become a certified provider under TRICARE, the health care program covering military-connected families. KidsPeace is now in our 10th year providing TRICARE-certified adolescent residential and in-patient hospitalization services to military-involved youth.

Key individuals responsible for the delivery of TRICARE-certified care and treatment 10 years ago continue to be involved in programming for military-

involved youth and families. “At the start, TRICARE-certification was viewed as a new opportunity for us to offer treatment to youth and families who had a military background, and we were of course excited to become a service provider,” said Alice Kwiatkowski, Program Director for the Inventor Center at KidsPeace’s Orchard Hills Campus in Orefield, PA.

Initially, the Orchard Hills Campus had only one center consisting of two TRICARE-certified residences, with one serving females and the other males. Although providing care and treatment to military-involved youth was new for KidsPeace, individual experiences and connection to the military were not.

“My father was in the Air Force during Korea and then was in the Air National Guard for the remainder of his service career which spanned close to 30 years,”

Kwiatkowski said. “Service to others was instilled as a value and I believe that it was through seeing the pride my father had in his career and in his service that guided me toward my choice to work for KidsPeace.”

In providing TRICARE-certified care and treatment, KidsPeace has been part of many success stories for military-involved youth and families. Amanda Harlin, House Manager for our TRICARE Edison House highlighted one such success story: “We worked with a family that was stationed overseas, having both a son and daughter in need of intensive residential treatment. With the siblings being at KidsPeace at separate times, the success of one directly contributed to the success of the other.”

Kwiatkowski recalled the case as “... unique due to time zones and some challenges related to international calls and finding a secure way to have face

to face communication. Zoom calls were challenging but both teams were able to work out systems and times that allowed for consistent family contact over the distance.

“Initially the female sibling struggled a little more with acclimating to KidsPeace, but the therapeutic work she was able to invest in over her stay was significant once trust was built and she was committed to working with the treatment team. Her brother benefited from her example in that he immediately saw KidsPeace as somewhere that he could access support and help. His sister doing so well upon her return home set the stage in that he was able to see firsthand her transformation after she had returned home to the family. I know while she was here, she expressed that he was struggling in the home and that we ‘may see him next’.”

In fact, that is what happened. “Following the treatment of his sister, upon arriving at KidsPeace her brother indicated that he saw how happy his sister was when



she returned and inspired him to seek treatment at KidsPeace as well. Both of these children did very well and made a lot of therapeutic gains,” Harlin noted.

This story is representative of the great work accomplished by our clinical, program and nursing professionals. Over the years we have featured several success stories here in Healing Magazine. It’s important to note that ultimately, these treatment successes would not be possible without the investment of time and commitment of the involved youth and their family.

As KidsPeace advanced our work with military-involved families, we realized we had the opportunity to expand our TRICARE-certified residential services. In 2020, the Orchard Hills Campus became TRICARE-certified in all our residential programs, increasing from the original two TRICARE residences to now a total of eleven. TRICARE certification expansion did not stop with the Orchard Hills Campus; in 2021 KidsPeace announced our adolescent residential programs at KidsPeace’s campus in Bowdon, GA became TRICARE-certified.

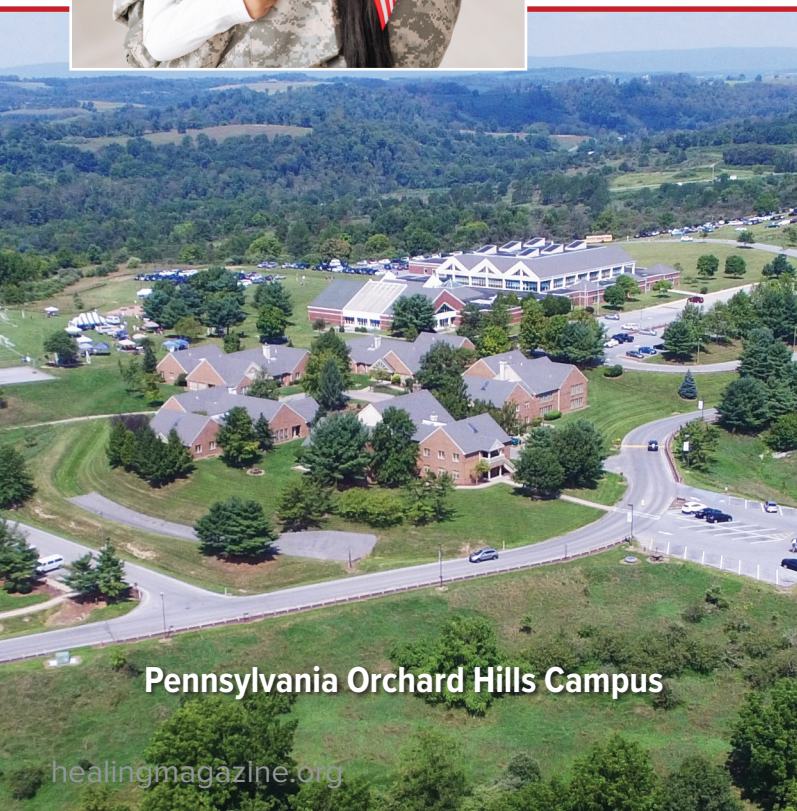
Increased availability to work with military-involved youth and families was welcomed by those committed to our TRICARE population from the start.

“When we learned TRICARE youth could be admitted across all residential houses, in our eyes this expansion created an opportunity to increase our ability to provide services to additional youth in need of the care and treatment offered at KidsPeace. We take a great deal of pride in the services we provide, in the quality of care offered and in the impact the relationships our associates and clinical team form with the youth in our care and their families,” Kwiatkowski said.

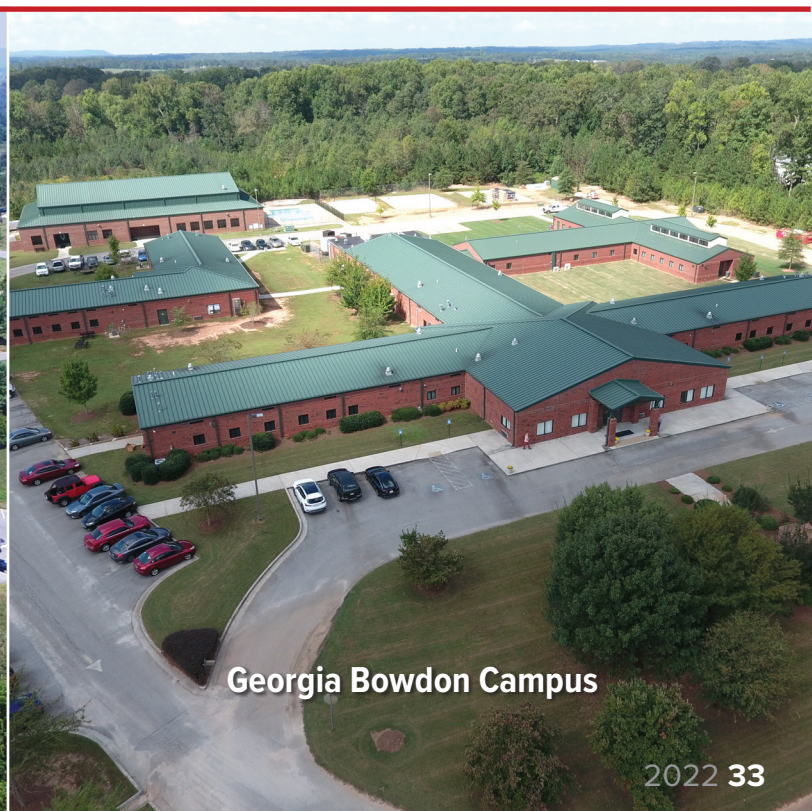
As we conclude a decade of providing service to the TRICARE population, KidsPeace will continue to seek out opportunities to increase our services dedicated to military-involved youth and families, building on our history of giving Hope, Help and Healing to children, families and those who love them.



Chris Sylvester joined KidsPeace in 1992 as a direct care worker at the Graham Lake Campus in Ellsworth, Maine, advancing to take on a variety of roles and responsibilities. In 2014, Chris became National Customer Relations Liaison for KidsPeace covering the Northeast Territory, which includes all of New England and New York, to ensure customers are aware of the KidsPeace Continuum of Care and the treatment services offered for youth and families.



Pennsylvania Orchard Hills Campus



Georgia Bowdon Campus

Conclusion

Our youth are inundated with the message, “It is up to you to save the planet.” This message carries an enormous burden for all kids. It is a youth mandate impossible to achieve. Too many youngsters have internalized this dictate, often manifesting eco-anxiety and climate depression. Children are comforted in discussion not by fear, but by hope through action. Young people need to know adults will join them to work towards healthy lives and a healthy planet.

“By honoring nature, the Earth, and the ever-evolving environment, we can convey a unity of purpose and a safe future for our children. We inspire this safety by communicating through dialogue that youth are not personally responsible for the planet; but rather it is a community, national, and global responsibility.”

- Linda Goldman, *Climate Change and Youth*, 2022

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Use as Side Bar or Delete the Following INCLUDE IN AFTERNOTES FOR PART TWO

Suggestions for Further Education on Climate Change

For Adults

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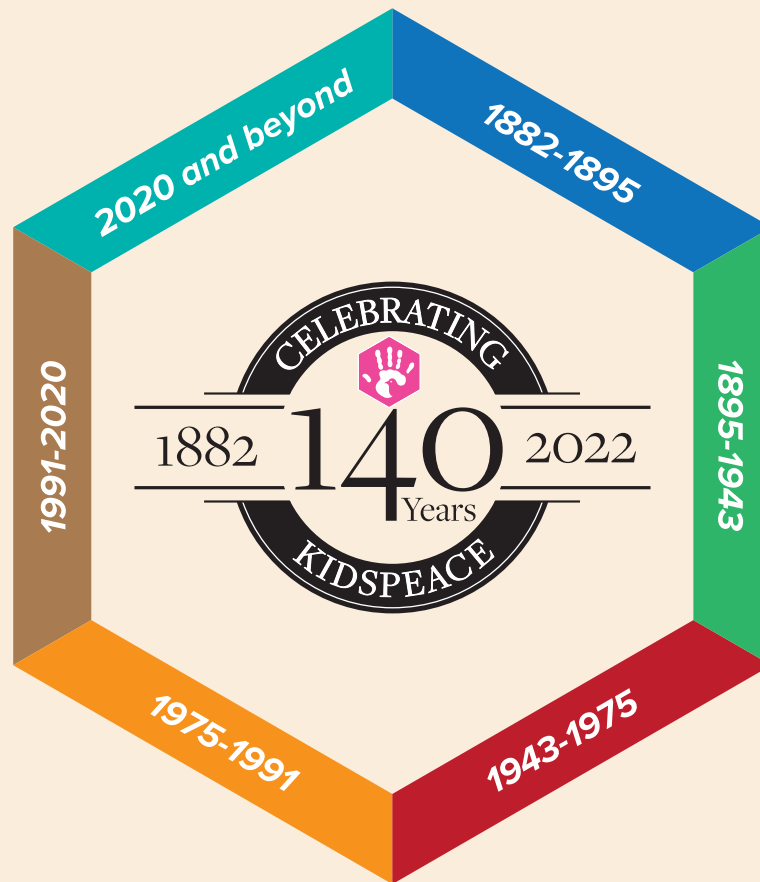


Linda Goldman, LCPC, NBCC, is a grief therapist and author who has written and lectured extensively on issues of grieving and trauma, with an emphasis on their effects on children. She holds a master's degree in counseling and early childhood education, and previously worked for nearly twenty years as a teacher and counselor in school systems in Maryland. Linda has served as an adjunct faculty member at Johns Hopkins University and Kings College in Ontario, Canada, and lectures at numerous colleges and school systems. Her newest books are **Life and Loss Classic Edition 2021** and **Climate Change and Youth: From anxiety and depression into action and hope** (scheduled for publication in 2022). www.grievingchildren.net

“By honoring nature, the Earth, and the ever-evolving environment, we can convey a unity of purpose and a safe future for our children.”



HOPE. HELP. HEALING. KidsPeace Through the Years



The Founding Era - 1882-1895

A community responds to care for children orphaned in an epidemic, and an institution is born.



A Broader Vision - 1895-1943

The generosity of a grieving husband leads to a new name and forward-thinking changes in caring for kids into the 20th century.



The Wiley House Years - 1943-1975

Following World War II, the organization reflects and builds on society's changing views of social services and children's mental and emotional development.

Evolution from Care to Treatment - 1975-1991

The emergence of the "Continuum of Care" marks an evolution toward modern services for mental and behavioral healthcare for kids.



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Looking past a pandemic into a bright future - 140 years in the making.



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