

# GOOD NEWS

Spring 2018



## Welcome to the family, Fontebella Maternity Home!

In April 2010, Fontebella Maternity Home opened its doors in O'Fallon, Illinois. Founded by Susan and Bob Hoff, the home provides shelter and support for pregnant women who find themselves without either. Susan serves as Executive Director and President of the Board of Directors at Fontebella.

Fontebella means "beautiful source of life" and was chosen as the name of the maternity home during a trip that Susan made to Italy. It seemed a fitting moniker for a service that provides expectant mothers with housing, food, and other resources to help them deliver a healthy baby and get on their feet as a new mother.

The home currently has a capacity for five women.

After several years of bringing the idea of a maternity home to life and growing it to the program it is today, Susan and Bob began to think seriously about its future. They decided to approach Caritas Family Solutions about a merger in order to strengthen and sustain what they had started. A merger plan was proposed and approved by the Board of Directors from both organizations, and will become effective July 1, 2018, pending the filing of paperwork with the State of Illinois.

"There is a great need for Fontebella to continue beyond our lifespans. We also see the need for Fontebella to offer additional services which we are unable to provide. So, we put much thought and prayer into finding a way to make these things happen," said the Hoff's in a letter to donors. "We want to ensure that our mothers and their babies always receive the best possible care."

Bob and Susan Hoff

We approached Caritas because we believe that our missions align and their infrastructure provides a strong foundation for the future we envision," continued Susan.

Transition activities have already begun, but for the most part Fontebella will not look any different right away and residents will not notice any break in services. Susan Hoff and two Fontebella board members will join the Caritas Board of Directors to ensure this smooth transition.

"We are excited to welcome Fontebella to our array of services," said Gary Huelsmann, CEO. "The maternity home will add another dimension to our pregnancy care program which for many years has provided a supportive option for mothers experiencing an unplanned pregnancy."



The mission of Fontebella Maternity Home is to empower homeless young women facing an unplanned pregnancy by providing them a safe place to live, and the opportunity to become independent women

and great moms through educational programs, case management and counseling. More information is available at [www.fontebella.org](http://www.fontebella.org).



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## BOARD of DIRECTORS

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Gary Huelsmann, MSW

# Summer camp to the rescue!

When school lets out for the summer, most students are relieved and excited about the break from early mornings or homework deadlines. Then reality sets in, along with the boredom. Finding something to do becomes a daily challenge.

Summer camps tend to fill the void for many children, and have become a go-to solution for many working parents. Foster parents are also always looking for activities for the kids in their care.

Because of the generosity of our friends at Camp Ondessonk and its donors, this will be the third summer that scholarships have made it possible for children in foster care to attend the overnight camp located in the Shawnee National Forest. This year, 23 scholarships were donated by the camp.

Two sisters in care through our Regional Office in Belleville have attended the camp the past two summers, and one is returning this summer as a Counselor in Training (CIT).

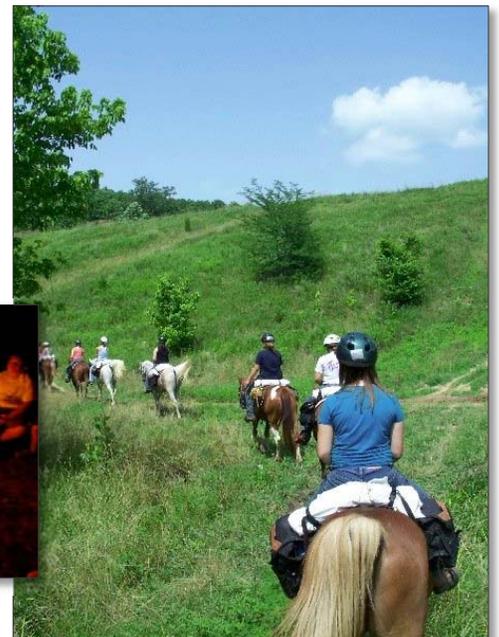
"We always wanted to go to a summer camp," said the older sister, who is now a junior in high school. "My grandma heard about [this opportunity] and encouraged us to go." Neither of the sisters had ever been camping or been away from home for an entire week at a time.

"It was scary at first, being away from home. Then I got used to it and had a great time. They always keep you occupied," she said.

Her favorite part about camp was meeting new people, even from other states. She has kept in touch with a few through e-mail. She wanted to go back the second year because "it's fun to be there, like one big family." This summer she is working and will not be able to attend camp.

Her sister, who is two years younger, is returning for her third summer at camp this year. "I didn't know anybody except my sister the first year. But it's always fun." Her favorite thing about camp is the horseback riding, particularly on her favorite horse, Shadow.

We are extremely grateful that Camp Ondessonk has welcomed children in foster care to attend the camp with these special scholarships. To learn more, visit [ondessonk.com](http://ondessonk.com).





## The wheels on the bus go round and round...

Since 2014, our Community Integrated Living Arrangements (CILA) program has provided loving homes for more than 16 developmentally disabled adults who might otherwise be living in a state institution. A key aspect of CILA homes is the availability of transportation to assure that each resident is able to take full advantage of life in a neighborhood community. (Residents are not able to drive themselves.) Although many day programs provide transportation, the ability to leave the home for anything else can be limited.

We all know that a good set of wheels is necessary to get around town!

Fortunately, Caritas Family Solutions applied and received a grant for four handicap accessible vehicles through the Illinois Consolidated Vehicle Procurement Program funded by the Federal Transit Administration and the Illinois Department of Transportation. The four vehicles will be used for our CILA program to provide the highest quality of safety in transportation for residents. Three of the vehicles provided by the grant are five-passenger minivans with lowered floors and a portable ramp to permit easy access for wheelchairs and other mobility aids. The fourth vehicle is a light-duty paratransit vehicle – “people mover” – that can accommodate up to 12 passengers or four wheelchairs. The total value of the four vehicles is \$173,742.

We currently have one minivan and the light-duty vehicle in our possession and the other two minivans are expected to be delivered this fall.

The vehicles allow ease of integration into the community by not having to rely on other modes of transportation. Since we have four CILA homes, now each home will have a new handicap accessible vehicle available 24-hours a day, seven days a week in case an emergency transit is needed.

CILA employees can drive the residents wherever they need to go. Residents are taken to medical appointments, day training/jobs, restaurants, shopping, and on social, recreational and educational trips.

We are very grateful to this program which provides improved transportation safety for clients, full access to community services regardless of distance, emergency transportation regardless of the hour of day/night, and elimination of capital expenses which frees up funds for client direct services. These outcomes tie directly to our mission to “provide direct services to persons of all backgrounds with social and emotional needs across the continuum of life.” By providing more reliable and safe transportation for our clients, we are able to link them with others in the community, provide needed educational opportunities and consumer activities and ensure emergency transportation needs to adults with developmental disabilities residing within the Caritas Family Solutions Community Integrated Living Arrangements.



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Sandy Freiburg



*Sandy was recognized for 20 years of service at the All-Staff meeting in November 2013.*

Before going back to school to earn her MSW in Counseling, Sandy Freiburg had been a Catholic elementary school teacher for 10 years as well as a Director of Youth Ministry in a suburban St. Louis parish. She wrote in her journal about her dream job: being able to counsel individuals in a clinical setting as well as in schools. So when she graduated from St. Louis University School of Social Work and was hired in 1993 to be a family therapist at Catholic Social Services in the Diocese of Belleville, it was a dream come true.

Sandy memorized the agency's mission and values when she started and held them in her heart these past 25 years, which she said gave her strength to do the work she encountered. It is also her parting words of wisdom to those who will continue that work.

It is estimated that Sandy counseled (and gave a piece of her heart to) more than 2,000 clients over the years. Perhaps her biggest legacy however is the "Family School Connection" program which she created in response to a crisis in one of the diocesan schools. A child had died, and they needed someone to talk to the students. "With my background as a teacher, I understood what needed to happen," she reminisced. It had always been her dream to connect Family Therapy with School Counseling. At its peak, the program

eventually developed to provide counseling in 16 diocesan schools. When the agency became independent of the diocese in 2012, the program was pared down, but throughout this past school year, Sandy was still providing services at St. James in Millstadt and Holy Trinity in Fairview Heights, along with St. Mary's in Edwardsville (part of the Diocese of Springfield.)

In addition to helping elementary students and their families, Sandy was also a mentor for graduate students seeking their Master in Social Work degree. One year, she was one of five to be recognized as the *Best Clinical Supervisor for Practicum Students* by the Saint Louis University School of Social Work. She estimates that she helped at least 10 counselors get licensed through either Saint Louis University or Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville. Many of those she helped to train are now working in schools.

Sandy witnessed several changes in the agency throughout the years, including three office moves, two name changes, and several changes in leadership and staff. When she first arrived, there were three full-time counselors, a supervisor, and four part-time counselors in the department. All the record-keeping was done by hand, with paper copies. Today, she is the only full-time counselor on staff and everyone has computers on their desks. Despite it all, she remained humble and grateful for the opportunity to help others through her "dream job."

As one dream often leads to another, Sandy will begin a new position in June as a family therapist at St. Louis Counseling, a division of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. We wish her only the best, and encourage her to keep dreaming and helping others to do the same.

*Sandy at the staff Christmas party in 1993.*



### Mission Statement

"As a visible expression of God's loving community and consistent with the example of Jesus Christ, Caritas Family Solutions provides direct services to persons of all backgrounds with social and emotional needs across the continuum of life."

## An open letter on Foster Parenting

After hearing a sermon series on “Being Too Comfortable,” I started dreaming of what direction I should take my extra energy, time and resources. The dreams always ended in taking care of children. On the other hand, my husband would say “we aren’t comfortable, we have five kids ages 3-13,” to which I agreed.

We initially invited a foster care worker to our home for “just a talk,” which led to “just some paperwork,” “just some fingerprinting,” “just some background checks,” and ultimately a calling we love and embrace – foster parenting. We were licensed in August of 2011 and while we have only had a few kids pass through our doors, our family has been gifted with many relationships we now call great friendships.

Our five biological kids range in age from 14-24. We adopted our sixth child in 2012. Our “bonus kids” have ranged in age from 2-17, with three sibling groups of two and several of them being preteen and teenagers.

For the most part, we raise our foster children the same way we raise our own children; however, we don’t always know what they have been exposed to and what they may consider to be ‘normal.’ Over the years we have learned they generally come from broken homes and that our home is not considered by them to be their home. I remember one fall day literally arguing with one of our teens the entire day. We finally decided to agree to disagree, but the rules would remain the same. Our strategy is mostly day by day: reviewing, regrouping, learning from mistakes, and moving forward.

In the last eleven years, we have never declined or hesitated to accept a placement of any age as **you never know what you are capable of doing until you try.** I have a good friend who was pregnant with triplets and when asked, “How will you ever care for three babies?” Her reply was always, “I don’t know, never had three babies before.”

**It’s the same with foster parenting...study it, attempt to be prepared, have a mentor, reach out to other foster parents, live day by day.** When we were fostering our now adoptive child I remember saying, “I can’t do this another day,” and my husband would say, “we’ll call the agency tomorrow.” Then the next day I’d say, “well we got through yesterday okay, let’s try today.” We chuckle about this now, thinking we are glad we never said it on the same day.

**With all we have learned and been exposed to – both happy and sad – I realize there are several things we didn’t know about children in the foster care system.** Not all children have a mother and father, a warm home, clean clothes, prepared meals, or even food for that matter. One of our children would rummage through the trash, which I thought was odd, but now I understand. One of our children could not figure out stairs; he lived in a ground level apartment with a solid door and was never allowed to venture outside. One of our children kept running into the French glass doors because she had never been exposed to clear entrances. Another had never touched grass. Examples like these were hard to wrap my head around because what was/is “normal” in my life is/was abnormal in theirs. Again, it is day by day and we still reach out to others for questions and concerns. We’ve based our mission on “Every Child Deserves A Chance.”

[Like] everything else, foster care is not for everyone – *but helping a child grow and learn should be!*

**Being a foster parent takes time, commitment, sacrifice, energy, and a solid base of mentors and friends in your life. It takes a village to raise children! For those looking at the possibility of fostering, please reach out to our family and others with your questions and/or concerns.**

Dana Hakman  
Mason, IL



# 2018 Spring Events raise more than \$175,000

Thanks to all who participated: attendees, sponsors, volunteers and donors!

## Heart & Soul Annual Gala

The *Heart & Soul Annual Gala* took place at the Four Points Sheraton in Fairview Heights on February 10, 2018 and was a delightful evening of inspiration, food, fun, and friendship! With the support of 275 guests and 30 volunteers, this year's Gala raised more than \$147,000.



## Growing Hope Annual Breakfast ▲

The *Growing Hope Annual Breakfast* was held on February 24, 2018, and drew more than 250 guests who enjoyed a delicious hot breakfast buffet at the Hecker Community Center in Hecker, IL. Those attending helped raised more than \$8,100.



## Trivia Night in East Alton ▲

Trivia enthusiasts of all levels gathered on March 23, 2018, at Julia's Banquet Center in East Alton for the 4th Annual Trivia Night. Guests enjoyed an evening filled with challenging questions, silent and live auctions and multiple raffles. The sold-out event raised more than \$16,000.

Visit us online for more details and photos!



## Blue Kids ▲

During the month of April, Caritas Family Solutions invited businesses, organizations and individuals to partner in raising awareness for National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Through the distribution of Blue Kids cards, the campaign raised more than \$3,200.



## DO YOU LIKE TO GOLF?

The 2018 Annual Federico Golf Classic will once again benefit Caritas Family Solutions! Sponsor and/or enjoy a day on the course for a great cause: **Sunday, August 26 at Belk Park Golf Course in Wood River.** Registration opens at 8am with a shotgun start at 9am. Learn more at [caritasfamilysolutions.org/Federico](http://caritasfamilysolutions.org/Federico).

# Caritas Day 2018

**Ca-ri-tas (kar e tas)** *n.* “charity or love; an unlimited loving kindness toward others.”

Last year for our 70th anniversary, we launched Caritas Day, a day of giving in celebration of the numerous successes experienced by the thousands of individuals, children and families that we’ve served over the years, and in support of those who need our services today.

It was decided to make this an annual event, held each year on our actual anniversary date. Caritas Day 2018 will take place on **Tuesday, July 31!**

Everyone can participate in this annual day of giving by making a monetary gift to benefit the services provided by the agency, volunteering their time and talents, or participating in the Caritas Calendar Challenge to stock our client Resource Center!

## ***Exciting events happening on Caritas Day 2018:***

**10:00 a.m. Ribbon Cutting and Merger Celebration** at Fontebella Maternity Home, 950 Hartman Lane, O’Fallon, IL 62269  
*Refreshments will be served*

**12 noon—5:00 p.m. Garage Sale at Fontebella**  
Visit the Fontebella “shed” and cut a deal on some great items for the entire family!

## ***Ways you can help:***

1. Make an **online donation** at [caritasfamilysolutions.org](http://caritasfamilysolutions.org). Then follow us on Facebook for updates about giving contests and exciting news throughout the day!
2. Participate in the **Caritas Calendar Challenge** to help stock the Resource Center! Find the calendar at [caritasfamilysolutions.org/caritascalendar](http://caritasfamilysolutions.org/caritascalendar). Donations will be accepted **Tuesday, July 31, 2018**, at any Caritas location from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (see list to the right.) Donations will be accepted at 900 Royal Heights Rd. in Belleville until 7:00 p.m. If you are unable to drop off an item but want to help, check out our wish list on **Amazon!**
3. **Volunteer** for one of our Caritas Day events or projects. Contact Carly Jones, Volunteer Coordinator, at [Carly.Jones@caritasfamily.org](mailto:Carly.Jones@caritasfamily.org) or 618-213-8716 for more information.
4. Visit [caritasfamilysolutions.org/CaritasDay](http://caritasfamilysolutions.org/CaritasDay) for the most updated info.

**CARITAS**   
**Day** *of giving*

## **REGIONAL OFFICES**

### **Belleville**

900 Royal Heights Rd.  
Suite 2150  
Belleville, IL 62226  
800-997-9703

### **Carterville**

10286 Fleming Road  
Carterville, IL 62918  
800-997-9381

### **East Alton**

645 Berkshire Blvd.  
East Alton, IL 62024  
618-258-8750

### **Mt. Vernon**

219 Withers Dr.  
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864  
877-277-3773





8601 West Main Street  
Suite 201  
Belleville, IL 62223



*Newsletters are also available at [caritasfamilysolutions.org](http://caritasfamilysolutions.org). If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please send your name, mailing address and email address to [outreach@caritasfamily.org](mailto:outreach@caritasfamily.org). Thank you!*

## #FosterCareFriday Campaign

These days, if you can get your cause to go viral on social media, you are almost ensured success. That's why when the Foster Care Licensing staff put their heads together to brainstorm how to recruit more foster parents, as well as retain those we already have, they turned to social media.

Research shows that the best way to find more foster parents is through those already serving or having served in that role. So reaching out to current foster families and asking them to share their stories on social media seemed like the perfect combination to help increase awareness and interest in foster parenting.

In January 2018, we launched the #FosterCareFriday campaign on Facebook. Every Friday so far this year there has been a post about foster parenting. The posts have ranged from personal testimonies to training videos to informational articles that inspire and provide support for our active foster parents.

The testimonies have been turned into blog entries on our website. Topics have included fostering teens to working with birth parents. Most of the training videos have been created by our own staff and can also be seen on our YouTube channel. We have also shared articles from other sites that are of interest—you don't always have to reinvent the wheel!

Follow us on Facebook and check out the campaign using any of these hashtags:  
**#FosterCareFriday, #FosterTalkwithCaritas, #CaritasFosterCare, #FosterFamilyGoals.**

*You can also read one of the stories INSIDE on page 5!*

**Is Foster Parenting for You?**  
**CaritasFamilySolutions.org**  
**618 258-8750**  
**CARITAS**  
FAMILY SOLUTIONS