

## Couple places value on helping children in distress

Tom Cromwell and Jeanne Newton became supporters of Caritas Family Solutions after visiting St. John Bosco Children's Center located in Belleville, Ill. The Center is currently home to 17 children, ages 6-13, who have been victims of severe abuse or neglect.

When Tom and Jeanne first visited the center, renovations were underway to make it a more therapeutic, homelike environment for the children served there by Caritas Family Solutions. "It was the most ambitious project I've seen undertaken to provide care to children in Southern Illinois," Tom said. Tom and Jeanne place considerable value on helping children who live in distressed situations.

"Our concerns are that if we don't take care of children and do what we can to ensure that these opportunities exist, then we are going to continue to see more children in distressed situations," said Tom. "The St. John Bosco Children's Center does a really good job of focusing on the needs of children and addressing these issues."

St. John Bosco Children's Center began operating in 1992 and has provided a safe-haven to hundreds of children, providing them with individual and group therapy as well as loving care around the clock. During their stay, children also have access to healthcare, educational and recreational opportunities and properly balanced meals.

Driven by concerns for children and their future, Tom and Jeanne made the decision to contribute in a significant way to the *Focus on Kids* Campaign, a fundraising effort to raise money for renovations in the south wing of the facility. "We think Caritas Family Solutions is doing something really important for young people and for kids who are held back by a number of reasons. Whether it happens to be in Belleville or in Carterville, Caritas has an important impact on children across Southern Illinois," Tom said. "It is best summed up by author Robert Putnam who said, 'If we can begin to think of these poor kids as our kids, we would not sleep for a second before we figure out how to help them.' Everybody has the capacity to do something. It doesn't have to be major, it should be what you can afford and maybe that's your time. There are many opportunities," he added.

Tom and Jeanne are passionate about helping vulnerable children with socio-economic disadvantages. Jeanne previously served as Board Member and President of Camp Ondessonk, a teen and youth camp near Ozark, Ill., and as a long time Board Member and Chairperson of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwestern Illinois. They are founders of a Camp Ondessonk scholarship program awarded to underrepresented Diocese of Belleville youth, and they provided gift leadership for the camp's recently constructed, six-cabin "mini-camp" village which serves campers ages 8-10.

**"If we don't take care of children and do what we can...then we are going to continue to see more children in distressed situations."**

**~Tom Cromwell**



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# GOOD NEWS

Spring 2016



## Saving our teenagers one at a time

Sarah was fifteen years old when her parents divorced and her mother began to have difficulties with depression and anxiety. Sarah had a few problems in the past such as failing classes at school, but was able to maintain a positive social life and passing grades. However, she began to falter now that her mother was having difficulties and her father and younger brother had moved out.

The real problem for Sarah began when her mother started working more and was not in the home to supervise her; when she was home, her mother was often tired from working so much. Sarah began staying out late on the nights that her mother worked. She had parties with alcohol and substances in the home and at times, did not come home at all. Her mother was too tired, too busy and too concentrated on her own problems to pay much attention to what Sarah was doing. Her father lived in another town and was also working long hours and was not speaking to Sarah's mother very often; he did not visit with Sarah but called her occasionally on the phone.

Sarah began spending time with older youth that were not positive influences. Her grades began to fall and she failed several classes because she came to school under the influence of drugs or alcohol, without having slept, or did not attend school at all. She began arguing with teachers and was expelled after a physical altercation with another student. Sarah then began stealing her mother's prescription medications to take and to sell. At that time, her boyfriend was much older and a well-known drug dealer.

One night, while her mother was at work, Sarah was arrested for being in possession of narcotics and ran from the police. She was placed in juvenile detention for the weekend. Upon her release, she and her mother were court-ordered to participate in **Multisystemic Therapy (MST)** available from the regional office of Caritas Family Solutions located in Carterville, Ill. MST is a four- to six-month program that helps reduce relapses, helps families reconnect, keeps families together and increases positive outcomes for youth who exhibit risky behavior that could and sometimes does land them in the juvenile justice system.

Immediately upon beginning work with the family, the MST therapist noted that Sarah's mother also presented with substance abuse issues. The therapist addressed these issues with the mother, providing her with in-home substance abuse treatment. The therapist also worked with Sarah's mother to address the lack of supervision in the home by talking with neighbors, teachers and church members to help with supervising Sarah. Her mother, with the therapist's guidance, contacted the school and began attending school meetings, helping Sarah with homework, and securing a tutor for Sarah. In addition, the therapist helped her mother understand the negative impact that Sarah's friends and boyfriend were having on her life. Sarah's mother set rules and structure for Sarah to follow, along with consequences and rewards for following or not following those rules. Sarah also received substance abuse counseling and received drug tests provided by the therapist and her mother. Most importantly, the therapist provided intense family counseling that included help with communication, understanding the importance of rules and boundaries and how to support each other in times of need. Sarah began playing soccer again, stopped all drug use, began a positive relationship with supportive peers and went on to graduate college with a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting. She had no further arrests. Her mother stopped all overuse of substances and her father became an integral part of her life.

Sarah reported, "If it hadn't been for my therapist, I would have been in jail and my parents would have kicked me out. I've never been closer to my Mom and Dad."

Sarah's mother added, "Our therapist saved our family. She was there every step of the way and stayed with us even when we didn't want her here. She had the confidence in us that gave us the confidence that we needed to save Sarah from the road that she was going down".



## Save the Date: Music Festival 2016

Caritas Family Solutions will be hosting an Inaugural Music Festival on **Saturday, October 22, 2016**, at Black Diamond Harley Davidson in Marion, Ill. The festival will feature four musical acts including the Southern rock band *South of 70* and country music artist Eli Tellor. The names of two additional acts have not yet been released; visit [caritasfamilysolutions.org](http://caritasfamilysolutions.org) for the most updated information.



Eli Tellor also will serve as the Master of Ceremonies for the event. Eli has a special connection to the agency because of his experience as a former foster child; he and his younger brother entered care when they were barely teenagers. "Foster care was a good thing for me and my brother because we were placed into care at a time when we really needed it. We had absolutely nothing at all," Eli said. After nine months they returned home to their parents. Although relatively brief, this experience had a strong impact on Eli and his family. During his time in foster care, Eli discovered music as his outlet. He always had a passion for music growing up, but it was in foster care that he received his first guitar and decided to take his love for music a step farther. At 13 years old, Eli won a competition and the chance to go to Nashville to record an album. That was his first experience making music.

Along with his passion for music, Eli is also passionate about helping children in any way he can. If not for his successful music career, he would have pursued a career in child therapy. Eli is excited to be able to use his musical talent to raise funds for vulnerable children in Southern Illinois through the 2016 Music Festival.

### 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."*

Visit us online at  
[caritasfamilysolutions.org](http://caritasfamilysolutions.org)



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## Thank You to our RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS

Three members of our Board of Directors are retiring at the end of this fiscal year: Barbara Calandro, Erin Prest and John Reichert. Both Barbara and Erin were appointed to the Board when the agency was still Catholic Social Services of Southern Illinois and have played integral roles throughout several years of transition and growth.



**Barbara Calandro** was appointed to the Board of Directors in June 2009. As a retired substance abuse counselor, she brought a knowledge of human services to the Board; as a mother and grandmother, she brought a genuine concern for child welfare. Barbara also shared her leadership skills with the Board, becoming vice-chair in 2011 and then chair in March 2012 through May 2015. She stayed an extra year on the Board as past-chair and even co-chaired the 2016 Heart & Soul Annual Gala. Barbara's outgoing personality, personal faith and experience as a military spouse were additional assets in her role on the Board and we are appreciative of the continued support of our mission provided by her and her husband, Jim.



**Erin Prest** has served on the Board since May 2010, and became treasurer in August 2013. She is a Senior Tax Manager at Anders CPAs+Advisors in Saint Louis, Missouri. With her accounting experience and professional integrity, she literally brought a wealth of knowledge and insight to the Board, supporting the entire agency through some major financial and strategic growth. Erin also served as a member of the Performance, Oversight and Monitoring Committee and was committee chair from 2012-2014. We are proud of and grateful to Erin and her husband, Adam, and know they will make great parents to their baby due in June.

**John Reichert** joined the Board in August 2013 and has served on both the Public Relations Resource Development Committee and the Planning and Program Development Committee. As owner and principle at InFocus Marketing in Belleville, John was a true asset during the rebranding efforts after the agency name change to Caritas Family Solutions. His community connections and networking skills have also been beneficial to the agency, especially during planning for our first ever annual gala in 2014 for which he and his wife Karen served as co-chair. We know that John will continue to be an advocate for Caritas in the community.



We are grateful to all of our Board members, past, present and future, who volunteer their time and expertise to advance the mission and set the direction for Caritas Family Solutions and all whom we serve.

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!

## Fundraising events support services

Caritas Family Solutions recently wrapped up a busy season filled with fundraising events, beginning with the Inaugural Lanes of Change Bowling Tournament in November 2015 and ending with the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Charity Brunch in April 2016. Special events are crucial to the growth of services provided by the agency. Because of the overwhelming support shown by individuals, groups, communities and businesses, a total of \$151,121 was raised among six events. We cannot thank you enough for your generosity and partnership in making these events a success!

*Clockwise from right: Attendees at the Annual Heart & Soul Gala; A happy table at Trivia Night 2016; Growing Hope Annual Breakfast brought in a great crowd; Lanes of Change Bowling Tournament was new but loads of laughs. The Annual Charity Brunch in Carterville was supported by Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Poshard of the Poshard Foundation for Abused Children (pictured below with CEO Gary Huelsmann).*



## Pay Now Illinois

As the state budget impasse continues to linger, the debt owed to social and human service agencies continues to climb. Services provided by these agencies are being threatened and in some instances, discontinued. Although Caritas Family Solutions is in financially stable condition, our agency is owed more than \$350,000 for services already performed to date, including multisystemic therapy for at-risk youth and assisted living support for low-income seniors.

At the beginning of FY16, Caritas and hundreds of other nonprofits, in good faith, signed contracts with the State of Illinois to provide services to qualified residents. We have been upholding our contractual obligations and continue to do so, but the State has not been paying us. As any business would, we expect to be paid for the services rendered. For this reason, Caritas has joined Pay Now Illinois, a coalition of 81 Illinois-based social and human service agencies who filed a lawsuit on May 4, 2016 against Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner and the directors of six statewide agencies. The lawsuit seeks immediate payment owed for work performed under contracts that date back to July 1, 2015, the beginning of the state's fiscal year. This is not a political dispute, it is just good business. The value of unpaid contracts for the members of the coalition exceeds \$130 million.

Many members of the coalition, who provide services including housing for the homeless, healthcare services for senior citizens, sexual abuse counseling and programs for at-risk youth, such as Multisystemic Therapy, face acute financial hardship and have had to reduce staff and programs. The viability of some of the organizations is threatened. The budget impasse has put many vulnerable families and individuals in difficult and sometimes desperate situations. We also continue to advocate for our clients and partner agencies in distressed situations.

The budget impasse creates financial uncertainty for our services. It also puts our clients who receive additional assistance, such as child care or housing assistance, at risk and jeopardizes their opportunities to better themselves and their families. We ask that you stay informed on this issue and aware of how it is impacting your community. Please join us in advocating for our friends and neighbors to receive the assistance that they so desperately need. Contact your state legislators and our governor to express your views.



## Focus on Kids: Capital Campaign Update

Caritas Family Solutions is close to wrapping up the agency's very first capital campaign – *Focus on Kids*. The campaign, which began in September 2015, is designed to complete the third phase of renovations at St. John Bosco Children's Center, a temporary home for severely abused and neglected children. Upon completion, children served at the center can look forward to living in a child-friendly, home-like atmosphere where they can feel safe and nurtured.

After the first phase of the project was completed, the children who moved into the newly renovated wing were astonished. One enthusiastic six year old boy exclaimed, "Wow! I have a place to put my things in my room, and I have a Star Wars cover for my bed! The hallways are really big, and we can play games inside on rainy days." All of the children who moved into the wing had such joy shining in their eyes. The staff at the center report that bedtime rituals are accomplished much easier and the children quiet down and fall asleep more quickly. The warm, loving atmosphere is contagious!

As you can see, the *Focus on Kids* campaign seeks to make a major impact in the lives of the children who enter our care at St. John Bosco Children's Center. If you would like to learn more about the campaign, or help achieve the final 20% of the \$200,000 goal, please contact Judy Woodruff at [judy.woodruff@caritasfamily.org](mailto:judy.woodruff@caritasfamily.org) or 618-213-8703. All donation levels are needed and appreciated. You can make a difference in a child's life today!

## Meet our new Volunteer Coordinator



**Kyle Williams** joined the Development team in September 2015. As the volunteer coordinator, Kyle is responsible for creating a robust volunteer program that strengthens the agency's programs and events. Since September, he has been busy developing and managing volunteer policies and procedures and developing a wide range of volunteer opportunities within the agency.

"It's challenging but also very interesting to start a project like the volunteer program from the ground up," Kyle said. "It's especially rewarding to see a volunteer, who may have never heard of our agency previously, become invested in our mission. I'm excited to keep building those partnerships in the community."

Kyle earned a bachelor of arts in anthropology from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and managed a nonprofit student organization while enrolled there. He has also volunteered with Big Brothers Big Sisters and Habitat for Humanity. Kyle served in the Army National Guard for six years, earning the Army Commendation Medal in 2012 and Army Achievement Medal in 2013.

A variety of volunteer opportunities are available for individuals or groups looking to make a difference. Some opportunities involve direct interaction with children and/or clients and require a criminal background check, such as tutoring at St. John Bosco Children's Center, babysitting at Foster Parent Support Group Meetings, or lending a hand at one of our community homes for adults with developmental disabilities. If you are interested in volunteering for Caritas Family Solutions, please contact Kyle Williams at 618.213.8716 or visit [caritasfamilysolutions.org](http://caritasfamilysolutions.org).

## SERVICES

Adoption

Foster Care

Counseling

Residential Treatment  
for abused and  
neglected children

Multi-Systemic Therapy  
for at-risk youth

Assisted Living and  
Employment Training  
for low-income seniors

Community Integrated  
Living Arrangements  
(CILAs) for the  
developmentally  
disabled

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