



Family Outreach of Amherst

Spring 2011

Helping struggling families help themselves

www.chd.org/familyoutreach

CHD Service Areas

Children and Families

Community Resources

Hawthorn Elder Care

Homelessness Prevention

Intellectual Disabilities

Juvenile Justice

Mental Health/Addiction

Social Enterprises

401 Main St., Suite 12
Amherst, MA 01002
(413) 549-5548

familyoutreach@chd.org

Family Outreach is a program of CHD, the nonprofit Center for Human Development.



good people
good work

Lucy Wilson Benson honored as Family Outreach Turns 20!

On Thursday, October 6, 2010, FOA celebrated its 20th anniversary with a cocktail reception at the Alumni House at Amherst College. As part of the celebration, the Helen Mitchell Community Service Award was presented to **Lucy Wilson Benson** for her lifelong commitment to service—locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally. Named for the woman who was instrumental in helping young women with children gain necessary self-sufficiency skills, this award is given periodically to an individual, or group, who best exemplifies the spirit of selfless dedication to helping improve the quality of life for members of our community.

This year's honoree, Lucy Wilson Benson, has an impressive record of dedicated service in both public and private sectors. FOA Director Laura Reichsman said, "We are thrilled to honor Lucy Benson as we celebrate our first 20 years of service and salute the Friends of Family Outreach for their dedicated commitment."

More than 100 people attended the event, a highlight of which was the presentation to Family Outreach of an Official Citation from the state Senate of Massachusetts, presented by state Sen. Stanley Rosenberg and state Rep. Ellen Story.



Lucy Wilson Benson



Lucy Wilson Benson, far left, state Rep. Ellen Story, FOA Program Director Laura Reichsman and state Sen. Stanley Rosenberg attend Family Outreach of Amherst's 20th anniversary celebration..

We gratefully acknowledge underwriting support for this event



from the Rotary Club of Amherst and hosting by Amherst College.

**NORTON
JEANNE
& mo :**
The Wily & Wondrous World
of Children's Book Writers

FOA Book Event, Thursday, March 24

FOA continues its "Salute to Families" series with a panel of three local children's book writers: Norton Juster, Jeanne Birdsall and Mo Willems. A book signing and reception will follow the program.

Thursday, March 24, 7-9 p.m.
Cole Assembly Room, Converse Hall, Amherst College
Complete program and ticket info inside . . .



Family Outreach
of Amherst

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Message from the Director

What does success mean? To some of us, it's a happy life with plenty of loved ones around us, healthy and untroubled. For others, it's having a good job, a nice home, a good relationship.

For most of us, it's some combination of those things. For many of the families we work with, success looks a little different—being able to pay the rent on time so they don't have to worry about being evicted, or finding a job, any job, that will help them keep their electricity from being shut off.



Laura Reichsman

I have spoken (and written) many times about the struggles facing FOA client families. Some of those struggles are universal. Many of the families we work with have children with medical or mental health issues; many have children who struggle academically. But I know many middle class families whose children struggle too. When my son was failing math, we hired a wonderful graduate student from the UMass School of Education, who helped Chris with his math as they played basketball and played the piano together. The difference is, for the families we work with, there are no private tutors for their children and very often, there's no one at home to help them with their homework. This could be because both parents work low-wage jobs that last into the evening, or the parent or parents struggle with mental health issues

of their own. Sometimes it is because the child has surpassed a parent's experience in school and the parent simply can't help their child with their grammar or math homework.

So, success looks different. It might be that a parent goes back to school so he or she can better help their child. Perhaps it's a better paying job with better hours. It could be that the child comes to our Homework Club or gets a Big Brother or Sister through CHD's Big Brothers Big Sisters program. Sometimes, it's when a family who had been unwilling to work with a caseworker from FOA decides that they want to change their life and reaches out to us for support.

As we all know, change is hard, and, when you are faced with years of bad decisions, very little money and struggling children, it can feel insurmountable. But, every day, we work with families who are doing that hard work with our caseworkers by their side. The work is hard but the transformation of a life in small, powerful ways is worth the hard work, for both the caseworkers and the families they support.

~ Laura Reichsman

DEAR LAURA,
I CANNOT BEGIN TO EXPRESS HOW MUCH YOUR SUPPORT DURING THE PAST MONTHS HAS MEANT TO ME. CHRISTMAS IS A VERY FRUSTRATING AND SAD TIME WHEN A PARENT CANNOT AFFORD GIFTS FOR THEIR CHILD.
YOUR KINDNESS DURING THE HOLIDAY MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR SARA TO HAVE A CHRISTMAS SHE OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO HAVE. YOU WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN FOR THE GOOD THAT YOU HAVE DONE.

A note of thanks from one of Family Outreach of Amherst's clients to Program Director Laura Reichsman. See the next page for a story about the Rotary Club of Amherst's annual Holiday Giving Party.

From time to time, we have special announcements we would like to send out via e-mail. If you'd like to receive them, please contact Rachel Barker: rbarker@chd.org

FOA Thanks Rotary Club of Amherst

On Monday, December 6, the Rotary Club of Amherst hosted its 10th annual Holiday Giving Party for the clients of Family Outreach at the Courtyard by Marriott in Hadley. It's hard to see who's more excited—the children or the Rotarians—as individual club members each sponsor one child, purchasing gifts from a "wishlist" provided by the parents. Fanciful balloon sculptures, face painting, a capella singing, a turkey dinner with all the trimmings—and a surprise visit from Santa—make this event a wonderful experience for everyone. As you can see by the touching thank you note on the previous page sent by one of the moms, it means a lot to every family to feel cared for—especially over the holidays!



Members of the Rotary Club of Amherst join clients and staff of Family Outreach of Amherst at the Courtyard by Marriot in Hadley in December of its annual Holiday Giving Party.



A Special Birthday Tradition Benefits Family Outreach of Amherst



Family Outreach Program Director Laura Reichsman accepts Samson's birthday donation.

Samson's birthday is just before Christmas (Dec. 22), when there is a lot of attention on both giving and receiving. Samson knows there are a lot of kids out there, even in Amherst, who are not as fortunate as he is, who may not receive any gifts for Christmas or birthdays, or who may not even have a home or enough food to eat.

Samson first talked with his parents about alternatives to receiving birthday gifts from his friends three years ago. That year, he asked his friends to give money to the Survival Center. The next year they heard about the FOA holiday toy drive through their friend Deb Napier, who was on the FOA board. The timing was such that Samson asked for new, unwrapped toys from his friends that he then gave to the toy drive. This year, he had his birthday party a bit later so he missed the toy drive, but Samson asked for money donations instead. He likes the idea of helping other families with kids, especially families in Amherst.

We at FOA are so grateful to Samson for his generosity and compassion for children in Amherst whose families struggle with poverty. We are so lucky to have him as an FOA supporter!

What's new at Echo Village?

Over two years ago, we began working with the schools, police, other human service agencies, landlords and the residents of Echo Village Apartments to find long-term solutions to their ongoing problems. Setting up a satellite office nearby, we have learned much about what it takes to build a community.

- We continue to offer the popular Homework Club, staffed by volunteers from the South Congregational Church and FOA, which continues to have great participation among the children.
- New in February will be a "Family Movie Night," to further develop the sense of community by encouraging residents to come together.
- A teen group is forming to allow teens to create documentary-style media programs to foster dialog about what they like/dislike about the community and get them involved in making positive changes.



According to caseworker Francine Rodriguez, "We are working hard to give everyone the tools to start building and changing their community. It's a long process, but we are committed to it and, by involving every member of the family, it's paying off!"

We would like to thank our landlord Jerry Gates and his staff for their commitment in helping us make this program possible.

A word about Homework Club

*Homework Club is a direct way for members of the community to connect with children who need help. According to volunteer coordinator **Flip Rosenberry**, "By creating such links FOA creates a win-win solution. Children who are behind in school gain the skills and confidence they need; while volunteers have the satisfaction of making a difference in a young person's life."*

Everyone wins and FOA can't thank all of you enough!



Fun at FOA's Echo Village December Holiday Party.

In Honor / In Memoriam

Since our last newsletter, many donors made gifts in honor or in memory of someone special. Thank you to all who have donated!

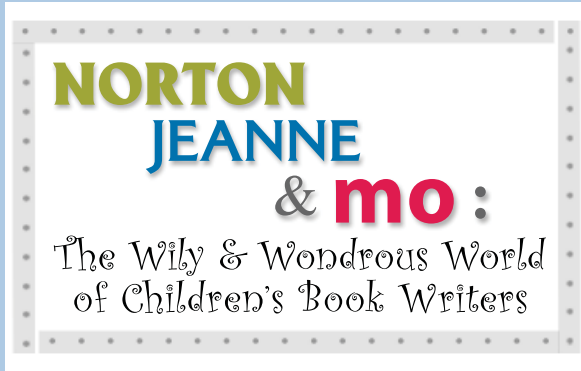
Gifts were made in honor of:

Betsy McInnis, by Nancy and Paul Hamel
Connie Gillen and Gertrude Ames, by Louise Reilly
Gertrude Ames' 101st Birthday, by Herbert and Paulina Stark
Helen Crotty, by Mary Sharma
Laura Wear, by Story Wright
Lawrence B. Siddall's 80th Birthday, by Barbara Van Noord and Steve Gottlieb
Lee Bridegam, by Julie and Mickey Marcus
Louise Reilly, by Carol Maloney Nelson
Lucy Benson, by Herbert and Paulina Stark
Marcia Moore Bain, by Susan and Andrew Bellak
Pam Rietkerk, by Traci and Joel Wolfe
Samson Heyer's Birthday, by Todd and Christine Felton, Kevin and Janet Kelly, Nate Budington and Megan Morey, Brigitte and Colin Ruhe, and several cash donations
Terry Singer, by Bob Hawley and Mary McCarthy
The staff at FOA, by Pauline Heffley and Steve and Jenny Reynolds

Gifts were made in memory of:

Abbie S. Jameson, by Ann Hastings
Bob Lenz, by Madeleine Lenz
Dot Cresswell and The Family Place in DC, by Dorothy Cresswell and Dusty Miller
Eleanor Friedlander, by Debbi Friedlander
Eva Schiffer, by Barry and Kristin O'Connell
Gerald M. Mager by Sarah Mager
Gertrude Ames, by Michael and Tina Berins, Jane G. Conner, Kent and Scottie Faerber, Evelyn Goldenberg, Mary Leder, Betsy and Bruce McInnis, Ellen and Barry Nigrosh, Lisa Plantefaber and Steven Fischel, Louise Reilly, Herbert and Paulina Stark, Barbara Van Noord and Steve Gottlieb, and Norton and Irene Starr
Kevin McCarthy, by Bob Hawley and Mary McCarthy
Marcia Moore Bain, by Nat and Rachel Barker, Susi and Arnold Friedmann, Barbara McGarrah, Jean Adams Robbins, Wildwood School Parent Council, Scott and Sarah Auerbach, Matthew Blumenfeld and Claudia Canale-Parola, John and Laurie Hanley, Nina C. Mankin, Betsy and Bruce McInnis, Larry McManus, Jessica and Eric Wilkinson, Laura and Frieda Reichsman, the Sanford family, Ruth and Don Katzner
Mary C. Chisholm, by Roseann Ventimiglia and Seth Fidel, Robert Nason and Lisa Sloane, and the Time Warner Cable/HR Team
Nancy Miller, by Larry Miller
In honor and memory of Romeo Grenier's 100th Birthday, by Kenneth Schoen and Jane Trigere

Family Outreach of Amherst presents a 'Salute to Families' Book Event



Thursday, March 24, 7-9 p.m.

**Cole Assembly Room
Converse Hall, Amherst College**

**Tickets available at the door,
or by calling 413-549-5999**

**Benefactors: \$25
General Admission: \$10 / Students and Seniors \$5**

www.chd.org/familyoutreach

Family Outreach of Amherst continues its "Salute to Families" series with this panel of three local, immensely popular and award-winning children's book writers. The Pioneer Valley has become a mecca for children's book writers and illustrators. Children's literature is one of the most successful areas in publishing, and it has become recognized as a critical influence in the development and education of our children. What children read, how they read, or whether they read at all vitally concerns their future and ours. It is largely through reading that children escape from us and begin to create a world that is their own.

Moderated by Greta Wilcox, Amherst kindergarten teacher extraordinaire, and featuring:



Norton Juster:

Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth* is a cultural icon that has endured 50 years. His newest collaboration with Jules Feiffer, *The Odious Ogre*, is

sure to join it in the top ranks of children's literature. A trained architect, professor emeritus of design at Hampshire College, amateur cook and professional eater, Juster lives in Amherst with his wife, Jeanne.



Jeanne Birdsall:

Her *Penderwick Series* creates a family we will all want to know and love. Her work shows a true picture of childhood, realistic family dynamics,

and, as one reviewer said, "should be held close like a warm, cuddly blanket." She lives in Northampton, Mass., in a house that is "old and comfortable, full of unruly animals, and surrounded by gardens."



Mo Willems:

His work in children's books, animation, television, theater, and bubble gum card painting have garnered 3 Caldecott Honors, 2 Geisel Medals, a Geisel Honor, 2

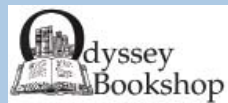
Carnegie Medals, 6 Emmy Awards, and multiple bubble gum cards. The *Times Book Review* has called his character, the Pigeon, "one of this decade's contributions to the pantheon of great picture book characters," but what do they know?

Family Outreach of Amherst would like to thank all who help make this event possible:

Underwriters



Co-sponsors



The Odyssey Bookshop in South Hadley and the Creative Writing Center at Amherst College

Advertise in our event program! Contact Rachel Barker at rbarker@chd.org

Children's Memorial Flag Raising

April 7, 10 a.m., Bangs Community Center, Amherst

April was first declared "Child Abuse Prevention Month" by Presidential proclamation in 1985. Since then, organizations who are dedicated to protecting children have used this special time of year to acknowledge the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse in all its forms. Please join the Amherst-based programs of the **Center for Human Development, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County, Family Outreach of Amherst, Not Bread Alone, and Jessie's House** on April 7 to show we are committed to preventing child abuse and neglect in our community. **For more information, please call Laura Reichsman at 549-5548 or Renee Moss at 253-2591.**





Family Outreach of Amherst

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Helping
struggling families
help themselves

Family Outreach of Amherst 8th Annual 'Light Up the Night!'

Friday, June 17, 2011, 6:30 p.m.



FOA will host its 8th annual "Light Up the Night!" dinner and auction on **Friday, June 17**. As in past years, the annual benefit, the program's largest fundraiser of the year, will be held at a private residence in Amherst that features some of the most magnificent gardens in town, lit by lanterns in the event's signature display. The evening will feature a sumptuous buffet dinner, prepared by Family Outreach board members and friends, a live auction with one-of-a-kind packages, and a silent auction that reflects the vast talents and generosity of the local community, and live music. Don't miss this chance to support Family Outreach and be a part of a special summer evening! Keep checking our Web site for event details:

www.chd.org/familyoutreach

