
Report from the
Executive Director

Partnering with others, whether it's our donors, sister agencies, the children and families we serve, schools, our staff, or the community-at-large, is one way in which we put the *connect* in Family Connections.

The board of directors encourages finding, and taking advantage of, opportunities for Family Connections to be a presence in our community. That makes each one of us an ambassador for the organization.



Board officers for 2008-09

Left to right: Peg Cartus, Secretary; Elaine Cipoletti, Treasurer; Cathy Sobel, President; Jennifer Kirkbride, Vice President

The executive and fiscal directors attend the Weirton Chamber of Commerce's Business After Hours meetings. Family Connections has representation at the Family Ways Collaborative, the Family Resource Network, the Public Affairs

and Agency Support Committees of the West Virginia Child Care Association. The residents at Brooke Place participate in community service activities and employees represent the agency every time they sport one of their Family Connections' T-shirts.

Family Connections hosted another well-attended open house at Brooke Place in the fall of 2008. The Evelyn Rapp Pavilion was dedicated and donors and the volunteer workforce, primarily from Colliers, were thanked for their generous contribution.



As an active member of the West Virginia Child Care Association, Family Connections recognized the contribution of Barbara Owens, manager of the Baymont Inn and Suites. Mrs. Owens, with the support of the Baymont's owners, has shown her generous spirit of giving through donations of goods to the open house and fund-raising dance, donations linens to Brooke Place, and allowing the residents to swim in the Baymont's pool.

The outpatient clinic completed its first full year at the new site in Weirton Medical Center's Medical Office Building. The clinic is staffed by a part-

time therapist and 2 contract therapists. Family Connections also entered into a contract with Richard Ajayi, M.D. (in February) to assist with clinical oversight. Medical professionals in the building have been a regular referral source.

In June, the fund development committee met with Peter Butler and Jenny Selin from WVU's Division of Resource Management. This partnership will give an opportunity for sophomore students in the landscape architecture class to develop their vision for the 6.5 acres at Brooke Place and work with a real client. It is an opportunity for Family Connections to further enhance the property.



Pictured: Jenny Selin and Peter Butler

In March, the board of directors met to strategize the next 3 year plan. Through identifying long range goals, the board sets the course for the agency. Inherent in this plan is the pledge to assure the viability of the agency in terms of commitment to professional staff and ethical and best practice standards, financial stewardship, and community involvement.

The challenging long range goals approved by the board for 2009-2012 include:

- Continue implementation of the Continuous Quality Improvement process
- Stronger identity for the board
- Ensure sustainability of the organization
- Develop a continuum of care
- Prepare eligible residents for independent living
- Improve employee retention
- Assist employees to better understand FC mission and core values
- Promote advocacy at the federal, state, and local levels
- Increase public awareness
- Raise income above fixed income of program fees
- Develop Brooke Place property
- Maintain property
- Keep abreast of innovative and day to day technology resources.



Report from the
Fiscal Director

Financially, Family Connections had its best year in a decade.

The fact that the population at Brooke Place remained at (or near) capacity during the last 6 months is the main reason the agency finished the year in the black. The income at the clinic held steady, and management identified options to increase the use of the outpatient service in the community. Plans are in the works for returning to providing home based intervention, socially necessary services, and group home aftercare.

There were six short term financial goals with 21 objectives or ways to attain these goals. Of the 21 objectives, 71% were met. The goal of having 3 months operating expenses in reserve was achieved during this year, as well as having a successful audit with no management letter from the auditor.

The fiscal year 2009-10 budget has been approved by the board with a 9.7% increase overall. However, this is mainly due to a continuation of the 3% cost of living increase for all employees, as well as some adjustments to hourly rates due to the federal increase of the minimum wage, and the addition of a full time home based worker at the clinic.

Family Connections has operated at the Colliers facility since 2002 (7 years have flown!). It now becomes a task to replace/refurbish major parts of the

facility such as new carpeting, painting of the exterior/interior, replacing cabinets and vanity tops in the bathrooms and resealing/repairing the parking area.

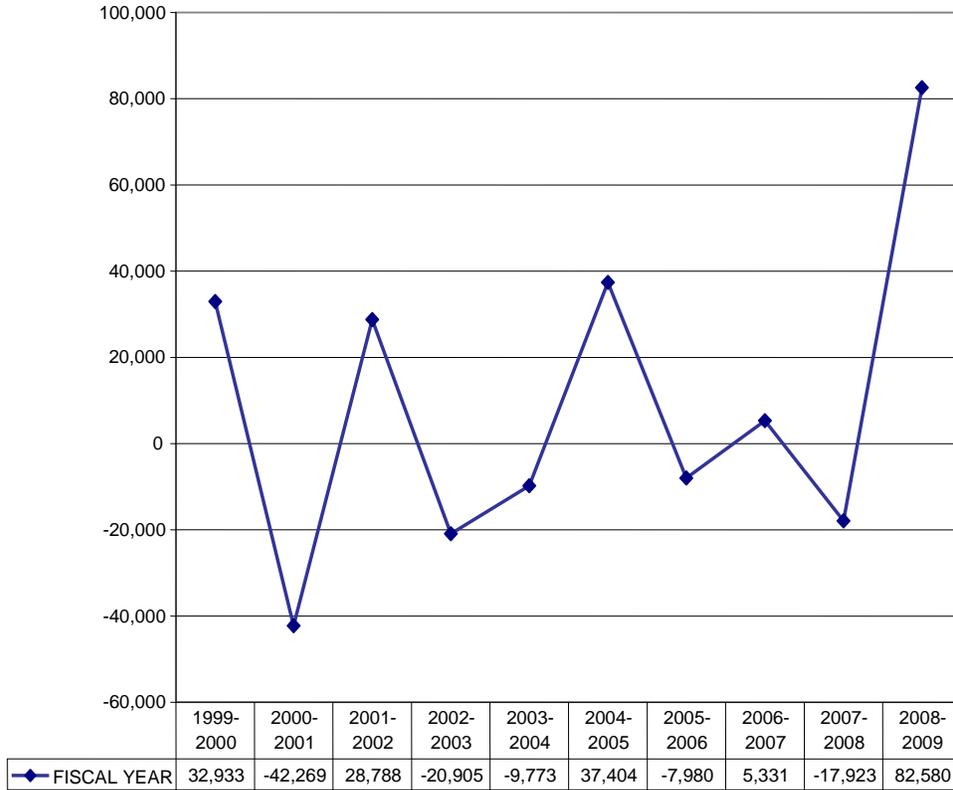
A part time cook at the group home was hired as a result of the comments from the employee satisfaction survey. Also added was the benefit of a paid “birthday” holiday to be taken during the month of the employee’s birthday.

The OJJDP grant ended on June 30th and remained a stand alone program, however, we continue to incorporate the grant activities into the daily routine of the group home and expenses have been included into the next fiscal year budget.

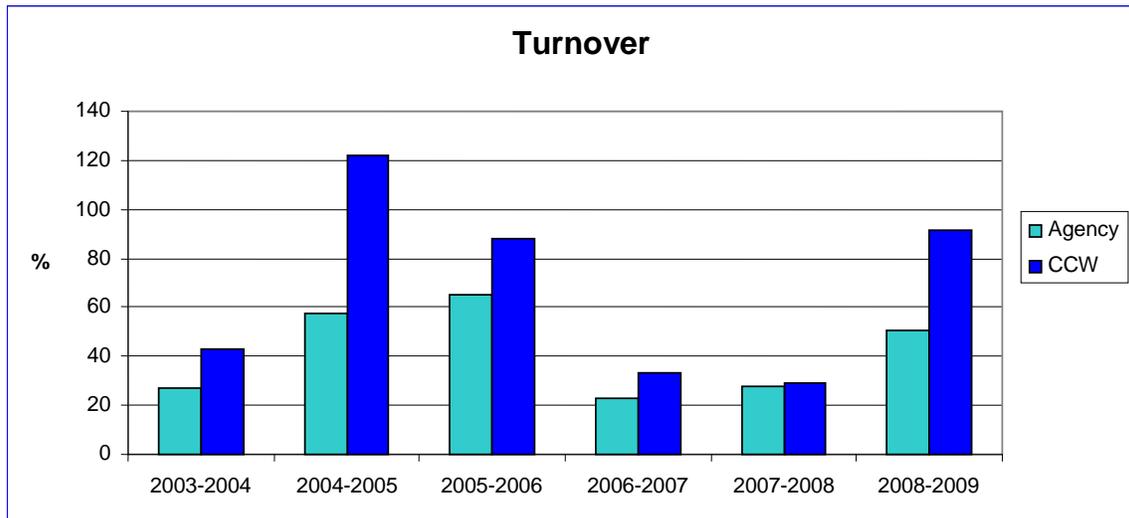
Looking back over the successes and challenges of the last year is the new starting point for looking forward. We are excited about the opportunities awaiting Family Connections in its 33rd year of operation.



Fiscal Year Profit/Loss Comparison

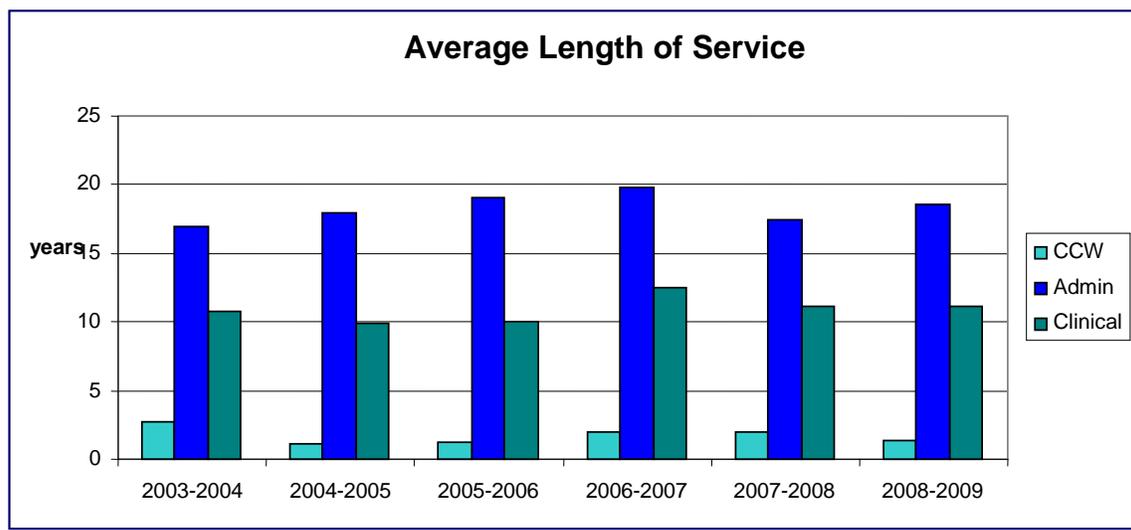


Human Resources



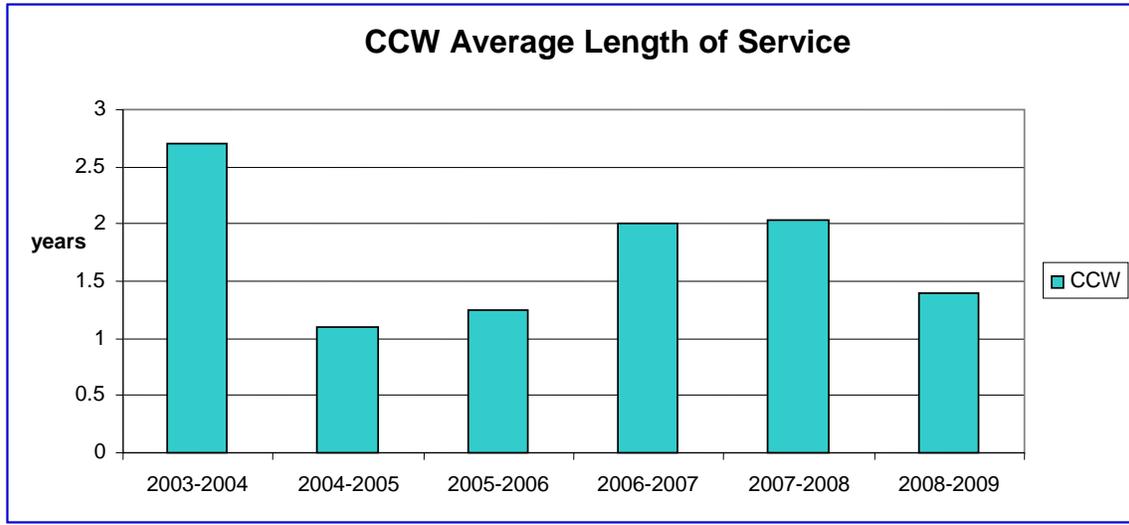
Explanation of 08-09 turnover:

Child care turnover in 08-09 was 91.8%. Consequently, Family Connections did not meet its objective of achieving less than 50% turnover for the child care worker position. Three out of 10 child care workers that exited were student interns. The risk taken when interns are hired is that they will leave at the end of their schooling; consequently, Family Connections must consider the impact of anticipated turnover when considering an intern for employment. If the students remained employed, the turnover goal would still have been unmet. Our CQI process has taken serious note of the turnover and recommended that a task force be formed to study the downward trend and make recommendations to management for any needed change in our recruitment and training processes. Our short-term plan goal for 09-10 is to, again, achieve less than 50% turnover for the child care worker position.



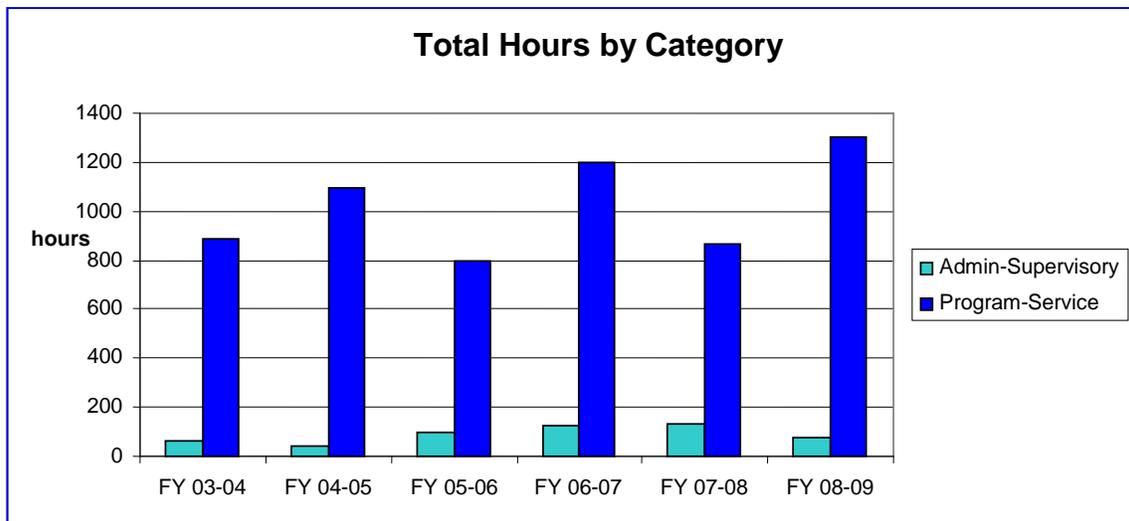
Average Length of Service:

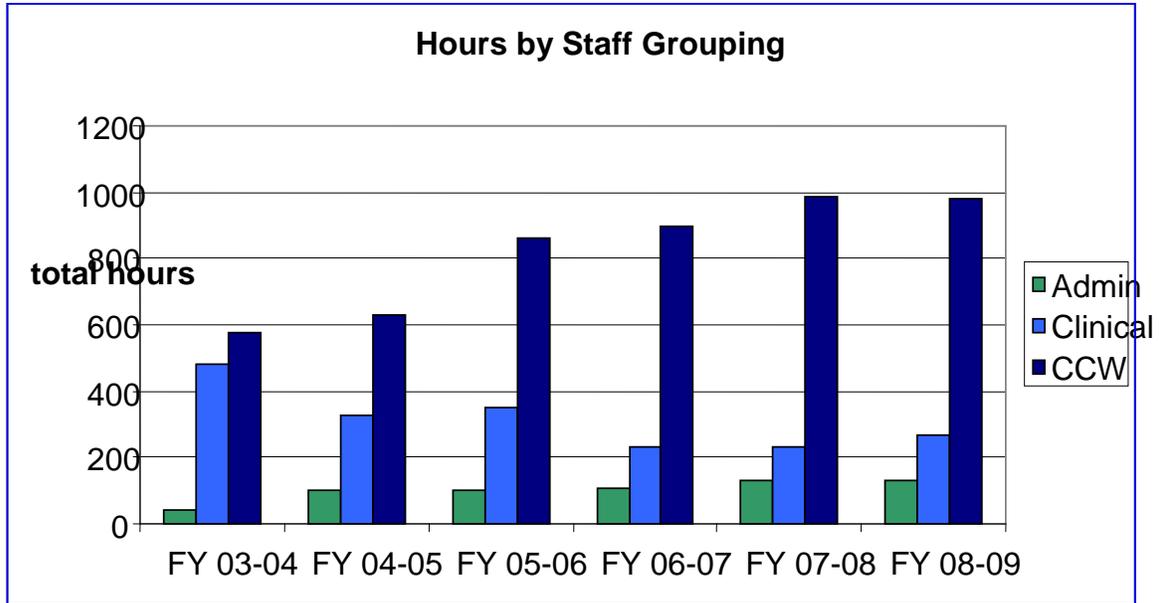
The “average” child care worker’s length of service decreased to 1.4 years in FY 08-09 as compared to 2.04 in FY 07-08. Half of the total complement of direct care staff have less than one year of service. However, the remaining pool has been employed from 2.6 years and up. Our “core” of direct care staff remains in employment. Out of the 10 direct care staff that exited in FY 08-09, 6 had less than 1 year of service (3 exiting employees were student interns mentioned earlier). Four had between 1 – 2 years of service. The Executive Director and Brooke Place Director are counted both in the administrative and clinical categories as they fulfill both functions.



Total Training Hours by Category:

Training in the administrative and supervisory areas totaled 76 hours as compared to 134 total hours being delivered in FY 07-08. This was largely due to replacing approximately 6 events during the year with an all-day event held for management staff and child care worker shift leaders. Training in the program-service category is at its highest (1,306.25 hours) due to a 32 ½ hour training in Life Space Crisis Intervention which was attended by 10 employees.





Training Hours by Staff Grouping

The Administrative category consists of the fiscal director and the administrative assistant. The Brooke Place director and executive director are in the Clinical category. The nurse is included in the child care category. Training for all categories remained just about the same when compared to total hours during FY 07-08. Average hours per employee in each group are 65.25 (administrative), 132.6 (clinical), and 115.4 (child care).

Fund Development

I. 2008-2009 FUND DEVELOPMENT GOALS

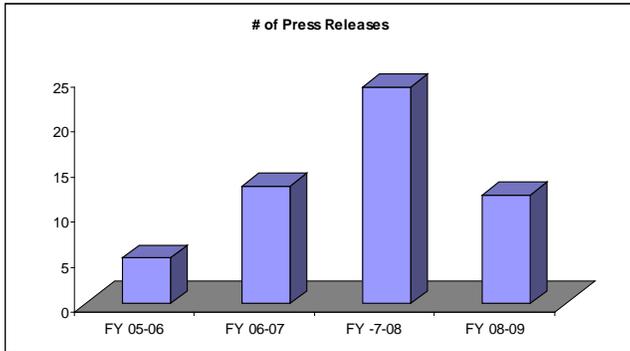
Goal 1: Continue to stay especially connected to those donors who are repeat givers.

Comment:

Family Connections tracks all donations with date given, by whom and the amount, utilizing a donor-tracking database. The agency is gratified to acknowledge that we have a growing list of individuals who contribute to our programs and services on a regular basis. It becomes and remains very important that we never fail to recognize the specific decision to contribute cash and in kind items when donors write a check to “Family Connections” or contribute items that are either needed or desired by our clients. Our open house held in September 2008 had the specific purpose of recognizes those individuals and businesses who contribute their money, time and talents in order to help us provide the best services we can. The dedication of the Evelyn Rapp Pavilion, with materials and construction all donated, provided an apt central theme to recognize the thoughtfulness of our community of stewards.

We continue our connections with donors through our education and advocacy efforts with such strategies as our newsletter, participation in community activities through speaking engagements, job fairs, Chamber of Commerce events, and our Brooke Place residents’

volunteerism with community service projects. Our hope in contacting area newspapers to publish news of our activities is to further accomplish our goal of staying connected to our donor family. We want the community to see what we're doing and we want our donors to see how their donations are being utilized. Approximately 12 press releases appeared in local newspapers (24 in 07-08, 13 in 06-05 and 5 in 05-06).



Although we feel we are meeting Goal #1, more can always be accomplished. Consequently, this goal will remain on the table during the 2009-2010 fiscal year.

Goal 2: Broaden representation on the Fund Development committee with staff/board/community volunteers, adding at least 3 additional members during 08-09.

Comment:

This goal was not met. However, our core group of committee members remains very active with excellent attendance at meetings. Presently, the committee consists of the Family Connections' board president, executive director, fiscal director, Brooke Place director, management consultant, and 3 community volunteers. Even though we did not achieve the goal, we feel that the committee is ample both in numbers and in representation. Additional representation can be better accomplished via Goal 3.

Goal 3: Develop an "auxiliary" of community volunteers who will carry out fund raising events.

Comment:

This goal was partially accomplished but neither on a formalized basis (the actual inception of a standing auxiliary) nor the scope intended. As agency fund development activities increase, the need for a stable core of volunteers to carry out the leg-work of fund raising events will be crucial.

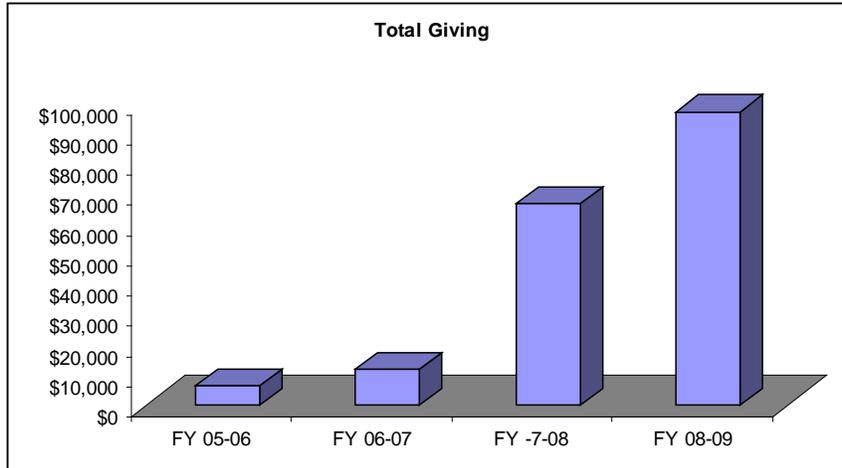
Goal 4: Raise \$50,000.

DONATION REPORT:

- 147 donation events for a total of **\$96,921.05** (includes OJJDP grant)
- \$34,835.00 cash from 53 donors
- \$1,215.00 cash from memorial and honor giving from 20 donors
- \$15,597.85 in kind from 74 donor events
- \$45,273.20 OJJDP grant

Comment:

This goal is met. Total giving has increased along with the number of individual donors.



II. SOLICITATION STRATEGIES/RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Strategy: "THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME"

GOAL: \$3,000.00
Income: \$10,294.85
 Tickets
 Raffles/Auctions/50-50
 Donations
 Donations, cash and in kind

Expenses: \$1,460.23
 Meals/Food
 Supplies
 Beverages
 Envelopes & Stamps



PROFIT \$8,834.62

The in kind donations are the crux of our proceeds from the raffles and auction. The dance is a big undertaking when one considers the time involved in planning and carrying out the pre-dance tasks as well as the dance itself. Securing volunteers for an auxiliary committee will provide further assistance to the individuals who worked very hard to make this second annual event another success. Plans are already underway for the 2010 event.

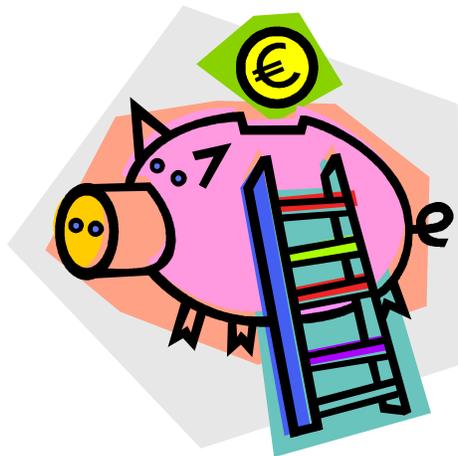
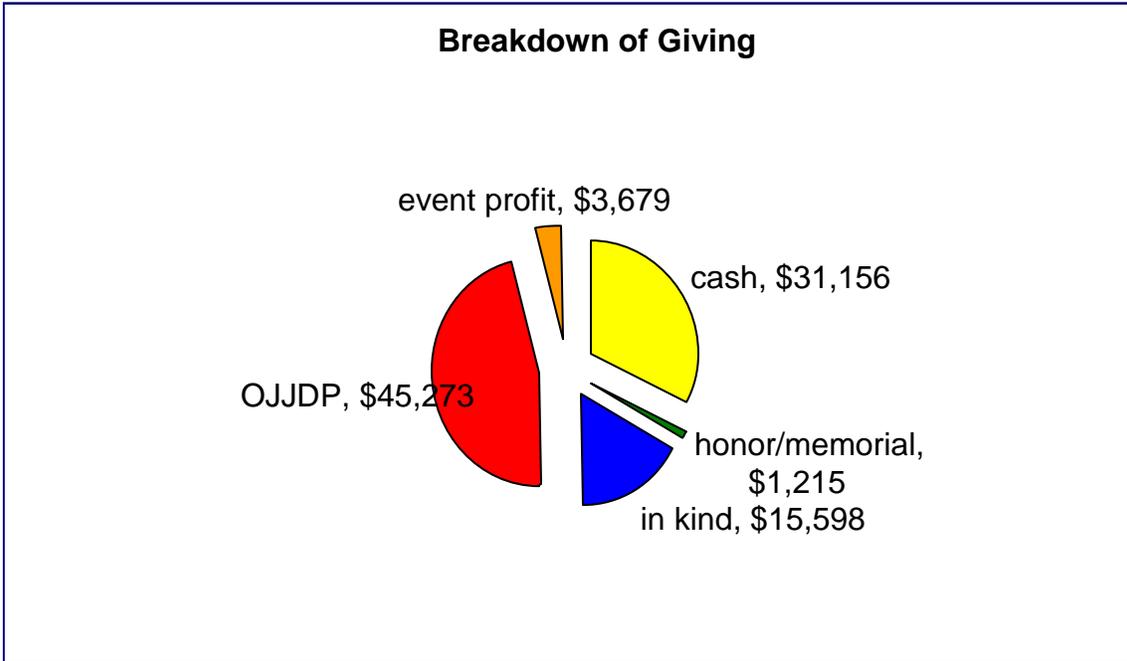
III. CONCLUSION

Our work in promoting the services of Family Connections with its out-patient clinic in Weirton and its residential facility in Colliers continues to pay off in many ways. Our donations have increased; however, and more importantly, more people know who we are and what we do.

Almost 50% of giving in 2008-2009 resulted from the OJJDP grant, which concluded at the end of this fiscal year. We will have to continue to work harder to provide choices for financial stewardship for donors if we are to achieve and surpass our \$50,000 goal for 2010. The clinic is not operating on a full-time schedule. More work needs to be done in this area. The census at Brooke Place is achieving full to almost full capacity for many months now and that is due to keeping WVDHHR workers, probation offices and judges informed about our services. The

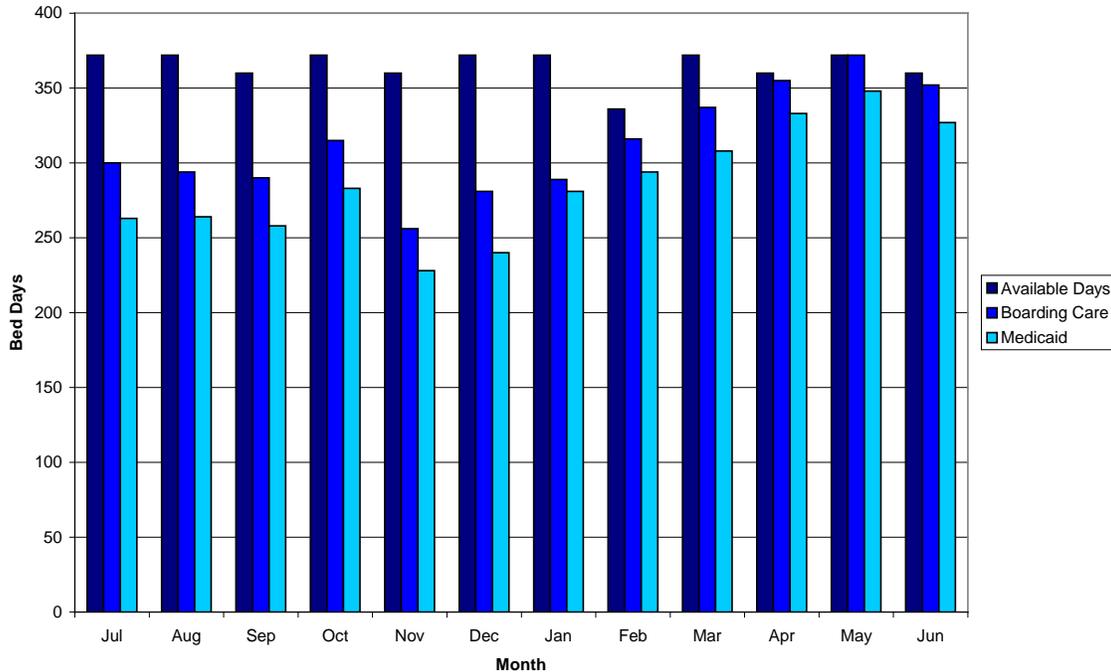
board continues to investigate the establishment of an endowment and plans to learn more about this investment for the future in 2009-2010.

We want businesses and individuals to be able to utilize our web site to make donations, so we are taking the necessary technical steps to achieve this. Even though we did not increase the number of published newsletters for 2009-2010, it is beneficial for the agency, even with the expense, to use as many opportunities as possible to “enter the homes” of our stakeholders. Even with the stressed economy, people are still looking for opportunities to give. We want to show our donors that we do excellent work, and that we are good stewards of our resources with the goal of providing the best services possible for our clients and our community.



Brooke Place

Potential v. Actual Occupancy FY 2008-2009



The potential occupancy of the group home is measured in “bed days”, i.e., the number of days in the month multiplied by the bed capacity of the group home, in this case 12. Boarding care represents the number of beds days that were actually invoiced to the Bureau of Children and Families, in other words, the number of days that beds were actually occupied by residents. Medicaid is the number of treatment days that were invoiced to the Bureau of Medical Services. In general, the boarding care and treatment days will be close, but never equal, because treatment days are not counted when residents are on home visits or in the hospital. As the chart indicates, May was the month with the highest population. (Last year it was also May; in 06-07 it was Dec.) There are 4,380 bed days each year. In 2008-09 the percentage of boarding care use was 88.7%. That is a considerable increase over 68% last year and 66% the year before. We would have to go back to 2004-05 to find 80% bed use. The target Brooke Place is still shooting for is at least 92% for the year.

A factor that seems to have impacted the resident population is the initiation of the Automated Placement Referral system. This is a web-based referral system used by DHHR to send out information on children needing out-of-home placement. A DHHR worker can send information on one child to multiple agencies or just one agency. It places providers in more direct and immediate competition for referrals, but it also presents an opportunity to receive referrals that we might not have gotten in the past. (It also has increased the number of male referrals we’ve received.) The Brooke Place director then has the chance make a contact and build the relationship. What is lost in this system is time to do a face-to-face interview with the potential resident, but we are looking at teleconferencing as one method to make that happen. Brooke Place served 21 girls last year and 24 in 2007-08.

Report from
Brooke Place Director

With twelve teenage girls in a house, there is never a dull moment. This past year has been no exception. In 2008-2009, we have seen many exciting moments and memorable times at Brooke Place.

The Weirton Medical Center Auxiliary chose Brooke Place to reap the benefits of this year's project. Entitled "Making Wishes Come True," each month, the women of auxiliary arrived at Brooke Place with a birthday cake and gifts for any resident having a birthday that month.



Of course gifts, pizza, pop and cake are always big hits with teenagers; however, the real attraction of these visits was the time spent with the members of the auxiliary. As some of our residents have no family of their own, these bonds are valuable to the girls and they look forward to visits from friends they have made in the community.



One of the ways the girls show their appreciation to a community that gives to them is to give back by offering a helping hand to local organizations.

Our residents spend at least two days a week at Kristen's Kloset. Kristen's Kloset is a local clothing closet operated by the Family of God Christian Center that accepts donations for families in need. Brooke Place residents assist in sorting and cleaning donated items and then displaying them. Some residents chose to give back to our four-legged community members by volunteering at the local animal shelter, where they helped in sorting donations, completing paperwork and walking and feeding the animals. The residents are encouraged to demonstrate generosity and compassion through community work.

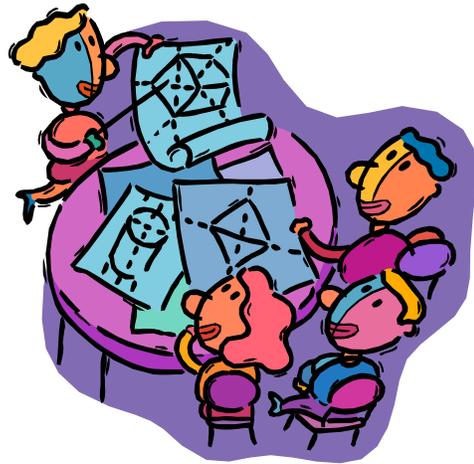
While the girls do spend time working as volunteers for local help groups, they also spend time working on their treatment goals, doing chores around the house and doing work at school. But, as we all know, sometimes, girls just want to have fun!!

Brooke Place residents also enjoy fun activities; such as going horseback riding, swimming, trips to Kennywood and to Pittsburgh Pirates games. Events like these are just plain fun, but also help the girls to learn new skills, build relationships with their peers and staff members and strengthen their social skills.

While there has been a flurry of activities for the residents, there has also been a lot going on behind the scenes.

In November 2008, the Bureau of Children and Family Services rolled out a new computerized referral system state-wide. While the Family and Child Tracking System (FACTS) has been in use by the department for some time, its sister system, FACTS+, was instituted this year in an effort to streamline the referral process for children being placed in out of home care. WVDHHR workers can now send a referral to many different agencies at the same time all over West Virginia via a secured internet website. Along with this referral for placement, comes a wide variety of information about a potential resident and their family. The system has been beneficial the department and to agencies in that it allows for more effective communication for all involved and provides more complete background information on any given child. Under the old “call and see” system, workers would call an agency they were familiar with to inquire about available beds. Calls to many agencies could be made until an opening appropriate for the child was found in an agency that could accept

the child. The FACTS+ system now allows workers to choose from all available agencies in WV. This increased our referral source awareness of Brooke Place and has helped to stabilize the census at 11-12 residents in the last 6 months of the fiscal year. Twelve residents is our capacity. The new information provided through this system is more complete than the past referral system, as the child history is entered into FACTS+ and sent along with the referral. This allows for a better continuity in a child’s care.



In our continuing efforts to provide a higher level of care, staff has participated in a number of trainings and conferences this year; including: the West Virginia Child Care Association conference/training on leadership and workplace values; the WV Youth Advocate Program training on treating adolescent victims of sexual abuse; the WV Justice Department and WV Department of Health and Human Resources cross-training on working with children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in the state of WV.

In addition to the number of trainings attended outside of the agency, Family Connections sponsored a training at Brooke Place, this spring. Staff members of Family Connections, as well as other agencies in the area, attended a week long training and received certification on “Life Space Crisis Interview.” This type of interview is a tool used by childcare providers to assist children during times of high anxiety or in stressful situations.

Also hosted by Family Connections, was the second annual “There’s No Place Like Home” dinner/dance to raise funds for the residents of Brooke Place. This year’s event took place on May 2nd, at the Weirton Holiday Inn.

Like last year’s event, this year’s dance was a success. The event garnered a great deal of support from the community and from local businesses. Despite the difficult financial times that we are all facing, community members turned out to show their financial support to the agency by purchasing a ticket for a full steak dinner catered by Undo’s Restaurant and a night of dancing with DJ Bobby LaRosa. Guests also enjoyed buying tickets for a chance auction and a 50/50 cash drawing, as well as bidding on items in a silent auction. The event went a long way toward strengthening Family Connections’ relationship with the community and in providing needed support for Brooke Place and its residents. Plans are already underway for the third annual “There’s No Place Like Home.”

This past year, 2008-2009, has been a busy year for Brooke Place residents and staff. We look forward to another successful year in 2009-2010.

