

EAC Network **QUARTERLY**

WINTER 2018

**SUFFOLK COUNTY CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER AT
THE PAT & MARY BAGNATO PLACE FOR KIDS
EARNS RE-ACCREDITATION FROM
NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE**



A quarterly publication for supporters and friends of EAC Network

 **EAC**
NETWORK
EMPOWER. ASSIST. CARE.

A Message From the President & CEO

2017 was a significant year of growth for EAC Network. Thanks to our expertise in so many fields as well as the dedicated support of our community, we were able to add several new programs to our wide-ranging list of services, including:

- **Community Re-Entry Assistance Network (CRAN)** to provide transitional case management services for individuals with severe mental illness who are reentering NYC from Rikers Island
- **Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP)**, a case management program that helps older adults remain independent in their homes by determining and arranging community-based services
- and **Fresh from the Garden**, which offers a three-step way to healthier living for seniors: nutrition education, cooking demonstrations, and fresh produce distribution

We've also seen some of our existing programs expand, including:

- **Senior Community Service Centers** in Long Beach and North Merrick, where seniors engage in a variety of activities such as socialization, recreation, health promotion, educational programs, and congregate meals
- and **Enhanced Employment Initiative** services to Nassau County, which advances education and employment opportunities for individuals involved in the criminal justice system

With these programs, we saw our staff grow to a talented team of almost 500 social workers, case managers, peer mentors, and more who work tirelessly every day to help those most at-risk in our community, whether it's a child who has been abused or someone battling addiction. And we're still growing.

So thank you. Thank you for your involvement with EAC Network, for helping us reach where we are, and for continuing to help us to grow.

Sincerely,



Lance W. Elder, President & CEO



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Holiday Happenings

Employees from **Grassi & Co.** threw a holiday party for children treated at our Child Advocacy Center. They provided food, beverages, arts and craft, a holiday singalong, and gifts to each child.



Thanks to Bob Eslick, **Kids Helping Kids By Kids Way, Inc.** delivered another huge donation of hundreds of brand new coats and winter wear for our children, which has been keeping them warm all winter.



Paypro Workforce Management Solutions hosted a toy drive at their headquarters in Hauppauge for our kids in need.



The **Estee Lauder Environmental Affairs & Safety** team volunteered to help our Nutrition Education & Food Services food pantry by packing meals for clients and preparing bags for an upcoming food drive.



Thanks to Major Chuck Kilbride, US Marines from **Toys for Tots** delivered six truckfuls of toys for our children in need, completely overflowing our conference room. Our Program Directors then hand-selected and distributed individual toys for each of the children in their programs.



Cigna Grant Provides Health & Wellness

Thanks to a **\$15,000** grant from **Cigna**, EAC Network has been able to launch a new health and wellness program to inspire healthy living and well-being among our employees. Each office is engaging in different activities to promote positive lifestyle habits.

Team members from our Hauppauge location, which is home to programs like Alternatives for Youth, Chance to Advance, Long Island Dispute Resolutions Centers (LIDRC), and Community Service, have been able to go on an outdoor excursion to exercise and discuss wellness.



Staff from our Suffolk Supervised Visitation and Project Access programs in our Ronkonkoma office

had a great time painting at Mini Monet. They explored their creative sides and designed some very impressive paintings!



The Ronkonkoma team also had a step challenge to see who could walk the most! Congratulations to winner Anges Cento, Program Counselor at Suffolk Supervised Visitation, runner up Estefania Yactayo, Senior Family Coach at Enhanced Supervised Visitation, and second runner up Anne Caplan, Program Director for Suffolk Supervised Visitation and Project Access.



Support EAC Network When Shopping Online

With online shopping becoming more and more popular for everyday and holiday needs, you can make a difference by shopping with **AmazonSmile** at no cost to you! Why use regular old Amazon when you can earn .5% of your purchases for EAC Network through **AmazonSmile**? Same products, same prices, same service, but with a purpose. Connect your account to EAC Network:

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COVER STORY

EAC Network's Child Advocacy Center Earns Re-Accreditation from National Children's Alliance

EAC Network's Suffolk County Child Advocacy Center at the Pat & Mary Bagnato Place for Kids was awarded re-accreditation by National Children's Alliance following an extensive application and site review process. As the accrediting agency for Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) across the country, National Children's Alliance awards various levels of accreditation and membership to centers responding to allegations of child abuse in ways that are effective and efficient and put the needs of child victims of abuse first. Accreditation is the highest level of membership with National Children's Alliance and denotes excellence in service provision.

Accredited CACs must undergo a re-accreditation process every five years to ensure that best practices are continually being applied. With accreditation standards being updated in 2010, re-accreditation this year reflects our commitment to providing evidence-based methods practice.

This is our third accreditation, making this our CAC's 15th year as an accredited Child Advocacy Center. In 2017, the CAC provided services to at least 379 child victims of sexual abuse in Suffolk County; approximately 75% of whom are female. Furthermore, at least 311 forensic interviews were conducted, 26 child workshops were offered within the community, and 485 individuals received victim support services.

"As an organization/team of individuals dedicated to responding to child abuse, we recognize the

importance of maintaining Accredited status from National Children's Alliance. Re-accreditation not only validates EAC Network's dedication to proven effective approaches of child abuse intervention and prevention, but also contributes to consistency across the child advocacy center movement as a whole," said Andrea Ramos-Topper, Division Director of Children & Youth Services.



Andrea Ramos-Topper with a client at the CAC

National Children's Alliance awards Accredited Membership based on a CAC's compliance with 10 national standards of accreditation to ensure effective, efficient, and consistent delivery of services to child abuse victims. Accredited Members must utilize a functioning and effective Multidisciplinary Team approach to

work collaboratively in child abuse investigation, prosecution, and treatment. National Children's Alliance also considers standards regarding a center's cultural competency and diversity, forensic interviews, victim support and advocacy, medical evaluation, therapeutic intervention, and child-focused setting.

"EAC Network is to be commended for its continued commitment to effectively serve victims of child abuse. As the national association and accrediting body for Children's Advocacy Centers across the country, our goal is to ensure that every victim of child abuse has access to high quality services that result from professional collaboration. By requiring Accredited Centers to undergo re-Accreditation every five years, we ensure that evidence-based

practices are being implemented and the highest quality of service is being provided,” remarked Teresa Huizar, Executive Director of National Children’s Alliance.

For more information about our Child Advocacy Center, visit www.eac-network.org/suffolk-county-child-advocacy or call (631) 439-0480.



It Was Her Secret: a CASA Story

Trigger warning: suicide

It was her secret. But can a six-year old really keep a secret, especially when it’s gnawing at her? Little “Angel” took quickly to her visiting volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), who visited at court direction since her mom, now removed, had threatened to kill herself and possibly everyone else. Angel and her younger brother seemed calm living with their dad in their trailer home, despite it needing a good bit of repair. But there were telltale signs. Dad cited that the pressures from mom’s behavior, as well as his intermittent employment, affected their home life.



Angel and her brother couldn’t wait to break out the crayons, colored pencils, and coloring books the CASA would bring. How little Angel loved to draw. So the CASA visited Angel at school. They talked. “Can you draw something for me?” And she did. “Can you tell me a story about it?” And she did. Tumbling out of Angel were the shadows at night that moved, her fears, the distance she now maintained at school, her lowered performance. Although dad knew Angel harbored dark thoughts, he didn’t appreciate her need to talk about them. The CASA reached out

a hand to Angel. And she took it. Eventually, the CASA’s report to the court led to formal counseling for Angel, which helped with the shadows.

As EAC Network’s Suffolk CASA Case Coordinator, I hear daily the stories of children’s lives sundered by the opioid epidemic, alcoholism, or out of control parental anger, anxiety, and fears. The children may be in foster care, with one or both biological parents or a relative, or sheltered in a respite program. Often they’ve bounced from eviction to relatives to friends to a shelter. Routine health and dental care have long ceased. They may have missed one, or even two years of schooling. Unsure and insecure, they harbor a deep hurt. Ashamed and angry, they aren’t sure whom to trust, whom to hold tight. Attorneys and caseworkers ply their craft with due diligence as best they can, protecting the legal rights and interests of parents and children, searching for solutions, while managing heavy caseloads.

The CASA volunteer, thoroughly vetted and trained, handles only one or two cases at a time. S/he spends the time listening, observing, understanding, advocating, and striving to give a voice to the child.

Angel needed someone. Someone she felt comfortable with, who would take the time to help her express her feelings in her own way. Angel needed a CASA: a caring adult in a child’s life who helps reopen pathways away from darkness.

To learn more about the CASA program, visit www.eac-network.org/court-appointed-special-advocates. In light of recent funding cuts, be a “community member who cares.” Visit www.eac-network.org/donate-now, and be sure to specify your gift to CASA. *by Howard Lerner, Case Coordinator*

#TeamEACNetwork Walks 5k and Raises \$5k



EAC Network was excited to join the Generosity Series as a charity partner for the first time this year! EAC Network staff, Board Members, and friends joined our team and walked or ran in the 5k at Eisenhower Park. Each participant raised a minimum of \$200, and we collectively raised over \$5,000 in support of our vital programs and services. We won an additional \$250 donation from Generosity from their Donation Wheel, and Allison McCormack, Administrative Assistant, was publicly recognized for being EAC Network's top fundraiser!

(Top: Kathryn Alexander, Bookkeeper; Bernadette Kehlmann, Senior Bookkeeper; Allison McCormack, Administrative Assistant; Angela Malone, Division Director of Health Services; Rachel Lugo, Division Director of Family & Vocational Services; Samantha Chukwura, Supervisor of Health Homes program; Trovana Hector, Information Services & Quality Assurance Coordinator; Tania Peterson Chandler, VP of Operations. Middle: Barbara Falanga; Hon. Anthony J. Falanga, Board Member. Bottom left: Sarah Muller, Development & Marketing Assistant; Alena Jones, Director of Development & Marketing, with Generosity staff. Bottom center: Bert Cunningham, Board Member. Bottom right: Allison McCormack, Administrative Assistant.)



EAC Network will be teaming up again this year! Contact us at (516) 539-0150 x117 or events@eac-network.org if you, your group, or someone you know would like to walk, run, or wheel as part of #TeamEACNetwork!



Staff Spotlight:

Kristen Azzopardi

What is your position?

I am a Clinical Case Manager for the Staten Island Court-Based Intervention & Resource Teams (CIRT).

Why did you choose this profession?

To be very honest, this profession fell into my lap! I was finishing my last year of college at SUNY Albany and a friend referred me to an internship at EAC Network. I fell in love with the work, and the rest is history!

How long have you been working with EAC Network?

I interned with Staten Island TASC for a month, and then I was hired as a temp for TASC through the summer. I then finished my last year of college and was hired as a Clinical Case Manager for CIRT. I've worked full-time for EAC Network for a year.

What is your favorite part of your job?

As cliché as it sounds, the best part of the job is helping others. There is nothing more satisfying than watching a client grow and develop throughout your time as a case manager. My success comes from watching others succeed, which is something that my job has given me the opportunity to do.

What is the hardest part of your job?

The hardest part of my job is separating my life from the lives of my clients. I put so much of myself into helping them overcome their hardships that leaving at 5:00 pm every day seems almost unfair to them. I guess it shows how much I love the work I'm doing, but I have to remember that I cannot lose myself in the process.

What aspect of your job do you wish people knew more about?

I wish people knew more about the programs that EAC Network offers. I see so many people whose

lives are torn apart by substance abuse, especially working within the treatment side of the criminal justice system. I wish these people knew about all the programs that are offered to get them help.

Name one goal you have for the upcoming year.

I want to go back to school part-time to get my Master's degree!

Tell us about a client who deeply influenced you and how you do your job.

My first successful client was probably the first person who influenced how I did my job. He worked so hard that when he was done he cried tears of happiness. I could never forget the feeling of hope that jumped within my soul. I wanted every single one of my clients to be a success and just live a happier life. This was the point that made me want to be the best clinical case manager I could possibly be.

Name one of your hobbies.

I love yoga! This job can be stressful, and yoga has definitely helped me throughout this year.



Kristen Azzopardi, Clinical Case Manager

Would you encourage others to go into your profession?

I would, but I would caution them to think hard about it. This profession is not for the faint of heart. It requires a lot of patience, a lot of love, and most importantly a lot of empathy.

What advice do you have for others interested in your profession?

Do not give up. Perseverance is key in a profession like this. You will have successful clients, and you will have unsuccessful clients, but that doesn't mean you give up on anyone.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

I hope to be a psychologist. I have personally struggled with mental health issues, and I hope that my experience can help to change lives.

Grant Corner

EAC Network is very proud to have received a few grants from our corporate partners recently, including **\$15,000** from **Geico** in support of Safe Start; **\$10,000** from **The MAC AIDS Fund** in support of Nutrition Education & Food Services; **\$5,000** from **Grainger** in support of Supervised Visitation, Safe Start, Safe Harbour, and Family Treatment Court, and **\$2,000** from **Investors Bank** in support of Community Guardianship.

THANK YOU, GRANTORS!



28th Annual Golf for Good Raises Over \$147,000

We hosted our 28th Annual Golf for Good outing at the prestigious Meadow Brook Club in Jericho in the fall where over \$147,000 was raised for our 70+ programs and services. In recognition of their dedication to helping people in need, Christopher Lambert of Axis Construction was honored and Senator John J. Flanagan of the New York State Senate received the Steven J. Eisman Humanitarian Award.

“We are so grateful to everyone who attended and supported our Golf for Good this year,” said Lance W. Elder, President & CEO. “We particularly want to thank our top sponsors, Axis Construction

Corporation, the Lambert family, NFP, and BWD Sports & Entertainment for their generous support.”

Proceeds from the event helped fill in our areas of greatest need, such as the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, which provides trained volunteer advocates who ensure children in foster care receive the services they deserve, with the ultimate goal to achieve permanency for the children, as well as our Long Island Parenting Institute (LIPI), which enhances outcomes for children by teaching mothers and fathers how to become confident and effective parents.

“This is all so humbling,” said Mr. Lambert in his acceptance speech. “Thank you, EAC Network, for all that you have done, and continue to do, in our community.”



A Message of Thanks

Ms. Caplan,

My name is Jen. Your agency's Supervised Visitation program recently helped reunite me with my sons, AJ and Xavier, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude.*

In fact, I was so impressed with your staff and facility that I feel compelled to let you know what a wonderful job they - and you - are doing.

When I was referred to your agency last fall, my children and I had been denied all contact with each other for over a year. When I scheduled my intake interview with Agnes, I braced for the worst. However, instead of the prickly, stark institution I had imagined, your facility in Ronkonkoma was warm, inviting, and comfortable. It is apparent that you and your staff have gone to great lengths to create a welcoming and soothing atmosphere for the families you serve. In our first meeting, Agnes clearly explained the agency's guidelines and policies and capably answered all of my questions.

On every one of my visits, I was highly impressed with the consistent courtesy, professionalism, and tact of every member of the staff. The supervisors in the room were warm yet discreet, and at no time made my children or me feel as though we were being watched.

I was also impressed with the variety of games and activities available in the visitation room. My boys' favorites were the air hockey table and Memory, but we never found ourselves with a lack of things to do.

It is clear that all of the rules and guidelines you

adhere to at the facility are in place to create as safe and comforting an atmosphere as possible for the children who come there, but the job your staff performs cannot be an easy one. I met some parents in the waiting room who were nearly total strangers to their children. While my heart breaks for these families, I am comforted to know that your agency is here to help them.



Thanks to the objective reports your agency sent to the court, the judge was pleased to restore my unsupervised visitation, and in the past few weeks we have been able to enjoy overnight visits again as well. AJ has continued the tradition he started at your facility of leaping into my arms whenever he sees me, and recently, we were able to celebrate his birthday together. I was even able to take the boys to their Little League opening day ceremonies!

Thank you again for the noble work that you do, and for helping to bring my family back together. Please extend my thanks and compliments to Agnes and the rest of your staff as well.

Most gratefully,
Jen

**Client names have been changed.*



Board Member Milestones

EAC Network Board Members were recently recognized by Lance W. Elder, President & CEO (left), and Richard Kessel, Board Chair (right), for milestone years of service. Recipients included Hon. Anthony J. Falanga, Laura L. Palker, and Bruce A. Watterson (5 years), Thomas Boerum (15 years; center), Michael Schroder (15 years/Emeritus), and Louis Grassi (30 years/Emeritus).

Community Partners

Community Partners are local businesses that team up with EAC Network to have a positive impact in our community. Together, we tackle obstacles in human services by promoting resolutions, providing accurate information and resources, and forming strong alliances that advocate on behalf of our neighbors in need.

GOLD



SILVER



BRONZE



BRONZE (cont.)



Community Partner Spotlight



Pasternack Tilker Ziegler Walsh Stanton & Romano LLP
Attorneys At Law

Pasternack Tilker Ziegler Walsh Stanton & Romano, LLP is the tough, reliable New York legal team you need for any workers compensation, Social Security, personal injury, civil service disability pension, or union member issue.

with our partners and staff; for example, many of our staff's families were affected by the recent hurricanes, so we held a clothing drive for families in need in Puerto Rico. We also support cancer organizations and a community food pantry.

The firm possesses experienced workers compensation and social security disability attorneys, including Catherine M. Stanton, Esq., senior partner, who is head of the firm's workers' compensation department, and who is also an EAC Network Board Member. Cathy recently shared why she and her firm are so dedicated to giving back to the community and to being a Community Partner.

I choose to support EAC Network because they do a lot for our community, and their beneficiaries are all ages and from all walks of life. Plus, EAC Network provides fun and rewarding opportunities to help others, including, most amazingly, the opportunity to go "Over the Edge" as well as the Community Partner program.

"At Pasternack Tilker Ziegler Walsh Stanton & Romano, LLP, we feel that there are always groups that need assistance. We are blessed to be in a position to assist others, and generally support organizations that have some personal connection

By being an EAC Network Community Partner, I am able to expose our firm to new audiences, and in doing so am still able to contribute to such a worthy organization and truly have a positive impact on our community."

Special Events

MARCH

8 Cohalan Cares for Kids
6-8pm, Suffolk County Bar Association
www.eac-network.org/cohalancares2018

MAY

8 Golf for Good
10am-8pm, Meadow Brook Club
www.eac-network.org/golfforgood2018

OCTOBER

19-20 Over the Edge
9am-5pm, Nassau Community College
www.eac-network.org/overtheedge



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Our Mission

EAC Network's mission is to respond to human needs with programs and services that protect children, promote healthy families and communities, help seniors, and empower individuals to take control of their lives.

- We **help** child victims of abuse overcome trauma.
- We **mentor** and **secure** permanent homes for youth in foster care.
- We **treat** those struggling with mental illness and addictions.
- We **feed** vulnerable, home-bound seniors and **assist** the incapacitated.
- We **train** individuals to obtain and retain employment.
- We **inspire** people to regain control of their lives and be productive again.

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WE ASSIST.
WE CARE.



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