At Mission Kids Child Advocacy Center, hope begins. The Center’s mission is to achieve healing and justice for victims of child abuse, reducing further trauma to children who have been through a traumatic event. In the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, before child advocacy centers, children who experienced sexual or physical abuse would have to tell their stories repeatedly, according to Mission Kids Associate Director Kristen O’Brien, MBA.

“Children would have to go to their local police department and, oftentimes, sit in the same type of room designed for a criminal and answer questions about their abuse,” said O’Brien. “Then, they would have to go and talk to an attorney and repeat their abuse, and then a medical professional, and so on and so forth.”

On average, a child would tell their story at least eight times just trying to get an intervention. “Can you imagine sitting in your office, turning to the person next to you and talking about your most recent sexual experience?” said O’Brien, referencing an example her colleague uses. “This is what the kids had to do for a non-healthy sexual experience, and it was just re-traumatizing them over and over again.”

The child advocacy model was born out of a need to focus more on children in the investigation of these crimes. Mission Kids is one of about 800 child advocacy centers across the country. Its focus is to move a child’s case forward for prosecution and, more importantly, perform the mental health and medical follow-up for that child so they can move on to healing faster, according to O’Brien.

“We try to bring all of those people together here to support the child so they don’t have to go to several different places,” said O’Brien.

(continued on page 2)
a message from our president

The holiday season has come and gone, bringing a new year filled with endless resolutions. There seems to be an intense motivation and determination to become a new, better version of yourself with the start of a new year. The desire to make up for lost time and give it everything you've got with a fresh start.

That energy, willpower, feeling of renewal, and empowerment is something you should channel 365 days a year, not just at the beginning of a new one. Bottle up that inspiration and drive, and always use it to propel yourself forward. The slate can be wiped clean at any time, giving you the chance to start anew and better yourself with each passing day. There are going to be times when you feel like giving up, but the desire to be the best you can — physically, mentally, and spiritually — should be a year-round goal. Let it be the drive that propels you forward, not a holiday season expectation or fad to live up to.

Take some time to compile a list of S.M.A.R.T goals for yourself that you can commit to and achieve throughout the new year. Don't overcompensate with goals that you know are unrealistic with your lifestyle and time commitments. New goals for 2017 are great, but it's the effort behind completing those goals that matters most.

Give equal time to all aspects of your well-being. Do something good for the soul and join a cause near and dear to your heart to help make a difference in your local community. There is an abundance of local initiatives in Pottstown alone that can help get you started. A recently formed initiative, the Pottstown Trauma Informed Community Connection (PTICC), focuses on helping the public recognize and respond to trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). You could be an agent of change and empower others to do the same.

This is your time — make 2017 count. Wishing all a healthy and happy New Year!

David W. Kraybill, President

(continued from page 1)

One of the major barriers, O'Brien said, is the taboo that exists around the topic. "People don't want to talk about sex in general, let alone sex that shouldn't be happening with a child," said O'Brien. "That dynamic is what keeps this so hidden and allows it to continue to happen. We're hoping that through additional community education and prevention in years to come, that taboo goes away."

In 2015, Mission Kids conducted 598 forensic interviews. In 2016, the organization provided [more than] 511. "We definitely saw an increase in reporting in 2015 due to the change in the child reporting law that came out of the Jerry Sandusky case in Pennsylvania," said O'Brien. "We saw reporting skyrocket through Child Line, the state's child welfare hotline, so it steadied out a bit this year."

From the time a report is made, law enforcement and the Office of Children and Youth are trained in “minimal facts interviews,” which ensure the child's safety without further traumatizing them or compromising the integrity of the case, according to O'Brien. The child and the non-offending caregiver would then be scheduled for an interview at the Mission Kids facility as soon as possible.

"Right now, we have two rooms that we refer to as the little kid and big kid rooms," said O'Brien. "Both are decorated in a way that's comforting, age-appropriate and certainly not something you would see a criminal interviewed in — more like a doctor's office or a day care. We have murals on the wall, colorful rugs, comfy chairs, etc."

While the child is interviewed by a forensic interviewer, the multidisciplinary team (made up of professionals directly involved in the investigation) is in a separate room to observe the interview via recording equipment.

"The child comes in through a different door where they haven't seen a police officer with a gun on their hip," said O'Brien. "The children don't even need to know that they are here."

Depending on how the interview goes and if there is a disclosure, the team that watched the interview will bring the non-offending caregiver back to a meeting room to walk them through the disclosure, according to O'Brien.

"At that point, the child is back in the waiting room hanging out with our case coordinator while the non-offending caregiver is meeting with the team," said O'Brien. "If there is a disclosure and enough evidence to bring forth charges, the family advocate will walk the family member through the next steps, because the legal process can be really confusing."

Mission Kids also has a network of mental health providers in Montgomery County that family advocates can refer clients to, such as Creative Health Services, Inc. in Pottstown.

“We have very specific requirements for our mental health partners,” said O'Brien. “We are an accredited child advocacy center and have to meet certain standards. The mental health standards talk about evidence-based treatments that are proven to help children that have been victims of trauma, so we only refer to partners that have met our accreditation requirements.”

(continued on page 3)

“All of that discussion on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the domino effect it can have on one life, then a family group, and then a community,” said O’Brien. “It’s just such a ripple effect, that if we can intervene earlier and in a different way, it could truly change the world.”
One of the most important components of a child’s visit to Mission Kids is scheduling a medical exam at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Mission Kids works exclusively with CHOP and Dr. Philip V. Scribano, DO, MSCE, one of the nation’s leading experts in child abuse examinations, according to O’Brien.

“Studies show that a very critical part of the process is when a child has a medical exam, and is told by a doctor that they’re okay and don’t look any different,” said O’Brien.

Before they leave Mission Kids, every child, no matter their age, is offered a teddy bear and a book if they would like one. “The stuffed animals and books go very quickly,” said O’Brien. “We offer every child and family a snack and water when they’re with us, so we’re always doing drives for snacks.”

The organization has shifted toward bringing in gift card donations for these items to continue providing healthy snacks for their clients to enjoy. “What we’ve found is that many healthy snacks don’t have a long shelf life, so things were expiring and we don’t have a lot of storage space,” said O’Brien. “We’ve also been doing some drives for Weis, Acme, or Walmart gift cards to be able to provide the snacks and water.”

When it comes to being trauma informed, O’Brien believes the alignment between Mission Kids and the Pottstown Trauma Informed Community Connection (PTICC) is important.

“All of that discussion on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and the domino effect it can have on one life, then a family group, and then a community,” said O’Brien. “It’s just such a ripple effect, that if we can intervene earlier and in a different way, it could truly change the world.”

O’Brien said some clients and even supporters of Mission Kids believe the organization is a part of county government. “We are a free-standing, non-profit organization that through funders, like Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation and so many others, is able to do this good work,” said O’Brien. She also commended Pottstown on its work from a social services perspective.

“I really hope to see what Pottstown’s doing replicated in some of the other jurisdictions that we support,” said O’Brien. “It’s attacking a problem from so many different perspectives and is just so important.”

Together we can…

• Make Pottstown an even better place to form strong connections, experience belonging, put down roots, and blossom.
• Recognize, respond to, and reduce the struggles that kids and adults face every day.

Register for the next PTICC Community Partner Meeting!

When: January 25, 8:30-11 a.m.
Where: Montgomery County Community College
101 College Drive, The Community Room
Pottstown, PA 19464

To further that community connection and network of support, the entire Pottstown Police Department (PPD) attended a “Trauma 101” training specifically designed for them. Kirsten Freitag Murray, Director of Development and Public Relations at Creative Health Services, shared that the conversation started in the Training and Research Work Group, and grew around the PTICC Steering Committee table. Everyone was enthusiastic about the PPD receiving the same definitions and language around trauma that the community has.

“This idea became a reality through Captain Thomas’ participation on the PTICC Steering Committee and the relationship that Creative Health Services has developed with the police department through years of collaboration,” said Murray. “That relationship began and strengthened with the work of Jena Stoltzfus, MSW, LSW, our Police Liaison and Director of SAFE (Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention work), and of course, through the work of our CEO and Clinical Director, Andrew Trentacoste, PsyD, MBA. It has been impressive to watch Captain Thomas’ knowledge and passion grow around this vital topic as he serves on the PTICC Steering Committee.”

From the beginning of this work around childhood trauma, Trentacoste, Stoltzfus, and Murray represented Creative Health Services on the Steering Committee. Murray is currently the chair of PTICC’s Communications and Messaging and Co-chair of the Training and Research Work Groups.

(continued on page 4)
“There was a lot of enthusiasm from the Steering Committee. As I met with Chief F. Richard Drumheller and Cpt. Thomas, they saw the benefit of creating common language and definitions around trauma. Then we started talking about logistics,” said Murray. “They both worked really hard to identify the dates and make this something that department members would attend as a part of their professional development.”

For Murray, the training was not only a professional passion, but also a personal one. “I am the daughter of a cop, so I grew up in the police culture. I understand the stressors on the family, especially the constant stressors on my dad as a police officer, and how that affects your overall life and mindset — because I have lived it,” said Murray.

Officers, detectives, community response unit team members, etc. from the Pottstown Police Department participated in five “Trauma 101” trainings, which covered the definition of trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences, what happens to the developing brain when exposed to trauma, the impact of unresolved trauma, and connecting a child/family to needed services at the end of a call.

Led by two facilitators from the Institute for Family Professionals, the training was a great step in talking about the emotional and sometimes long-lasting aspects of exposure to trauma. “When most of us, including police officers, hear the word ‘trauma,’ we think of physical trauma — that’s our natural instinct,” said Murray. “Officers respond to and manage complicated and stressful situations, and do their best to make sure everyone lands in a safe place when all is said and done. Cpt. Thomas and Jena Stoltzfus both strongly agree that a primary goal of this training is to create a pattern that consistently leads an officer’s thinking to that last step — connection to services — any time it is relevant.”

Murray said members of the department brainstormed on the traumas that they witness during their shifts, serving as a connective activity. “The first thing was to clarify we are not necessarily talking about physical trauma,” said Murray. “We are talking about emotional trauma, chronic stress, and the physical and emotional implications of that over the life span. That’s a critical distinction.”

In addition to the long-term outcomes of unresolved ACEs, topics covered during the training focused on the point of view of children present at a call they respond to — and connecting families to services when possible. The TED Talk “How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime” by Nadine Burke Harris was also instrumental in the training based on the post-training feedback.

“The first thing was to clarify we are not necessarily talking about physical trauma,” said Murray. “We are talking about emotional trauma, chronic stress, and the physical and emotional implications of that over the life span. That’s a critical distinction.”
PMRPC Welcomes New Regional Recreation Coordinator

In October 2016, Michael Lane began his tenure as regional recreation coordinator of the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee (PMRPC), replacing Justin Keller.

“As the new regional recreation coordinator, I plan to assist the members of the PMRPC, build upon the foundation of work that was established by the former recreation coordinator, and improve the wide range of recreation opportunities that currently exist in the region,” said Lane.

Lane envisions accomplishing this by guiding the design and implementation of recreation projects, coordinating funding options, fostering partnerships with businesses and other non-profits, and informing residents and tourists of the various recreation resources available for them to enjoy.

“I am impressed with the institutions and programs that have been established to help residents maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle by inviting them to recreate and interact with the outdoors in as many different ways as possible,” said Lane.

Meet Lori!

In November 2016, the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation (PAHWF) welcomed Lori Reinhart Musson to its board of directors.

A resident of Pottstown for most of her life, Musson says volunteering and supporting the community has always been important to her. She believes one should take care of their home and do whatever they can to keep it healthy and strong.

“Being a part of an outstanding organization like PAHWF provides a great opportunity to give back to the community,” said Musson.

Having spent her 35-year career as a marketing professional and business development strategist for Fortune 500 companies, as well as a consultant, Musson will serve on the Foundation’s Marketing/Communications Committee.

“I look forward to sharing my brand positioning skills to help the community become more familiar with the Foundation — what it stands for, what it does, and how it can help,” said Musson.

Even as the owner of a relatively new and growing business, Eleanor Russell Ltd., Musson always makes time for her health.

“My husband and I make a point of preparing healthy meals at home, and we take brisk walks through our neighborhood each evening with our Basset Hound,” said Musson. During warmer weather, Musson also plays tennis and rides her bike 30 miles per week. She even plays ice hockey in a mixed-gender league as a right wing.

“It’s invigorating and tremendous fun,” said Musson.

To others seeking to lead a healthier lifestyle, Musson recommends setting reasonable goals and always keeping your eye on the ball.

“When you eat right and get some exercise in, you feel better, look better, and think better — what’s not to like about that?” said Musson. “It’s a total win-win!”

She is an active member of the Board of Directors for Pottstown Rotary Club, and the President of the Board of Trustees for First United Methodist Church.

SAVE THE DATE

for the following 2017 contests!

HOME GARDEN CONTEST
MARCH TO JULY 2017:
What: Grow for it! Beginner and experienced gardeners alike are invited to dabble in the art of gardening and compete for cash prizes. Learn more about what it takes to grow a garden and help beautify your communities with your entries. More details to come!

ON YOUR PARK, GET SET, GO!™
JULY 2017:
What: A month-long race in which local parks compete to win grant funds toward park improvements. Stay tuned for more information on how you can support your local park this summer!
As Director of SAFE and the Police Liaison at Creative Health Services, Stoltzfus works alongside the department, reviewing all domestic violence reports that come into the Borough and helping navigate victims to necessary services.

“Sometimes I’ll go on an outreach call to victims with the police department, and lots of times I’m doing crisis calls with them,” said Stoltzfus. “They’ll talk to me about a mental health case, and I’ll go out with them to offer support and services to local mental health providers and crisis services.”

Stoltzfus said the police see trauma every single day, but may not recognize it in some cases.

“The department just participated in emotional survivors for law enforcement classes not even a year ago, where they recognized their own trauma, how it affects them from seeing things on the street, and how it affects their families,” said Stoltzfus. “They do have awareness. It’s just not always front and center.”

The more children are exposed to trauma, such as domestic violence or violence in the community, the more they see. And families don’t know how to react to it, Stoltzfus explained. Plus, she said trauma can happen in any family.

“Overcoming ACEs, moving on from your traumatic experiences, and developing into a healthier member of our society are not solely the work of professionals,” said Trentacoste. “It’s the work of communities. In Pottstown…connection matters. It’s the work of our community.”

For more information on how you can get involved and recognize, respond to, and reduce trauma, visit www.pottstownmatters.org.

Meet John!

John Foster joined the Foundation’s board of directors in October 2016 and will serve on the Strategic Planning Committee. “The rewarding part to me is the opportunity to be a part of an organization that causes cultural changes,” said Foster.

Foster has over thirty years of industrial experience after a successful technical career at Cabot Corporation. Now retired, Foster serves on the board for the Foundation for Pottstown Education, serves as Vice President of the Board of Operation Inspiration, and is a member of the Bethel Community Church of Pottstown. He’s also been with Toastmasters International for 50 years as the founder and past president of the Bethel and Pottstown Community Toastmasters club.

Foster has a passion for early childhood development. “I grew up with the old biblical quotation that, ‘If you give a person a fish, they can be fed for a day,’” said Foster. “But if you teach them to fish, they can be fed for a lifetime.’ And that happens in early childhood.’”

For his own health and wellness, Foster started running after a health issue at age 48. “My first race was a five-mile, United Way race here in Pottstown,” said Foster. “Since then, I’ve put on over 50,000 miles, and I’ve run the Boston Marathon three times.” Foster also enjoys yoga, biking, walking, and going to the fitness center.

To others seeking a healthier lifestyle, Foster suggests making fitness and wellness a part of your routine. “I think the most important thing, especially as we age, is a healthy attitude. Look for benefits. They will motivate you to continue,” said Foster. “I would also recommend learning more about the body and the mind, and their relationship to one another.”

In his spare time, Foster likes to play games with friends, travel, and learn about Black history.

“He has been married to his wife, Lillie, for 56 years. They have three children and three grandchildren.
Meet Ashia!

The Foundation welcomed Ashia Cooper back to its board of directors in October 2016. In her current term, she will serve on the Foundation’s Impact Committee.

“I jumped at the chance because of all the wonderful work that the Foundation does,” said Cooper. “It is on the cutting edge of initiatives that promote health and wellness in the area.”

For Cooper, the most rewarding part is the impact the Foundation has on the greater community. “The Foundation supports programs that help to propel and progress the area forward,” said Cooper. “It also has a huge influence on the education of community members in terms of health and wellness.”

Cooper has an extensive background in education and believes that everyone, no matter their profession, has a role to play in educating their community.

“I think that my perspective from working in school districts can be beneficial,” said Cooper. “My knowledge of child development and familial systems can integrate and identify programs that will impact families in a positive way.”

To help clear her thoughts and focus on the day, Cooper takes a brisk walk each morning. “I also like to exercise deep breathing, because I feel health and wellness is not only taking care of your physical self, but it’s also taking care of your mental health,” said Cooper.

To others seeking to lead a healthier lifestyle, Cooper suggests starting small. “I think it’s important for you to set goals and then work to incrementally achieve them.”

In her spare time, she enjoys traveling (she once rode a camel in Turkey!) and loves to cook.

“I love to make pasta,” said Cooper. “It’s a great way to integrate some of those veggies that many kids don’t like because you can chop them up small and make it into a nice sauce.”

Most of Cooper’s community involvement centers on her children and church, but she looks for opportunities to get more involved.

PAHWF Recognized for Regional Planning

On October 19, the Foundation received the regional planning award at the 2016 Economic Development Luncheon presented by the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce and Pottstown Memorial Medical Center. Montgomery County Planning Commission’s Donna Fabry also accepted a regional planning award on behalf of the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee (PMRPC), as did Justin Keller, for his work in the region as the former regional recreation coordinator.

From left to right: Fabry, Keller, Kraybill, and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Regional Advisor, Drew Gilchrist.

Consolidated Statements of Financial Position

June 30, 2016 and 2015

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Fall 2016 Grant Round

The Foundation seeks grant proposals consistent with our identified mission of improving health outcomes in the Pottstown region. Within our mission, we have established priorities our grants are required to serve.

The Fall 2016 grant round includes 39 grants totaling $945,786, awarded to non-profit organizations, schools, and municipalities. These grants are funded according to the following priorities:

**PRIORITY #1: Healthy Behaviors - General**

There were no requests for Priority #1 during this grant round.

**PRIORITY #1A: Healthy Behaviors – Schools**

Promoting healthy living through nutrition, activities, and programs in public and private schools to reduce obesity and encourage healthy living. Three grants were awarded, totaling $29,361.

- Montgomery County Community College Foundation: Dental Sealant Project
- Montgomery Early Learning Centers: Pottstown Playground Project
- The Pennsylvania State University: After-school and Summer 4-H Programs at Park Springs Apartments

**PRIORITY #1B: Healthy Behaviors – Parks**

Improving parks, programming, and the built environment to increase access to physical activity. 10 grants were awarded, totaling $346,900.

- Amity Township Athletic Club: Replacement of overhead lighting at pool complex
- Boyertown Area Branch - Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA: Boyertown Community Pool Renovations
- Boyertown Rotary Foundation: Pickle Ball Courts (3)
- Pottsgrove Soccer Club Inc.: Everybody Scores 2016
- Pottstown Athletic Club: Fitnesstown USA II
- Pottstown Downtown Improvement District Authority: Pottstown FARM
- Preservation Pottstown Inc.: Mosaic CLT Community Gardens Initiatives
- Trinity Evangelical Congregational Church: God's Community Garden
- YWCA Tri-County Area: Capacity-Building Matching Grant
- YWCA Tri-County Area: Phase 1 Strategic Plan Implementation

**PRIORITY #1C: Healthy Behaviors – Networks**

Creating and promoting social networks involving healthy living. Seven grants were awarded, totaling $160,500.

- ArtFusion: Beech Street Factory - Community Programs
- Centro Cultural Latinos Unidos Inc: Schuylkill River Greenway & Fun
- Developmental Enterprises Corporation/Pottstown Training Center: Healthy Eating, Healthy Living
- Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities: Promoting Health and Stability in Our Community
- Schuylkill River Athletic Club: Junior Dragon Warriors - C.R.E.W. Community Recreational Water athletics program
- Wellness Council of Boyertown: Supporting Health and Wellness in our Community
- Family Services of Montgomery County: AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) for the Pottstown Office of Family Services of Montgomery County

**PRIORITY #2: Health Access**

Funding learning opportunities for physical and emotional health. 12 grants were awarded, totaling $259,865.

- Camphill Village Kimberton Hills: Aging in Community
- Carson Valley Children’s Aid: Women’s Voices/Healthy Choices
- Child Advocacy Center of Montgomery County, d/b/a Mission Kids: Fostering Resiliency through Family Advocacy
- Child, Home & Community: Pottstown Area Pregnant & Parenting Initiative
- Family Services of Montgomery County: Building Resilience Among Young Parents
- Health Care Access: Health Care Access Programs
- Laurel House: Community Counseling
- Maternity Care Coalition: Early Head Start (Pottstown)
- Pennsylvania State University Philanthropic Fund: Dining with Diabetes
- TriCounty Active Adult Center: Prime Time Health - Helping older adults live longer, healthier, more independent lives
- Triskeles Foundation: Food For Thought (FFT)
- Visiting Nurse Association Community Services, Inc. (VNA): Personal Navigator Program with Expanded Legal Support

**PRIORITY #3: Strengthen Non-Profits**

Funding learning opportunities and strategic planning to strengthen non-profits. Seven grants were awarded, totaling $149,160.

- Child, Home & Community: Capacity Building Technology Upgrade
- Helping To Inspire Positive and Healthy Opportunities for Progress: Board Training and Strategic Planning
- Operation Inspiration: Bulldog Program
- Pottstown Area Police Athletic League: Administrative Operations & Sports Complex Advancement
- Pottstown Public Library: Engaging Donors and Stakeholders Using Communication and Development Best Practices
- Royersford Outreach, Inc.: General Operating Funds for Building and Program
- TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation Inc.: Operating Grant for TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Worksite Wellness Initiative

152 E. High St., Suite 500
Pottstown, PA 19464
Phone: 610-323-2006
Fax: 610-323-0047
www.pottstownfoundation.org