



Understanding Trauma and Spreading Hope:

A Primer on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

eBook

The following is an excerpt from our recently released eBook, "Understanding Trauma and Spreading Hope: A Primer on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)," created with Creative Health Services, Inc.

What's the Story?

Do you ever catch yourself judging other people's behaviors? Do you shake your head when a parent screams profanity at an already crying child? Or wonder aloud when you read about yet another teen caught using drugs or alcohol while skipping school? Or ask "Why can't my co-worker ever get to work on time?" Unfortunately, it's common for us to judge these situations when we don't know the whole story or understand the context.

Our typical reaction is, "What's wrong with that person?" because it's hard to put ourselves in someone else's shoes. However, when we witness these behaviors and don't know the whole story, it's important to recognize that surface behaviors could be the result of something deeper and unseen.

As Joe Foderara, LCSW, BCD, challenges us, we should change the question to, "What happened to that person?" or "What is going on in their life?" because these troubling behaviors could be the result of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?

"Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), also known as childhood trauma, are events or series of events that involve a threat to one's physical or emotional well-being, or are overwhelming, deeply distressing, alarming, fearful, or terrorizing. It leaves one feeling helpless; changes the way a person understands him or herself, others and the world; and changes one's neurological landscape." -Pottstown Trauma Informed Community Connection website.

To continue reading, visit <http://bit.ly/2sUG5pm>

Continue to page 2 to learn about PAHWF grantees who provide services and programs to combat trauma in our region.

a message from our president



As we learn more about trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), it's vital to continue educating ourselves and the people we know as to its effects on our health, well-being and overall ability to thrive in life.

Connection matters. Belonging matters. ACEs matter. Your story matters.

These messages of hope and connectivity championed by the Pottstown Trauma Informed Community Connection (PTICC) are reminders of a community working together in the stand against trauma.

The Foundation is proud to have partnered with PTICC and Creative Health Services to produce the eBook you see on the cover of this publication in order to help raise awareness, understand trauma and spread hope. It is necessary to equip the community to be able to recognize, respond to and reduce the struggles brought about by trauma. Of the original 17,000 ACE study participants, 64% reported at least one ACE and 12.4% reported four or more. The more ACEs you have, the greater the risk for chronic disease, mental illness, violence and being a victim of violence. Read these facts and more in our eBook linked on Page 1.

In the pages that follow, you'll learn about a few of the Foundation's grantees who provide services and programs related to combating trauma. Our hope is that you will take this information to better understand and help yourself or someone you know. I encourage you to get involved and attend community meetings and trainings to explore people and your neighbors that are affected by ACEs. You'll learn something new each time as the research and data continue to evolve and help us better relate to people that we serve.

Let's deepen our understanding of the impact of ACEs on people in our region so we can better serve friends and neighbors in Pottstown and the tri-county area. None of us need to feel alone: we can work together on our shared ACEs and step toward wholeness.

David W. Kraybill, President

Our grantees are doing great work, especially helping those affected by trauma and ACEs. We've included brief snapshots of select grantees and the services they provide to help break the cycle.



Laurel House is a comprehensive domestic violence agency, providing services that victims of domestic violence may need to have happy and safe lives free from abuse. Its mission it to advocate for and empower those impacted by domestic violence by providing crisis intervention, safe haven, supportive programs and resources. They also strive to advance social change through preventative education and community training and collaboration to foster a coordinated response to domestic abuse.

"Two of our major resources are our emergency shelter and hotline (1-800-642-3150), both of which are available 24/7," said Monetary Donations/Third Party Events Coordinator Liz Lyons. "Victims can call for anything from, 'I'm in imminent danger right now; I need to get to your shelter' to 'I'm in this situation, and I'm not really sure what to do' to get more information."

In addition to emergency housing, the agency offers transitional housing for clients who aren't ready to move out on their own or don't know their next step. There, clients can stay for up to two years while they look for employment and take the steps to fully support themselves. Clients can pay rent based on their income to get used to being able

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Created in 1991 to ensure women and children have access to healthcare, Maternal and Child Health Consortium (MCHC) of Chester County ensures that families start healthy, stay healthy and succeed in school. It empowers families to build a healthier and brighter future for their children by overcoming the social and environmental barriers that lead to poor health conditions in our community. MCHC's mission is to improve maternal and child health through the collaborative efforts of individuals, providers and policy makers. Its programs serve mainly low-income families, helping them obtain healthcare, health insurance and health education while also providing education on early childhood development, according to Executive Director Milena Lanz.

1. Healthy Start Program: This home visiting program offered in Coatesville, Kennett Square, Phoenixville, West Chester and Pottstown aims to enroll pregnant moms within the first trimester of pregnancy to ensure they have access to healthcare and prenatal care. MCHC sets up the first appointment for these expectant mothers; helps them apply for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition program; and assists them in collecting all the necessary documents to apply for health insurance. Once the baby is born, MCHC works with the whole family until the child is two years old, providing child development education using "Parents as Teachers," an evidence-based model curriculum.

2. Family Benefits Program: Helps individuals apply for health insurance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Services are provided at the West Chester site and other agencies around the county.

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The YWCA Tri-County Area (YWCA), located in Pottstown, is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

It provides gender-specific programming related to health and wellness, as well as character and leadership development. The organization is focused on the importance of healthy living in order to be one's best self, including mental health, said Youth Program Manager Kelly Grosser.

"Through our initial assessments and conversations with our kids, we are able to start identifying needs and perhaps suspicions of ACEs and/or trauma," said Grosser. "We're certainly addressing the issues and connecting students with resources if it's beyond the scope of work that we do."

For 10 years, the YWCA's Healthy Pathways Program (HPP) has educated and empowered girls on all topics related to health. It currently offers HPP programming for five different age groups across seven different locations at its King St. location in Pottstown, local middle schools and housing developments.

In addition, the YWCA offers a large after-school population of children ages kindergarten through sixth grade the opportunity to try new, healthy foods via the Fun Food Friday program.

"We have the wonderful gift of serving children outside the space where they are struggling just to look in the mirror or to exist safely at home," said Grosser. "We move with them and we talk nutrition and



eat well with them, but then we're really looking at the whole child, and I think that's a unique opportunity that we get."

The YWCA also offers advocacy programs in the community, such as its Week Without Violence campaign, in which staff members visit local schools in the Pottstown, Pottsgrove and Owen J. Roberts districts to talk about violence in a variety of forms, but in particular, teen dating violence.

"What comes out of that is often a much bigger story of what they've witnessed or the way they live or what's happening in their homes," said Grosser. "We've created a program that allows us to facilitate full or partial school assemblies and bring in other community agencies and experts such as domestic violence survivors."

Students can anonymously text questions and comments during the assemblies. Entries are passed on to the speakers so they can address the larger population and answer those confidential questions. Educational video clips are also incorporated so students can watch and respond.

"It gets the conversation started," said Grosser. "We also help to coordinate counseling support services as needed after the assemblies in coordination with the guidance office."

Additionally, the YWCA offers a Stand Against Racism program in the schools, which creates opportunities for students to have conversations about their experiences with racism and connects them with resources. Its vision is to empower children, youth, families, and communities to learn, grow, take a stand, and advocate for racial justice and civil rights, women and girls' empowerment and economic advancement, and women and girls' health and safety.

Chief Mission Impact Officer Sheri McDonald said the organization seeks to learn how ACEs and racism align and the subsequent trauma that arises as a result.

"We strive to give those we serve a voice and to feel comfortable with having those conversations that they may not otherwise have when dealing with educators that have implicit biases and that have already made a judgement about me before I've sat in a chair," said McDonald. "That speaks to my ACEs, to my success and to my future."

To learn more, visit <http://www.ywcatricountyarea.org>





Meet Danny!

In July 2017, the Foundation welcomed Danny Aaron to its board of directors. A firm believer in education, foremost in the classroom, but secondarily in the home, church, and community, Aaron believes serving on the Foundation board provides a holistic approach to educating youth via training and exposure to numerous offerings in the community.

"Not only interacting with a diverse board, but also the privilege of meeting and working with the community liaisons who invest their time and energy to promote the importance of health and wellness are great rewards," said Aaron. "Further, being able to help groups and organizations promote sound activities and events in the spirit of good health is also paramount."

Aaron is the plant manager for Dana Incorporated's Pottstown facility and will serve on the Foundation's Grants Committee of the board.

"Life has afforded me immeasurable opportunities and experiences, some atypical of my fellow board members, that allow me to view situations centrally and circumferentially," said Aaron. "I think key decision-making should be made by ones who can relate to the environment that they support."

To support his own health and wellness, Aaron credits daily exercise and spiritual growth.

"I maintain a healthy lifestyle of exercise, diet and sound decision-making, which I think is sometimes overlooked in the scope of 'healthy' living," said Aaron.

In his spare time, he enjoys motivational speaking, cars, fashion and most importantly, spoiling his grandkids.

A native of Sandusky, Ohio, Aaron uses his pride in his upbringing to help improve wherever he lives.

"As a youth I grew up surrounded by opportunity, and I want today's youth to have greater offerings than I did."

Board Retirements

As of June 30, 2017, three of the Foundation's board members, Art Green, Jim Corum and Kerri Pidcock-Lester, have concluded their terms and retired from the board.

"On behalf of the Foundation's board and staff, we thank Art, Kerri and Jim for their years of service and wish them all the best in their future endeavors," said Foundation President Dave Kraybill.



Art Green held the title of Board Chair from July 2014-June 2017. In his nine years on the board, he served on the Executive, Strategic Planning, Marketing/Communications, Grants and Impact Committees.



Kerri Pidcock-Lester served on the board for six years, sitting on both the Grants and Nominating Committees.



Jim Corum served on the board for three years, offering his expertise on the Nominating and Marketing/Communications Committees.



24 hours of giving for good

On Oct. 17, the TriCounty Community Network (TCN) kicked off The Amazing Raise, a one-day giving challenge for nonprofits in the Tri-County Area.

If you missed it, you can still give to your favorite nonprofit by visiting <https://tcnetwork.org/the-amazing-raise/>.

Thank you for supporting local organizations!





Meet Jeff!

The Foundation welcomed Dr. Jeff Sparagana to its board of directors in July 2017. Sparagana will serve on the Marketing/Communications and Strategic Planning Committees. For the past 23 years, he has served in various capacities in the Pottstown School District (PSD), most recently retiring as superintendent of schools.

"Wellness, healthy living, exercise have always been a part of who I am," said Sparagana.

Sparagana was also the senior administrator for PSD's community-based school readiness initiative - PEAK (Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness) since its inception in 2005. In the fall of 2014, he initiated steps with PEAK to convene a community-based trauma informed task force—Pottstown Trauma-Informed Community Connection (PTICC).

"When you think about being trauma-informed and understanding what has happened to people, you're talking about individuals working independently and oftentimes getting nowhere, versus a community engaged together in a culture of understanding of how trauma impacts people."

To support his own health and wellness, Sparagana enjoys a two-and-a-half mile walk with his dogs every morning, in addition to rowing three miles on his Concept2 rowing machine several times a week.

"My wife and I really enjoy cooking and have evolved toward cleaner living from an eating perspective," Sparagana said. "I'm Italian, so pasta is my life. I've started eating spaghetti squash, using any of the sauces that we typically make with traditional pasta, and it's really good."

Contest Updates

On Your Park, Get Set, Go!®:

The challenge was 12 parks in one month—and our parKticipants rocked it! Congratulations to our 2017 winners who won grant funds for improvements to their parks.

HEALTHIEST PARK PRIZE:

The park that received the greatest number of visits by the conclusion of the competition.

1st PLACE: Brown Street Park, Spring City Borough - \$5,000 recreation grant for improvements.

RUNNER-UP: Frederick Friendship Playground, Upper Frederick Township - \$2,500 recreation grant for improvements.

ACTIVITY CHALLENGE PRIZE:

The municipality that collectively cast the most number of ticketed votes regionally by the conclusion of the competition.

1st PLACE: Heather Place Park, Upper Pottsgrove Township - \$5,000 recreation grant for improvements.

RUNNER-UP: Brown Street Park, Spring City Borough - \$2,500 recreation grant for improvements.



Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute:

A two-day, annual conference that brings together educators from across the region to learn new and innovative ways to adopt physical activity as a learning tool in the classroom.

What did HBHM 2017 look like?

165 educators attended

30 organizations represented

12 area school districts represented



Home Garden Contest:

Together with MOSAIC Community Land Trust and Building a Better Boyertown, the Foundation set out to encourage and support gardening for both beginners and experienced gardeners via the 5th Annual Home Garden Contest. This initiative contributes to the physical and mental health of residents, promoting a sense of community among the residents in the Pottstown and Boyertown boroughs. Visit homegardencontest.com for a list of 2017 winners and photos of entries.



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Contest Updates (continued)



Wellness Achievement Celebration:

In the 2016-17 school year, 23 school buildings competed in the Medical University of South Carolina's (MUSC) Wellness Checklist Competition in its third year of existence in the region. This encompassed four public school districts and five private schools.

The contest aims to reduce childhood obesity through innovative wellness initiatives in schools. Each school receives a checklist that serves as an action guide for participants, implementing evidence-based strategies to improve overall school health environment, leading them to make nutrition and physical activity changes. Of the 23 participating schools, 19 earned the Wellness Achievement Award and received \$1,000 from the Foundation to be used toward wellness programs of their choosing.

As the grand prize winner, earning over 160 points, Rupert Elementary School of Pottstown School District received an additional \$2,000 and a trophy to be displayed on its campus. Rupert, Brookside Montessori, West Pottsgrove Elementary and West-Mont Christian Academy were the top four finalists.

Thank you to all participating schools for their hard work in creating a healthier environment for their students to learn and thrive in! To learn more about the contest, visit MUSC.

Laurel House

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to pay their own bills and, in theory, move toward being completely self-sufficient and able to move out into the community at the end.

The hotline also helps victims create a safety plan, so if and when they decide to leave, they're able to do so as safely as possible.

Laurel House provides individual and group counseling to people in its housing programs as well as community members who aren't in a position to move into Laurel House housing. Attendees can still receive individual counseling and go to support groups, a program the Foundation is supporting this year.

The agency also offers prevention and community programs, including outreach to various high schools throughout Montgomery County to educate teens on healthy dating relationships.

"We help students spot the dynamics of healthy and unhealthy relationships so hopefully they never find themselves in a position where they need our services," said Lyons.

Training is also provided to law enforcement, medical professionals and others who interact with victims through their work, equipping them to address those situations. Laurel House also features a crisis response team called DART - Domestic Abuse Response Team, comprised of trained advocates available 24/7 to provide immediate, in-person response to victims of domestic violence when referred by law enforcement or medical personnel.

"These advocates work directly with law enforcement, local hospitals and other medical professionals so that when they do get perhaps a domestic call to 911 or if somebody comes to the emergency room

and discloses abuse, an advocate is sent out immediately to meet with that victim right then and there," said Lyons. "DART is staffed by eight staff members as well as volunteers who give up their nights and weekends to go out to the hospital, to the police stations and anywhere throughout Montgomery County to meet with the victims."

Lyons advises using the hotline to speak to someone regarding a loved one, co-worker, friend, etc. that may be in an abusive situation.

"They (the hotline operators) speak to family members all the time who say, 'We know this is going on, but we don't know how to help,' 'They get mad at us if we try to intervene,' or 'They're being isolated from us.' We can absolutely help with that."

Laurel House's services are available to anyone in Montgomery County in an active abusive relationship, who were in an abusive relationship and having a hard time moving beyond it, or even those who are in an abusive relationship, but not at a point where you're ready to end it.

"We are actively trying to increase our footprint in the Pottstown area," said Lyons. "We recently opened our own facility in Pottstown, so we're excited to finally have a permanent location there because we did see such a need. It was really difficult when we weren't there for people to come to us, so we're happy to be able to make it as easy as possible for people in that area to get services."

To learn more, visit <http://laurel-house.org>



Maternal and Child Health Consortium of Chester County

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Maternal Health also provides information and referral services programs, where a specialist connects individuals to different resources around the community based on their needs. As a part of the Healthy Start Program, MCHC has screened mothers since its inception for depression symptoms and referred them to counseling services if needed. As a home-visiting program, MCHC can learn the specific needs of clients as well as the goals advocates need to strive to achieve with them.

"Our advocates support moms emotionally," said Lanz. "When we go to their houses, the trust that the advocates develop with the families is huge."

Last year, MCHC started screening moms on ACEs, addressing the importance of doing so and how trauma impacts the population it serves.

"I can tell you since we started trauma training, and it's going to be a year very soon, 15% of our Healthy Start participants had an ACEs score higher than 4, which we know puts them at a higher risk of developing chronic diseases," said Lanz. "We're really making sure that we provide the families we serve with all the education they need to thrive."

Lanz also noted that 13% of MCHC's Healthy Start participants screened positive for symptoms of depression, which she said correlates to their

situations. She stressed the importance of the ACEs screenings and the education, as most clients are unaware of what ACEs are and that everyone experiences some form of trauma in their lives.

On the importance of a trauma-informed staff, Lanz said, "Everything relates to our client's health, and so, if we make sure that our staff members are capable and they feel comfortable because they have the knowledge of trauma, then they're able to actually support the families better."

For more information, visit
<http://www.ccmchc.org/>



Building Resilience Among Young Parents Program

Family Service's Pottstown Family Center (PFC) provides Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg's Building Resilience in Children and Teens model to young parents (ages 13-25). The PFC model builds the strength of young parents by fostering their internal resiliency.

Family Development Specialists (FDS) engage targeted parents to build the seven crucial "C's"— competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control within themselves and their children. This increases parental effectiveness and assists with raising healthy and confident children.

"There's just this history of trauma and ACEs, particularly with resiliency and what these kids have been through in their short number of years," said PFC Director of Programs and Services Kelly Canally-Brown. "All of that is wrapped up in their ability to parent, nurture their kids or even respond to their needs."

PFC has also used the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program in Pottstown since 1993. This nationally acclaimed, evidence-based home visiting program helps parents understand their child's development and encourages activities that promote healthy growth in language, cognition, motor and social-emotional competence. The goal is to support parents as their child's first teacher, and ensure that children are ready to begin and succeed in kindergarten. For some parents, dealing with one's own childhood trauma while trying to parent is a difficult one," said Canally-Brown.

"What we're responding to in the Building Resilience program is the ACEs of the young parent as well as the potential for and, in some cases, already the basis for the ACEs of their children," said Canally-Brown. "Some of our parents are so young, that they are growing up together with their children."

PFC strives to help these young parents break the cycle to ensure their experiences don't negatively impact their children.

"When all you know is one way of parenting or living, unfortunately, they are going to be put at higher risk," said Canally-Brown.

"The model is helping parents understand the risk factors that go with having a history of abuse and trauma and what those risk factors are, but also what the protective factors are."

Director of PFC Eve Bieber said all the organization's programs are strength-based, giving practical strategies to help parents succeed and build resilience for themselves and their child. This helps parents recognize their own strengths, even though they may feel they're in constant crisis.

"It's kind of that 'ah-ha!' moment for them. Hopefully they can build on that and change the family dynamic so their children don't have the same experience," said Canally-Brown.

To learn more, visit
<https://www.fsmontco.org/>



Family Services of Montgomery County's Pottstown Family Center

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Project HEARTH: Helping Elderly Adults Remain in Their Homes

Project HEARTH connects elderly adults who are healthy enough to live in their own homes with special support services to help them remain independent. These free services, including professional, in-home counseling, errand and transportation service, friendly visiting, telephone reassurance, and handyman chore service, are available to adults ages 60 and up.

"Project HEARTH was created to be the sister program to Meals on Wheels," said Volunteer Coordinator Aaron Shostak. "It started as a safety network for seniors because Meals on Wheels volunteers would go to the client's home and their doorbell would fall off, they'd find them on the floor, or the client would say 'Can you go get my prescription?' or 'I need a gallon of milk.'"

Project HEARTH is an all-volunteer-run program, serving over 100 clients in the greater Norristown, North Penn and Pottstown areas. It remains one of the only programs in Montgomery County that provides professional counseling to seniors in their own homes.

"It started out mainly as just handyman services—installing grab bars, ramps, smoke detectors, doorbells, fixing the doorknob...anything that would keep the seniors safe in their homes," said Shostak. "Over the years, it's morphed into a transportation service, but I still have some volunteers that go in and do laundry, cleaning, clean windows, change curtains and provide handyman services."



Seniors can call Shostak to apply. Volunteers must complete an application and provide two personal references and a state background check. Between the two offices, Shostak estimated a total of 20 volunteer for 100+ clients, stressing that volunteers are always needed and welcomed.

Project HEARTH also offers a new telephone reassurance service, where volunteers call daily to check in on seniors.

"We make sure everything's okay, or see if the clients need anything," said Shostak. "A volunteer will call a client Monday through Friday every day at 10 a.m. to say 'Hey, you okay?' 'Have you eaten?' 'You haven't fallen?' It's more of a safety check."

There's also a counseling component, where licensed clinical social workers visit seniors in their own homes to help them cope with anxiety, depression, illness, isolation, loneliness and loss. Counseling services must be requested and the senior must agree to participate.

"Grief and loss can be they actually physically lost someone or a pet, or they've just lost their independence like they're not able to drive anymore. Maybe their mobility has changed, so it can cover a wide range of different things that change as we get older," said Program Director Shushma Patel.

The counseling portion of the program is free to seniors with the help of a PAHWF grant. Program staff also work with insurance companies to reduce senior copays.

"We're adapting to the needs of the community," said Patel. "We're trying to provide seniors with some services, but also encourage them to come to us so we can connect them with any additional services they may need."

To learn more, visit
<https://www.fsmontco.org/programs/seniors/project-hearth-helping-elderly-adults-remain-their-homes>