

ANNUAL REVIEW

2018



FORESTDALE
FAMILY WHEN FAMILIES NEED US

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The new Tom Stoppard play, *The Hard Problem*, ponders the nature of what it means, in the contemporary world, to be human – what is consciousness? Are goodness and morality an essential part of human nature? What motivates goodness, or acts of kindness?

Complex factors influence “good” behavior, including genetics and evolutionary pressures (we can be generous because it ultimately helps to propagate the gene pool). Additional factors include self-expression (it helps us define who we are), self-interest (we share, so others share with us), the environment in which we live (we see good behavior mirrored), it feels good (helps our brain release endorphins), and we enjoy the approval from others for doing something that is good and right.

This latter influence, shaping positive social behavior by showing approval, has been and continues to be an essential aspect of human progress. Parenting is partly about helping children suppress their “less friendly” human instincts in the service of more pro-social behaviors (i.e., “use your words” or “share your toys”).

At Forestdale, we work to help families raise amazing children, and we are saddened to witness our society's strong, current trend in the opposite direction. Americans appear, more and more, to publicly encourage selfishness, dishonesty, greed, bigotry, bullying, and violence.

We flock to gatherings, reality shows, or social media sites that celebrate negative, harmful, and divisive behavior. This type of action appears to be as natural to humans as generosity and altruism but, whereas in the past, we were taught to still our unkind impulses and to view them as shameful, they can now be openly boasted about and celebrated.

We were encouraged to cheer when people committed selfless acts of bravery, not when people exhorted crowds to beat up on weaker people. At Forestdale, we not only witness acts of courage and bravery every day; we encourage them and cheer them on. We see mothers who've reclaimed sobriety to become consistent, caring parents, and fathers who are re-committing financial and emotional support to non-custodial children. We see teens become the first in their families to graduate from college (eating ramen noodles while studying at midnight in their SUNY dorms), and grandparents, who thought they were done with parenting, step in to care for grandchildren when necessary.



As the children of these families enter society, strengthened by the sacrifices and hard work of their families to overcome obstacles, we are confident that they will usher in a new age of societal approval for courage, bravery, integrity, and kindness over violence and greed.

Moreover, we know that as Forestdale (i.e., our families, staff, donors, and Board) works to help families heal from trauma, find stability, and thrive, it will benefit not only the children we serve but shift the more significant progress and evolution of our society in the direction of our better human nature.

Forestdale's 2018 Annual Review describes our long-standing programming and recent innovations to meet the needs of low-income families and children working to heal from trauma and improve their lives. Thank you to those who have joined us in this fight to make sure that every child has what she needs to flourish, that every family has a route to stability, and that our larger community has the opportunity to work toward generosity, compassion, and well-being.

Looking forward,

William Weisberg
Executive Director

Robert Whiteford
Chair, Board of
Trustees

2018

A YEAR IN REVIEW

As a service organization, Forestdale's commitment to ending child poverty is expressed primarily through our work to strengthen individual families, helping them break the intergenerational transmission of poverty and trauma. Our current focus is on intervening to help families in crisis stabilize, working with children to place them on a path to future success, and working with mothers and fathers to help them be great parents and plant the seeds for intergenerational advancement.

HELPING FAMILIES IN CRISIS

When NYC child protective services identify families they consider at-risk, they often call Forestdale in to help. When a child is **not** in imminent danger, we send staff into the home to help set up therapy, addiction services, housing supports, employment services, or whatever the family needs to stabilize and get back on a healthier path (Preventive Services). When a child **is** in imminent danger, we find a safe and loving temporary home for the child (Foster Care). Concurrently, we work with the parent (providing a variety of supports) to be able to safely reunite the family as quickly as possible, or place the child into adoption if the parent is deceased or unable to care for the child.

The Strong Families/Preventive Services unit helps families in crisis (with children ages 0-18) remain together safely by assisting them in mastering parenting skills, obtaining housing, and securing gainful employment. In FY 2018, we served 173 families (683 individuals); more than 99% of these families were successful in averting separation through foster care with our help. This year, we were pleased to add Preventive Services for families under Court Ordered Supervision (a higher level of protective monitoring) for families affected by mental illness or addiction (our Family Treatment and Rehabilitation model).

The Strong Families/Foster Care unit helps children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect.



We work to strengthen and reunite families rapidly and efficiently whenever possible, and if not possible, find adoptive homes for children. In FY 2018, we worked with 580 foster children, ages 0-21. We are pleased that 51 youth found permanent homes through adoption. In 2017, we began our *Home Away From Home (HAFH)* program, funded by ACS, to expand the number of new, quality foster homes and increase support to existing ones. On October 22, 2018, Deputy Mayor Herminia Palacio and NYC ACS First Deputy Commissioner Eric Brettschneider came to Forestdale to celebrate the wonderful volunteers who have stepped forward to help children when they are most

vulnerable. They heard from a panel of Forestdale *HAFH* foster parents about their work with the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM); a model that builds intentional communities (hubs) of foster parents to help each other with advice, friendship, transportation, and respite. Currently, the two hubs we started, with 15 foster families caring for 40 foster youth, have been very productive and particularly helpful to teens in care.

KEEPING CHILDREN AND TEENS HEALTHY

Strong Minds, Strong Bodies is Forestdale's clinical health services unit. It began in 2012 as a partnership with NYU's Colleges of Nursing, and Dentistry, and Child Study Center, to ensure that children in care receive high-quality medical, dental, and mental health care on site at Forestdale, as well as through our network of community-based practitioners. Currently, we offer pediatric care hours four days per week, nursing services five days per week, psychotherapy services seven days per week, and psychiatric services two days per week. *Strong Minds, Strong Bodies* has grown to include our work with several mental health model developers, as well as our movement towards a more integrated health services approach (Health Homes). Through *Strong Minds, Strong Bodies*, we have been able to achieve the following:

a) **Significant Successes:**

- This year, we provided medical and dental services to over 300 high need youth, ages 0-21.
- New State licensure designations for Forestdale (29-I license and State Plan Amendment approval), will allow us to significantly enrich what we can do for children and teens, including additional mental health services, nursing services, social skill development supports, community-based psychiatry, life coaching, substance abuse counseling, and other services.

b) Improved Long-Term Outcomes for Children and Their Families: Support from several sources has allowed children and their families to benefit from the mental health interventions that enable them to move from distress and despair toward healing and growth. We continue to utilize a comprehensive framework which includes multiple mental health modalities along a continuum to suit the differing needs of our clients. In the past 12 months, we accomplished the following:

- One hundred thirty-seven families (representing more than 400 individuals) received some form of mental/behavioral health intervention to help cope with loss, form attachments, improve family relationships, receive treatment for depression, heal from parental maltreatment, or regulate emotional mood swings.
- Fifty-five dyads participated in *Forestdale's Attachment & Biobehavioral Catch Up (ABC)* program, which promotes secure attachment for infants and toddlers who have experienced adversity. Rigorous evaluation has demonstrated that families have used *ABC* to improve nurturing, increase stability, and strengthen parent-child bonds.

Leading Young People to Prepare for Adult Success

Strong Futures unit-According to the most recent research, less than 10% of foster youth graduate from

college. Here at Forestdale, approximately 70 youth receive a wide array of services, each month. In addition to direct academic and college enrichment services, we provide our young clients with a variety of ancillary supports. These supports include tutoring, workshops (academic, financial literacy, life skills, career prep/employment), recreational activities and cultural trips (in partnership with Culture for One), one-on-one guidance, and referral to additional Forestdale programs (i.e. life coaching, *Strong Futures Internship*, pregnancy prevention, mental health interventions, and medical and dental care) to ensure a robust, holistic, and worthwhile program experience.

- **On to college!** *Forestdale Scholars (FS)* emphasizes setting academic and behavioral fundamental goals for college success and is still the foundational component of our *Strong Futures* youth programming. *FS* provides academic support for youth in foster care (grades 5-12+), to ensure that our adolescents see high-school graduation as a top priority and college graduation as an attainable goal. Using a combination of interactive group activities, individual counseling, tutoring, and advocacy, we are leveling the playing field for more than 100 foster care youth ages 12-21, annually. Services include supplying fully stocked backpacks for more than 500 grade, middle, and high-school youth, college tours to schools across the country (i.e., Vermont University, SUNY campuses, and more.) to inspire and motivate their academic success, and financial assistance for college room and board, textbooks, lab fees, and laptops. All of this work has paid off! In FY 2018, approximately 26 of our youth were attending college, twice the number compared with just a few years ago.

- **On to careers!** *Strong Futures Internship (SFI)* transitions foster youth successfully into the workforce, offering our adolescents, and young adults paid internships in information technology, administrative services, childcare, peer health education, culinary arts, automotive work, and maintenance. We are pleased to report that Forestdale has worked with more than 92 young adults from September 2016 to June 2018; over 85% completed the internship. Graduates indicated an increase in self-confidence and job skills, and supervisors reported that participants improved their capacity to perform job tasks and augmented



communication skills with supervisors and co-workers. In July 2018, we began our fifth cohort with 25 interns. After completing *SFI*, our participants transitioned back into school full-time or unsubsidized employment. These include jobs at Amazon, LaGuardia Airport, Lids apparel store, Kohl's, Target, and the US Open -- Yeah!

- **On to life!** *Improving Outcomes for Youth after Foster Care* is an intensive life-coaching program that helps young people (ages 16-24) who are exiting the foster care system (48 per year through Forestdale) advance toward healthy work, school, and relationship objectives. After an assessment, staff and program participants set goals in one or more of four areas: academic engagement, career planning, housing stability, and family relations/connection to a caring adult. We focus the work on connecting young adults to positive influences (school, work, relationships with caring adults) while diverting them from negative influences (crime, incarceration). They choose short and long-term objectives under the guidance of our trained Life Coach, and then design a realistic plan to take small steps toward advancement in their goals. Funding from the NYC Council's Young Women's Initiative (YWI) has supported *Improving Outcomes for Youth after Foster Care* program since 2017.

Helping Mothers and Fathers Be Great Parents

Forestdale Parenting Programs – Our renowned parenting programs bring together people who are committed to being great moms and dads, and give them the tools to do so. Forestdale's parenting programs are the means by which we assist birth parents in improving their lives so that they can better and safely care for their children.

- **Strong Fathers** helped more than 165 fathers this year through job training and placement, classes on bonding and improving interaction with their children, and more effective co-parenting techniques with the mothers of their children. Our participants receive intensive, individualized strengths-based case management, an intense 3-month parenting psychoeducational workshop series, access to a network of peer support with program participants and alumni, and members of the larger community. Fathers in our program become more actively involved caregivers, leading them to increase their emotional engagement with and financial support of their children. Both are measures that have been demonstrated to improve the lives of children significantly.
- **Strong Mothers** - This year, we worked with 103 pregnant and parenting women ages 16 and up, providing weekly parenting support services, reproductive health, and family planning services, peer mentoring, and material goods). *Strong Mothers*



continues to meet these young women where they are, helping them delay first or future unplanned pregnancies, improve maternal and childbirth outcomes, expand parenting skills and resources, and advance academically and in their careers. Earlier this year, we began a *Strong Mothers Domestic Violence and Trauma-Informed Mental Health Program expansion*. One of the central aspects of the trauma-informed expansion is the stabilization of the mother so she can create a stronger bond with her child and gain a better understanding of her child's emotional, psychological, and physical development. Thus far, we have served 28 women in the Anger Management and Domestic Violence classes, and through individual trauma-informed therapy.

WHAT'S NEW AT FORESTDALE IN 2018?

In 2015, we served approximately 1,000 families. Now, we serve about 1,500: A 50% increase in three years. We've had some successes, and we are eager to continuously seek out and implement new initiatives and evidence-based models that can help support all of our families and children. Below is a summary of some of this original programming and our capital projects:

- ***Working with Young People to Succeed after Foster Care***- Forestdale is delighted that the child welfare field is on the verge of implementing a comprehensive strategy to support the success of young people aging out or already aged out of foster care. There have been some foundation-funded initiatives that have already demonstrated improvements in housing, employment, academic, and life outcomes for this vulnerable population. However, several forces have now come together to engage the City in discussions about funding a new **more comprehensive and wider-reaching** initiative to provide integrated life coaching, employment, and academic supports to young people, ages 15-25, who have been system-involved. A group of private donors, ACS, and child welfare providers have convened to map out the coaching/mentoring, employment, and academic services most likely to help these young people succeed. We are pleased to be part of this effort and know that additional targeted supports will help young people who have been in foster care obtain much better outcomes in their future lives.



- ***Implementing Care Management*** - Forestdale's new *Children's Health Home (HH) Care Management program* is a person/family-centered service model with a Care Manager coordinating and advocating on behalf of a child's physical, behavioral, and other social support needs, bringing together a network of organizations and service providers that work together to assist each child and family. The *Children's Health Home program* at Forestdale is aligned with our mission and is helping 100 young

people access the high quality, specialty healthcare they need to treat diabetes, depression, sickle cell anemia, asthma, or other special health conditions.

- **Enhancing Permanency Outcomes** - In 2014, 35,502 American children aged 10-17 were waiting for adoptive homes (Hicks, 2015). We cannot overstate the benefits of being established in a permanent home even if the child is very slow to acclimate to the new home. This year, Forestdale added new services to help ensure the lasting success of reunification when children are returned home from foster care, and to help find adoptive homes for children in, particularly difficult circumstances. The *Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK)* program, established by The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, was awarded to Forestdale this year. *WWK* uses an evidence-based process to identify adoptive family matches for historically hard-to-place young people.
- **Upgrading Our Forest Hills Campus to Better Support Our Trauma-Informed Services** - While Forestdale has evolved to meet the dynamic needs of the communities we serve; our 75-year-old physical infrastructure has not. Forestdale started work on a new *Teaching Kitchen* earlier this year, and we expect it to "go live" in Spring 2019. We have also received grants from NYS and NYC to upgrade our other buildings, and create a state-of-the-art career, maternal/child program, and additional training, health, and preventive program spaces.

A Heroine's Legacy Shines On

The Forestdale community was dealt a significant blow when our beloved Adoption and Permanency Supervisor, Evelyn Reid, passed away on May 25, 2018. At Forestdale for 14 years, Evelyn is remembered for her passion for helping foster children find permanency through adoption, her love and pride in her own children, and her acapella singing (building four was often treated to her lovely voice wafting through the halls).

All of her colleagues respected her intense dedication to children and her dogged devotion to finalize adoptions as quickly as possible so children would have a permanent family. Our Adoption and Permanency Unit continues her legacy, working tirelessly to find a permanency solution for each child.

Finding a Loving Family

In 2016, Evelyn began working with a teenager, Amanda (not her real name). When Amanda's mother passed away in 2013, Amanda needed a home. Amanda's great-grandmother came forward to take care of her, but in 2016 started having severe health problems. The family of one of Amanda's good friends invited Amanda to join their family. Evelyn worked extremely hard for and with Amanda and this loving family until the family formally adopted Amanda in 2016. Amanda has suffered many personal losses, but her new family's commitment to her sense of security and happiness is impressive and felt by her and by all around them. Evelyn was exceptional at her job; this is but one of the hundreds of families that Evelyn worked tirelessly to bring together permanently. The successful unfolding of these young people's lives will be her legacy.

Evelyn continues to serve as an inspiration to Forestdale's outstanding Adoption and Permanency program; a team that she helped to train, and a unit that she helped construct. Alexandra Doricent, the Permanency Supervisor, has impressed everyone since joining Forestdale in 2018 with her brilliance, exuberance, and commitment. Nayla Ochoa anchored the team through this challenging transition, marshaling her diligence and compassion to make sure that adoptions proceeded without interruption. The matchless Tracy Kitt brings her tremendous experience, wisdom, and warmth to our latest effort, Wendy's Wonderful Kids, helping to find adoptive homes for teens and other young people who have not easily found adoptive families, helping us achieve our aim that every child should have a forever family.



CALENDAR 2018 FORESTDALE SUPPORTERS

- 112th Precinct
- Acme Lighting
- ADP
- Aligner Chocolates
- All Star Studios
- Apollo Jets
- Arthur J. Gallagher & Company
- Barclays Center
- ChemRX Pharmacy Services
- Cicatelli Associates, Inc.
- Community Resource Exchange
- Dammann Fund, Inc.
- Deloitte
- Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
- DiffusionPR
- Dormitory Authority of the State of NY (DASNY)
- Edith Glick Shoolman Children's Foundation
- First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills
- Forest Hills High School
- FPWA
- Flywheel Sports
- Frances L. & Edwin L. Cummings Memorial Fund
- Fulton Street Hardware
- Fund for Public Health in NY
- Fund for the City of New York
- Girl Scouts Troop 4413 & 4940
- Good+ Foundation
- High Water Women (HWW)
- Hollis Lions Club
- Human Resources Administration – Center for Economic Opportunity
- Hyde & Watson Foundation
- IBM
- Ira W. DeCamp Foundation
- Janey Fund Charitable Trust
- Jaye Penney Gould Foundation
- JetBlue Airways
- Kiwanis Club of Forest Hills
- Madison House
- Martha Mertz Foundation Inc.
- Merrick Academy
- Milrose Consultants
- Nancy & Edwin Marks Family Foundation
- New York Community Trust
- New York Life Foundation
- New York Mets
- Northwell Health (LIJ)
- NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS)
- NYC Councilmember DanEEK Miller
- NYC Councilmember Francisco Moya
- NYC Council Queens Delegation
- NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson
- NYC Council – General
- NYC Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)
- NYC Dept. Youth & Community Development (DYCD)

- NYS Dept. of Health
- NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH)
- Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA)
- P.S. 101
- Queens Chamber of Commerce
- Queens County Bar Association
- Queens Borough President Melinda Katz
- Rego Park-Forest Hills Lions Club
- Rego Park/Queens Center Mall
- Restoration Medical Supply
- Ridgewood Savings Bank
- Ripples A Not for Profit
- Rose Academy of Ballet
- Rosin Steinhagen Mendel
- Seyfarth Shaw LLP
- Soccer Friends USA
- TD Charitable Foundation
- The Durst Organization
- The Journey Church-Queens
- The Reform Temple of Forest Hills
- Tropham Foundation
- Tydas, Inc.
- United HealthCare
- van Ameringen Foundation, Inc.
- vFramework
- Washington Square Fund
- West Side Tennis Club
- Women's Club of Forest Hills, Inc.
- Women Helping Women

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