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PCGF NEWS | WINTER 2021

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DHS Director Marc Cherna Retires

Warmest congratulations to **Marc Cherna** on his retirement in March as Director of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. Hired 25 years ago “to fix child welfare, we were known as a national disgrace,” as he explains, Mr. Cherna went on to establish the Department of Human Services (DHS), bringing together four separate departments into one entity. His focus on prevention, service delivery and public-private partnerships has

resulted in the creation of numerous initiatives including the 412 Youth Zone (a drop-in center for youth aging out of foster care or experiencing homelessness) and the forthcoming year-round, low-barrier shelter for fragile populations.

Under Mr. Cherna’s leadership, DHS has won national recognition from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Casey Family Programs

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Homeless Children’s Education Fund Salutes Champions for Children

The Homeless Children’s Education Fund (HCEF) Champions for Children annual gala honors local “Champions” for commitment to improving the lives of children in our region. The gala raises



essential funds to further HCEF’s mission to “advance the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness in Southwestern PA, guiding

them to be productive, empowered citizens.”

This year’s Champions are Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation (Executive Director, **Pamela W. Golden**) and **Mark R. Gensheimer**, President, C.S. McKee.

Harry J. Soose, Jr. will receive the Linda A. Dickerson Award, which

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Inkwell Donates Hats to Youth

Inkwell Global Marketing, a New York-based promotional products company, has generously donated 100 winter hats for the Foundation to distribute to youth.

In making the donation,

Gary Brill, Business Manager at Inkwell Global Marketing, commented, “We’re excited to create a signature PCGF hat and share 100 to provide warmth for children living

in Pennsylvania. There’s nothing like wearing a new hat to lift your spirits on a cold winter day.” ■



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cherna Retires

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and many others. While giving credit to his team, Mr. Cherna comments, "I am reassured that DHS is in good hands. My senior staff is incredible."

PCGF has been honored to partner with Mr. Cherna and DHS over the years and wishes him all the best that life has to offer.



Congratulations to **Erin Dalton**, who was named as Director of DHS by County Executive Rich Fitzgerald. A 13-year veteran of the department, Ms. Dalton recently served as the Deputy Director in

the Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning. Ms. Dalton has garnered a national reputation for using predictive analytics to streamline services provided to vulnerable populations. By integrating information from DHS, providers and public records, organizations and clients have access to holistic data and a record of services provided.

PCGF is proud to have worked with Ms. Dalton on the Human Services Integration Fund to improve conditions and reduce recidivism for incarcerated individuals in Allegheny County, and we look forward to future collaborations.

Learn more about Ms. Dalton's work on the Good Health, Better World podcast: [Click here](#) ■

HCEF Award

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is named in honor of the community leader who helped with the formation of HCEF and served as the organization's first board chair.

"HCEF awards this Champions award to Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation in recognition of their leadership role in our region and their consistent focus on the needs of youth experiencing homelessness," HCEF stated when announcing the honor. "Their generosity has reached so many children and families, and supported them in countless ways, big and small. PCGF and Pam Golden in particular, are true community leaders."

The virtual celebration takes place Thursday, April 22, at 7 p.m. Learn more and purchase tickets: [Click here](#) ■

Leadership Changes at Partner Organizations

Patrick Dowd, former Executive Director of Allies for Children, has been appointed Chief Operating Officer of the Allegheny County Health Department.

Lamont Loyd-Sims has been appointed Executive Director of Dreams of Hope, an organization dedicated to supporting the region's LGBTQIA+ youth.

Lisa Perry, former Executive Director of Jeremiah's Place, recently accepted the position of Executive Director of Pittsburgh Action Against Rape. Jeremiah's Place protects children and strengthens families by providing respite, health, renewal and support. ■

Kudos to...



PCGF Board of Trustees member **Robert James**, Esq., who was promoted to Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Highmark Health. In his new capacity, Mr. James will implement and advise upon Highmark Health's enterprise-wide diversity, equity and inclusion strategy.



PCGF Board of Trustees member **Jason Lando**, who recently accepted the position of police chief in Frederick, Maryland. The former Pittsburgh Police Commander pioneered a series of innovative programs to improve police and community relations in neighborhoods such as Garfield, East Liberty and Homewood. Chief Lando will remain an active member of the PCGF Board. ■

Mark Your Calendars

** virtual event*

PCGF honored at "Champions for Children" Thursday, April 22*
7 p.m.

We ask Trustees to make every effort to attend:

Board Meeting Tuesday, June 1*
4 - 5:30 p.m.

Board Meeting Tuesday, September 21
4 - 5:30 p.m.

Board Meeting/ Annual Meeting Tuesday, November 9
4 - 5:30 p.m.

PCGF at Work in the Community

Since 2014, the Foundation has focused its resources on mitigating the circumstances of families with children and youth who are experiencing homelessness. PCGF collaborates with direct service providers, the Department of Human Services and other foundations to address this issue. The pandemic of 2020 compounded challenges for both marginalized families as well as cash-strapped service providers. We appreciate the work of our community partners in significantly impacting the community.

Highlights from programs implemented in 2020 with PCGF support included:

Allegheny Valley Association of Churches assisted 24 families, including 16 children.

The agency works to bring stability to families that leads to permanent housing and self-sufficiency by providing basic necessities and case management to families with children who are experiencing homelessness. AVAC acquired Chromebooks and assisted children in attending school virtually.

Angels' Place served 104 clients by providing early childhood education and support to improve options for housing stabilization. Angels' Place addresses the issue of generational poverty by providing assistance to single parents with children age birth to 5.

Bethlehem Haven's Safe at Home program served families by providing monetary support to prevent families with children from becoming homeless or to put them in rapid housing programs. During the pandemic, Bethlehem Haven **received more than 2,000 calls for assistance**, representing a 40% increase over the prior year.

Beverly's Birthdays played a pivotal role in bringing a sense of normalcy to children during the pandemic as the organization **provided birthday parties, gifts and cheer to 182 children** who are receiving services from various agencies. ▼

“ Birthdays are about someone remembering you! ”

Birthday Child

Bridge to the Mountains street outreach program provides emergency shelter to pregnant women and women with children who are experiencing sudden homelessness and are at risk of family separation. **Four children were born to women while living in the facility.**



East End Cooperative Ministry launched a new program to help families achieve independence through housing and **served 70 families.**

HEARTH provides housing and supportive services to women with children fleeing domestic violence and other traumas and **continued to offer life-changing programs** throughout 2020.

Homeless Children's Education Fund served 153 youth in summer and after school programs in four shelters. ►

Jeremiah's Place was forced to alter plans because of the mandate to limit gatherings. Rather than scheduling face-to-face meetings and tours, Jeremiah's Place continued to work virtually with its 30 partner agencies and **provided parents with clothing, shoes, cleaning supplies and food in 250 grab-and-go bags.**

Light of Life Rescue Mission used its PCGF grant to support two components, Women's Street Outreach and the Family Shelter, and this support was used to avoid evictions, get families

“ The frustration of the pandemic, coupled with trauma, can impede a parent's ability to solve problems. Sometimes all they need is a caring ear and a helping hand. ”

Homeless Children's Education Fund Staff

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PCGF at Work

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into homes, provide transportation assistance, purchase clothing and enable participants to enroll in school or cover expenses of applying for employment.

Serenity Living Transitional Home, which assists youth between the ages of 13 and 23, **provided a safe place to live and taught life skills**. Because of the pandemic, many SLTH residents lost employment but funding enabled the organization to provide uninterrupted service.

Sojourner House MOMS (Motivation Opportunities Mentoring Spirituality) **served 19 women who were experiencing homelessness and in recovery**. In response to the pandemic, staff adjusted programs by monitoring the mental health of clients, teaching virtual etiquette protocols, monitoring homeschooling and obtaining masks and hand sanitizers for clients.

South Hills Interfaith Movement meets the growing demands of individuals and families searching for critical services in the South Hills area. SHIM **experienced a 21% increase in requests for support** this past year and **helped to feed 2,000 individuals a month** through its pantry. Case management helped clients navigate the complex system of social services.

The Salvation Army's Pathways of Hope program **provided intensive case management** to prevent street and other forms of homelessness by offering quality case management, clinical assessments and one-on-one counseling sessions.

Tickets for Kids quickly pivoted to online programs for much needed diversionary activities and through its partnerships **provided 391 virtual experiences**. ▼

“ Dear Tickets for Kids: We desperately needed to find ways to provide students with growth opportunities without accessing the community in person... You were right there for us. ”



Trade Institute of Pittsburgh partnered with **shelters and the Allegheny County Jail** to present program training and employment in the trades with the goal of breaking down gender barriers and encouraging women to train and pursue well paying, nontraditional careers.

Women's Center & Shelter provided services to **297 children and their mothers** who were fleeing domestic violence situations. 100% of the children were linked to medical, dental and developmental screenings; 81% of school-age children who stayed in shelter for 5+ days maintained school attendance while school was in session. ■

South Hills Interfaith Movement food pantry

Participating Agency