

AGENCY OF THE MONTH

Episcopal Social Services A 175th Anniversary Growth Spurt

As it celebrates its 175th anniversary, Episcopal Social Services should feel entitled to kick back a little and rest on its laurels. Instead, ESS is having what may well be its busiest year ever, opening a host of new programs and taking over a network of existing early childhood centers. Among the new offerings are a Non-Secure Detention facility, four new after-school programs in the Bronx, a Young Adult Borough Center with the Department of Education and two cutting-edge Intensive Preventive Services programs targeting adolescents. "It is a really exciting time," says Robert Gutheil, ESS' Executive Director. "We are growing in all kinds of extraordinarily interesting and I hope valuable ways."

ESS was founded in 1831 as the Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society. It began as an association of chaplains and lay people caring for the City's poor in almshouses, prisons, hospitals and on Ellis Island. The agency has continued to maintain a strong commitment to serving those who are in need with programs ranging from foster care to Early Head Start to serving ex-offenders through its Network in the Prison and Network in the Community Programs.

Foster Care

Over the years, ESS has evolved into an important provider of child welfare and MRDD services. St. Barnabas House, which ESS opened in 1864 to serve the poor, sick, hungry and homeless, would eventually become an orphanage housing 90 children. Today, ESS provides foster care and foster care prevention services targeting the South Bronx and the West Side of Manhattan. Its foster boarding homes serve over 500 children and it operates several highly regarded group programs.

ESS is proud of the permanency outcomes it achieves for children placed in its care. Approximately 70% of ESS foster children are reunited with their parents, 20% are adopted by foster parents and 10% are adopted by relatives. Over the past five years, half of the youths who have graduated while in ESS foster care have enrolled in college, compared to a national average of 30%. In 2004-2005, ESS debuted Project College Bound, a comprehensive college/life preparation program for high school aged foster youth. The program includes academic coursework, SAT tutoring and computer training.

The agency's Independent Living Pro-

gram trains over 100 foster youth ages 14 and up in the skills necessary to survive successfully in a complex world. ESS also operates two supervised independent living apartments in the Bronx.

ESS' foster care programs operate out of its both its Manhattan headquarters and Paul's House, a community-based program site in the South Bronx. (See: Paul's House, below.)

Health and Mental Health

Children placed with ESS' foster care programs also receive high quality health and mental health care. "We have two full-blown medical clinics, here and at Paul's House in the Bronx," says Gutheil. "I don't know how many other agencies are still providing full medical clinics."

"We offer pediatrics, psychiatry, psychology and dentistry," says Dr. Luis Rodriguez, Assistant Executive Director, who oversees health services at the agency and has administrative oversight for MRDD programming. Rodriguez, who is board

certified in both pediatrics and psychiatry, notes that ESS holds the number one ranking among ACS providers for children with special medical needs.

New Directions

Gutheil's arrival at ESS, after a long career as Executive Director of Salvation Army's Social Services for Children Department, coincided with major transitions within the world of child welfare. Foster care placements were declining sharply and group homes were not viewed favorably as program options by ACS. "When I came in the Fall of 2004, we started a strategic planning process," says Gutheil. "And, about a year ago we adopted a new strategic plan for the agency. We had our commitment to child welfare but no one in their right mind was envisioning child welfare as a growth area, except in terms of prevention services."

Group Home Transformations

Nevertheless, Gutheil looked at the ESS group homes and saw something special.

"With teenagers, so much of what happens to them and so much of what is effec-



Robert Gutheil, Executive Director

tive with them is in the context of their peer group and peer influences," says Kym Watson, ESS's Director of Group Homes. "There is a great opportunity when kids who are having problems at home or in the community come into a group environment. They can get support from the group, be af-

Paul's House: Home to Host of Community Services

When Episcopal Social Services opened Paul's House last May, it packed a lot of services into the newly-renovated building. The 17,000-square foot Center for Children and Families is home to Early Head Start, Early Intervention, Family Preservation Services, Foster Care & Adoption Services and Children's Health Services. In total, these programs serve an estimated 1,000 South Bronx families annually.

A centerpiece of the new facility is the William H. Wright II Early Head Start Center, which hosts six Early Head Start classrooms. This program provides crucial early help to young children and their families, ensuring that the children are ready to succeed when they start school.

Paul's House also features the Starr Dental Center, made possible with the support of the Starr Foundation, and the Stephen Chinlund Children's Health Services facility, which serves as a legacy and tribute to Episcopal Social Services' former Executive Director.

The facility also offers Early Intervention, Family Preservation, and Foster Care and Adoption Services.

"In a neighborhood where 54% of young children live in poverty, ours is the only comprehensive facility for children under the age of three," said ESS Executive Director Robert Gutheil.



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Episcopal Social Service is significantly expanding its role in early childhood services. The agency is taking over seven child care centers previously operated by Sheltering Arms Children's Services.

firmed by the group and be corrected by the group in a guided way. We have kids who come back and talk about the power of network meetings or the power of our retreats. The group home was a family for them.”

“I am so high on these programs,” says Gutheil. He cites the case of one child with both serious developmental and behavioral health needs who was placed in an ESS group home after having spent more than 10 years in psychiatric hospitals. Although Gutheil initially opposed the placement, fearing that ESS would be unable to meet the child's extraordinary needs, he is now a believer. “This kid is thriving in our group home with some supplementary supports,” he says. “It is an enormous testimony to the quality of our program. It would have been very easy to say that ACS has new priorities so let's just close them down. But, I just did not want to lose that program.”

Instead, ESS is adapting its group homes to meet new and specialized needs.

“We closed one of our group homes which had been used by ACS and began working with the Department of Juvenile Justice,” says Margaret O'Toole, Assistant Executive Director. In May, ESS re-opened the house as a non-secure detention facility for 12 boys aged 7-15. “It has been very successful,” says O'Toole. “It is a whole different way of relating to kids, but so far it really has been going very well. We were able to use some of the present group home staff and recruited others. Staff has to go through specific training.”

While the short-term, detention nature of the program constrains opportunities for treatment, Watson believes ESS' child centered approach will make a difference. “The Department of Juvenile Justice has been very interested in the clinical models we are bringing to the table. Even though they come in and go very quickly, we will have some long-term stays.”

Two of the agency's group homes continue to serve youth referred by ACS and OCFS. “We are full,” says O'Toole. A fourth home has been closed with plans to redevelop it for alternative programming.

Early Childhood

ESS' new strategic plan did call for targeted growth in the area of education. In June, the agency announced that it will be taking over a series of seven child care centers previously operated by Sheltering Arms Children's Services. The move complements ESS' recent development of an Early Head Start program serving 60 families in the South Bronx but will be the first ACS-funded child care program for the agency.

“The Sheltering Arms programs have an excellent reputation programmatically,” says Gutheil. Sheltering Arms decision to relinquish the programs grows out of financial challenges which that agency faced stemming in large part from its foster boarding home programs. The programs include family day care, group day care, therapeutic nurseries and afterschool activities in Manhattan (Harlem and the Lower East Side) and Brooklyn. They serve a total of approximately 1,000 children.

“We are also bringing on some very talented people who come with the programs,” says Gutheil. “Cordelia McNish, Director of the Child Care programs and Celeste Gordon, who runs their Therapeutic Nursery Programs are both very impressive.”

After-School Programs

Last year, ESS also stepped in to help save a series of Bronx-based after-school programs which were at risk following an administrative scandal at Gloria Wise Boys and Girls Clubs. “It looked like these programs were going to hit the dust,” says

going to get these contracts. It probably cost the agency about \$200,000.”

ESS' good deed has paid off, both for the families of the East Bronx and the agency. This year, ESS has been awarded a series of State and City contracts to operate after school programs – Advantage After-school, 21st Century, Extended Day Violence Prevention, etc. – at PS 36, IS 174, PS 138 and PS 75.

These four new programs join ESS' pre-existing after-school program at MS 302, also located in the Bronx. “We have had that program for more than five years,” says O'Toole, noting that MS 302 serves a significant number of children living in nearby homeless shelters.

With the addition of this year's four-new programs, ESS has become a significant provider of after-school services for more than 1,000 youngsters in the Bronx. Programs feature a full array of youth development activities, ranging from tutoring and homework help to recreation, trips and pregnancy prevention.

Young Adult Borough Center

The upcoming launch of ESS' new Young Adult Borough Center (YABC) at Harry S. Truman High School in the Bronx represents another significant first for the agency. YABCs are one of several collabo-

Gutheil. “I am very proud of our board. We began running the programs on the ESS dime just because we felt they were programs that must continue. It was not clear that we were

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rative alternative high school program models involving partnerships between DOE and CBOs. The programs serve up to 250 “over-age, under-credited” youth who are at serious risk of dropping out before graduating. The program attempts to address obstacles to a student’s attendance.

“These are kids who for whatever reason weren’t able to get more than 17 credits and weren’t able to graduate in four years,” says O’Toole. “They may have adult responsibilities. There may be a parent at home with a drug program and they have to help out with their sisters and brothers. They may have children themselves.”

The program operates from 9:00 in the morning to 9:00 at night with the bulk of the activity in the late afternoon and evening. DOE provides the teachers and curriculum. ESS will provide social services to help students stay in school. “We provide counseling and referrals,” says O’Toole. There also is a “Learning to Work” component which exposes students to a variety of career and education options. Kids can receive a stipend for their work experience with local companies and organizations. “We will arrange college trips and job fairs. We will offer workshops on how to write a resume, how to conduct yourself in an interview – how to dress, how to answer questions,” says O’Toole.

While this full-fledged partnership with DOE on a school-based, alternative high school is a new and significant step, O’Toole sees the YABC as a natural extension of ESS’ traditional mission and programs. “A lot of the students we will be working with are similar to the adolescents in our foster boarding homes, group homes and preventive programs,” she explains. “It is just that

we will be doing this work in a high school setting.”

Preventive Services

ESS has also just begun a significant expansion of its preventive services programming with the winning of two separate ACS contract awards to provide Intensive Preventive Services for Adolescents in both the Bronx and Manhattan. These programs, which feature evidence-based, nationally-recognized treatment models, will serve 78 families in each of the boroughs.

“We will be using Functional Family Therapy,” says O’Toole. “If you are true to the model, it is very effective working with this particular population.” As with other evidence-based, family therapy models, FFT includes rigorous training, supervision and reporting requirements to ensure conformance with treatment protocols. “There will be weekly supervision by phone with our therapists,” says O’Toole.

FFT calls for intensive, home-based and short-term interventions which train families to deal with problem behaviors. “We have been interviewing recent MSW graduates who are absolutely committed to working with the families,” says O’Toole. “They are ready and excited about this whole new venture.”

These new programs build on the foundation of ESS’ existing general preventive program which serves 90 families in the South Bronx. “We do parenting groups, teen groups, mentoring services and monitor all aspects of the families’ situations,” says Deanne Channer, Director of Preventive Services. “For each worker, there is a lot of involvement. It takes a lot of heart. You have to build a strong relationship. Within the last two years, we have seen an increase in the number of ACS referrals. Cases that

we are getting now would have been in foster care until a few years ago. But, they are trying to give the families a chance.”

MRDD Services

A second area targeted for growth in ESS’ new strategic plan is services for individuals with disabilities. The agency currently operates five residences – either IRAs or ICFs -- in Manhattan and the Bronx.

“We have just gotten a contract from OMRDD to do a traumatic brain injury program that will be home- and clinic- based,” says Gutheil.

“This is for people who have suffered an accident resulting in severe delays or major impairments,” says Dr. Luis Rodriguez, Assistant Executive Director. “We offer intensive case management to ensure that clients attend the services they need on a regular basis. In New York State, there are only five other organizations that provide these services. It is very difficult to obtain services.” ESS is beginning with services in Bronx, Manhattan and Queens but plans to expand to Long Island and the other boroughs.

Richard Anemone recently joined ESS as its new Director of MRDD Services and is planning additional growth in this area, including the possibility of new day programs and additional residences.

Looking Ahead

All this growth offers plenty of excitement and lots of challenges. “It is a little daunting sometimes,” says Gutheil.

Finances are always an issue, especially during times of growth. In 2004, ESS had a budget of \$24 million. “Sheltering Arms will add \$7 million. That’s an increase of almost one-third to the agency

budget,” says Gutheil. “By this time next year, with the after-school programs and the rest, we will probably be in the mid-\$30 millions.”

ESS is already raising \$4 million in private contributions and other support to supplement government funded programs and support other initiatives where no public monies are available. “We have a small endowment, about \$10 million,” says Gutheil. “Our board allocates money from the earnings on the endowment to support ongoing work as well as new programs. The board was willing to cover the deficit on the group home program to allow us to hang on a little longer and make this work. We laid out a lot of money for the Sheltering Arms start up and still more on the after-school program.”

Director of Development and Communications Kerry Hishta Hui is ramping up the agency’s fundraising efforts to match its expanded programming, including outreach to new foundation and corporate supporters. “The board is playing an active role in the development effort, knowing that government sources aren’t going to cover everything,” she says.

Implementation of all these new programs keeps the agency’s “to do” list pretty full. “We have a game plan for at least our next year or two,” says Gutheil.

This month, ESS will take at least one night off to celebrate its 175th birthday. A special Anniversary Dinner is being held at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine on September 12th, featuring former Secretary of State General Colin Powell as keynote speaker.

For information about Episcopal Social Services and its programs, call 212-675-1000 or visit www.essnyc.org.

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sessions to complete the training. For more information visit www.longislandcrisiscenter.org or call (516) 826-0244 for a free brochure. Applicants please call (516) 826-0244 to schedule an interview prior to enrolling in L.I.C.C.’s training program.

September 13 – Institute for Senior Action Fall session starts. Ten classes provide advocacy education taught by experts in their fields. Learn about federal, state & local government, public speaking and a wide array of other subjects. For recent retirees, as well as longtime activists. At Hudson Guild Elliott Center, 441 West 26th Street. For information contact Steve Swidler, Project Director at 212-273-5261 or via e-mail at sswidler@jasa.org.

September 13 - The Friends of Little Flower volunteer organization will hold a Memorial Dinner Dance in honor of Monsignor John T. Fagan to benefit Little Flower Children and Family Services of New York. The event, which begins at 7:00 pm, will be held at Majestic Gardens on Route 25A in Rocky Point. Tickets are \$40. For more information or to purchase tickets, please call Marge Borrelli at 631-345-6927.

September 13 - Leake and Watts Services, Inc. will host its Inaugural Family Life Education Conference “Raising Winners: An Urban Agenda”, a forum for parents, professionals and service providers, 8:45 am – 12:30 pm, Fordham University, Lincoln Center Campus, 113 West

60th Street, New York, NY, Pope Auditorium. No charge, but advance registration is required. Contact Junith Rodriguez at Leake and Watts, Preventive Services, at (718) 794.8520 or jrodriguez@leakeandwatts.org.

September 14 - Morgan Stanley will be hosting a breakfast, "Control Your Wealth." Will be discussing how to increase charitable contributions while reducing estate tax liability, the transfer tax system, personal trusts and transferring highly appreciated stocks to the next generation. 8:00-9:30 am. Morgan Stanley Corporate Headquarters-1585 Broadway (at 47th Street). RSVP required. Contact Stephanie Kelly 212-883-8120.

September 16 - Greystone Programs will benefit from the 17th Annual International Wine Showcase and Auction at The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY. Food and wine tasting begins at 12:30 pm; silent auction begins at 1:00 PM, life auction begins at 4:30 pm, \$70.00 per person. For reservations call Maria Dowling, Events Coordinator at (845) 452-5772 ext. 350 or go on-line to www.greystoneprograms.org.

September 16 - Variety Child Learning Center (VCLC) will host a Family Reunion Celebration in recognition of 40 years serving young children with special needs, along with their families, from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm at 47 Humphrey Drive, Syosset, NY. Festivities are open to alumni, current families, and staff of VCLC. Call 516-921-7171, ext. 2104 for more information or e-mail reunion@vclc.org.

September 17 - The Community Foundation Garden

Party will be hosted by Rob and Emilie Dyson at Mandalay, Millbrook, from 3-6 pm, Tickets are \$125 in advance. Sponsorship opportunities are available by contacting David J. Ringwood, Vice-President/Development at 845-452-3077.

September 18 - The Momentum Project will celebrate twenty-one years of providing communal meals and health-related services to New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS at a reception from 6-9 pm at 322 Eighth Avenue (Enter at 26th Street) in Manhattan. For reservations and more information, call 212-691-8100 ext 327.

September 18 - Children’s Village will host a Golf and Tennis Classic with a full day of golf and tennis with lunch, cocktail reception, dinner and awards, St. Andrews Golf Club – Hastings on Hudson; \$2500 golf foursome, \$625 individual golf; \$300 individual tennis, \$150 cocktails and reception only. Contact RoseAnn Magdaleno: rmagdaleno@childrensvillage.org, 914-693-0600 ext. 1224.

September 18 - United Way of Long Island’s Golf Outing will be held at Huntington Crescent Club, 10: am, registration followed by brunch and a 12:00 p.m. Shot Gun Start, Cocktails and Dinner from 5:30- 8:00 pm. For information, call Janie Figueroa at 631-940-3721 or jfigueroa@unit-edwayli.org.

September 18 - Medical Health and Research Association of New York City, Inc. (MHRA) will hold its 3rd Annual BroadwayOffBroadway Cabaret at B.B. King Blues