

HOME INSIDER

Summer 2021



GROWING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

An Interview with The Felix Organization and Land to Learn

By: Erin M. Cafarelli, Chief Development & Public Relations Officer



I recently had the pleasure to sit down and chat with Amanda Ricken Simonetta, Executive Director at The Felix Organization and Jen Morris, Program Manager and Garden Educator and Zoë Markwalter, Director of Operations at Land to Learn. This summer, thanks to a collaborative partnership with The Felix Organization and Land to Learn, we were able to provide garden programming for the youth at the Children's Home.

Amanda, can you tell us about The Felix Organization?

The Felix Organization was founded in 2006 by Rock 'n Roll Hall of Famer, Darryl "DMC" McDaniels of rap group Run DMC and Emmy Award-winning casting director, Sheila Jaffe. Fellow adoptees, they were connected by a mutual friend and immediately bonded over their mutual desire to give back to youth who

may not have been fortunate enough to get taken into a forever family as they had.

The first idea they came up with was to build a city for youth in foster care! A friend suggested they start a bit smaller—with a camp. That very summer, in partnership with the child welfare agency, The New York Foundling, we hosted the first summer of Camp Felix!

Since 2006, Felix has sent nearly 3,000 children to our five Camp Felix locations, serving New York and Los Angeles-based foster youth. Felix also offers year-round programs to help foster children in New York City reach their dreams throughout the year. Since our inception, Felix's programs have impacted the lives of nearly 15,000 children in the foster care system.

What are some of the programs you offer?

From a single summer camp that first year, the Felix tree has blossomed into five camps and a variety of year-round programs including Beyond Camp, Felix Friendship Circle and holiday celebrations to support our youth during a very difficult time of year.

We at Felix believe strongly that all children deserve these opportunities. All of our programs remove the financial and logistical barriers, so that youth in foster care can enjoy these same opportunities and rites of passages that other children experience.



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MISSION STATEMENT

The Home is dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing environment that improves lives and empowers at-risk children and families in the Hudson Valley and surrounding communities.

VALUES STATEMENT

Our core principles guide us in fulfilling our mission and operating on a daily basis. We live by these values and use them to focus our decisions.

Integrity We will act ethically, honorably and with commitment in all that we do.

Stewardship We will manage our resources responsibly to ensure ongoing sustainability.

Respect We will show compassion and respect for ourselves and others.

Opportunity We will foster resiliency and seek to create growth opportunities.

Dear Friends,

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones happy, healthy and enjoying the summer season. The last 18-months have taught us many lessons and reconfirmed for us just how important the mission and work of the Children's Home is for the children and families in our community. None of the work we do would be possible without the supportive, caring, dedicated and generous group of friends we have made over the last 174 years.

We have exciting news! The Children's Home will celebrate its 175th anniversary on January 21, 2022! It is hard to believe that the work our founders set out to do in 1847 is the same work we are doing today—with a few changes.

Traditionally, the Children's Home has been known as a residential treatment program serving children in the New York State Foster Care System. However, over the last few years we have branched out to serve children and families in the community through our Community Based Services Program. We have also seen a steady decline in the number of kids placed residentially. Public policy and funding have moved to a system that supports families and children in their homes and communities. You will hear about the growth of our Community Based Services Program in our article on page 4. We have almost 300 children enrolled today and we expect that number to continue to climb.

The crisis at the southern border has been at the forefront of national news for months. In 2014, the Children's Home provided emergency shelter services to unaccompanied minors in response to the last surge. Two years ago we began providing emergency care to children coming across the border in what is now a record surge. The Children's Home developed 60 shelter beds to help in the national response to this influx.

We continue to collaborate with community partners to provide the children we serve with the best care possible. Thank you to The Felix Organization and Land to Learn for helping to enrich our summer programming by offering a garden project for our kids to participate in.

The Home also welcomed three new board members and a new executive committee in July. We are looking forward to working together to ensure the mission and work of the Home continues to support the most vulnerable in our community.

It was a challenging school year for our kids, but they persevered. We saw three of our youth graduate and receive their high school diplomas and one of our youth moved up to sixth grade. We couldn't be more proud of their hard work, determination and commitment.

The twists and turns of the last 18 months have tested us all. But you can rest assured that we are resilient. Our commitment to the work our founders set-out to do in 1847 remains strong and we are hard at work ensuring our mission is fulfilled each day.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and thank you for all that you do for the children and families in our community. We look forward to celebrating our 175th Anniversary with you in January!

Sincerely,



Walter J. Joseph
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer



Children's Home of Poughkeepsie Appoints New Board Members & Officers

By: Erin Cafarelli, Chief Development & Public Relations Officer

The Children's Home of Poughkeepsie is pleased to announce three new board members and a new executive committee for the 2021-2022 term. The Children's Home Board of Directors is composed of generous community members who have been selected for their knowledge, expertise and commitment to our mission.

The three newly elected board members are:



Matthew Cruz, born and raised in Poughkeepsie, New York, has been a lifelong resident of the Dutchess County area. He is financial advisor and pension consultant with DSL Financial Services in Poughkeepsie. Matthew graduated from the State University of New York at Geneseo and is an Accredited Investment Fiduciary (AIF®) and College of Financial Planning Graduate who holds the Chartered Retirement Plans Specialist (CRPS®) designation. Matthew believes deeply in giving back to the community and is an active member in the Hyde Park Rotary Club and the Roosevelt Vanderbilt Association. He also enjoys cycling, golf, volleyball and spending time outdoors. Matthew and his wife Kate reside in Hyde Park with their three children, Amelia (7), Natalie (6), and Leo (2).



Sean Manna, a long-time Hudson Valley resident, works at Central Hudson as a Supervisor in Accounts Payable & Financial Records. Sean holds a Bachelor's degree in Finance from the State University of New York at New Paltz. His volunteer work includes the United Way of Dutchess County, Dutchess Outreach and he is current board member of the Tivoli Gardens Condo Association. Sean is a long-time Children's Home volunteer, assisting with events, serving on the Home's Social Network Committee and most recently the Finance Committee. Sean joins the board as Assistant Treasurer.



Carole Schaad is co-founder and artistic director of Stringendo, Inc., music school for school string players, 1998 to present. She is committed to community service for her student musicians and organizes music for many local events and organizations. Carole teaches violin privately and at Dutchess Day School. She has served on the Board of Directors at the Starr Library in Rhinebeck, and is a past president of the Rhinebeck Chamber Music Society.

"I am delighted to welcome these three dynamic community members to the Board of Directors at the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie. I look forward to working together to support the mission of the Home this coming year," said Maureen Crush, President, Children's Home of Poughkeepsie Board of Directors.

Thank you to all who serve.

Children's Home 2021-2022 Board of Directors

Maureen Crush, <i>President</i>	Vanessa Rice, <i>Vice President Program</i>	Alyssa Bowers
Patricia W. Goodemote, <i>First Vice President</i>	Rochelle Friedman, <i>Vice President Resource Development</i>	Matthew Cruz
Mary Lou Davis, <i>Vice President Audit</i>	Amy Dittmar, <i>Secretary</i>	Nicholas Garin
Alicia Dean, <i>Vice President Governance</i>	Valerie Murphy, <i>Treasurer</i>	Sherry LaTassa
Christopher Downey, <i>Vice President Investment</i>	Sean Manna, <i>Assistant Treasurer</i>	Linda Lurie
	Catherine Forbes, <i>Historian</i>	Patrick Meaney
		Carole Schaad
		Kim Scoralick
		Donald K. Stammer
		Susan K. Stoller
		Jessica L. Vinall
		Walter J. Joseph, <i>Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer</i>

COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES PROGRAM SEES GROWTH

By: Courtney Doyle, LMHC - Assistant Executive Director, Community Based Services

Our Community Based Services program (CBS) has seen quite the expansion over the past couple of years. At its inception in 2016, the department had two programs, Health Home Care Management and Wendy's Wonderful Kids adoption recruitment and served 60 clients. Five years later, we have grown to serve almost 300 clients, and added two additional programs. Currently, we provide Health Home Care Management, Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), Children and

These programs strive to be family driven and youth guided. The family is viewed as the expert in their care which allows for strong rapport between the clients and practitioners.

The Community Based Services department carries the mission of the Children's Home in providing trauma informed and culturally competent care to our community. Each program provides a wide array of services to meet the needs of the youth.

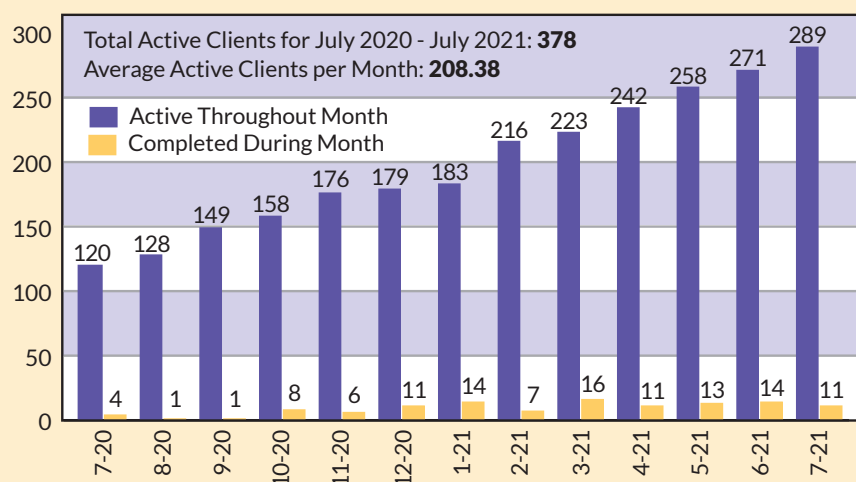
life. These services strengthen families and help them make informed decisions about their care.

Finally, Wendy's Wonderful Kids, a signature program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption brings children waiting to be adopted from foster care one step closer to safe, loving and permanent homes. Through **Wendy's Wonderful Kids**, the Foundation provides grants to adoption agencies to hire and train adoption recruiters who implement the Foundation's Child-Focused Recruitment Model. This model is up to three times more effective at serving children who have been in foster care the longest, including older youth, sibling groups and children with special needs.

The CBS program consists of social workers, mental health counselors, case workers and care managers. (We have grown from a staff of 6 to 32!) Staff offer children and families consistent support to overcome the challenges they face and become successful in independently navigating their community resources.

The rapid growth of the Community Based Services program reflects the scale of need in our community. As the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie rises to the challenge of meeting this need, it is exciting to think of the positive impact we can provide. I began my career in the Group Emergency Foster Care Program, where we cared for children experiencing acute trauma after being removed from their home environment. Community Based Services takes a proactive approach to support children and their families which can prevent such trauma. Our community systems often work in silos. The Community Based Services program continues to break down those silos and provide continuity of care for youth in all physical health, mental health and educational aspects of their lives. Our goal is to provide healing and hope to kids and families that need it most.

Active Client Census for July 2020 – July 2021



Family Treatment Support Services (CFTSS) and the Wendy's Wonderful Kids adoption recruitment program. Services are provided in Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Sullivan and Ulster counties. These programs align well with the New York State Families First Prevention Services Act, which aims to prioritize family based care over residential levels of care. The Community Based Services model brings more accessible services to the community allowing families to stay intact.

The hallmark of Community Based Services is offering supportive programming to youth and their families in their home or in a community setting of the family's choice.

Care Management provides the tools necessary to stay healthy, promote wellness, and decrease utilization of the hospital. The Care Manager provides a family centered plan that supports continuity of care and will help families arrange new services if necessary.

HCBS is a strengths-based program that offers services such as respite, caregiver family support and prevocational skills to youth.

CFTSS include clinical components such as individual and family therapy. CFTSS gives youth the power to improve their health, well-being and quality of



COOKIES AND MILK

By: Emily Mathews,
Development and Public
Relations Associate

Would you keep an old, tattered shirt that's 5 sizes too big? One loving mother shared with us why her daughter chooses to. This is their story:

"I am connecting with you today to share a picture and my words of thanks. Yesterday I found myself unpacking a box of a few of my daughter's clothes. In the box of cute little dresses we packed away for her daughter to wear someday I found the item of clothing most cherished by my daughter—the t-shirt that celebrated the 150 Birthday of the Children's Home.

At the age of 5, she left her former home by train and made her way across the state to Poughkeepsie. At the age of 7, she was ready to come to her new foster home. Our home. Her caseworker

"I know that there are many little girls like my daughter that you care for daily, please know that those caring moments that you extend to the children matter. Thank you for creating my daughter's priceless possession—a t-shirt stained with cookies and love."

brought many bags of oversized clothes labeled with her initials. As I was unpacking her clothes that first day, I pulled out one of the t-shirts. "You don't want to save this t-shirt, do you? Especially since it is 5 times too big and stained with brown stains all over the front." I quickly watched her emotions change to sadness as she clung on to the shirt and began to tell me the stories.

Little did I know that this was her nightshirt. On the nights that she woke up with scary dreams a caring staff would have milk and cookies with her. My daughter wore that shirt until it was so worn from being washed that I told her I

was afraid that if we washed it one more time it would be ruined. She asked that I would never throw it away. After unpacking the box yesterday I shared with her the treasure that I found. Immediately it brought back for her the memories of cookies and milk and the love and care that the staff at the Children's Home showed her."

"Thank you for creating my daughter's priceless possession – a t-shirt stained with cookies and love." Next year marks the 175th Anniversary of the Children's Home. We hope you'll join us in celebrating 175 years of healing & hope, cookies and love!



continued from front cover

How did you get involved with Land to Learn?

In 2020, due to COVID-19, we had to shift our in-person overnight camp programs to virtual and pop-up day camp experiences in order to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our campers.

The challenge of adapting our programs inspired us to create the Camp Felix Garden program in partnership with a foster care group residence in upstate New York that had a large enough property to build on. I was familiar with Land To Learn and thought they would be the perfect partner to help us implement this kind of program.

Last summer, with Land to Learn, a group of teen girls were able to build a garden on site at their group home. It was a great way for them to get outside and dig in the dirt while creating a beautiful and peaceful space for reflection.

We are so grateful to have a new group of young people building a garden on the property of the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie this summer!

What a great way to pivot your programming during an uncertain time. Zoë and Jen, what exactly is Land to Learn?

The mission of Land to Learn is: Growing a movement for food justice and community



wellness through garden-based education. We focus on facilitating social-emotional learning, openness to trying new things (especially veggies!), and skill building in a variety of garden-based settings.

We have many different programs which we conceptualize as being part of a "Leadership Ladder". Our SproutEd program is the first rung on the ladder and offers K-2nd grade students lessons out in the garden, where they learn science, ELA and reading skills, as well as social-emotional skills and tasting lots of veggies! We also run an entrepreneurial program for upper elementary students called "Crop Shop" where students design advertising materials and run a mini farm stand at their school. We have two programs that are primarily for teenagers: Radicle Roots and, of course, Ground Truth (the program CHP youth are a part of)! These programs offer job skills training and social-emotional learning for teens in a garden-based setting. We also prioritize hiring and training youth within the communities where we work as assistant gardeners and interns.

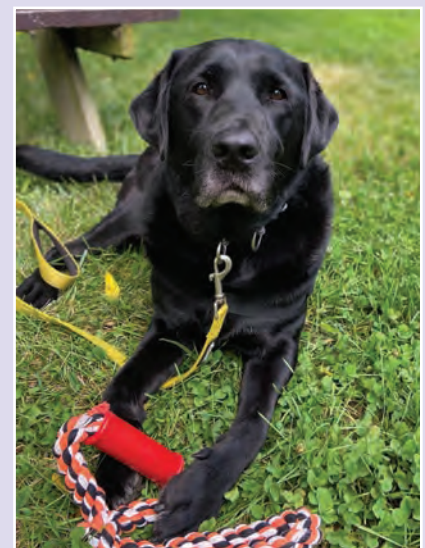
What are the benefits to the youth you serve?

The cooperative nature of our programming gives youth a voice and sense of agency in their learning. They learn lessons more deeply because they are invested in the outcomes. Being outside comes with its own set of benefits: stress reduction, mindfulness, and a sense of connectedness, among many others. The novelty of the experience of being and working in a garden also sets the time apart in youth's minds and makes the learning that much more impactful and memorable.

Amanda, why are collaborations like this important to the youth served by The Felix Organization?

Since our inception 15 years ago, Felix has relied on long-term partnerships with community-based organizations spanning across the country to ensure we fulfill our mission.

Most social services agencies have to focus on basic needs for children in foster care



Elvis patiently waits in a local park for a visit with one of the youth in our Community Based Services program. Our team meets with children in a place that is most comfortable and accessible for them and their family.

like housing and education. Very few organizations, however, can focus their resources on planting a seed of hope to help children in foster care pursue their own dreams and goals. The Felix Organization is fortunate to be able to provide environments and opportunities that support personal growth and enrichment for this population throughout the year, and we couldn't do it without the partnership of organizations like yours, which allow our mission to come to life.

Felix relies profoundly on the collaborative efforts of our partner agencies, donors, volunteers, and supporters in order to reach as many children in foster care as we possibly can! We would like to give a BIG thanks to everyone at Children's Home of Poughkeepsie for helping to make that vision a reality!

That's wonderful. Jen, can you tell us how the garden project is going at the Children's Home?

We are learning a lot in this partnership and I believe the youth are as well. The

youth and staff brainstormed together to figure out what to plant based on participant preference, availability, and seasonality. So far, we have planted out all 7 garden spaces with tomatoes, peppers (including spicy ones which the youth are excited for!), cucumbers, watermelon, beets, and soothing herbs, among others. The teens recently made a yummy strawberry and lettuce salad with produce they harvested from the garden! With the help of Jay's carpentry skills, we've decorated signs for many of the plants and made flags for the gardens. Every day is a new adventure and we appreciate that the youth continue to show up to care for the plants and beautify the space with us!

Thank you all for taking the time to share with us about your work and this awesome collaboration. Partnerships like this are critical to the success of the youth in our care. The kids are loving the project and we are all excited to watch their gardens grow.

The Shoebox

I met a boy some time ago who deeply touched my heart.
He has no place to call home.
He has no one any longer to call family.
I sat on the floor in his room.
He sat on his bed.
All he had left were his "treasures."
He went to his closet to take out his most important worldly possessions.
They were in a shoebox.
He removed the lid.
The shoebox was not even half-full.
He proudly showed me all he had to his name.
Four action figures and a tablet, not the electronic kind, but paper.
But when you have so little, those things mean so much.
That shoebox held everything near and dear to him, his "treasures."
He was so proud to show me each one.
No matter, how meager the "treasure," every child needs to have something they can all their own.
—David A. Crenshaw, Ph.D., ABPP



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A place of healing and hope since 1847.



**Open Your Heart Cocktail Concert &
175TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION**

Thursday ★ April 21, 2022 ★ 6 - 9 pm
Performance by New York Tenor Christopher Macchio