

NETWORK NEWS

A newsletter for our families, friends, and volunteers.



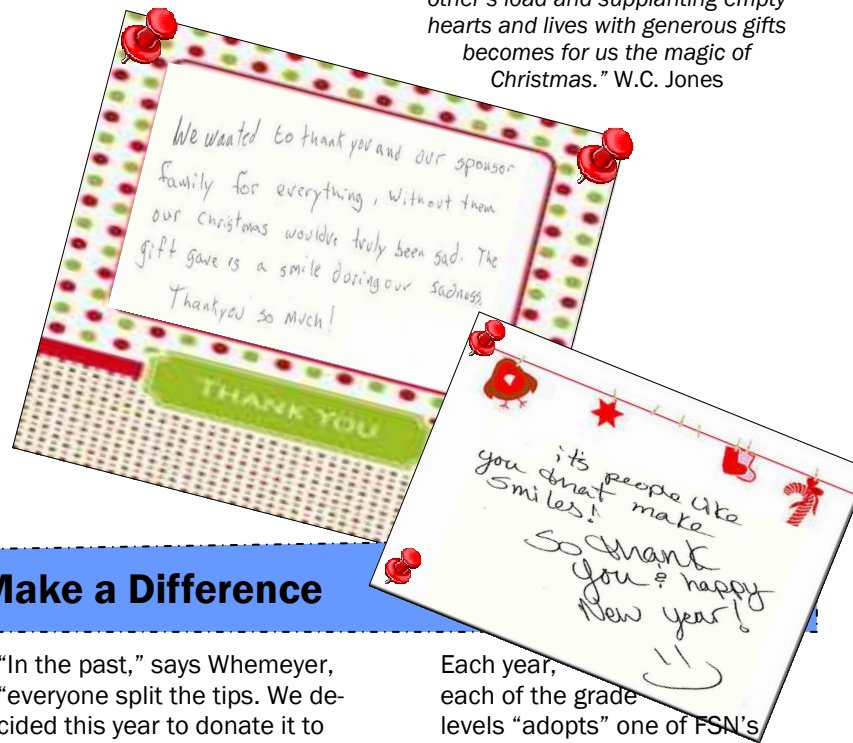
Believe In The Miracle Christmas at Family Support Network

Every year it looks as if Santa's workshop relocated from the North Pole to the office of Family Support Network. The office is filled to the brim with presents as Family Support Specialists work hard to hide the gifts in every nook and cranny safe from the eyes of peeking children. Like Santa, local donors keep the Christmas spirit alive in the hearts of not only children, but parents too.

Starting a week before Christmas FSN sets aside a special Christmas visit for each family at the office or in the family's home. The beautifully wrapped presents from donors don't last long as kids tear through the paper to find the toy they have been wishing for all year long.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts and the hearts of our families for bringing joy to our families year after year!

"The joy of brightening other lives, bearing each others' burdens, easing other's load and supplanting empty hearts and lives with generous gifts becomes for us the magic of Christmas." W.C. Jones



Our Christmas program is an integral service FSN provides to our families. Many of our families simply do not have enough in their tight budget to set aside money for Christmas presents. With the help of over 170 donors this Christmas season we were able to participate in making Christmas wishes come true; not just through the abundance of gifts, but through cherished time spent with family as well.

Local High Schools Make a Difference

"We wanted to make a difference," is a sentiment shared by high school students Sydney Wehmeyer of Skyview and Grady of Billings Central. Both teenagers helped coordinate efforts of their peers in order to give FSN families a brighter celebration this Christmas.

"In the past," says Whemeyer, "everyone split the tips. We decided this year to donate it to families who don't get to have a Christmas or don't have anyone to spend it with." For two nights, Skyview choir members served dinner and provided entertainment to the Music Feast attendees. The diners were told that the money put in the tip jars would go to local charities. "We want to reach out to kids at Christmas and give them something we take for granted."

Each year, each of the grade levels "adopts" one of FSN's families and goes above and beyond by buying the family everything on their list and more. As Grady said, "it's the right thing to do." He explained that in the weeks leading to Christmas, a collection of money is taken each day. Students sign-up to bring items on each family member's wish list and then use the collected money to buy any other items the family might want or need. "It's a fun thing for our class," and it's a fun time for the families who receive the gifts!

Sydney is a senior and co-president of Skyview's Choir. She and her fellow president, Eli Webster, decided that this year the money collected in the tip jars during their annual Music Feast event would go to local charities.

Students from Billings Central have shared with FSN families for the past several Christmases.

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Doing The Work of FSN

By Wendy Ochs, Family Support Network Director

When I tell people what I do for a living I often hear some things like, "that must be so rewarding." And the answer is, "yes, it is," though not for the reasons I expect most people have. Or, at least, not for the reasons I thought it would be when I first began this work several years ago.

I was a "baby social worker," fresh out of college and on my way to Billings, MT, to work with at-risk families through the US-2 program, a young adult volunteer missionary program of the United Methodist Church. I had visions of going forth and changing one corner of the world by sharing love and faith with my fellow humankind. Obviously, I was a bit idealistic and a lot naïve; but genuine optimism is catchy and at times, served me well. Especially when it came to Denise.

Denise (not her real name) was a mom with severe mental health issues who rarely left her home. She didn't trust people and was struggling to raise three children, two of whom had their own mental health diagnoses, without the help or support of others.

I arrived at her small trailer in one of the more notorious trailer parks in town on a hot September day. For whatever reason, Denise let me in. And for whatever reason—that catchy optimism and sweet naivety, perhaps?—she liked me and let me in again and again.

Over the next year and a half, Denise did incredible things. She started seeing a psychiatrist and got back on medications to help control her schizophrenic thoughts. She went back to school, got a job, and moved to a better part of town. She shared her gift of creativity by making beautiful arrangements of silk flowers for the people she loved. She became more involved in her children's care to make sure they were getting the services they needed.

Toward the end of my two year commitment, Denise asked me to accompany her to an IEP meeting for one of her children. We arrived at the child's school and sat around a big table with several others. The meeting started with Denise introducing the people who were there—teachers, counselors, a psychologist, the princi-

pal. When she came to me she said, "Oh, that's just Wendy. She's someone who comes and visits with me sometimes." What?! My first instinct was to be really offended. "I do more than 'just come visit with you'" I wanted to shout! Thankfully, I kept my mouth shut and listened. And as I listened I learned an important lesson that changed my understanding of why I do the work I do.

The lesson was this: it's not about me! Yes, I was leaving Montana feeling like I had made some sort of difference in that corner of the world. I had loved the unlovable, had faith in the faithless. I had planted seeds that I hoped would one day take root and grow. But the truth was the person who had grown and changed the most was me. Because so many courageous people had let me into their homes and their lives and had shared a part of their journey with me, I would never be the same.

Do I find my work rewarding? Yes, most of the time I do. Because most of the time I recognize that I still have a long way to go. There's more growing and learning to do and I'm grateful to be surrounded by people who continually help me do just that!



Family Fun from Future Shirts Inc



FSN encourages activities in which all family members can participate. Future Shirts Inc. helped FSN families achieve this over the holiday season through the donation of 210 color-me t-shirts and fabric markers. Families cheerfully personalized their "Season of Sharing" t-shirts as they visited with each other.

Thank you Future Shirts Inc for getting involved in the community and putting a smile on our families faces!

If you or a group would like to get involved in creating a family activity call our office and let us know your ideas!

256-7783

Barbara's Open House



Thank you to all of those who attended Barbara Sample's Open House in October. She really enjoyed the event and continues to stay involved by organizing training opportunities and providing input as we explore ways to collaborate with other area agencies.

The Wraparound Process

Wraparound is a planning process that follows a series of steps to help children and their families realize their hopes and dreams. The Wraparound process also helps make sure children and youth with mental health issues grow up in their homes and communities.

The Wraparound process is a team-based activity that helps groups of people involved in a family's life work together towards a common goal.

The team creates a plan that includes ways to assure that children/youth and their families can experience success in their communities, homes, and schools.

Wraparound services are intended to be integrated in to local organizations in Billings to effectively work with families in the community.

To receive more information on how to get involved or more about Wraparound call:

Nancy Farrar 256-7783
Family Support Network

National Sources:

- National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health www.ffcmh.org (240) 403-1901
- National Wraparound Initiative www rtc.pdx.edu/nwi
- Systems of Care
www.systemsofcare.samhsa.gov

Underriner Motors and Mufflers & More Keep FSN Vehicles Afloat

In the last year alone FSN put 64,000 miles on their company vehicles in order to make sure families had time to connect and learn the skills needed to grow and thrive together. Children are transported to our office in Billings from Ballantine in the East, Columbus in the West and Crow Agency in the South. Our Staff also serves Stillwater, Carbon, Bighorn, Musselshell and Sweet Grass Counties.

FSN has several older, high-mileage vehicles that workers use to transport children to and from visits.

December was a tough month on all of our vehicles; we lost one due to an accident and three others due to repairs. Having safe, reliable transportation is vital need of our agency. With the help of a grant from the Exchange Clubs and the aid of Underriner Motors, FSN replaced two vehicles and received two moderately newer cars. To FSN's gratitude, Underriner Motors has provided 14 vehicles to FSN's fleet over a 3 year span.

We would also like to thank Mufflers & More for the continuous hard work the mechanics put into maintaining FSN's vehicles throughout

the year.

Currently, FSN is looking to add newer vehicles with lower miles to assist in reducing maintenance cost and providing reliable, safe transportation for children. If you or if you know of someone that would like to donate a low mileage vehicle please call FSN for your tax deductible donation.

406-256-7783



FSN's Wish List



*crafts*board games*diapers*shampoo*
*deodorant*tampons/pads*
*hairbrushes*furniture*coloring books
monthly planners gifts for gift closet*alarm
clocks*brooms*mops*dressers*

One of the easiest ways to support families at FSN is by donating items from our Wish List. By collecting items from our Wish List, you help keep our families' smiles up!

The Gift of Reading

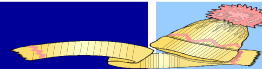
Thanks to our friends at Barnes and Noble bookstore, FSN received hundreds of books for the children FSN serves. The Barnes and Noble team's goal is to present a new book to each child over the holiday season in hopes that they can create their own library at home. For many of these children this is their first book of their own. Thank you Barnes and Noble for giving the gift of reading during the holiday season!



US Bank Gives Back

After the Day of Caring event in September, US Bank volunteers expressed future interest in donating needed items for families. In December, US Bank organized a donation drive for hats, mittens, shampoo and other essential items for families at FSN. US Bank also designated their December Jean's day funds to go towards maintenance of the agency vehicles.

Thank you US Bank!



KIPS, NPP, Triple P Training-Oh My!


Family Support Specialists are actively engaged in trainings the next few months.

Key to **I**nteractive **P**arenting **S**cale (KIPS) is a practical, evidence based tool that reliably assesses the quality of parenting behaviors during free play with a young child.

Family Support Specialists use KIPS to effectively promote healthy child and family development.

Barbara Sample is training the staff and other community members in the **N**urturing **P**arenting **P**rogram, an evidence based family approach for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. The program feature activities to foster positive parenting skills. Concepts build upon levels of empathy, alternatives to hitting and yelling, family communication, developmental expectations and promotion of healthy physical and emotional development

FSN and United Way will host a training on the **T**riple **P** program. Triple **P**, **P**ositive **P**arenting **P**rogram, is a multi-level intervention framework that aims to tailor information, advice and professional support to the needs of individual families. Interventions are intended for the prevention of social, emotional and behavioral problems in childhood, the prevention of child maltreatment, and the strengthening of parenting and parental confidence. Triple P works for many different families, in many different circumstances, with many different problems, in many different places!



Thank you to FS N's 2010 Holiday Donors:

Allison Ackerman
Lori and Grant Agnew
Alpha Delta Kappa Zeta Chapter
Deborah and John Anspach/Hanson
Charles and Kathleen Arago
Carol Austin
Austin Lehman Adventures LLC
Lynda Ballard
Jennifer Baretta
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Todd and Linda Baugh
Sue Begger
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Linda, Caitlyn, and Norman
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The Breakfast Club
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Augusta Soriya
Jim and Carol Speilman
Tracy and Ralph Spence Jr.
St. Joseph Catholic Church
Gary and Rhonda Steubs
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Stockman Bank (Shiloh)
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Yellowstone Resource Group
LaVone Zentz

The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention." -Oscar Wilde

We'd like to give a special thank you to the following for their support throughout 2010:

Broquel Albertson
Alpha Delta Kappa Zeta Chapter
Kelli Delaney
Jim Allen
American Lutheran Church
American Patchwork Quilters Association
Dave Armstrong
Misty Arneson
Mike and Renee Barker
Billings Clinic-OR
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Lori Blake
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The Breakfast Exchange Club
Amy Gibler Brown
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Caroline M Hall

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Mary K, Terry and Laura Housinger
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Patrick Wilson
Donna Witham
Lynda Woods
Yellowstone Country Lodging Association
Yellowstone Valley Quilters Guild
Connie Zugg



Family Support Network changes families one visit at a time.

FSN programs promote development of healthy parent-child interactions to interrupt the multi-generational cycle of abuse, neglect, hopelessness, poverty, and drug use.



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With just a little support each of us can discover the sources of strength in our lives.



The FSN board has designated first meeting of the calendar year as the annual meeting, which is open to the public.



YES! I WANT TO JOIN WITH FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK IN THEIR EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN AND PRESERVE THE FAMILY THROUGH SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES. I UNDERSTAND MY DONATION WILL SUPPORT LOCAL EFFORTS.

Name _____ Signature _____

Address _____ Phone _____

I want to do more. Contact me to be a volunteer.

My contribution is enclosed for \$ _____

Please make your check payable to **Family Support Network** and mail to:
P.O. Box 21366
Billings, MT 59104

Valentine's Day Fun

Whimsically painted planters make a gift of roses and African violets even sweeter. All you need is a terra-cotta pot, some acrylic paint, and a little imagination.



Items needed:
-Terra-cotta Pot
-Acrylic Paint
-Paint Brushes



Thank you



Family Support Network is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible. All donations will be acknowledged in writing for your records.

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