

[2015 ANNUAL REPORT]

Oakland Family Services



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Building brighter futures for individuals...



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...and families in our community.



Oakland Family Services has been helping build brighter futures for individuals and families in the community since 1921. And, as with any organization that has been making a difference for so long, the agency has needed to stay adept and agile, evolving in all ways to stay present and effective.

This year, through the commitment of our donors, the dedication of our staff and the compassion of the community, we have been able to do just that, touching the lives of approximately 30,000 people through our prevention, education and treatment services.

And as we continue to serve those in the community who need us the most, we routinely monitor and analyze not only the optimal ways to provide our clients with the best of modern, research-based care and education, but also the best practices for running a robust human services organization.

Oakland Family Services has consistently analyzed research, which continues to prove the importance of critical development that takes place when children are ages 0-3. In 2015, Oakland Family Services continued to grow Before 3 to Succeed, an early childhood initiative that has changed how we reach out to help children in the community. The staff identified an additional nearly 1,900 0- to 3-year-olds already in our system. Thousands of parents throughout our agency and the entire county were provided access to key educational information on brain development, child development and parental engagement. When necessary, little ones were routed to the life-changing services we provide.

We know that in addition to the school year, the need for learning and school readiness for children is always present. During the summer months of 2015, Oakland Family Services evolved our Children's Learning Center, offering a summer program for children who were at risk of failing in kindergarten. Instead, they began school in the fall ready to learn and achieve. In fact, of all Children's Learning Center graduates who went on to kindergarten, 94% were promoted to first grade.

Finally, in a time where 16% of Michigan teens seriously consider suicide and one in 11 makes at least one suicide attempt, we continued to support our community through specialty mental health and substance abuse treatment services for adolescents. And, for all ages, we constantly adapt our research-based treatment methods to ensure a happier, more stable and productive life for our clients. Part of this evolution of treatment has included an ongoing focus on trauma-informed care, to ensure clients who have a history of physical and/or sexual abuse or other trauma-inducing experiences are not inadvertently retraumatized in a service setting.

Also in 2015...

- + Our passionate Volunteer Corps membership grew by 375%. These volunteers serve the needs of the organization, providing assistance that helps Oakland Family Services get business done, and also enhance the lives of everyone who needs us.
- + Clients whose lives were changed by the agency became spokespeople in the community, sharing emotional stories of how Oakland Family Services worked to help them.
- + Agency Ambassadors introduced people to the organization, helping them learn about Oakland Family Services' important work.
- + Our caring and dedicated staff worked to ensure a brighter future for every individual and family who walked through our doors.

This report describes the many programs Oakland Family Services offers and their impact on the individuals we serve. It celebrates all who make this work possible. Finally, it shows how Oakland Family Services seeks to Evolve Always, as we continue to provide brighter futures for those who need us.



Dee Wright-Masilotti
Chairman, Board of Directors



Jaimie Clayton
President & CEO

[BOARD OF DIRECTORS]

There are no stronger leaders than those dedicated individuals serving on the Board of Oakland Family Services. These selfless volunteers commit their time, expertise and resources to improve the lives of others and ensure Oakland Family Services' programs and services meet the community need.

On behalf of the entire staff of Oakland Family Services, we extend to our Board of Directors our most sincere appreciation for all they have done and continue to do.

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Paul DeRoche
Vice Chairman

Michael R. Kramer
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Robert W. Scharff
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Alfred Tobocman

Kenneth Whipple



[PROGRAMS + SERVICES]

Oakland Family Services offers a continuum of prevention, education and treatment services that span the human life cycle to enrich the lives of children, strengthen families, and build brighter futures.

Examples of the impact our innovative programs had in our community in 2015 are:

- + Children in more than 1,400 families will have brighter futures through culturally sensitive programs that enhance parenting skills, strengthen family relationships, and help children enter school ready to succeed.
- + More than 230 children were provided with safe and loving homes, whether placed with an adoptive family or reunified with their parents.
- + More than 1,500 parents and relative or licensed caregivers attended trainings to provide children with more experiences that foster learning and development, helping children enter school with the skills they need to be successful.
- + More than 500 youths with serious emotional disturbances, and their families, learned skills to manage emotions and behaviors, so that children are able to achieve their goals at home, at school and with friends.
- + Nearly 4,000 people were helped to overcome issues such as depression, anxiety, grief and loss, substance abuse and troubled interpersonal relationships, improving social, family and work functioning.
- + More than 4,000 members of the community and more than 1,300 clients of Oakland Family Services received educational materials on the importance of early brain development in a child's preparedness to succeed in school through the Before 3 to Succeed awareness campaign and initiative.



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[PREVENTION]

Early Childhood Services

...nurturing healthy parent/child relationships

- + Early On
- + Fussy Baby
- + Parents As Teachers

Family Preservation Services

...providing safe and secure homes for children in need

- + Foster Care for Children
- + PRIDE: Pre-Service Training for Foster Parents and Adoptive Parents
- + Adoption Services
- + Foster Home Licensing
- + Foster Parent Support Groups

[EDUCATION]

School Readiness and Education Services

...preparing children to succeed

- + Children's Learning Center
- + Great Start Readiness Program
- + Early Learning Communities

[TREATMENT]

Behavioral Health Services

...addressing barriers to change and empowering individuals to thrive

- + Mental Health Treatment
- + Substance Abuse Treatment
- + Hispanic Treatment Services
- + Project Recovery Intensive Services for Mothers (PRISM)
- + Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment Services

Specialized Services for Youth

...a program for children, adolescents and families funded through the Oakland County Community Health Authority

- + Individual Counseling
- + Family Counseling
- + Group Counseling
- + Case Management
- + In-Home Services
- + Peer Support and Parent Empowerment
- + Respite
- + Psychiatric Services
- + 24/7 Access to Program Staff

[PROGRAM SUCCESSES]

Children's Learning Center – Great Start Readiness Program

“Oakland Family Services and its amazing staff has become a part of our family. My 4-year-old son has learned so much, so quickly at the Oakland Family Services Children’s Learning Center. The director and teachers make Oakland Family Services the best preschool in Oakland County; they work collaboratively with parents to ensure all of the children’s needs are met. I am confident my son will enter kindergarten fully prepared!”

Project Recovery Intensive Services for Mothers (PRISM)

“I was charged with drunken driving with a child in the car. I thought I did not have a problem with alcohol but having this happen made me see how wrong I was. With the help and guidance I received from Oakland Family Services, I know how to keep sober and clean. I feel better mentally and physically and am stronger than I was because I received the help that really got me through this hard time.”

Fussy Baby

“My son has improved in following directions and being social. He has expanded his learning and is showing respect for his teachers. For my family, it has made it easier to discipline and interact with my child. The advice given has helped so much.”

Behavioral Health

“My therapist has gone above and beyond to make sure I am well mentally and physically. Now I have a house, a job, food, and I am less stressed and depressed than I was before I started counseling. Thank you!”

Specialized Services for Youth

“My son was angry, sad and physically lashed out at school. Our Oakland Family Services therapist entered our life and has supported, taught and encouraged not just my son, but the entire family, and I am forever grateful. I never thought my family, especially my son, would experience peace like this.”





[PREVENTION]

Marvette desperately wanted a family.

She and her husband of 14 years, George, tried to have children, without success. They decided to open their home and hearts to a child who had been removed from his or her home because of abuse or neglect. Oakland Family Services' Family Preservation program provides foster care and adoption services, as well as foster care licensing and training for both foster and adoptive parents.

Twins Carter and Chaise desperately needed a family.

In November 2014, Marvette and George were presented with the opportunity to take not one, but two boys into their home. Carter and Chaise were four months old at the time, underweight and dealing with complications from exposure to cocaine. They were just four pounds each at birth.

"When they came into our home at four months, they were so tiny, we could hold each of them in one hand," Marvette said.

The boys were also dealing with health and developmental issues that persist to this day. Chaise had language delays and Carter had physical delays. Both babies dealt with severe acid reflux that sent the family to a GI specialist and have asthma that necessitates breathing treatments. They were both served by Early On at Oakland Family Services, due to the delays, which were caused by their biological mother's cocaine use.

Though handling the health issues of two boys may have seemed like a lot, Marvette said at the end of the day she would look at her then foster children and feel pure joy.

"At the end of the day, I look at them and I smile because it is all worth it," she said.

Oakland Family Services helped create a beautiful forever family.

Marvette and George's adoption of Chaise and Carter was finalized in June 2015.

"Through all of this – through the fostering and adoption, through my boys' developmental delays – Oakland Family Services was there for all of us," said Marvette. "The staff's focus was always on what was best for Chaise and Carter. The process was so smooth."

Chaise and Carter recently celebrated their 1st birthday. Marvette is still a regular at Oakland Family Services, attending the agency's Early Learning Communities play groups, which especially help them with fine motor and social skills.

"Oakland Family Services gave me the chance to be a mom and that meant the world to me," said Marvette. "There are no guarantees in life, but there is one thing that I am certain of – my boys will be loved."

My hope is that by giving them a brighter future, they will also grow up to make a difference in the lives of others. I couldn't imagine our lives without them. I am so thankful to Oakland Family Services for giving Chaise and Carter a home and for making all four of us a forever family."



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MY HOPE IS THAT BY GIVING THEM A BRIGHTER FUTURE, THEY WILL ALSO GROW UP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS. ”



[THANK YOU]

For 95 years, Oakland Family Services has remained a cornerstone of strength and stability in our community. With compassion and expertise, the staff delivers hope through quality services and programs that make a real difference in the lives of the individuals, children and families the agency serves. It is their work that allows Oakland Family Services to advance its mission each and every day.

Dana Agrusa
Erika Alexander
William Alliston
Melanie Altman
Reshunda Anderson
Alison Andrus-Gallaway
Thomas Baker
Amanda Barbosa
Brenda Bartenbaker
Pamela Bartos
Amanda Beckman
Beverly Beckstrom
Samantha Belanger
Sandy Benson
Kristin Benton
Margaret Berg
Abigail Blackshire
Karen Blechinger
Steffanie Boudreau-Thomas
Heather Brady
Tracy Brady
Shirley Brogan
Caitlyn Broughton
Kelsey Brown
Rachael Brown
Emily Brunke
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Lisa Callaway
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Misty Chung
Lori Clark
Jaimie Clayton
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Caroline Coburn
Sandra Coe
Holly Coffman
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Cynthia Coleman
Velma Coleman
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Lauren DeGrazia
April Delaney
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Lezlee Eddy

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Denisha Flentroy
Nolia Fountain Lloyd
Laura Fuller
Rachel Fuller
Ellene Funke
Dix Geiger
Lisa Gillett
Jessica Glowacz
Shannon Gordon
Molly Graham
Kelsea Grecu
Kimberly Grefka
Lauren Grushoff
Sarah Hakala
Monique Hannah
Michelle Harris
Ashley Hart
Colleen Horton
Ginger Houghton
Melanie Hoyt
Frances Johnson
Meagan Johnson
Monica Johnson

Jennifer Jones
Roberta Jones
Ijuane' Joseph-Jones
Laurin Jozlin
Emily Kaminskas
Chelsea Kasperski
Kristen Kasperski
Ashton Kattoo
Sofia Kazulkina
Kathleen Kiner
Nicole King
Theresa Klunzinger
Kylie Knight
Sharon Kossman
Rod Kovac
Monica Kovach
Kshantineyah Langford
Sarah Lawrence
Deianira Leach
Esther Lee
Julie Lemay
Shimika Leonard
Amanda Liddell
Angela Liegghio
Amanda Lisowski
Candace Lomasney
Johnniqua Love
Kathleen Lynd





Danielle Lyons
 Julayne Magee
 Kathleen Mallett
 Natalie Marchione
 Michelle Martin
 Douglas Masheff
 Michelle Masheff
 Wren Masheff
 Douglas McCann
 Melissa McMahon
 Steven Meerschaert
 Valerie Mercadante
 Raynard Meridith
 Colleen Micklas
 Jeanne Miller
 Julie Mison
 Allison Mocerri
 Arlene Monroe
 Carolyn Moody
 Christia Morris
 Marcela Nava
 Leslie Neisler
 Alyssa Nicol
 Stephanie Noga
 Malinda Odisho
 Derek Odneal
 Jamie Overbaugh
 Bobbie Parham
 Sybil Parrish
 David Partlo
 Donae Patrick
 Karolina Pelc
 Briana Petlock
 Gail Petrusha
 Kristen Phillips
 Dominique Pressnell
 Cassandra Ray

Nancy Rebar
 Justin Redder
 Kerisma Reed
 Kathryn Ribant Payne
 Sherri Richards
 Marilyn Rie
 Justin Rinke
 Tiffany Robinson
 Cirea Rodgers
 Marcela Rodriguez
 Katherine Rose-Brissette
 Linda Ruggirello
 Mary Sain
 Vyctoria Sanborn
 Karen Scheffer
 Naomi Schwartz
 Margaret Sclesky
 Kyeisha Seaton
 Shantel Sheeka
 Jessica Slack
 Katie Sloan
 Deborah Smith
 Ira Smith
 Micheline Sommers
 Teresa Spong
 Sara Srygley
 Amanda Stein
 Megan Stürzinger
 Maha Sulaiman
 Shaun Taft
 Mary Tamasiunas
 Charlene Taylor
 Chontay Taylor
 Kimberly Taylor
 Carol Teachworth
 Terese Teasley
 Janet Terry

Lisa Thomas
 Julie Tillman
 Maria Tovar-Ruiz
 Dayna Valent
 Jennifer Van Cleve
 Ashley VanMaele
 Glenda Vidosh
 Alice Wainwright
 Melanie Watson
 Erin Wearing
 Melanie Weiss
 Carrie Welch
 Malinda Werth
 Stephanie Wheeler
 Valerie Whitaker
 Jennifer White
 Jessica White
 Michelle Wilder
 Jay Wilson
 Allen Wood
 Laura Woodall
 Brittney Woodson
 Alexis Woody
 Jolie Wycinski
 Fay Young
 Kevin Zoromski
 Lisa Zubał-Leggett

2015 STUDENT INTERNS

Katherine Christensen
 Jessica Contreras
 Brittany Cwierniewicz
 Lisa Lamport
 Amanda Liskowski
 Kristen Phillips
 Julian Prosser
 Jessica White

[VOLUNTEER CORPS]

Oakland Family Services Volunteer Corps members play an important role in the work of the agency. These individuals generously give of their time and of themselves, in order to directly improve the well-being of children and their families in our community.

Volunteers play with and read to children in our preschool classrooms. They pack Thanksgiving dinners into boxes for families who wouldn't otherwise have a full holiday meal. They help make sure the holidays are bright for children through our Adopt-A-Family program, and they provide regular help with administrative duties that assist with the everyday business of the agency.

Oakland Family Services is extremely thankful for the support and generosity of our Volunteer Corps!

Tricia Campbell

Antoinette Daka

Kyle DeRoche & the Members of Boy Scout

Troop 229 of Commerce Township

Erina Dinkollari

FCA Motor Citizens

Lexi Guidos

Elise F. Hayes

Tiffany Hodges

Chuck Johnson

Kurt Johnson

Ellen Knoppow

Angela Kolar

Lori Lees

Mary Beth MacGuidwin

Kathy G. Martin

Brian Newman

Sue Pienta

Katie Prior

Red Robin of Troy

Cherie Ritter

Marla Rosberg

Rachelle Saker

Sally Savoie

Brad Seitzinger

Nancy Shapiro

Jill Slocum

Sharon Stanton

Renee Unger

United Way for Southeastern Michigan

Eva Von Voss

Ann Wiedelman

Scott Wiedelman

Linda Wright





[EDUCATION]

By the time he got to Oakland Family Services' Children's Learning Center, 4-year-old Angelo had been expelled from eight other preschools. Autistic and nonverbal, Angelo would have violent physical rages that made his schools brand him a "safety risk." Angelo's mom Tracy said she was losing hope, discouraged for her son and weighed down by a lack of options. She needed to keep her job, especially as the provider of health insurance for her whole family.

"I was just heartbroken," Tracy said. "I felt so bad for my son, I was just depressed. I had just started to let go of the hope that something was going to be right. We'd take Angelo into a new child care facility, drop him off, and then get that phone call: 'You have to come pick up your son.'"

Then she was referred to the Children's Learning Center by a friend and the world changed for her, for Angelo, and for her entire family.

"When I first walked in the door, the teachers greeted me," Tracy said. "They were happy and smiling and you could see the kids running around and they were happy. I just felt this relief. I was assured it would be a good fit for Angelo, which was overwhelming, because that wasn't something I was used to hearing."

Oakland Family Services' Children's Learning Center locations in Pontiac and Walled Lake offer high-quality child care and preschool services for children age 14 months through five years. The center uses the nationally recognized High/Scope model of early learning, which encourages children to learn through play. Each center accommodates 96 students.

When Angelo started attending the Children's Learning Center in Pontiac, Tracy's first impressions proved true. Angelo bonded with other children, with his teacher and even with the school cook, who not only provides the entire center with breakfast, lunch and snack every day, but who accommodated Angelo's eating difficulties. She didn't let him go without food for the entire day as other schools did.

"The teachers were amazing," Tracy said. "At previous places, Angelo would just cry and never stop crying but at Oakland Family Services, he didn't do that. I could actually go to work with comfort and peace knowing that my child is happy and is in a good place with good people. It made my days so much easier."

Angelo's rages decreased and, though not verbally, he is now communicating with others. Previously brushing off others' attempts at physical contact, Angelo now hugs the staff and other students at the school.

"It's the best child care facility I've ever seen," Tracy said. "The staff goes above and beyond what their job is because they treat people like family. Angelo being there made me feel like I could breathe again. I was a whole new person. I was happy."

Tracy knows this means a brighter future for Angelo, who is now 5 and has moved onto kindergarten.

"Angelo getting his educational start at Oakland Family Services is only going to help him in the next step of his life," she said. "If you could only see the difference in him from when we walked in the door until now... it's amazing! I really can't imagine life had we not found Oakland Family Services. It's truly been a blessing."



“ IF YOU COULD ONLY SEE THE DIFFERENCE IN HIM FROM WHEN WE WALKED IN THE DOOR UNTIL NOW... IT'S AMAZING! ”

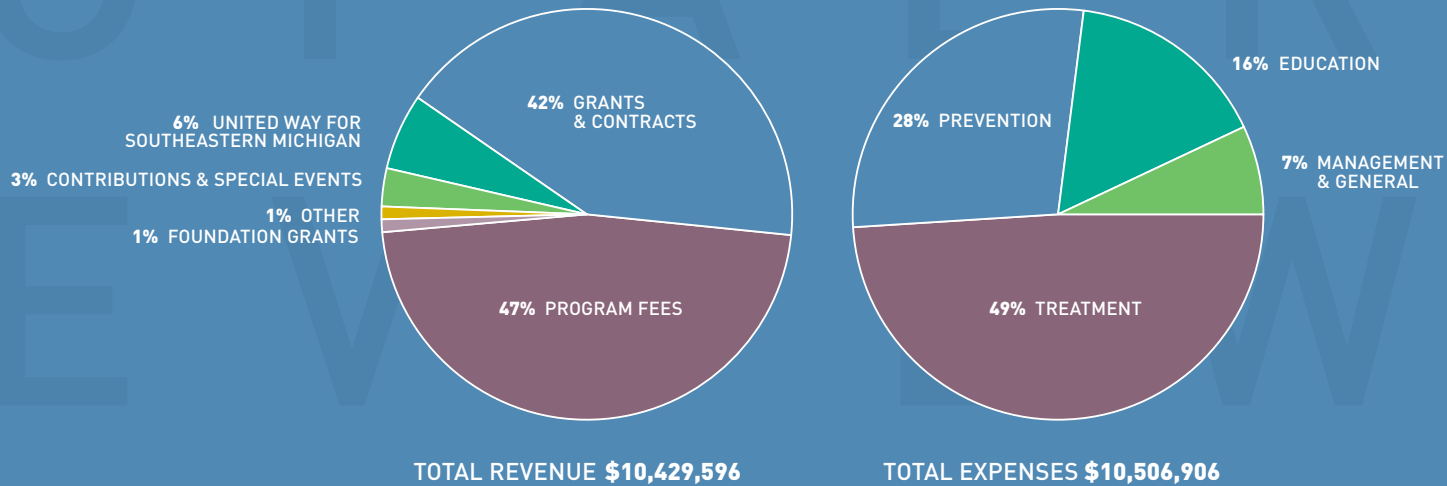


2015

[FINANCIAL OVERVIEW]

Oakland Family Services is truly grateful for the support of all of those who make its work possible. Oakland Family Services enjoys a diverse funding base including state and local grants and contracts, program fees, United Way for Southeastern Michigan, and contributions from individuals, foundations and organizations.

For more information on Oakland Family Services' financials, please visit www.oaklandfamilyservices.org.



[DID YOU KNOW?]

93% of the funds Oakland Family Services receives goes directly to services.



[FUNDING PARTNERS]

- + 51st District Court
- + AuSable Valley Community Mental Health
- + Children's Trust Fund
- + Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- + DeRoy Testamentary Foundation
- + Eagles for Children
- + Macomb County Community Mental Health
- + Michigan Department of Corrections
- + Michigan Department of Education
- + Michigan Department of Human Services
- + Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority
- + Oakland County Health Division Office of Substance Abuse Services
- + Oakland County 6th Circuit Court Family Division
- + Oakland County 6th Circuit Court Urban Drug Court
- + Oakland Integrated Health Network
- + Oakland Schools
- + Oakland Schools Great Start
- + Older Person's Commission
- + The Jewish Fund
- + United Way for Southeastern Michigan
- + Women's National Farm and Garden Association

[SPECIAL STORY]

Miss Dominique, a preschool teacher in Oakland Family Services' Children's Learning Center, guides and instructs students in her classroom every day. These students, as with many in the Children's Learning Center, are struggling due to multiple risk factors. All of the Children's Learning Center teachers are adept at observing and providing what these children need, but Dominique in particular can empathize.

"I was one of these kids," she said.

When Dominique and her older brother were little, her birth mother struggled with mental illness and a drug addiction that left her ill-equipped to care for her children.

While in her mother's care, Dominique failed kindergarten because her mom didn't take her to school. There were many times that she and her brother were not fed properly. Their sustenance at times came from snacks they were allowed to collect at a corner party store.

"Later in life when I was an adult, I realized that my aunt was prepaying at that party store every week so my brother and I would have some sort of food. My aunt knew we were not being fed properly. I don't ever remember my mother cooking food for us," she said.

After many Children's Protective Services calls and interviews with Dominique at school, she and her brother were removed from her mom's home when she was seven years old and her brother ten. The same aunt who had been buying them food – her mother's sister – took guardianship to prevent them from entering foster care. Dominique's mom eventually signed away all parental rights and allowed her sister to adopt them.

Her aunt was going through a breakup at the time and had two sons, one three months older than Dominique, and one just a baby. That left her aunt single and with four children in her care.

"My aunt had four kids on her own," Dominique said. "She worked three jobs to provide for us. We were very poor. We always had what we needed, but it was always a struggle for my aunt to provide for us. We had Christmas because the schools would donate, just like Adopt-A-Family at Oakland Family Services. We had Thanksgiving because people donated Thanksgiving baskets to our family."

Dominique's aunt guided her and continued to get her proper support, due to the trauma she had been through. At the age of 9, Dominique came to Oakland Family Services for counseling.

The first person in her family to attend college, Dominique was pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education at Baker College and came back to Oakland Family Services for a short internship. When she entered the building, she realized she had been there as a child. A little while after graduation, she learned of a job opening at Oakland Family Services, applied and was offered a lead teacher position.

"I really feel like I belong here, with these children," she said. "I really understand what they are going through. This was me. If I would have gone to preschool at 4, I would have been one of these children. Every child needs one consistent person in their lives and maybe I can be that for at least one child. I can give the kids hugs and be there for them on a daily basis."

Dominique said her aunt, whom she now calls mom, was her one consistent person in her life.

"No matter how hard, she never gave up on me. I look at myself today and I give all of my credit to my aunt," she said. "If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be where I am today. I'd be on the same path as my birth mother. I always had one person cheerleading for me."

Dominique said she knows she is right where she belongs in her life, because, like the other Children's Learning Center staff members, she understands the trauma people have gone through and works and advocates to help families in need find proper resources.

"The teachers here, the staff, they all care," she said. "These are our kids and they are a priority. They are going to be loved."



“ IF IT WASN'T FOR HER, I WOULDN'T BE WHERE I AM TODAY. I'D BE ON THE SAME PATH AS MY BIRTH MOTHER. I ALWAYS HAD ONE PERSON CHEERLEADING FOR ME. ”



[ANNUAL GIVING]

Oakland Family Services' Brighter Future Giving Society supports the sustainability of the organization. We are pleased to honor those who have joined at one of the three levels:

Diamond Level [\$10,000 and above for five years], **Ruby Level** [\$5,000 and above for five years], **Emerald Level** [\$1,000 and above for five years]

Supporters who have joined the Brighter Future Giving Society are recognized in these pages of the annual report with the following symbols:

◇ Diamond

● Ruby

● Emerald

\$100,000 & ABOVE

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Southeast Michigan
United Way for Southeastern Michigan

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● Mr. and Mrs. George R. Mrkonic, Jr.
MWB Contracting, Inc.
● Sandy and Rick Nahm
● Mr. and Mrs. William J. O'Brien, III
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● Lassie M. and Jerry B. Lewis
Mandell and Madeleine Berman
Foundation
● Mr. and Mrs. Kirk N. Martin
● Mr. Gregory Mazurek
● Mr. and Mrs. Terrence M. Meter
● Mr. Stephen J. Pickett
and Ms. Gayle A. Roberts
Rafalski Hare, P.C.
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David and Sharon Sutton
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\$20,000 - \$99,999

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◇ The Young Foundation

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PNC Financial Services Group
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● Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Prior
Signal Restoration Services
Spectrum Automation Company

● Mr. and Mrs. John E. Utley
XO Communications

● Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence L. Gladchun
● Mr. and Mrs. Judd Hart
Christina Heidrich

\$10,000 - \$19,999

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◇ The Mort & Brigitte Harris Foundation
Ralph L. and Winifred E. Polk
Foundation
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● Mr. and Mrs. Richard R. Vlasic
● Mr. and Mrs. Ken Whipple

\$1,000 - \$1,499

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Robert and Patricia Baer
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\$5,000 - \$9,999

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[T R E A T M E N T]

Roslyn came to Oakland Family Services for two reasons – to get sober and to get her daughter back. With the agency’s help, Roslyn did both, and turned her life around.

Roslyn describes herself as wild and out of control when she was young. An early criminal charge of possession of a felony firearm was one of her first brushes with the legal system.

“I just really screwed my life up,” she said.

Roslyn lost parental rights to six children after her brother burned one of her sons with hot water so severely he ended up in the University of Michigan Burn Unit. Her brother faced criminal charges; she was arrested for child neglect and endangerment. She was not found guilty, but her parental rights were terminated.

Though her children were no longer in her care, she would still keep tabs on them. It was through her daughter she eventually discovered that her son Ronald had been stabbed to death at 23 years old. She was pregnant at the time and this sent her spiraling back into crack and cocaine addiction.

When Roslyn gave birth to Zarianna, who she calls Zari, her daughter was immediately removed from her care due to her previous loss of her six children.

Roslyn immediately realized what she had missed out on, in not getting to raise her children, and decided that she wasn’t going to let that happen again. She didn’t want Zari’s life to go the way of Ronald’s.

“She wanted me and she needed me, and I needed her,” Roslyn said. “I fought hard for her.”

Roslyn began attending visitations with Zari at Oakland Family Services, as Zari had been placed in one of the agency’s foster homes. At the same time, she started in the agency’s gender-specific Project Recovery

Intensive Services for Mothers (PRISM) program. The PRISM program offers mothers an intensive substance abuse program that involves group and one-on-one counseling, as well as education on parenting and life skills. Transportation and child care make this program accessible and possible for moms.

At times Roslyn felt like both the staff in the PRISM and the Family Preservation programs were being hard on her, but then realized they were just trying to create the best possible outcome for both her and for Zari. She said the PRISM program helped her feel safe enough to open up and share a lot.

“That did something to me,” she said. “It made me check myself and do a reality check. I finally took time for me. And, I knew I could talk to my therapist. I felt safe.”

Roslyn worked hard to attain her goals. She moved to a new two-bedroom home out of the area where she had fallen into drugs and trouble with the law. She completed the PRISM program. She got a car – one that she describes as not a 2015 or 2016, but a good reliable car – and she got a job.

Most importantly to Roslyn, she got Zari back. When Roslyn went to court, Oakland Family Services staff members from both programs were there to support her.

“They stood for me,” she said. “They fought for me. These ladies put themselves on the line.” Roslyn said she tells her friends or other people who need help what Oakland Family Services did for her.

“I tell them, ‘Go to Oakland Family Services, they can help,’” she said. “The boyfriends come and go, but your kids are forever.”



“ THEY STOOD FOR ME. THEY FOUGHT FOR ME. THESE LADIES PUT THEMSELVES ON THE LINE. ”



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