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GREETINGS FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Community Member:

Welcome to Crisis Services' first edition of our 'Safety Net' newsletter!

This year commemorates a significant anniversary for Crisis Services. In 1968, the Erie County Department of Mental Health established this fledgling organization in an effort to assist those facing crisis in our community. At the time, the goals of our dedicated staff and volunteers were to take hotline calls, 24 hours a day, from those contemplating suicide, to promote suicide prevention through extensive community education and training, and to conduct research in the area of suicide prevention and crisis intervention. Today, forty years later, while those goals remain the same, we have created additional services in identified areas of need. Our Emergency Outreach and Trauma Response Program, Mobile Crisis Response Team for Children and Adolescents, Advocate Program, and Homeless Program, combined with our 24-hour Crisis Hotline employ more than 75 staff, who are assisted by over 100 dedicated Crisis Services volunteers.

We are celebrating forty years of uninterrupted service to our community with two very significant events. Our 1st Annual Crisis Services Golf Tournament, held on August 25th at the Transit Valley Country Club, was a great success, bringing many sponsors together with a great turnout for a fun-filled day of golf, food, and drink.

On Tuesday October 7th, we will be hosting Men Who Cook, an innovative event pairing male leaders, chefs, and celebrities cooking and serving their favorite dishes. This 'tasty' event will be held at the Statler Tower Grand Ballroom from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. A founding member of the Crisis Services Board will be recognized, along with some of our dedicated staff and volunteers. Visit our website, www.crisisservices.org, or call 834-2310 ext. 146 for more information on this very exciting event.

While we have undergone many changes since 1968, our core values remain the same. 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we are here for those experiencing crisis.

We thank you for your support in the past and look forward to continuing to provide these services for many years to come.

Sincerely,
Douglas B. Fabian
Executive Director
Crisis Services Phone Room – the “hub” of the agency

In response to the growing social problems associated with the returning Vietnam Vets, and the increasing numbers of homeless and unemployed, the Erie County Department of Mental Health established Crisis Services forty years ago. Located in the Liberty Building in downtown Buffalo, the center received 7,300 phone calls from people considering suicide or experiencing emotional distress in its first year of service. By 1969, that number quickly grew to over 10,000 phone calls a month. It is important to note that since the first day of operations, November 12, 1968, and even during times of relocation, the hotline has never gone silent!

Over the years, the agency has grown to include seven different departments employing 75 staff members as well as over 100 dedicated volunteers. The phone room remains the “hub” of the agency, fielding over 100,000 calls annually. Volunteers remain a very critical component of Crisis Services. Rather than a primary source of staffing and running of the phone hotlines, today’s volunteers stretch the organization to provide 24 hours of immediate response in the areas of mental health, suicide prevention, homelessness, domestic violence, sexual assault and elder abuse by augmenting the work of professional staff. As the Phone Room connects the organization and its mission to its past, so too do the continued efforts of today’s volunteers.

The Phone Room also is home to our Kids Helpline program that provides school-age children, adolescents and their parent’s immediate and confidential support 24 hours a day along with kidsisis.com, a website offering moderated group and private chat sessions along with message boards to get assistance and information.

First Annual Crisis Services’ Golf Tournament

The sun was shining, the humidity was low, the temperature a balmy 74° on Monday, August 25th for the shotgun start of the First Annual Crisis Services Golf Tournament. The weather, combined with one of WNY’s finest courses, made for a day of great golf!

Transit Valley Country Club served as the venue for this very successful debut fundraiser for the agency. Crisis Services would like to thank the following for their sponsorship:

- Maple Gate Anesthesiologists, P.C.
- Kaleida Health
- VITEC Solutions
- Professional Emergency Services PLLC
- GWA Local 1122
- Stamus Roofing Inc.
- Tim Herzog, Flying Bison Brewing Company
- Insbrook Printing & Mailing Services
- University at Buffalo Department of Emergency Medicine
- Kirantis & Associates, CPAs
- Conax Technologies LLC
- 1-Evolve Technology Services
- Amy Mayfield
- FDR Medical Services
- McGard LLC
- Ebers Landscape Service, Inc.
- Hiscock Barclay LLC
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- Amy Mayfield
- FDR Medical Services
- McGard LLC
- Ebers Landscape Service, Inc.
- Hiscock Barclay LLC

A happy ending!

J is a 21 year old pregnant female, who suffers from mild retardation and depression. Crisis Services received a call from her aunt a few months ago advising that J was going to kill herself.

After a thorough assessment, we found out that J had no family support in the community. Her mother had thrown her out of the family home. She had no job, no transportation, and lacked the skills to find shelter. Working as a team with J’s case worker from another agency, a Crisis Services housing counselor did the following talked to J daily to keep her stable found her an apartment that she could move into and found her connected with several community agencies to get J furniture, household goods, and baby items. J now says she is happy as she awaits her daughter’s birth in October. This aptly illustrates how Crisis Services serves as a safety net for so many in the community who have nowhere else to turn.

Volunteer Spotlight on Dennis Zakrzewski

Dennis Zakrzewski began his volunteer work with Crisis Services in the summer of 2001, becoming certified as a Crisis Phone Counselor in the following year. That same year he also trained to become a Hospital and Court Advocate. His role as a Crisis Services Hospital Advocate has him responding to all 11 hospitals in Erie County when a victim of domestic violence, family violence, sexual assault, rape or elder abuse presents.

In the spring of 2007, the Office of Court Administration eliminated the full time Crisis Services Victim Advocate position at Buffalo City Court’s Domestic Violence Part. Understanding the void this left for DV victims, Dennis volunteered to step in to maintain services for survivors of Family Violence that appear before Judge Givens.

He singlehandedly provides Crisis Services advocacy services at DV court 20 hours a week to ensure that survivors have access to resources, assistance with orders of protection and modifications.

Become a Crisis Services Volunteer

In order to provide services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, Crisis Services relies heavily on our volunteers. If you are looking for a meaningful volunteer experience, please consider joining the Crisis Services’ team. Volunteers are used in our Phone Room and Advocate programs.

PHONE ROOM - help others during times of crisis, when they need someone the most. The Phone Room responds to calls 24 hours a day on a wide variety of issues such as suicide, homelessness and addiction. You must complete an extensive training program that provides you with the information and necessary skills needed to be a phone counselor. Computer skills are required.

ADVOCATE PROGRAM is the Rape Crisis Center for Erie County and a NYS Non-Residential Domestic Service Provider. We provide 24 hour crisis intervention to victims of domestic violence, family violence, rape, sexual assault & elder abuse in 11 ERs in Erie County. You must complete an extensive training program which provides information about the dynamics of DV & sexual assault, the emotional impact experienced by a survivor of sexual assault or DV incident, and the medical & legal aspects encountered by the survivor.

To receive more information about becoming a Crisis Services volunteer, call 854-3131 or visit our website at www.crisisservices.org.

Dennis proudly displays his Volunteer Service Award for the agency. Crisis Services relies heavily on our volunteers. If you are looking for a meaningful volunteer experience, please consider joining the Crisis Services’ team. Volunteers are used in our Phone Room and Advocate programs.