



42 YEARS OF SERVICE TO ERIE COUNTY



SUMMER 2011

## Who Are We?

In November of 1968, Crisis Services began its operation with a small group of trained volunteers and a handful of professional staff providing coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These specially trained volunteers, many of whom were working full time jobs in the areas of nursing, social work, psychology and theology, took 7,300 calls in the first year. All of these calls dealt with suicidal or emotional crises.

Forty two years later, Crisis Services, now the most comprehensive crisis center in WNY, houses four distinct programs that continue to respond to those in suicidal or emotional crises, as well as providing response and support to survivors of domestic and family violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, those who have been exposed to trauma, and the thousands of people who are in need of a supportive listener or referral information. We continue to offer all of these services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, answering over 130,000 calls in 2010! And we continue to utilize volunteers to make this happen.

Today's Crisis Services is staffed by professionally trained staff with various bachelors and masters level degrees, including social work, mental health counseling, psychology, and human services. We have over 70 full and part time staff. We also have a number of staff that is currently licensed by New York State or in the process of obtaining licensure for social work or mental health counseling. However, in order to be able to offer the high quality of care that we extend to our clients on a 24/7 basis, it remains necessary to support the work of our agency staff with professionally trained volunteers.

After completing an in-depth interview process and background check, Crisis Services' volunteers complete a very rigorous crisis intervention training program before beginning their on-site training. They commit to work a minimum of six months (and most stay much longer than that) and are regularly supervised by clinical staff. They are part of our crisis response team and work side by side our agency staff 24 hours a day. They answer calls on the hotline, they advocate for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault at all of the hospital emergency departments in Erie County, as well as the courts, and they provide peer support for those who have experienced a recent trauma.

Who are these people who choose to give their valuable time and expertise to this agency? A recent survey of our volunteers revealed the following:

- Almost 1/3 of them have graduate (masters level and doctorate) degrees and another 45% have bachelors degrees
- More than 50% of them work full time, many of them in related fields (social work, case management, health care)
- Of the 47% of our volunteers that are students, 90% of them are working on degrees (bachelors, masters and doctorates) in the areas of mental health and counseling

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## Upcoming Events

**Saturday, July 16, 2011**

### Golf Tournament

Kory Memorial Golf Tournament  
 Batavia Country Club  
 8:00 am Shotgun Start  
 All proceeds to benefit Crisis Services. Call 648-2453 for more info.

**Thursday, September 8, 2011**

### Wine & Chocolate Tasting at Choco-Logo

141 Broadway, Buffalo  
 Fundraiser to benefit Crisis Services during Suicide Prevention Week. For more info, go to [www.chocologo.com/events](http://www.chocologo.com/events)



**Tuesday,  
 October 4, 2011**

*Crisis Services Presents*

## 5th Annual Men Who Cook

6:00 - 9:00 PM  
 Ellicott Square Building



Find us on Facebook

[www.crisisservices.org](http://www.crisisservices.org)

THE **SAFETY NET**

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## Call to Service



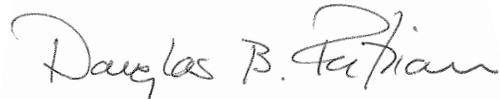
*Douglas B. Fabian, Executive Director*

President Barack Obama has brought many new talents and gifts to the White House. His challenges have been many and, while his results to date have been mixed, no one can deny a new sense of activism toward reshaping our communities. The country is trying desperately to pull out of its financial hole and begin generating new jobs in a new economy. But, aside from the financial side of things, President Obama has instilled a new vitality to the concept of "volunteerism". President

Obama has stated, "The challenges we face are unprecedented in their size and scope, and we cannot rely on quick fixes or easy answers to put us on the road to recovery. Economic recovery is as much about what you're doing in your communities as what we're doing in Washington----and it's going to take all of us, working together." The effort comes at a time of extraordinary need for community service and volunteerism.

As the economic downturn puts more of us at risk and increases the demand for social services, many non-profit groups, like Crisis Services, are experiencing a so called "compassion boom" resulting in a marked increase in volunteer inquiries. It seems that the old adage, "when the going gets tough, the tough get going" really does ring true!

President Obama's call for a renewed sense of service is a welcomed priority overall, but Crisis Services can claim that we realized the importance of volunteerism long before it became a matter of national interest. Because of the priority that we have always placed on recruiting and training highly qualified people, quality volunteers have always been a fixture at Crisis Services. We consider ourselves quite fortunate to have an assemblage of caring and compassionate individuals to help us carry out our mission on a 24 hour a day/ 7 day a week basis. For this, I thank every man and woman who has so generously given their time and talents over the past 42 years. Your devotion has put Crisis Services well ahead of the national call to service.



Douglas B. Fabian, Executive Director

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**Who Are We?**, continued from page 2.

They come from all walks of life, they bring a remarkable set of life skills, and they add a comprehensive mixture of the compassion and empathy needed to enhance the contributions of the clinical staff. Because of our volunteers, we can offer something that no other mental health agency in the area can - a multi-dimensional approach to caregiving that combines all of the clinical and therapeutic skills from our professional staff with the vast experience and wisdom brought by our volunteers.

## Spotlight on Our Volunteers



Anneke Meyer-Berg,  
Crisis Counseling Program  
Volunteer

### Anneke Meyer-Berg Crisis Counseling Program Volunteer

I came to the US in 2008 from Cloppenberg, Germany to attend UB. I am currently in the doctorate program in Social-Personality Psychology and expect to complete this within three years. I came to Crisis Services last year, after researching volunteer opportunities online.

I found the training so helpful and informative, teaching me so much about domestic violence, homelessness and crisis intervention. I learned about the court system, police and hospital involvement. The training, although very time consuming, thoroughly prepared me for my role as a volunteer crisis counselor. I now usually work late evenings or overnights. I find the overnight shifts to be the most beneficial because I get to spend more time on the calls, talking in greater depth to the clients.

This volunteer experience has really exceeded my expectations. The hands-on experience I've received leaves me feeling as though I've really accomplished something. My area of study centers on the genetic, emotional and cognitive factors of when and how people help each other, i.e through volunteering. My own volunteer experience here has opened my eyes and has given me the compassionate skills required for this type of counseling, as well as helped with my research. I've come to understand why people do want to help each other. The staff that I work with here feel more like family to me; they are completely supportive.

As a TA and a graduate assistant, I typically work 70-80 hours/week. Many times I feel too tired to come in for my shift. But when I do, I am reminded how significant this work is and it becomes very energizing. Helping someone or just being there to listen can be very uplifting.



Tony & Bernie Misita,  
OASIS Volunteers

### Tony & Bernie Misita, OASIS Volunteers

We came to Crisis Services after attending a seminar for survivors of suicide that was sponsored by Crisis Services about 10 years ago. We lost our 21-year old son, Randy John Misita on October 14, 1987, after he died of suicide, or as we call it – "death by emotional pain". After attending that seminar, we were part of a small group of survivors that created a new volunteer component at Crisis Services.

We called it OASIS which stands for Open Arms Survivors Impacted by Suicide. We accompany the Crisis Services Trauma Response Program teams when they make trauma calls to families after a suicide. These calls are usually scheduled and, together with the counselors from Crisis Services, we talk to the survivors and offer them something that most of the counselors can't – the knowledge of having lived through the nightmare of suicide and the support that we can give because of this knowledge. We've worked with many counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists on the many different boards and committees that we serve on and they all agree that the best support comes from those that have been through the ordeal.

After Randy's death 23 years ago, we were looking for ways to deal with our grief. In the process, we became involved

with Compassionate Friends, a national support group for parents who have lost a child. Later on, we founded a local chapter of Bereaved Parents of USA, which is also national, as well as a suicide support group that is affiliated with Life Transitions Center of Hospice. We are now involved with a program called RAP (Resources for Adolescent Problems) in Niagara County schools. We think it's so important to make kids and teens aware of the signs of suicide and to let them know that there is help for them and that there are people who care what happens to them. And we continue to work with the Crisis Services OASIS Program. We do seem to be on a mission since Randy's death, a mission that no one would choose to be on. We don't believe that Randy was born to die so young in order for us to do this. We do believe that we came to do this because of the energy that he left us after his death. And that energy gets renewed everytime we hear a story about how we changed someone's life by telling our own story. We believe that Randy continues to live through the lives that we change.



Sarah Skelton,  
Advocate Program  
Volunteer

### Sarah Skelton, Advocate Program Volunteer

I started working with Crisis Services in 2005 as an intern during my Masters program. I did many of my direct contact hours in the ER's of Buffalo for the Advocate Program. I was also fortunate enough to be able to work in the Family Justice Center doing case management, and working with the police department. My internship experience was so great that I have

continued to stay on as a volunteer since then, taking shifts each time I return to Buffalo during the year.

I have a BA in Psychology from Hilbert College, and a MS.ED in Mental Health Counseling. I am a Liscenced Mental Health Counselor in the state of Hawaii and am currently enrolled in a Psy.D program for Clinical Psychology at Argosy University in Honolulu, HI. I am also a Mental Health Technician with the United States Army, National Gaurd.

I feel like the training I recieved with the Advocate Program has helped me in every area of my academic training. The rates for domestic violence and rape are so high that no matter where I am in my training or work, the clients that I run into, have some sort of experience with this and I can now better understand their experiences. The experiences that I have gained from the trainings and work with the Advocate Program have made me a better therapist and counselor. There are numerous opportunities for growth, trainings and supervision within the program. And I received all of this for free, no student loans necessary!

I continue to volunteer with Crisis Services because I think the program is so vitally important to the community. The staff are always available and helpful, so appreciative of the volunteer's efforts. I remember coming home from a really hard day at work to find a thank you card and bag of candy for halloween. It was so heart warming. I really feel that the people that work at Crisis Services are very authentic and genuine and really care about their clients. When you are passionate about this work, it is refreshing to find people who share that passion.

## Volunteer & Staff Appreciation Party

The Volunteer Appreciation Committee of Crisis Services hosted the Volunteer & Staff Appreciation Party on Saturday April 16, 2011 at Hamlin House in Buffalo. Well over 110 volunteers, staff and managers enjoyed a fun-packed evening during which the 'Years of Service Awards' were presented. The first annual



*A happy table of Crisis Services volunteers and staff.*

"Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award", which recognizes one volunteer for their outstanding leadership abilities, professionalism, and compassion and respect for those they serve was presented to Barbara Cady of the Crisis Counseling Program. Barb was nominated by several staff members at Crisis Services. The award was presented by Debbie Schutt, CCP Supervising Counselor and Arthur Dietz, Crisis Counseling Specialist, who acknowledged that Barb makes Crisis Services a better agency and better place to work. Congratulations to Barb!

## Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award

### Nominees:

Nicole Sweeney, Advocate Program  
Joe Wawryzniak, Advocate & CCP

### Winner:

Barbara Cady, Crisis Counseling Program



*Scott Weber (l) presents 10 Years of Service Award to Douglas Fabian (r) Executive Director of Crisis Services.*

## Years of Service Awards

### 10 Years of Service:

Douglas B. Fabian,  
Executive Director

Sharon DeVargas,  
Administrative Program

Rebecca Stevens,  
Advocate Program Supervising  
Counselor

Arlene Nasca, Fiscal Department

### 5 Years of Service:

Melinda DuBois,  
Board of Directors

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Board of Directors

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Foundation Board member

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Laurie Tanner,  
Homeless Program

Arthur Dietz,  
Crisis Counseling Program

Tiffany Rogers,  
Administrative Program

Bill Diehl,  
Crisis Counseling Program

Robyn Wiktorski-Reynolds,  
Advocate Program Coordinator

Sarah Skelton,  
Advocate Program Volunteer



*Jackie Walker poses with Robyn Wiktorski-Reynolds.*

## Founders Day Award

Crisis Services' Advocate Program was honored by Medaille College for their contributions to community service in Western New York at its annual Founders' Day Celebration on Wednesday, April 13, 2011. A reception, dinner and awards ceremony took place at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. Robyn Wiktorski-Reynolds, Coordinator of the Advocate Program, accepted the Organizational Award for Service and Citizenship on behalf of the program. In her acceptance speech, Robyn thanked

the staff and volunteers calling them "the most dedicated individuals you'll ever meet who work on the front lines...You won't hear about this staff often or see their names in the papers, but they are the silent heroes who work day in and out to see that victims find justice, find safety, find peace." Along with the award was a donation of \$2500 which will be used for their lock exchange program for victims of domestic violence and to purchase items for comfort kits which are provided to survivors of sexual assault. A proclamation from County Executive Chris Collins naming April 13th as Crisis Services Day in Erie County was also presented.

## Our Volunteers

From the beginning, Crisis Services has relied on volunteers to provide the depth of services that we offer on a 24-hour/day, 7 day/week basis. Our volunteers are dedicated and committed individuals who bring an impressive mixture of experience, compassion and diversity to our agency. They include university students working on internship credits, seasoned life veterans, including many recent retirees and homemakers, and many part and full time employees who manage to add these hours to their already busy lives. Their

reasons for giving of their time so generously vary greatly, but they share a common thread – the desire to give of themselves to those that are in immediate need of a human connection.

Here is a list of our currently active volunteers. The management and staff of Crisis Services extend our deepest gratitude for all that you provide for the agency. Thank you for making a difference!

Victoria Bachman	Joseph Dabkowski	Tamara Ingram	Amber O'Daniels	Julia Szprygada
Heather Bashaw	Kimberly Damian	Jessi Jackson	Elizabeth Oddy	Jennifer Taber
Tami Beck-Koetzle	Heidi Delnuovo	Sarah Jones	Gregory Patterson	John J (JJ) Tasca
Amanda Rose Blando	Angela Detschner	Carly Kane	Sarah Peckham	Christina Townsend
Rosemary Boctor	Carole DiRienzo	Suzanne Keene	Mary Pentycofe	Jennifer Valenti
Cortney Bota	Keturah Erhardt	Anya Kester	Emma Peterson	Donald Van Every
Elaina Breen	Maria Esquilin	Ambar Khushbakhaat	Stephanie Pinzel	Caitlin Vigliotti
Rhonda Brinkman	Jennifer Fedoriw	Will Knapp	Ruth Plant	Corrie Vogel
Nichelle Brown	Stephanie Foy	Christine Kocsis	Lovell Pompey	Leanne Wagner
Amy Buffomante	Rich Fritz	Christy Krawczyk	Donna Ray	Wendy Walker
Barbara Cady	Amy Gallaway	Brittany Kucala	Felicia Santiago	Joe Wawrzyniak
Latasha Camm	Elizabeth Galvin	Nancy Lindberg	Miranda Shelanskey	Jennifer Willard
Nicole Cappiello	Christina Garcia	Kalei Logue	Shirley Shoen	Desiree Williams
Gerilyn Capps	Cally Graham	Amanda MacAlpine	Sarah Skelton	Reneé Williams
Shana Carr	Elizabeth Graziadei	Amanda Manzer	Debi (Mary) Smith	Colleen Winter
Stephanie Casal	Kelcey Gurtler	Katherine McDonald	Stephanie S. Snyder	Freddie Woods
Diana Cellini	Debi Handley	Anneke Meyer-Berg	Linda Sommers	Sherrene Yeong
Jamelah	Michael Healy	Christa Miosi	Nicole Sposato	Melissa Young
Chartmon-Lester	Mary Heick	Bernie Misita	Caitlin Sprole	Lianna Zulich
Kristen Choboy	Erin Hershey	Tony Misita	Ashley Strobele	
Meridith Cohen	Brienna Hill	Amber Morczek	Kristine Stull	
Yvonne Correa	Matthew Holla	Yvonne Niesen	Carly Sunderlin	
Diane Cortese	Dezarie Hutchison	Kim O'Connor	Nicole Sweeney	

## Interested in Becoming a Crisis Services Volunteer?

If you are looking for a meaningful volunteer experience, please consider joining either our Crisis Counseling Program or our Advocate Program. Both programs require completion of a 40 hour training session and a minimum six month commitment.

**Crisis Counseling Program (Hotline)** - Helping others during times of crisis, when they need someone the most. The Crisis Counseling Program responds to calls

24 hours a day on a wide variety of issues such as suicide, homelessness, addiction, domestic violence and mental health. Basic computer skills are required.

**The Advocate Program (the Rape Crisis Center for Erie County and a NYS Non-Residential Domestic Violence Service provider)** — Providing 24-hour crisis intervention to victims of domestic violence, family violence, rape, sexual assault and elder abuse at all eleven emergency departments in Erie County.

Call 834-3131 or visit [www.crisisservices.org](http://www.crisisservices.org) for more information.

# OUR MISSION

Crisis Services is dedicated to promoting the health, safety, and well being of the community through prevention, education, immediate intervention and access to community wide resources 24 hours a day.



Please consider donating your old cell phone(s) to Crisis Services to help survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Call 834-2310, ext. 4467 for more information.

## MEMORIAL & TRIBUTE GIFTS TO CRISIS SERVICES

**Make a donation today in support of Crisis Services and those who depend on our critical services.**

Remember a friend, loved one or family member for a birthday, anniversary or special celebration or to offer a meaningful expression of one's sympathy, love and respect at the time of death with a gift to the Crisis Services Foundation. Your gift today can help Crisis Services continue to provide its excellent services and programs to individuals in need in our community, as it has since 1968. In order to treat and assist people in emotional crisis through a variety of therapeutic services, we need your ongoing generous support. Enclosed in this newsletter is a convenient envelope for your use, or you may charge (MasterCard, VISA or American Express) your donation online by visiting our secure website at:

[www.crisisservices.org](http://www.crisisservices.org)

### DONATE ONLINE



[www.crisisservices.org](http://www.crisisservices.org)

Make your tax-deductible gift on our secure website using your MasterCard, VISA or American Express.



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*Read how our volunteers help to make Crisis Services the most comprehensive crisis center in upstate New York. See 'Who Are We?' on page 1.*

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