

Mark Radzysinski & William DeKine - Contributing Photographers

Drew Edwards - Head Security / Event Host

Special thanks to Event Coordinator Fleur DeKine for solidifying everything from the charity right down to the “Nichetini.” The Niche Family congratulates you on creating top notch production with effortless flare.

Also, Kristin & Jane of MB Events did an amazing job of putting together bid packages from our wonderful contributors to the silent auction, which raised a large portion of the total donations:

City Steam Brewery Café & Brew Ha Ha Comedy Club for dinner & a night of laughs; Fiona Stone Boutique & Mariel Shoe Bar, gift certificates so you could look great going there; Fun Skydiving for the daring! Glee Boutique & the Elbow Room for a gift basket, group seminar & lunch. Heights of Wellness for 5 classes of different kinds of exercise. Planet of Sound Recording Studio for performance tix. Prossage Muscle Therapy for a back-walking massage! And if you missed out on that bid, they also offered a couples massage. Salsa Fundamentals @ Fuller Movement: Salsa lessons for those who like their dancing HOT! Spiritus Wines put together a great gift basket that would be perfect after your salsa lessons. Stone Age Rock Gym offered rock climbing certificates, and Taking Care Center Center offered a membership and massage for working out those kinks after the salsa dancing or rock climbing! Tapas on Ann and Theaterworks offered a nite of dinner & theater, and for the ultimate weekend getaway, Premier Limousine, Bin 228 Panini & Wine Bar, Hartford Stage and Marriott Hartford Downtown put together a weekend package that would take you worlds away, without leaving town.

As Niche Hartford magazine repeatedly says, there are wonderful things to see and do here, and we encourage everyone to check out these sponsors and “see Hartford through our eyes”.

Event Galleries are now up at www.nichehartford.com



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Covenant to Care for Children

Helping Connecticut's
Children in Need.

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Community Partnership Award
Honorable Mention

Our Mission

Covenant to Care for Children mobilizes and channels the generosity of caring and faithful people to advocate for, mentor and provide direct assistance to Connecticut's children and youth who are neglected, abused or at-risk.



L to R; Veronica Lenzen, Lisa Harrison, Meghan Poole, Mira Galliger, The Reverend Joan Sorenson



Meghan Poole

Annual Baby Shower Held and Honor Given to Grace Lutheran Church Liaison by Meral Prewitt, AASW Regional Coordinator, Southwest Region

The table was loaded with gifts for babies at the Grace Lutheran Church (Stratford) annual baby shower on March 18 for the clients of their adopted social worker, Meghan Poole of the Department of Children and Families Bridgeport. “I am just overwhelmed by this congregation’s generosity!” said Ms. Poole.

“Many of the children I care for are special needs children. One foster mom in particular is helping a child who has a life threatening illness and she has decided to adopt this child. The adoption will be final soon. She will be so touched to have these lovely clothes for him. The doctors are saying they are amazed he has survived this long. I

think he is a miracle brought about by all the love and prayers he receives from the people in this church and his loving foster mom,” she said.

Liaison Lisa Harrison prepared a luncheon and organized the baby shower with assistance from her co-liaison, Veronica Lenzen. She included a ceremony for liaison Mira Galliger who is moving to Texas. The Reverend Joan Sorenson presented a plaque to Mira at the luncheon in honor of all her years of service to the Adopt A Social Worker program. She said, “Mira has shown a lot of dedication to this wonderful program to help children and we appreciate all she has done to keep this program active in our church.” The plaque read:

One hundred years from now it will not matter what kind of car I drove, what kind of house I lived in, how much was in my bank account, nor what my clothes looked like. But the world may be a little better because I was important in the life of a child.

Ms. Harrison said, “I’m glad she got me involved and I am enjoying it so much. Many of the moms here today were pregnant last year when they came. This year it’s so fun to see all of the children here who are learning to give to others at an early age. We will all miss Mira. She is a great friend to me and all the children.”

Our Programs

Our **Adopt A Social Worker** program works with over 200 faith communities to benefit thousands of Connecticut children by providing the critical material needs that help stabilize their living situations. Without the efforts of over 1,000 volunteers and donors, this initiative would not be a success.

Our **Critical Goods Distribution** program assists social workers who are attempting to reunify and preserve families by providing them with goods such as furniture and clothing. During any given fiscal year, we deliver an average of \$115,000 worth of usable goods to families in need. On a yearly basis, around 500 children are provided with beds, dressers, a table to eat at and do homework on and other goods that they too often go without.



Our **Reach One Youth** mentoring program matches the power of infinite love to youth with infinite potential by assisting highly at-risk teens, teen parents and their children. This program creates partnerships between youth, mentors, congregations and the broader community by providing opportunities to nurture and cultivate the resilient spirit found in all youth.

Our mentoring program, **Mom, Mentor, and Me** (M3) mentors children whose mothers are incarcerated in the New Haven, Waterbury, New Britain and Greater Bridgeport areas. Although mentoring children of prisoners is not new, this is the first program that focuses specifically on children who have been detached from their mothers due to incarceration. M3 creates and supports relationships between youth, mentors and faith communities to provide the support needed for these at-risk youth.

(Watch for future newsletter issues for details of each program)

The Struggles of Three Connecticut Families

by Chastity Taylor, AASW Regional Coordinator, Central Region

On March 11, I made a presentation about Covenant to Care for Children's Adopt A Social Worker program to St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church in Farmington, Connecticut. In preparation, I called the Department of Children and Families (DCF) social worker adopted by the congregation and asked if she had any stories that I could share with the congregants. There were many, but I was particularly touched by three that I would like to share as a reminder as to why it is so important to help these children.

There are four girls in the first family who are 14, 8, 3 and 1. DCF became involved when the mother gave birth to a child who tested positive for cocaine. The mother has since graduated from a substance abuse treatment program, but has recently lost her job. The father is working a few hours each week as a chauffeur, so the family is in dire straits financially. The three oldest children go to school and are doing fairly well. DCF is concerned that there is domestic violence between the parents. DCF can engage the parents in conversation, but the father is dodging his substance abuse evaluation, which makes DCF believe that he is using drugs.

The second family has two boys who

are 4 and 3. The father is currently caring for the children because their mother is incarcerated. The mother has mental health and alcohol issues. She took the children to a fair one day and came home intoxicated. The father removed the children and threatened not to allow the mother to see them anymore. The mother became upset and stabbed him in his shoulder and upper lip with a butter knife. She was arrested and has been incarcerated since October, 2006. The father has temporary full custody but is afraid that the mother will fight him in court when she is released from jail in April.

The children of the third family are 15 year old twins, a boy and a girl. The son is in the home, but the daughter was removed because she witnessed her mother's suicide attempt by sleeping pills and alcohol. She cared for her mother and stayed by her mother's side to ensure that she was still breathing. The son reported not knowing about the situation. The daughter is upset being out of the home and continues to run-away from her placement. The mother continues to drink and abuse prescriptions pills. The father is in the home, but refuses to interact with DCF. The son is out of control, refusing to go to school, cursing at his mother and hanging around with a bad crowd. The mother has no control over her son. No

family members have completed any of the services set up for them.

At this stage, these stories do not have happy endings, but perhaps they will in the future. Nevertheless, they provide a powerful reminder of why we, as a community, need to come together and support the less fortunate families in Connecticut. The staff of Covenant to Care for Children is grateful for your support, for without it, we would be unable to fulfill our mission of mobilizing and channeling the generosity of caring and faithful people to advocate for, mentor and provide direct assistance to Connecticut's children and youth who are neglected, abused or at-risk.

Do you do many internet searches?

CCC earns 1 cent for every search done in our name on www.goodsearch.com. Just search with our name, "Covenant to Care for Children," as who you are searching for. Thanks.

Escaping the Blueprint

by Jeffery Harris, Mom, Mentor & Me Program Coordinator (Waterbury, New Britain Regions)

Research suggests that children who have a mom incarcerated are more likely to engage in criminal behavior than those who do not. I have seen first hand, however, how some of these children are taking steps to make sure they follow a different path than their mothers; they have decided to escape the blueprint. Although I have been involved with behavior challenged youth for over 20 years, I experience one constant stereotype; namely, that past behavior is an indicator of future behavior. This is not true in every case. In fact, many children become productive members of society because they have added motivation to avoid a path that could lead to a life of heartache and pain.

Let me share with you the story of two girls whom I have matched with an

adult mentor. The first is a 14 year old honor student who showed me her report card with all A's. She is a math tutor on weekends, very involved in theatre, and made a traveling dance team. This fine young girl even sings in the youth choir at church.

The other child is a straight A student as well. When I asked her what she wants to be when she becomes older, she told me a teacher or a pastor. I asked her grandmother, "what's she like?" She responded: "I can tell you, she is a joy to be around." In fact, the day I met her, she greeted me with an enthusiastic "Hi, are you my mentor?" For someone to be greeted in this manner may not be a big deal, however, this girl is only 9 years old. Shortly after my arrival, the mentor arrived and they hit it off. It did not take much time for

them to plan their first official meeting time.

Another night, I witnessed escaping from the blueprint by a lovely child. When I asked her what was the best part of the week for her and why, she said "Friday, because that is when I see my mom. Since mom went to jail almost all her friends and family have forgotten about her." Those words almost brought a tear to my eye, and when I glanced over at the mentor, her expression revealed she felt the same.

I have witnessed some unfortunate situations in which the child follows the path of the parent. It is true that there is no guarantee that these children will not end up in jail like their mothers. But a program like CCC's Mom, Mentor and Me can help these children in their attempts to escape the blueprint and become successful adults.

Opening Doors

by Megan Cardinal, AASW Regional Coordinator, Northwest Region

On September 10, 2006, St. John's by the Sea of West Haven closed its doors after one last very emotional Sunday service. For financial reasons, the church was forced to close down and sell its beautiful chapel. Through all this time of hardship, the faithful congregation members of St. John's by the Sea never stopped helping others. St. John's had been matched with Covenant to Care for Children's Adopt A Social Worker program for over 10 years and never neglected the needs of any child.

Susan Dangle, St John's liaison, shared with me the emotional aspect of the church closing its doors and the search to find a new home. She said the congregation was lucky enough to join with Christ Church of West Haven to begin a new church called the Church of the Holy Spirit. I asked her how the members of the two churches agreed on a new name. She said they left it up to the children and this was the name they chose.

The Church of the Holy Spirit opened its doors for the first service on

September 17, 2006, with two groups attending. The first

group represented St. John's and the other represented Christ Church. As time went on, Susan contacted me and asked for my help to start the Adopt A Social Worker program in this new congregation. We decided this program would be a great way to bring the two groups closer together in their process of becoming one whole congregation.

Valecia Williams of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) had worked with St. John's for many years and expressed a strong interest to me about continuing her relationship with the new Church of the Holy Spirit. On Sunday, March 11, 2007, Valecia, Susan and I stood in front of the congregation and together made a promise to serve the children of Connecticut. We then signed the first covenant with the new Church of the Holy Spirit.

After the service, I saw not two congregations, but one group of very caring and loving people working together for a greater purpose: to serve children in need. The congregation was already working on Easter baskets for Valecia's

clients, but more than just that came out of this covenant signing. The women's group was so touched by Valecia's and my words that they offered to knit prayer blankets and sweaters for children in local hospitals whom Valecia and DCF are helping. Another congregation member stated she was a nurse in a local hospital and wondered if someone could come speak to the nurses in her unit to teach them more about looking for signs of child abuse and neglect. We referred her to one of the trainers at DCF to set up that meeting.

What I took away from this day was that CCC not only helps the children in the social worker's case load, but that it also opens up many other doors. Because of the relationship with CCC, the Church of the Holy Spirit has come together as one. Children in Valecia's case load will be waking up to Easter baskets and treats on Easter morning, many other children will be receiving blankets and sweaters to keep them warm, and maybe some cases of child abuse and neglect can be identified and stopped due to the training given to local nurses. All this made me feel very lucky to be working for an organization that truly can improve the lives of others.

We wish to thank the following foundations for their generosity and support:

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NICHE HARTFORD MAGAZINE RAISES MONEY FOR CCC!

By Joe Gazzola

Niche Hartford Magazine's Loft Launch Party was a complete success, both for the people who attended and Covenant to Care for Children. Wonderful atmosphere, great people, and good music set the vibe for the first perfect day of spring. A complimentary toast with the "Nichetini", infused with 100% Italian Gelato was given during the unveiling of the Niche Hartford Spring Edition. Host and publisher of Niche Hartford, Joseph Gazzola, displayed what it's truly like to create synergy. Tuscan Twins Restaurant provided wonderful tastes and many vendors came together to give patrons more than what they expected including complimentary wines, cognacs, vodkas, and even Gelato. Like CCC, guests came together from all ages, professions, and ethnic groups to have a great time and support a worthy cause. In the end, over \$3000 was raised for Covenant to Care for Children to help the less fortunate children of Connecticut.



L to R; Anna Radzyminski (Girlfriend), Joseph Gazzola, Nadine Gazzola (Sister-in-law), Seth Gazzola (Brother)

We would like to thank the many people and businesses, who contributed their time, merchandise and services to make this event successful, and we want you all to know who they are:

Fleur DeKine - Event Coordinator

Kristen & Jane of MB Events - Event & Silent Auction Coordinators

Kevin Hickey - On Premise Manager; Future Brands

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Room 960 & Koji - Ticket Box Offices (www.room960.com) (www.kojidowntown.com)

Doug Fey, Dave Wilson, Marty Weiland of CT Audio - Event Producers (www.ctaudio.com)

Joseph Michaels - Event DJ & Head Promoter (www.purenightlifeevents.com)

Mikey McNulty - Head Event Photographer (www.mikeymcnulty.com)