



TRANSFORMING TOGETHER



**Berkshire Children
& Families**

2008
ANNUAL REPORT

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



RAYMOND T. KUSHI, JR.

In implementing our strategic plan for 2008, the staff and Board of Berkshire Children and Families focused on three objectives.

First, we completed our transition to a fully merged agency. Our team of top professionals in Pittsfield and in the Pioneer Valley now share a single culture with common understanding of our mission. To help us in our outreach efforts, we also improved our infrastructure. After selling our old, outdated office building in Northampton, we then moved into a modern, upgraded and larger leased facility in Hadley with handicapped accessibility and ample parking.

Our second objective was to maintain financial stability and self-sufficiency. This year we did run into some financial bumps. In spite of state cutbacks on funding, the Board and staff committed to going forward with unfunded but vitally needed and successful programs. To accomplish our goals, we drew from last year's surplus and used some of the proceeds we received from the sale of Northampton property. To date, we have also raised an additional \$53,000 to replace lost funding of our Family Literacy (formerly Even Start) program. Lastly, we would like to announce our finance director retired and we were pleased to have hired a highly qualified CPA as a replacement. We have also filled other staff vacancies with talented leaders who will eventually be able to move into senior management positions.

Our third objective was to complete our circle of service that we provided to families and children. With this in mind, we developed a housing/ parenting partnership with Riverview Homes which is a neighbor of ours in Pittsfield. We are also exploring ways to address the mental health needs of our clients.

This agency truly does good work in the community. Every day, every person working here improves the life of a child or parent who needs help. As we move into fiscal 2009, we need to communicate to the public exactly what we do, the value of our programs to the community, and our funding needs. In short, we will be looking to raise the community profile of the agency as we believe this will facilitate our ability to tap into new sources of revenue.

Raymond T. Kushi, Jr.
President

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



CAROLYN MOWER BURNS

As typical for the last 19 years of my tenure at Berkshire Children and Families, I am writing the Annual Report in the early fall when the endless warmth of the September sun and the bountiful, colorful harvest belies the harshness of the winter ahead. The exceptional beauty of this autumn seems at odds with the apprehension we feel about the unstable economy and what steps we need to take in our personal and in our work lives. I have no answers about the bigger picture for our country but I have many thoughts about our agency.

As BCF President Ray Kushi mentioned in his report, we have achieved the majority of goals in our Strategic Plan despite some short-term strains in agency finances. He recognized the staff's valuable work with families in local communities and has identified priorities for the coming year. This year we will tackle the mental health needs of the vulnerable children and families we serve, and communicate our mission and work to the larger community.

I appreciate and share Ray's passion for BCF's work and look forward to building on our accomplishments to take this work to the next level. I am so proud of the successes of our families and children, and of our staff's role in these positive outcomes. I am also mindful of the unprecedented challenges that families will encounter in the present economy. I worry about the inevitable strain on our own resources.

Last year, the theme for the Annual Report was *Growing, Changing and Reaching* to capture the incredible transition BCF experienced with the merger and rapid program growth. This year our theme is *Transforming Together*. What do we mean by this? As you will read in the program reports, BCF's practice — together with children and families, with organizations in the communities in which families live, and with funding sources — results in lives that are truly altered or transformed for the better.

A young mother who lives at Redfield House is one example. She attends parenting groups at the McNerney Parent Center and participates in the Family Literacy Program. This young woman is expanding her repertoire of parenting, career and life skills thus positioning both herself and her children for future success.

Many children and their families experience a strong beginning in our Early Care and Education Centers where children receive a solid educational foundation. Their parents strengthen their own role in their child's learning while having the support to pursue employment.

And what about the children referred to us who have experienced trauma as well as separation from their birth families and significant community ties? Many of these children are offered permanent family and community connections through BCF's Healing Homes Intensive Foster Care, the Adoption Program and Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow.

Transformation? I truly think so. This fuels my conviction that, especially in the present economy, the Board, staff and I must raise BCF's profile, grow funding and continue on our current trajectory to expand needed services. Success will mean that we can support children and their families to weather whatever the future brings. Emotional and economic stability mean lasting personal support networks, concrete skills and competencies to wrest the most from their experience. The futures of families will transform.

Carolyn Mower Burns
Executive Director

BERKSHIRE CHILDREN & FAMILIES PROGRAMS

TRANSFORMING TOGETHER: EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Through caring relationships, developmental opportunities and social experiences

Early Childhood Care and Education in Pittsfield provides full-time licensed child care and education for infants through school age children; individually-oriented, language-rich programs are offered at six sites in Pittsfield. All programs partner with parents to develop services and classroom environments that are fun, stimulate developmental challenges and meet the individual strengths and needs of the young children.

This program is funded by the Department of Early Education and Care, Berkshire United Way, City of Pittsfield, Coolidge Hill Foundation, Dean Foundation, Department of Education School Nutrition Program and parent fees.

Impact

- Parents in 227 families are able to work, prepare for work or stabilize their home environments for the healthy development of children
- 180 children, infants through 5 five years old, attend educationally high quality centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children
- 78 preschool children have been assessed for program planning through Universal Pre-kindergarten (UPK) Assessment Grant from The Department of Early Care and Education
- Some preschool children and families participate in the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment Program: Enhancing Social and Emotional Development so that their classrooms can support their special strengths and challenges
- 93 school age children have had homework support, community, educational and recreational activities (and field trips during school closings) in collaboration with their elementary schools during out of school time
- Any of 273 children with special needs have had them met in their classrooms or groups, from infants through school age

I wanted to take a minute to express my sincere thanks to BCF for a decade of caring. I first walked into the office in the old building up on the hill with a very sickly, very scared little baby girl in March of 1997. From that point on, we have received wonderful, caring, and loving services from the staff in every program. We have pictures of the staff at Redfield House where Marie learned to begin trusting and allowed herself to be held and loved. I look at them often and remember her journey. Other preschool staff were a great part of her life on West Street where she prepared to enter elementary school. Since then, she has spent summers at both Conte and Morningside Kids' Club where other school age staff have further nurtured her individuality and prepared her for entry into middle school. I remember many years ago wondering if I would be able to get daycare during the summer. You told me that we were considered "family" and that there would be a place for us. And there always has been. Next year will be very sad when Marie can no longer attend the Conte Kids' Club. When I talked with her about it she said she would at least be able to see everybody when we drop Alex, (my son) off. She will definitely miss all of you.

I would like to personally thank each and every one of the "family" of staff and teachers that have had a role in Marie's care over the past 10 years. You have all shown the kind of love and caring that any parent would want for their child when they can't be with them. You truly have made the life of one very special little girl much richer. A grateful Mom

(And I'm glad my son has 3 more years to go!!!!)

TRANSFORMING TOGETHER: *Breaking the cycle to promote healthy development for children and stable family and community relationships through BCF'S PARENTING PROGRAMS*

Hampshire County Parent Aide Program and Parenting Groups Funded by the United Way of Hampshire County, Children's Trust Fund, the Dean Foundation, Hampshire Educational Collaborative, Town of Williamsburg and other local sources, the Parent Aide Program offers child abuse and neglect prevention services. Trained volunteers and staff provide support to parents living in stressful situations. Weekly visits build a trusting, nurturing relationship with families. In turn, support, information and connection to community resources allows for the development of nurturing family environments. The program also offers several parent education and support groups. In groups, parents have the opportunity to learn new ways to understand their children, develop their parenting skills and find peer support.

Impact

- 27 parents and 36 children experienced greater stability through individual support and involvement in community activities
- 57 parents learned new ways of looking at children to enhance parenting skills, and developed new understanding that they are not alone through peer support in groups

Healthy Families Hampshire County

Healthy Families is a voluntary, strength based home visiting program for first time parents under age 21 funded by the Massachusetts Children's Trust Fund (CTF). Home visitors provide parent education and support so that young parents may attain economic self-sufficiency, optimal growth and development for both themselves and their child, reduce second, unplanned pregnancies, and ultimately reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

Impact

- 76 young parents are better prepared to lead their families and know more about appropriate parenting on behalf of 82 children

Healthy Families Hampshire County (HFHC) was honored with the All-Star Award this year by CTF. One factor that contributed to the program's receipt of the award was that its participants chose to remain in the program longer than any other Healthy Families program in the Commonwealth. Longer participation in Healthy Families has been correlated with better outcomes for children and young parents.

BCF Healthy Families had the highest percent of father involvement than any other state program!

McInerney Parenting Services in Berkshire County

McInerney offers parenting education and support through groups, community building and outreach. It is funded by Berkshire United Way, Northern Berkshire United Way, the City of Pittsfield, Federation for Children with Special Needs, CTF, Williamstown Community Chest (WCC) and with private contributions. A new outreach initiative in FY 08 has involved working with parents at Riverview Homes in Pittsfield to strengthen the relationships within this community for over 100 parents and children with a father's event and a weekly after school cookie club.

Impact

- 363 families representing 479 children obtained the support and understanding they requested to stabilize and enhance their parenting, their family life and the development of their children
- 92% of parents reported they increased their knowledge and skills related to parenting
- 70% stated they enhanced their family stability by connecting with community supports related to food, clothing and shelter
- 42% stated they decreased their isolation by improving their social skills in the groups

Redfield House Young Parent Services

Redfield House, located in Pittsfield, is a partnership with Berkshire Housing Development Services and supports young single parents in rental housing, services onsite in the community and in a residential program. The program is funded by DCF, Berkshire United Way, WCC and through private contributions. 100% of families live below the poverty line and have suffered a history of broken family relations, trauma, child witness to violence, sexual assault, and a history of school failure.

Young parents develop parenting and life skills individually with case managers, in groups, and in the community to prepare for successful independent living. They learn through daily living situations or crises. Relationship building, housing assistance, counseling, parent education, life skill development, leadership development and recreation are all part of the mix of services. Young families actively participate in community activities: parenting support groups such as Parents Helping Parents, political education groups (register to vote and discussions about political issues), a garden group that has just used tomatoes to make tomato sauce for meals. Groups allow young parents to strengthen and develop skills: whether it is learning to have a regular bedtime routine for their children, or how to successfully reach their own goals.

Impact

- 27 young parents representing 30 children set goals for themselves and their children, and 80% reached those goals within 3 months
- All learned how to seek support from others in their community
- All families (living at Redfield) maintain a safe environment for themselves and their children
- 6 mothers achieved high school diplomas
- 26 young parents were working or in school
- 5 families have moved out of the program and are successfully maintaining apartments outside of Redfield House
- 21 young mothers pay their bills on time
- 30 children are up to date on immunizations and had their health care needs met
- 27 young mothers are now receiving regular healthcare for themselves

Pittsfield Family Literacy

Family Literacy transforms two generations at once through teaming human services with education to build a sustainable foundation for parent and child success in school and in the community. It is funded by Berkshire United Way, the City of Pittsfield, Margaret P. Stevenson Foundation, Berkshire Taconic Foundation, the Berkshire Bank Foundation, other local grants and private contributions. BCF has collaborated with the Pittsfield Public Schools' Adult Education Program, Berkshire County Head Start, the Pediatric Development Center, and welcomes The Berkshire County Regional Employment Board as a new partner. Other matching services include Foster Grandparents and McNerney Parenting Services (BCF).

The comprehensive program includes adult basic education, early childhood education and early intervention, parenting, pre-employment skills, financial literacy and life skills development. Families are encouraged to develop partnership with community supports to break cycles of isolation and poverty.

Impact

- 30 students made significant academic gains and increased their grade level
- 33 families obtained stable housing through case management.
- 13 parents graduated with high school diploma or equivalency
- 24 of 33 parents have moved on to better paying jobs or further education
- 33 children enhanced their development, especially in social interactions, language and pre-literacy skills and are ready for success in school

Personal Family Highlights

- One student who received her GED has gone onto Medical Assistant training, and is currently employed in that field. She has purchased a car, rented her own apartment and her son attends full-time preschool
- One student received her GED and is currently employed full-time. She has moved out of Redfield House and rented her first apartment, bought a car, and is paying for her daughters childcare (currently independent of all assistance)
- Four students who graduated are at community college to receive higher education



FAMILY LITERACY GRADUATES

Community Centered Family Support in Berkshire and Hampshire Counties

Transforming at Home; Family Support workers meet with families in their homes for 6-9 months of intensive service. Families work toward meeting goals in areas such as home safety for children, parenting and the use of community services. The program is funded by The Department of Children and Families through the Family Networks Initiative, and The Department of Mental Retardation.

Community Centered Family Support mobilizes each family's strengths for the safety and healthy development of children, focusing on child development, budgeting, household management and social skills development. Staff members develop relationships with families strengthening and developing social networks. Families are then positioned to maintain the gains achieved in the home-based skill building.

Impact

- 108 families made progress toward their own agreed upon goals for the safety and development of their children, preventing removal to foster care
- 108 families experienced partnership with a Family Support Worker in building networks of support in their own communities
- Program staff, Family Networks and community resources shared perspectives and resources so that families could access comprehensive services in order to meet their individual goals
- 7 families received the support they needed to parent and advocate for their special needs children in school and communities



FISHING AT HEALING HOMES PICNIC

TRANSFORMING TOGETHER: *Finding the path to home through BCF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES*

Healing Homes Intensive Foster Care

Healing Homes believes that every child deserves an opportunity to learn, grow, and ultimately thrive in a loving home environment. The program serves children and adolescents referred and funded by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) with histories of trauma, abuse and neglect. Many have experienced multiple placements, including hospital or residential school settings. Foster and pre-adoptive parents participate in extensive training and continuous learning in order to provide a healthy and positive family experience so children can heal from previous trauma and loss. Once placed, the child, the foster family, and sometimes the birth family, begin a process of transformation. The Healing Homes social worker partners with the child, the foster family, mental health professionals, schools and other significant people in the child's personal network of relationships. This support stabilizes the child in her foster family and creates optimal conditions for the next steps to permanency.

Impact

- 88 children and adolescents experienced life in safe and stable family settings
- 7 children were living in permanent families on a pre-adoptive, adoptive, or guardianship status
- 7 children were reunited with their birth families
- 3 young adults "graduated" to independent living with community and family supports in place

Adoption Services

The Adoption Services Program serves children who have been abused or neglected, are in foster care through and funded by DCF, and in need of permanent, adoptive families. Social workers assess these children to determine whether they are ready for adoption and to find pre-adoptive families for them. Once children are placed, families receive support through the legalization process and for three months after the adoptions are legalized. The Adoption Services Program also completes independent assessments of children and families and makes recommendations in complex cases for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

When a child is placed in a pre-adoptive home, it is the beginning of a journey of transformation for the child, the family and sometimes even for BCF staff! As each individual family's journey is uniquely their own, the staff member (and therefore entire team) learns something new from every experience: the collective understanding of how to work better together with families and children is deepened. The smiling faces of our newly created "forever families" on adoption day are our reward for joining with them through this transformative process.

Impact

- 132 families and 170 children were supported on the road towards lasting family connections
- 9 children were placed in pre-adoptive families
- 12 children were adopted into loving families

Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow

Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow, located in Easthampton, MA, is an intergenerational, planned community for kinship, guardianship and adoptive families who provide permanency to children who have experienced foster care and elders who wish to be "extended family members". As a partner at Treehouse with the Treehouse Foundation, Beacon Communities LLC and Treehouse community residents, BCF provides DCF funded adoption, foster care and onsite pre and post permanency child and family support and stabilization services.

During FY 08, Sarah Greenblatt and Mary LeBeau from the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, a component of Casey Family Services, offered technical assistance to the Treehouse partners to develop a strategic plan. This plan captures and integrates the incredible resources, knowledge and skills of everyone involved at Treehouse. A blueprint for our work together in the future has been created.

Impact

- 12 families with 36 children were supported in all phases of creating and sustaining permanent family ties
- 5 children were adopted into families living at Treehouse
- 1 child was reunited with a family member
- All partners deepened their understanding of what families need to sustain permanent commitments to children and what children need in order to belong to families and communities

TRANSFORMING TOGETHER: *Family and community connected care for children and families through DCF FAMILY NETWORKS LEAD AGENCY SERVICES*

BCF serves as the Family Networks Area Lead Agency in the DCF Pittsfield and Greenfield Area Offices covering many rural and urban communities in Western MA. BCF partners with the Area Offices to develop local networks of services and community collaborations to support children and families to reach outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being. BCF staff members organize and facilitate family team meetings; families and children have an active voice in identifying services that enhance their own strengths and resources. BCF is responsible for service referral, utilization, and educational consultation for three types of services purchased by DCF from private providers: community-based Support and Stabilization Services, Intensive Foster Care, and Congregate (Residential) Care placements.



ENJOYING THE OUTDOORS

Impact

- 564 families served by the Pittsfield Area Office benefitted from coordinated networks of service and support to promote the safety, permanency and well being of their children
- 392 families served by the Greenfield Area Office benefitted from coordinated networks of service and support to promote the safety, permanency and well being of their children
- Many children and adolescents were able to return in a timely manner to permanent family and community settings following placement in Intensive Foster Care or Congregate Care

2008 FINANCIAL REPORT

Berkshire Children and Families, Inc. For the year ended June 30, 2008

Income

United Ways	\$315,769
Contributions	130,310
Government Contracts	6,099,526
Grants	155,607
Services and Fees	206,085
Investment Income	(36,558)
Gain on Sale of Building	552,915
Other Income	1,540

Total Income \$7,425,194

Expenses

Program Services	
Early Childhood Education	1,443,836
Permanency	2,642,695
Parenting and Family Support	1,154,919
Lead Agency	1,028,765

Total Program Services \$6,270,215

Support Services	
Management and General	932,149
Fundraising	3,011

Total Support Services \$935,160

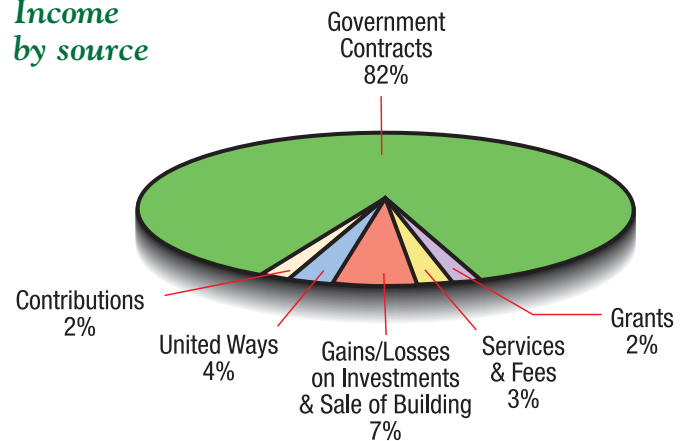
Total Expenses \$7,205,375

Increase in Net Assets	219,819
Net Assets, July 1, 2007	1,916,240

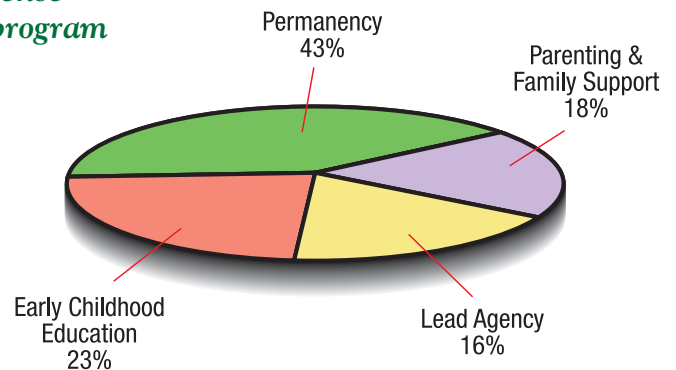
Net Assets June 30, 2008 \$2,136,059

unaudited

Income by source



Expense by program



Major Funding Sources

Berkshire Bank Foundation
 Berkshire County Sheriff's Office
 Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation
 Berkshire United Way
 Child and Family Services, Inc. - New Bedford, MA
 Childrens Services of Roxbury / Mass. Families for Kids
 City of Pittsfield
 Communities Foundation of Texas
 Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
 Coolidge Hill Foundation
 Dean Foundation, Inc.
 Federation for Children with Special Needs
 Hampshire Educational Collaborative, Inc. (HCFN)
 Margaret P. Stevenson Foundation
 MA Children's Trust Fund
 MA Department of Early Education and Care
 MA Department of Education
 MA Department of Mental Health
 MA Department of Mental Retardation
 MA Department of Children and Families (formerly DSS)
 Northern Berkshire United Way
 Rotary Club of Pittsfield
 Town of Amherst
 Town of Williamsburg
 United Way of Hampshire County
 Williamstown Community Chest

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To all our generous supporters, from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008. Thank You!

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Berkshire Bank
Berkshire Eye Center

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Jekanowski & O'Neill
Jones Town & Country
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Kim Scibelli
Linda Umbach
Michael and Jeanie Hawkins
Northampton Cooperative Bank
Our Lady of the Hills
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Pioneer Valley Travel
Rachel Bowen
Saint Anne's in Leeds
Saint John the Baptist
Sara Tanne
Nancy Hamel
Theresa Ruggiero
University of Massachusetts, Computer
Science Department
University of Massachusetts, Health
Services
V A Medical Center
Webber and Grinnell
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