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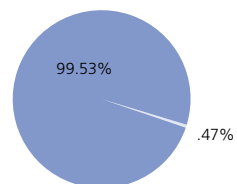


Finding Direction. Realizing Dreams.

2008–09 Annual Report

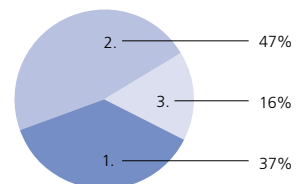


Financial Summary ending June 30, 2009



Revenue

Public Funding—Office of Mental Health	\$3,179,860
Grants & Gifts	14,990
Total:	\$3,194,850



Expenses

1. Treatment & Therapy	\$1,172,660
2. Residential Living	1,496,306
3. Management & Administration	525,884
Total:	\$3,194,850

Donors

Stillwater appreciates the generosity of the following individuals and organizations:

Individuals:

- Anonymous
- Lee P. Bearsch
- Joe Biegen
- Linda Biemer
- Elizabeth Kay Boland
- Diane L. Brown
- Margaret W. Cole
- Sheryl Dalton
- Sharon Fowler
- John Giglio
- Angela Kehoe
- Karen A. Koscianski
- George J. Koscianski
- Nancy LeBlanc
- Marc Lippman
- Charles and Millie Miner
- Brenda Morrisey
- Charlotte O’Dea
- John & Mary Prikazsky
- Donna Rider
- Jim & Noni Saroko
- Dennis Tchir
- Lesli VanZandbergen
- Audrey Wheeler
- Karen Wright

- The Community Foundation for South Central New York
- Cornell University Bluebird Grant
- Cornell University “Kids Growing Food”
- First Congregational Church Women’s Fellowship
- First Congregational Church of Greene
- Home Depot
- Levene, Gouldin & Thompson
- Midstate Litho
- North Fenton United Methodist Church
- Rotary Club of Greene
- Rotary International

Please consider supporting and enhancing the lives of the children we serve by purchasing beverages through the Java Joe’s Roasting Company link found on our website, www.stillwaterrtf.org or by doing your online shopping through the OneCause link which can also found be on our website. Both organizations donate a portion of the proceeds from your purchases to Stillwater.

We also welcome and are grateful for your direct financial contributions which help pay for facility improvements, enhanced opportunities, and the activities that are so essential to every child. Contributions are accepted online at www.stillwaterrtf.org.



Leadership Message

It is with great excitement and pleasure that we present you with the first Stillwater Annual Report. As some of you may know, we have been a part of the mental health community in Central



Karen E. Wright



Elizabeth Kay Boland

New York since 1992. Many of you will know us by our former name...Children's Home RTF.

In 2008, after several years of planning and development, we launched our identity as Stillwater — a name that better reflects our beliefs, principles and values, as an organization that serves children and youth who are challenged with mental health issues.

We invite you to become part of our direction and part of the dreams we all have for children...that they will grow and flourish under our care and with our compassion, understanding and guidance. As we enter our second year as Stillwater and our 17th year of service in children's mental health, we remain committed and motivated to help children and provide support for the future we all share.

Thank you,

Karen E. Wright, LCSW
Executive Director

Elizabeth Kay Boland, MSN
Board Chair

Stillwater Board of Directors 2008–2009

Elizabeth Kay Boland, *Chair*
Sheryl Guiles, *Vice-Chair*
Dr. Jane A. Coddington, *Treasurer*
Sharon Fowler, *Secretary*
Linda Biemer
Vince Coletta
Robert K. "Chip" Houser
Joanne Moxley, LMSW
Charlotte K. O'Dea
Dennis Sweeney
Stephen E. VanNostrand

Our commitment is to the children we serve and to their families, as they work with courage and strength to build a strong foundation for a healthy and successful future. Stillwater; a reference point familiar with those who live in the Greene area, roots us in our Chenango County community. To a broader world, we envision that Stillwater brings to mind images of a place where peace, healing, calmness and depth are present and attainable. After all, those who live and work at Stillwater are always on a quest...*finding direction and realizing dreams.*

Finding Direction. Realizing Dreams.

Getting to Know Us

The staff and Board of Stillwater invite you to get to know us a little better. Stillwater RTF, was founded in 1992 to serve the unique needs of children who experience emotional and psychiatric difficulties. The NYS Office of Mental Health had just initiated the development and licensing of Residential Treatment Facilities (RTF) as a sub-class of psychiatric hospitals. It was hoped that such facilities would provide a more normalized living environment where children could thrive under the care and supervision of professional staff while receiving the critically necessary treatment to enable them to return to family, community and school.

Our children come from diverse backgrounds in Central New York. They struggle with complex issues of trauma, loss, grief, and psychiatric difficulties. Stillwater responds to these needs providing intensive, child-focused and family-centered services. Psychiatric care, mental health services, education, and other health and wellness services are at the core of what we provide. Stillwater is licensed by NYS Office of Mental Health and accredited by the Joint Commission.

We pride ourselves on being creative, culturally respectful, and fiscally responsible. We use a variety of therapies, all of which place us at the forefront of treatment for children at risk of life-long psychiatric difficulties. Our program provides safety, understanding, expertise, and hope for the future.



Stillwater Residential Treatment Facility provides children who experience psychiatric and emotional difficulties with intensive mental health services and comprehensive residential care. At Stillwater, children and their families receive the treatment and support they need to heal and find hope for a better future.

— Mission Statement

We are pleased to present you with our first Annual Report. If you would like to enrich the lives of the children at Stillwater there are many ways that you can help — and it all begins with getting to know us. Visit our website at www.stillwaterrtf.org. *Welcome!*

Behavior Management through Adventure

BMTA – Behavior Management through Adventure is a coordinated therapeutic approach first developed by Project Adventure that is woven into every aspect of life at Stillwater. It begins with the Full Value Contract, six core concepts that everyone — staff and residents included — agree to from the start. They are:

- Be Here
- Be Safe
- Be Honest
- Set Goals
- Take Care of Self & Others
- Let Go & Move On



BMTA's systematic approach promotes positive behavior and empowerment of residents and staff to take responsibility for their community, wherever that community may be. Participants are empowered through establishing norms using Full Value principles and the use of group calling, a tool that gives everyone the chance to participate and be heard on a level playing field. Groups are also a way to promote good communication skills. There are six different types of groups and anyone — staff or resident — can call a group at any time. The six types of groups include:

- Celebration – a positive group where all participants can share in good news
- Information – a forum for requesting and sharing information
- Checking In – a way to determine the overall status or mood of a person or group
- Confrontation – a safe, structured way to deal with conflict

“During my stay here I went through a lot, but I’ve always had staff by my side. About a year ago, somebody said to me that actions speak louder than words. That made me think and I started to show that actions do speak louder than words. That is why I am doing so well. Thanks for everything.”

— a Stillwater resident

- Consequences – to determine appropriate consequences when the group agrees it is necessary
- Feelings – a forum for expressing and sharing feelings

Activities throughout the day are structured so that they integrate into the experiential learning cycle. Before an activity an information group may be called to communicate rules, determine the schedule, set goals for the activity, and explain the reason for the activity. Afterwards, there is a group discussion that addresses results — how those results are relevant, why they are important, and what should happen next.

Annually Stillwater hosts a “Mini Conference” or “VIP Day” that teaches parents or guardians about our BMTA approach so that as residents transition back into their homes, they can continue being supported using the skills that they have developed. Activities include the children, their “VIPs” (very important people in their life), and the staff.

The BMTA model is a leading edge approach that has been very effective for Stillwater, developing the children’s sense of responsibility, accountability, and empowerment. We continue to advance in our training and methodology, as we fulfill our mission and help children and their families to find direction and realize their dreams.



“Leo” Teaches Empathy with Cuddles, Wags, and Walks

Leo, a 90 pound bundle of fur, visits the children at Stillwater every Monday with his owner, Victoria Gear. A therapy dog, Leo is half Standard Poodle and half Leonberger. He was rescued from an abusive situation — a victim of circumstances not unlike many of the children he now visits. Around Leo the children practice being calm, gentle, slowing down their movements, and demonstrating love and empathy. Meanwhile, Leo enjoys showing off his “tricks” like sitting, shaking, and rolling over for which he is amply rewarded by the children with treats. The children also walk him, pet him, and soak up plenty of his furry, non-judgmental, unconditional love. Our thanks to Victoria for sharing Leo with us!

Multi Sensory Room

In early 2008 Stillwater received the funding necessary to create a Multi Sensory Room. A grant from the Community Foundation for South Central New York combined with generous donations from the Rotary Club of Greene and the Hidden Angel Foundation, as well as donations from private contributors, made the room a reality. Since then, it has become a favorite space for many of the residents. It provides a kind of unique sensory stimulation that relaxes, uplifts, quiets, and soothes children who often are functioning at a level of hyper vigilance or depressed mood due to traumatic life experiences.

“The idea is to start at whatever level the child is at,” explains Katie Prikazsky, a social worker at Stillwater. “When you have a child who is hyper, you begin with lots of lights and sound, gradually dialing it back as the child begins to settle down, eventually becoming calm.”



For a child who is withdrawn or depressed, the experience in the Multi Sensory Room can begin very subdued and gradually sensory experiences can be added to help the child become more engaged and less withdrawn.

The Multi Sensory Room has a ball pool, bubble tubes that light up with different colors, fiber optics, a disco ball, projector, a wide variety of music, a big rocking chair with built-in speakers, weighted blankets, and a variety of textures on the walls. In the Multi Sensory Room children have control over their environment as they exercise preferences for music or quiet, lots of lights or dark, activity or stillness.

“When kids are struggling to focus on school, or when they are having a tough day, the Multi Sensory Room can really turn things around for them,” says Katie.



Besides therapeutic benefits, the Multi Sensory Room is a lot of fun and can be used as a reward for meeting behavior goals. The relaxing environment also helps kids talk through problems more easily than they might if they were sitting in a social worker’s office.

Without the generous support of private contributions, the Multi Sensory Room would never have been possible. Our staff, and especially the children we serve, would like to thank all those who helped make the room a reality. It has already made a very positive difference in the lives of the many children who have used it.

“Over the past 9 years, I have seen so many young people make significant positive changes in their lives, learn to manage their emotions, and resolve very painful pasts. Many residents have told me that this has been the first place that they really felt safe, cared for, or understood. It is truly an amazing process.”

— a Stillwater staff member

Recreation Therapy: Leveraging the Value of Leisure Time

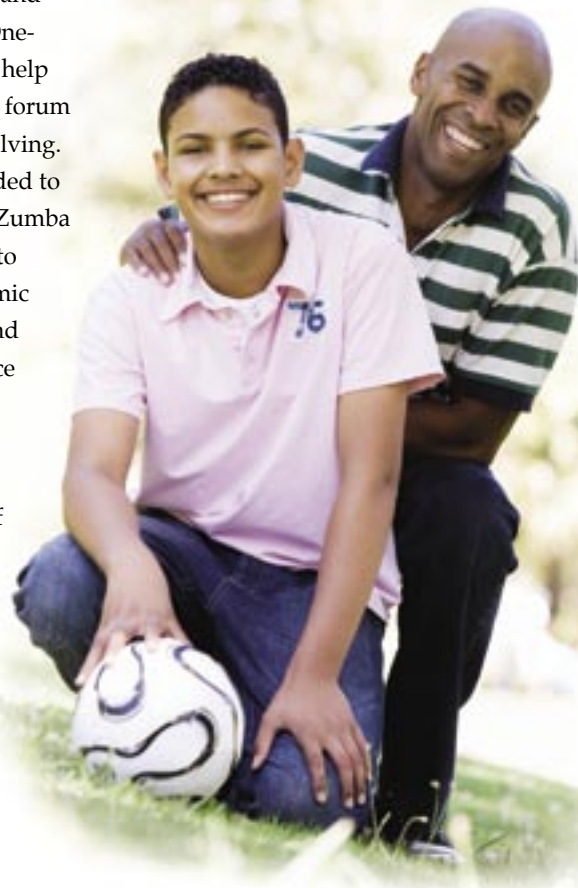
For children, much is learned through play. At various ages and developmental stages games take on different meanings — strengthening skills, establishing self-confidence, developing strategies for cooperation and teamwork.

The children at Stillwater are no different. Our BMTA (Behavior Management Through Adventure) model is integrated into all that we do — including recreational activities. Acknowledging how you feel, learning techniques to appropriately express emotions, being aware of how you feel after expression, and learning ways to translate that into coping skills for daily life are all benefits that can be derived from recreational therapy.

Circuit training, used almost daily, builds strength and conditioning and is an effective emotional outlet. One-on-one basketball in the gym can help create a more casual, comfortable forum for conversations and problem solving. Recently, Zumba classes were added to the evening recreation schedule. Zumba incorporates Latin dance steps into a fitness routine, creating a dynamic fitness program that mixes fast and slow rhythms, as well as resistance training. The classes are a fun alternative to the more standard interval training sessions and the response from residents, and staff as well, has been very positive.

Getting outdoors and connecting with nature is also part of the program and it is easy to do with over 30

acres of wooded property surrounding Stillwater. In April, children and staff began blazing a four-foot wide trail that will ultimately create a 1.2 mile loop around the property. The path is lined with stones, logs, branches, mulch and wood chips and includes two bridges — a 16 foot “Let Go and Move On” bridge, and a meandering bridge through 100 feet of marshland that is still in progress. A gathering place was created half way down the path in a clearing, with benches and a circle center. Freshly planted black walnut saplings,



donated to Stillwater by Midstate Litho in Endicott, NY form a circle around the area. This will be a place for talking, for welcoming and sending off ceremonies, for finding direction so that dreams can be realized.

All that we do here at Stillwater comes back to this — helping children and their families find new ways of coping, offering hope, a place to restore balance, gain confidence, and find the strength to move forward.

Thanks to private donations, the recreation department is also able to organize outings to community events, participation in team sports, and occasional day trips. Recent activities have included a trip to Dorney Park, a day of white water rafting in the Adirondacks, and time at nearby Chenango Valley State Park. These activities are tremendously important to the children and to our goal — that one day children and families can be reunited in the community, with hope for the future and the chance to reach their highest potential.

“I am constantly amazed by the resiliency of the children and families we work with. They often come to us after a long, difficult road through the mental health system, exhausted by the process and frustrated by setbacks and disappointments. Yet, they keep working to help improve their lives. I feel honored that they allow me to work with them and help them through this part of their life’s journey.”

— a Stillwater staff member



Chess Club is a Real “Check Mate” with Kids

Thanks to volunteer Joe Biegen, a professor at Broome Community College, the children at Stillwater have the challenging and enriching experience of learning to play chess. Mr. Biegen leads a Chess Club at the RTF that incorporates learning the game, playing, and occasional tournaments for fun. Chess helps kids to develop and improve skills such as mental focus and creative problem solving, as well as giving them an additional recreational outlet. Stillwater is grateful to Mr. Biegen for enriching the lives of our children with his time and talent.

NYS Agriculture in the Classroom Curriculum and an Organic Garden Hold Children's Interest as They Learn Important Concepts



Stillwater is fortunate to be located amidst the rolling hills and lush landscape of rural Chenango County, with lots of trees, fresh air, and natural beauty to enjoy. The environment itself is therapeutic in reconnecting us with nature — giving us the quiet and solitude necessary to regain our balance and ground ourselves once more.

Stillwater reading teacher, Sue Stradling takes full advantage of our natural surroundings, creating teachable moments every chance she gets. Thanks to the New York State Agriculture in the Classroom (NYSAITC) curriculum and Cornell University, those moments present themselves every day.

Using the instructional materials provided and thematic learning strategies, Ms. Stradling's lesson plans incorporate an appreciation for the environment, an understanding of how our food is produced, where it comes from, and how to make healthy food choices.

One of the activities within the curriculum, Kids Growing Food, has resulted in the cultivation of a beautiful organic garden at Stillwater. The children take part in every aspect of planting, cultivating, and harvesting the fruits and vegetables. When harvest time arrives, much of the produce is used in preparing the children's meals, but some is also donated to local food pantries, as an example of generosity and sharing with community.

Recently, Stillwater received a grant from Cornell University, specifically for this program. It is the fourth grant received from Cornell for programs within the NYAITC curriculum.

Concepts learned through the NYAITC programs and activities extend to every subject area. There are stories to promote reading and teach new vocabulary words, activities that incorporate movement and stretching, science and math applications, health and nutrition, history and social studies — not to mention important social and behavioral skills like teamwork, cooperation, generosity, compassion and understanding.

"The children seem to love the program," says Ms. Stradling. "This Spring we hatched chicks and learned about embryology. Over the winter we participated in a six-week Cornell pilot program called Cooking up Fun, where we cooked and tried healthy new foods. To celebrate Earth Day we planted shrubs donated by the DEC Planting for Knowledge program, and of course we are always working on our organic garden," she adds.

The students and Ms. Stradling also grow flowers and have participated in the Community Garden Challenge, sponsored by local seed wholesaler Page Seed and the National Gardening Association. Ms. Stradling was recognized in 2007 by NYSAITC as "Teacher of the Year". She is an Advisory Board member of NYSAITC and also the National Gardening Association. Recently she spoke to teachers from throughout New York State about the success she has experienced with the program at Stillwater.

"The RTF has given my family hope and direction in dealing with my daughter's mental illness and behavior problems. The program is an ongoing learning process, not just a quick fix, that involves my whole family so that we may be successful."

— a Stillwater parent

