



AFP Newsletter | December 2015



FEATURED MEMBER:

Janina Serrao and Family & Children's Agency

Sitting at the Starbucks on the Post Road in Fairfield sipping a hot mocha in the end of October, Janina is amazingly calm, cool and collected, given that she's very pregnant; her first baby is due in two weeks. She hails from a long line of Westporters, and was previously the Captain of the Staples Varsity volleyball team, a position that, she notes flashing a small smile, "was awarded perhaps, more for personality than sports prowess."

Janina went to college and studied Psychology at James Madison University and graduated in 2003. Though she found her first job with a small nonprofit as a Vocational Counselor for people with developmental and psychiatric disabilities to be fulfilling, she realized that the position didn't allow much room for advancement. Fast forward four years later and Janina landed a job at Family & Children's Agency.

She was hired as the Development Coordinator to take care of the donor database and assist with special events. Janina rose among the ranks from the Coordinator position to Development Associate, then Manager of Development & Marketing, and finally to her current role as the Director of Development. Situated in a fairly large fundraising department, she's in charge of individual giving, all appeals throughout the year, and special events. Janina likes the frequent interaction with board members and volunteers instead of always sitting in a back office. Janina and her agency are shaking up the development world with some new initiatives involving millennials and are re-imagining other fundraising events.

Progressive programs initiated by the administration and development team include the creation of a Junior Board of Advisors, made up of young people who spread the word about the Agency among their peers, and assist with volunteerism and fundraising. Every year the group has a new focus and chooses an Agency program to be the beneficiary of their charitable events and monies raised. Efforts are publicized to peer networks on Facebook and other social media. Their inaugural year benefited the Agency's homeless clients and last year they engaged with the ASPIRE afterschool program to plant a small garden at Fodor Farm, the community garden in Norwalk. This year they are working with the Family Support & Prevention Services and will be conducting a diaper drive for clients.

Last year, Family & Children's Agency's annual gala plans were re-drawn. The theme of this time honored tradition was refocused to center on the Agency's purpose. Instead of renting out the usual country club, they acquired the use of a raw, unadorned space with high ceilings, exposed brick, and concrete floors. This blank canvas was decorated with the agency's beautiful colors-teal and lime green-- agency signage, messages, and dramatic lighting. Video vignettes of clients describing the importance of the nonprofit's programs were produced and shown as well. Supporters of the agency invited their friends to learn about the organization's mission and activities. The event was handled by Abigil Kirsh, a renowned catering firm from New York City; the cuisine was delicious and beautifully presented. The service was impeccable.

Located in Norwalk, Family & Children's Agency is a human services organization with a \$15.5 million budget and more than 200 employees. Founded in 1942, it originally provided counseling for women and families during World War II as they struggled to cope with stress, separation, and loss. Today, the nonprofit supports individuals throughout all stages of the life cycle and works to help people build better lives. Each year, they provide services to more than 11,000 children and families, youth, adults and seniors. Services include: adoption, counseling, family support, specialized foster care, parent education, afterschool program, mentoring, addiction recovery, homeless services, and home care and personal alert services. Though there is not enough room here to do the organization's many programs justice, a complete description, along with a moving video, can be found on their website. Here are details on a few select services:

Parent Education Program - offered in partnership with the Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies, this educational program teaches parents about divorce and what family disruption feels and looks like for kids.

Community Connections - provides support to adults experiencing homelessness. The day center is open seven days a week and is often the first step in engaging clients in need of rehabilitation. It provides case management, connections to community resources and engaging classes. In addition, Family and Children's Supportive Housing program provides formerly homeless adults the opportunity to learn skills that they require to maintain housing and independent living.

FCA Home Care- includes a spectrum of services to allow seniors to remain safe and independent in their own homes. The home care program also offers Personal Alert emergency response systems, home health aides, homemakers, home modification services, assisted transportation, and live-in care.

Adoption - both international and domestic adoption services are provided, in addition to post-placement adoption support.

Janina has been at Family & Children's Agency for over 8 years. She "loves it" and believes that it is truly like a family. The leadership recognizes each staff member's potential and allows them to grow within the agency. For the second year in a row, they were named a "Top Workplace" by Hearst Media. The award was very importantly determined through employee feedback. Janina feels the Agency's tag line rings true to her heart and many others': "Together We Change Lives."

The photo at the top includes left to right: Robert F. Cashel, President & CEO, Julene Greenshields, Board Chair, and Janina.



Isabella Frances Serrao joined the world on November 4th weighing in at 7lbs 3 oz.
Janina is doing well and she and her husband couldn't be happier.

National Philanthropy Day Awards Breakfast in November



Left to right: Lisa Ferraro, Fairfield County Chapter and Susan Lampley, Senior Program Officer, Melville Charitable Trust, which was awarded the Outstanding Foundation, and Cindy Citrone, Outstanding Philanthropist, with Abygale Lund from the AFP Connecticut Chapter.

Upcoming Events

December 3 Annual Meeting & Luncheon

12:00-1:30 at the Norwalk Inn and Conference Center, Norwalk.
\$25 for members, \$45 for non-members. All are welcome.



The luncheon will feature Watts Wacker, the Futurist: Don't Think Outside of the Box. . . Instead Ask Why the Box? The Annual Meeting will also take place and will include an announcement of the proposed leadership slate for 2016.

New Members

Kimberly Bragoli
Director of Development/Communications
Ability Beyond Disability

Margaret Reynolds
Client Associate
Merrill Lynch

James Cunneen

Renewed Members

Linda Avellar
Director of Communication & Development
The Ferguson Library

Susan Chudwick
Director of Development
Bridgeport Hospital Foundation

Cindy Clark
Director of Development
Westport Public Library

Scott Gentry
VP of Development & Marketing
Boys & Girls Village

Tish Gibbs
Consultant

Cathy Greco
Executive VP, Corporate Accounts
United Way

Wally Halas
VP Advancement
Fairfield University

Marion Herbert
Manager of Communications
Family & Children's Agency

Tricia Hyacinth
Manager, Fund for Women and Girls
Fairfield County Community Foundation

Scott Neff
Development Director
Friends of Nathaniel Witherell

Kimberly Pugh
Director of Major Gifts
St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation

Diane Reese Tucker

Grace Weber
Executive Director
Founders Hall

Contact Information

For more information on AFP Fairfield County, visit our website at:
<http://www.afpfairfield.org>.

For questions related to events or membership, please contact our Chapter Administrator, Marianne Hickey at mariannehickey@afpfairfield.org.

To get involved with an AFP Board Committee, email board member, Lorraine Gibbons at lgibbons@shehancenter.org.

For questions or comments about the newsletter, please contact AFP board member, Anne Tack ATack@Tackwriters.com.

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