

Listening Ear Crisis Center
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Agency Updates

Listening Ear is pleased to welcome new personnel and congratulate those who have made advancements —

Welcome:

- Emily Brown, Mental Health Technician/211 Call Specialist for the Crisis Center
- Jessi Brown, B.S., Foster Care Worker for the Children's Foster Care Program
- Megan Cook, Assistant Program Director for Residential Services Central - Adams Home
- Sam Dush, B.S., Certification Worker/Foster Care Worker for the Children's Foster Care Program
- Donny Kyre, B.S., intern for the Transitional Living Program
- Thaddeus Levine, M.S., Case Manager for the Transitional Living Program
- DeAuvia Rucker, BSW, intern for the Runaway & Homeless Youth Program
- Stephanie Schwanda, LPC, Therapist for the Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program
- Brittany Smith, Mental Health Technician/211 Call Specialist for the Crisis Center
- Nick Willetts, BSW, intern for the Transitional Living Program

Congratulations:

- Mindy Bigford, Program Director for Residential Services Central - Lynnwood Home
- Brandon Garber, Senior Direct Care Worker for Residential Services Central - Adams Home
- Children's Services – Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Transitional Living Programs were awarded the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' Homeless Youth and Runaway Youth grant.
- Children's Services – Runaway and Homeless Youth Program was awarded a three year federal grant.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson: Dr. Kristin Sheridan
Vice Chair: Dr. Ross Rapaport

Secretary: Al Kaufmann
Treasurer: Paul Siers

Ruth Freebury
 Matthew Hagen

John Leonard
 David Johns, PA

Heather Tubbs
 Dr. Suzanne Shellady

Executive Director: Donald Schuster

If you wish to have your name removed from the newsletter mailing list, please write: **Executive Director, Listening Ear, P.O. Box 800 Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0800** or, email dschuster@listeningear.com. If you want more information about us, please visit our website at www.listeningear.com or see www.guidestar.org.



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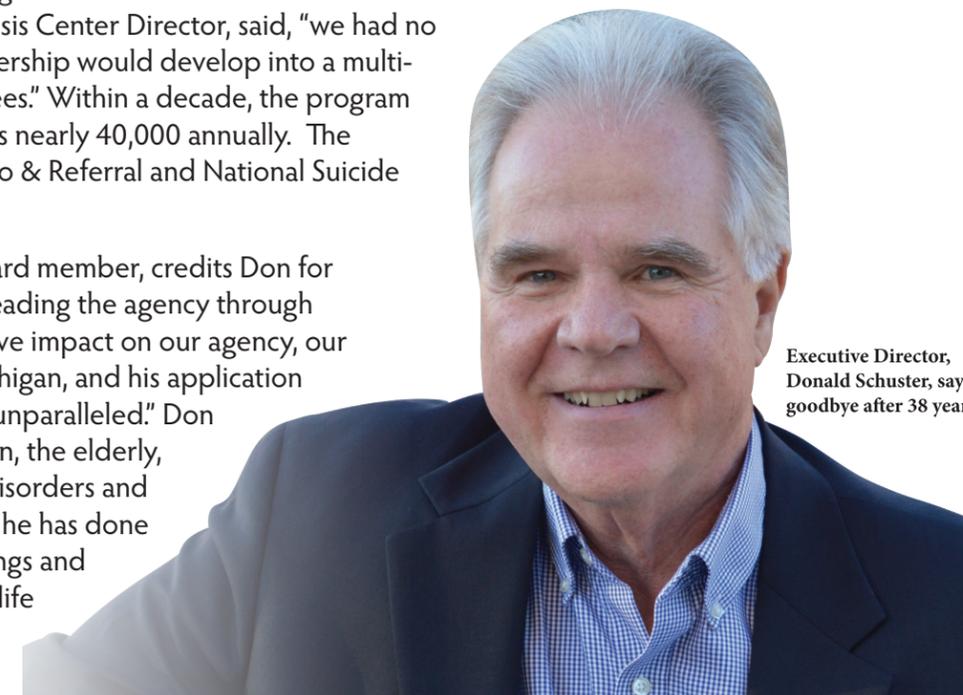
Gratitude to Our Retiring Director - A Vision Realized

Donald Schuster, leading Listening Ear for the last 38 years, is retiring in January. Don began his tenure as Executive Director at the age of 29 when the only service was the 24 hour crisis program. With Don's vision and initiative, the agency now offers nine programs that serve citizens in over half of Michigan's 83 counties.

"When we started the Crisis Center program in 1969 with a handful of volunteers and a \$250 donation," Kathy Tarrant, Crisis Center Director, said, "we had no idea that Listening Ear under Don's leadership would develop into a multi-program agency with over 300 employees." Within a decade, the program was serving 4,000 callers and now serves nearly 40,000 annually. The Crisis Center is also part of the 2-1-1 Info & Referral and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline networks.

Al Kaufmann, former employee and Board member, credits Don for keeping an eye toward the future and leading the agency through remarkable development. "Don's positive impact on our agency, our community and indeed the State of Michigan, and his application of social work skills and knowledge are unparalleled." Don is a lifelong advocate for abused children, the elderly, people with disabilities, mental health disorders and those living in poverty. Al said, "All that he has done is wrapped in his value of all human beings and a belief that all people should live their life to the fullest extent possible."

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Executive Director, Donald Schuster, says goodbye after 38 years.

INCREDIBLE COMMUNITY

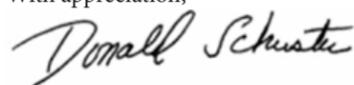
Dear Readers,

It is with gratitude, a clear sense of accomplishment, and new opportunities to serve before me that I will step aside as Executive Director of Listening Ear and enter into my next phase of life. Over the last 38 years I have been blessed to serve children that were abused or homeless, people that were suicidal, a person with disabilities, someone needing a home or a person facing tough challenges in life. In doing so, I have worked cooperatively with thousands of compassionate and mission driven staff and community members, where collectively we served over one million people. The citizens we served were often helped with little things and some with big things that made a lasting difference in their lives. We listened, supported, housed, fed and loved those in need.

I shall miss the people we serve and have developed a deep respect for their resiliency, strengths and determination. It is hard to leave this beautiful collective of people but it is time for another leader to build upon the jewel that Listening Ear has become. Amanda Hart has been chosen to become the next Executive Director of Listening Ear and I know her dedication to the consumer is deeply entrenched after watching her at Listening Ear over the last 12 years. Amanda is a mission driven leader, who is never reluctant about stepping forward to help and advocate for those in need.

Finally, there will always be much to do to improve the human life experience and I trust the people of Listening Ear and the community will never shy from this honored role. To our greater community - I thank you for doing your part to help those in need by generously giving. I will treasure our time together and forever value the meaningful work we did to serve those in need.

With appreciation,



Donald Schuster
Executive Director

A Vision Realized:

Creating a Respected, Solvent and Quality Organization

(continued from page 1)

Sally Goodrow, who manages an emergency assistance fund for those needing medicine, gasoline, shelter, food or more, mentioned, "When we were setting up the John H. Goodrow Fund, Don was most helpful, offering guidance and direction... Don knows the community and shared his insights."

George Rouman, retired Executive Director of Central Michigan Community Mental Health, recalled "Shortly after arriving in Mt. Pleasant, Don Schuster came to meet with me and to learn about the community's unmet needs. While chatting, I remarked that Listening Ear could not continue to exist or thrive solely as a call center. It would need to expand its mission to include additional programs and recipients." Don acted on that advice and helped to chart a new direction for Listening Ear.

In 1981, Listening Ear launched new services for homeless youth, children in need of foster care and specialized treatment counseling for sexual abuse. Currently these programs serve more than 250 youth annually. Listening Ear also began offering residential services for persons with disabilities. Currently Listening Ear serves 130 adults in five counties through 18 group homes as well as in-home help support so that persons



Kathy Tarrant,
Crisis Center Director

with disabilities can stay in their own homes. Don led the way helping these consumers achieve their social, educational, employment, travel and other "dreams."

Because the Crisis Center received a high number of housing related calls, in 1984 Listening Ear began offering affordable housing. The agency owns 130 rental units and its office buildings which contribute to the agency's sustainability. As retiree Nancy Wanek said, "There is no doubt in my mind that Listening Ear would not be the highly respected, financially solvent and quality organization it is without the leadership of Don Schuster."



Dr. Kristin Sheridan,
PhD, Board Chair

To ensure stability for various programs, Don established five endowment funds and an additional self-funded one - the Schuster Family Fund for survivors of child sexual abuse.

With a commitment to high standards, he helped secure national Accreditation for the agency. Board Chair, Kristin Sheridan said, "Don is focused on excellence and has shown the capacity both to inspire others and to be inspired by them. He is passionate about our consumers and takes delight in the exceptional caring and commitment that staff show."

Staff at Listening Ear admire Don's open yet decisive nature - often accompanied by a great laugh. Michele Young, Director of Residential Services at Listening Ear says, "Don is one of those leaders that will certainly be unforgettable. He has great passion, drive and insight which have kept us in the forefront of other agencies."

While he will continue to play a supportive role in the agency, Don is looking forward to more time with family and friends, traveling and fishing while still being an advocate on various state and regional Boards along with a private pain management service. All of us at Listening Ear express our heartfelt gratitude for his inspirational work at Listening Ear.

We are thankful for these supporters!

(Gifts made since the last newsletter)...

LISTENING EAR CRISIS CENTER FUND

- Pamela Burke, in memory of Lou Ann Howard

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TREATMENT FUND

- Donald Schuster from the Schuster Family Fund
- Andrew Strich

PHIL A. LANGLOIS ENDOWMENT FUND

- Wesley Skinner
- James & Carol Wojcik
- Nancy Grover
- Annie VanDyke
- Susan McTaggart Dennis
- Mr & Mrs John Lorand

GENERAL DONORS & GRANTMAKERS - THANK YOU TO:

- Kevin Allen toward Crisis Center operations in honor of Nick Olson
- Barnabas Foundation Stewards Fund/The Paul Buiten Stewards Fund toward youth programs
- Alden and Vada Dow Family Foundations for Weekend Recreation program and youth recreation
- Eagle Riders toward Crisis Center operations
- Ronda Farlow toward Crisis Center operations
- Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation toward awning to protect vulnerable consumers
- Isabella Bank toward homeless youth programs
- Leppien Foundation grant to support the Crisis Center and youth programs
- Louis De Rocco, Jr. toward the Weekend Recreation program
- Mental Health Association of NY City, Inc toward awning to protect vulnerable consumers
- John & Katrina Olson toward Crisis Center operations in honor of Nick Olson
- Ed & Leah Perry toward Crisis Center operations in honor of Nick Olson
- Joshua Salisbury Inc. toward Harley Days and Weekend Recreation program
- WE Martin Foundation toward homeless youth programs and Child Sexual Abuse Treatment
- Marilyn Zorn toward Crisis Center operations

Please join us as we celebrate the
Retirement of Don Schuster
Friday, December 15th
from 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm
Comfort Inn Hotel and Suites
2424 S Mission
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

