

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

Congratulations to:

Anne Garcia, B.S., C.I.R.S., Mental Health Technician/2-1-1 Call Specialist in the Crisis Center was promoted to Assistant Crisis Center Director.
 Julia Sabo, B.A.A., Mental Health Technician/2-1-1 Call Specialist in the Crisis Center was promoted to Mental Health Technician II/2-1-1 Call Specialist.
 Kathleen Tarrant, B.S., C.I.R.S., Crisis Center Director, was recertified with the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems as a C.I.R.S.
 Jenny Jacobs promoted to Program Director for Residential Services South at Prairie Creek I and II.
 Roberta Jenkins promoted to Senior Direct Care Worker at Residential Services Central at Gary Street.
 Marin Wood was promoted to Assistant Program Director at the Residential Services Central Mt. Pleasant home.
 Cindy Croke promoted to Assistant Program Director at Residential Services Central for the Clare AFC Home

Welcome to:

Courtney Cirone, new Employment Specialist for the Antrim Kalkaska area serving Residential Services North.
 New Mental Health Technician/2-1-1 Call Specialist staff Rachael Lynch, B.S and Shantell Johnson.
 Joshua Caswell, CMU alumni B.S. in Business Administration, Accountant with the Business Support team.

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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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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The mission of Listening Ear is to provide citizens of Michigan with human services and affordable housing that satisfy, support, and promote the dignity and well-being of those in need.

September 2013
 Volume XVI, Issue 2

Listening EAR

Opportunity to Heal

Not long ago a six year old child was referred to our Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program after being molested by a neighbor that she and her family trusted. The entire family struggled with the shock, sense of betrayal, anger and fear for their child's future. The healing began when the child and family had the opportunity to receive treatment. Therapist and counselor, Kristie Birchmeier, LLPC, worked with the child and family from the point of disclosure through the court case that followed. Today the girl and parents are doing better and working through this terrible situation together.

The program was launched in 1981 after the Michigan Department of Social Services approached Listening Ear. Over the years the agency has further developed the specialized program for child victims of sexual abuse and/or incest. The Program offers crisis and support services free of charge to child victims of sexual abuse and/or incest in Isabella and Clare Counties and surrounding areas. Children enter the program by being referred by a Protective Services worker at the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), the police department, the court system, other community agencies, or, by self-referral. Hours are flexible to meet the needs of families served. The program is supported by two licensed and experienced Therapists with a strong background in child development, family functioning, and trauma.

(Kristie Birchmeier using therapeutic aids to help a child heal from the traumatic experience.)



INCREDIBLE COMMUNITY

Dear Readers,

For over 44 years, Listening Ear has focused on supporting and improving life and in doing so has touched thousands of people in many different ways. Many have been far reaching and profound such as listening to a caller speak about wanting to kill themselves after losing their wife of 63 years and feeling all alone. It could be how we helped a 6 year old girl survive and heal from being sexually abused by a baby sitter from the neighborhood. Or it could be how we supported two men with disabilities for ten years, while they finished college, traveled, took part in their community and lived a meaningful life.

Supporting thousands of people over the last four decades has been rewarding, challenging and life changing. There are hundreds of incredible employees who work tirelessly to support the clients or consumers of Listening Ear. The employees have one common characteristic, the unending passion and commitment to serve and support those in need. You will hear about a few of those incredible people throughout this newsletter.

Incredible life stories have occurred such as the runaway and abandoned youth that became a physician with a beautiful family of five. Or the desperate homeless man with a shotgun and a fifth of whiskey that sought help and years later became a successful businessman, father and motivational speaker.

Life has many crucial twists yet the resiliency of people is profound, especially with support from incredible employees like we have at Listening Ear. But to make this impact we need a caring community with donations to places like the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation, United Way and directly to Listening Ear. Together we are building and sustaining a caring community that is *"Always There.."*

Sincerely,

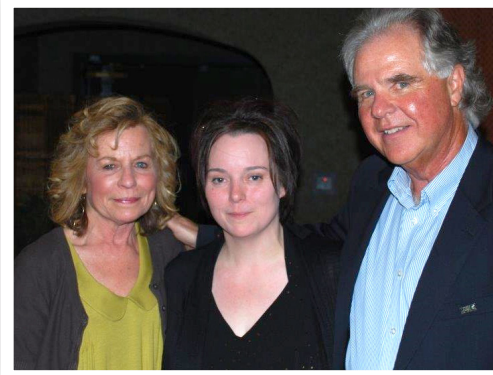
Donald Schuster, LMSW
Executive Director

Building a Community That's *Always There*

2013 "ANGELS OF LISTENING EAR"

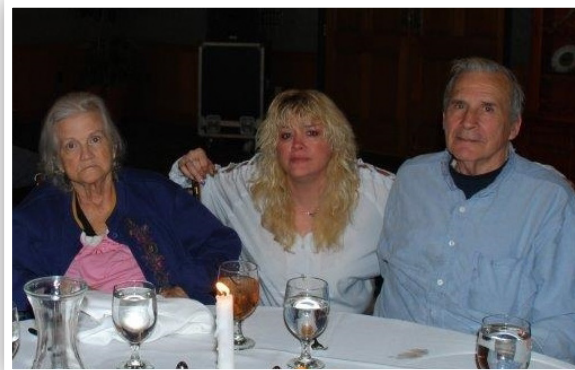
Three staff were recently awarded as "Angels of Listening Ear" at the Board Awards Banquet.

Dottie Richardson has worked for Listening Ear's Residential Services at the North Birch Home in Kalkaska for ten years. She has worked as a Direct Care Worker, a Senior Direct Care Worker and now she is the Assistant Program Director. The Residential Services program provides support to people with developmental disabilities and/or mental illness so that they can fully participate in their communities. Dottie has consistently shown dedication, love of the consumer, hard work and has always been willing to go the extra mile for the consumers. Known for giving good hugs, the guys who live at the North Birch Home are always eager for one of her hugs. And, when a consumer needs medical care, she is the first one there and last one to leave. Dottie never turns down an opportunity to get the guys involved in the community, whether it is a community event or a new fun thing to do. Last fall she orchestrated a 90th birthday party for a consumer who lives at the North Birch home. About 85 family members, friends and staff attended the celebration.



"Angel" Dottie Richardson shown with Karen Elkins, Director of Residential Services and Don Schuster, Executive Director.

Diann Turnwald has worked for Listening Ear for almost 26 years! Diann began her career at the Clare Home as a Direct Care Worker for Listening Ear's Residential Services. Later she became a Senior Direct Care Worker, then an Assistant Program Director and now is the Program Director. She is a great advocate for her consumers, especially regarding medical care. One of the doctors kiddingly calls her Dr. Diann! Her immense knowledge and skills have helped a consumer with a trachea and ventilator be able to continue living in the licensed adult foster care home where he is loved and well cared for. She also leads the agency's First Aid and CPR training programs. Diann is also a Harley Motorcycle lover and was one of the founders of "Harley Days." The annual event brings almost 100 consumers together for a day of motorcycle riding, food and celebration. She always makes sure that there are sidecars for consumers that use a wheelchair. Diann is compassionate, dedicated and always a great advocate for her consumers.



Diann Turnwald with her parents

SEEKING 5TH ACCREDITATION SINCE 1998...

The leadership at Listening Ear is once again immersed in reviewing and updating policies and procedures to ensure compliance with Council on Accreditation (COA) standards of best practice. COA is an international, independent, not-for-profit, child- and family-service and behavioral healthcare accrediting organization. Standards are continually updated to emphasize services that are accessible, culturally competent, evidence-based, individualized, outcomes-oriented, provided by a skilled and supported workforce, respectful of individual rights and involve family and provider collaboration. Listening Ear is preparing for its fifth re-accreditation site review to join COA's "Community of Excellence." A team of Site Reviewers will come to Mt. Pleasant in June 2014 to conduct a detailed analysis of all of Listening Ear's administrative and service delivery practices.

We can't achieve this without community input. You may take part in Strategic Planning, a Consumer and Stakeholder's Forum, or be sent a COA survey or a satisfaction survey to complete. You are always welcome to share suggestions as to how we might improve our services by contacting us by email: dschuster@listeningear.com or by calling (989) 773-6904 Ext. 224. Together we can assure that Listening Ear's services are meeting the needs of the communities and consumers served so that all can have confidence in the credibility, integrity and achievement of the organization.

A KIND AND GENTLE LEADER...



"Angel" Amanda Hart and her family

Amanda Hart has served Listening Ear for nine years – first as a Case Manager in the Transitional Living Program (TLP), then as a Child Foster Care worker, and finally as Director of Child and Family Services. She has brought gentleness, commitment, leadership, unrelenting advocacy and program development. She is also kind, unselfish, smart, ethical, accurate, a joy and pleasure to work with. As a leader, she often brings people together in ensuring that consumers have a good life. Don Schuster, Executive Director, said to Amanda during the presentation, "Simply said, you are a kind and gentle leader and healer that inspires us all. As a TLP Case worker I remember that all the young, homeless expectant mothers wanted you to be with them. You were comforting, reassuring and always there. That says a lot about you! As a Foster Care Licensing Worker, you were diligent in following all licensing standards, but always compassionate and inspiring with the foster care youth and foster parents. As another colleague said, Amanda has a warmth about her that all youth and foster parents feel."

As a leader of Child and Family Services, Amanda is an unrelenting advocate, working with the legislature, the state and other youth homeless programs in building the best services available. She is patient with fellow workers, always available and hard working. Schuster said that Amanda is "One of the most committed, hardworking employees that I have encountered. Your energy is unlimited but is driven by your passion. She says sometimes I just want to fold warm towels out of the dryer, but you are always back the next day seeking to serve others. You just have that deep sense of service, that if there is one more youth to help then we need to support them!"

We are thankful for these supporters!

(Gifts made since the last newsletter)...

LISTENING EAR CRISIS CENTER FUND

- Anonymous - in honor of loved ones who committed suicide to help others from feeling so helpless.
- Betsy Banta
- Kathy Tarrant
- James & Carol Wojcik

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TREATMENT PROGRAM FUND

- Marty Mater

Thank you to these GENEROUS DONORS

- Anonymous - so that consumers can enjoy non major league baseball games.
- The Knights of Columbus in Shepherd for the generous gift to our Shepherd home; the gift was used to redecorate a sensory room, purchase sensory stimulation items for one of the consumers and toward pictures, curtains and wall art for the house.

ADVENTURE

This summer, five Y.E.T.I. youth, three staff from the Child & Family Services team and 67 Foster Care participants (children and their Foster Care family members) went on an outing to Michigan Adventure. Current and past program youth are encouraged to join the Youth Empowerment Team Initiative (Y.E.T.I.) –where youth practice leadership skills, gain a sense of belonging and plan youth activities. The outing also served as a positive development activity. While at Michigan Adventure, the teens helped Foster Care parents and program staff with the foster care children and took them on rides. Gifts from The Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation, the Mt. Pleasant Optimists and the Kohls Department Store helped fund the outing. (At right: Some Y.E.T.I. youth enjoy the rides.)



CONNECTING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Thanks to consumers, staff and family members willing to embrace new technology, people with disabilities are overcoming communication barriers. Consumers served by Listening Ear who have difficulty communicating can articulate their needs and preferences using Communication boards, I-Pods, I-Pads, TTY phones and more. Vanessa Sargent, Community Living Specialist, is impressed how technology has expanded possibilities for a consumer named Mary. "Mary is very social and loves to be out and about. Though she uses a wheelchair for mobility and cannot speak, Mary has expanded her horizons using technology! Using her Dynavox Communication board and an I-Pad, Mary can now express her feelings, desires and preferences. Mary touches words or images on her board to ask for help, tell others she is happy or uncomfortable or hungry or that she wants to go downtown. She can even choose the restaurant and make menu choices. Once she touches her selection, the board verbalizes for her, for example, saying out loud, "I'm hungry. I'd like a burrito at Taco Boy." Before using technology her family members and staff had to guess what she was trying to say by reading her body language. Each day Mary uses her assistive speech devices to tell her caregivers what outfit and earrings she wants to wear and what television shows she wants to watch. She also uses Skype to stay in touch with relatives."

