



*“Encouraging Growth, Changing Lives and Enriching our Community”*

Dear Friend of FSF,

My family usually sends out a Christmas letter this time of year – highlights of the year, what family members accomplished at school and work, where we went on vacation and family we visited. In a sense, our family here at Family Service Foundation is doing the same by means of this holiday letter. During this season, we share what we are thankful for, what brings us joy, and what we are hopeful for in the new year.

In truth, we’ve had our share of challenges this past year – financial shortages caused by the continuing need to maintain a first-class workforce while providing quality care to the more than 500 individuals we serve with residential, day, and community mental health services.

Despite these challenges, we have much to be proud of:

- We received top certification from CARF for our Behavioral Health services;
- We successfully transitioned to new leadership within our Developmental Disability program, touching the more than 100 individuals we serve with day and residential care;
- We provided residential services to more than 20 individuals suffering from severe or chronic mental illness, providing them an option to hospitalization, the criminal justice system, or life on the street;
- We continued our commitment to those who, in addition to having an intellectual, developmental or behavioral disability, are also deaf, deaf-blind, or hard-of-hearing;
- We continued services to some 400 underserved individuals through our community Outpatient Mental Health Clinic.
- Most of all, in the face of financial challenges, we refused to shrink service or step back from our mission of encouraging growth, changing lives for the better, and enriching the local community

But especially this time of year, our minds turn to the challenges faced by our clients. Suddenly our organizational challenges pale by comparison. Sooner or later, most of us will face obstacles on life’s road: unemployment, poverty, discrimination, advancing age, or disabilities of one kind or the other. Regardless of our individual religious affiliation, there is a common sense of “there but for the grace of God go I.”

But the people we serve at Family Service Foundation – the Johns, Opals, and Pauls – representing real people heroically confronting disability and chronic illness – face particularly steep climbs -- overcoming not one but multiple disadvantages along the way. It’s personal. Adults experiencing severe mental illness or an intellectual disability likely find themselves with poverty-level incomes, no jobs, and, too

often, the victims of stigma and discrimination. As they age, many outlive their families. They call on us to provide a sense of home and family.

We answer the call through therapy, counseling, residential services, meaningful day programs, community integration activities, and vocational and supported employment services. It's person-centered. For John, it means moving toward independent living with employment and life-skills support. For Opal, it means day and vocational help (with American Sign Language assistance) performing job-related filing and organizing, but leaving time for the singing and dancing she loves. For Paul, it means mental health therapy and medication management in a safe, residential setting, while he moves toward recovery and independence. We are proud of their accomplishments this past year too.

But we remain unsatisfied to look only after their health and safety. We want to help them participate fully in life – to experience family and community – to attain the optimum independence for which they are capable – to have choices. Like I said, it's personal.

So we are proud -- but not too proud to say we need your help. This next year, we wish we could provide training for twenty of our direct support professionals through a program sponsored by the Maryland Association of Community Services. For twenty, that will cost about \$10,000. We wish we could tailor a more consistent, personalized nutritional system for our residential clients. That has about a \$20,000 price tag. We wish we could automate our record keeping and documentation systems. We wish we could train more of our staff in basic American Sign Language, so we can more readily interact with our deaf and hard-of-hearing clients. But all these wishes have price tags and all are beyond our current capacity without your help.

During this season, it is common to seek compassion – and we do on behalf of those we serve. As with other groups asking for help, we hope that compassion leads you to make a financial contribution. But we want that contribution to become a partnership. Follow us during the year, find ways to become involved, get to know our clients, maybe volunteer. In return, we pledge to be good stewards of your investments – both of time and treasure. Last year, 90% of our funds went towards meeting the direct needs of our clients. Less than a tenth went toward administration and fundraising. Please help the hundreds of Johns, Opals, and Pauls we serve. They depend on us. We depend on you.

Happy Holidays,

Gordon Raley  
CEO