

# Better Tomorrows

An Annual Stewardship Publication of Family & Children's Center **2017**

**Ashley's Story**  
Hope Academy helps  
teen mom realize  
she's not alone  
pg. 2

**Dave & Barb Skogen**  
A legacy of giving forward  
pg. 1

**Healthy Families**  
Join us in celebrating  
25 years of better  
tomorrows for families  
pg. 6



# Doors to Better Tomorrows

Greetings,

Many children in our society are born into lives filled with obstacles—with doors of opportunity seemingly closed all around them. Whether it be in an abusive or neglectful home, one with ill-prepared parents or with mental illness in their families or themselves, they seem destined for a life of challenges, disappointment and hardship.

Their hardships often become difficulties for entire communities. When people can't succeed in society, some will drop out of school and become homeless, some will turn to crime, and some will pass it on to future generations.

Family & Children's Center changes all that. You give us the keys, and together we unlock those doors. Your support allows us to reach struggling children, teens, adults and families to remove those obstacles and enter into a new world of possibilities—a world of better tomorrows.

That's a world where more people can be productive and contribute positively toward their communities, where children can enjoy childhood, teens can build dreams and adults can achieve them.



Your generosity is the key to that new world, and we thank you for all you've done to help open doors in the past. We hope you will continue your support.

With gratitude,

Tita C. Yutuc, LCSW  
President/CEO

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## Better Tomorrows

Better Tomorrows is published annually by Family & Children's Center for friends and supporters of our mission. To learn more about the center's services and community impact, or to inquire about making a charitable gift, please visit us at [fcconline.org](http://fcconline.org) or call the Development Office at (608) 785-0001 ext. 235.

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# Giving Creates a Legacy

*What others have given before us, is what we have today and what links one generation to the next, is what we give to provide for future generations*—that sentiment is what Dave and Barb Skogen learned years ago and have carried forward their entire lives.

Dave and Barb began sharing their gift of time, talent and generosity with Family & Children's Center 25 years ago when Dave served as a member of the board of directors. The tradition continues today, with Barb serving on the Board for her second term.

For Dave, trust in the people within the organization, time serving on the board and understanding Family & Children's Center's mission has been what has kept him connected for all these years.

For her, Barb says, "It is the role that Family & Children's Center plays in keeping the community emotionally healthy. It's about FCC getting to the root cause of problems and helping individuals heal. It's about breaking the cycles of abuse, providing education to parenting teens and giving hope to adults with persistent mental illness. It is being there to support and offer a lifeline of hope, especially to the kids who didn't ask for the life they've been given. It's giving skills to these people who want to help

themselves and break the cycles they have found themselves in."

Barb's passion for Family & Children's Center stems from the knowledge that communities thrive when their members have the tools



*"You get back ten-fold when you give someone a gift."*

~ Dave Skogen

they need to become healthier, remove barriers and break cycles.

"Family & Children's Center is so important in building relationships with individuals and letting them

know it's possible to move forward and to start on the path to becoming productive citizens," says Barb. "I worry if we, as a community, don't step in to provide help to these programs that are solely reliant on private dollars, the community suffers and we pay a cost in a different way."

Dave and Barb feel if everyone could take the time to understand the struggles, trauma and abuse that has shaped the lives of individuals using these programs, and take just a moment to walk in their shoes, people would be more inclined to get involved.

The Skogen's believe that giving has a higher purpose in serving and enriching the lives of others. There is tremendous joy for them in giving without the expectation of receiving anything in return, just a simple smile and a thank you. Dave says, "You get back ten-fold when you give someone a gift."

Through their commitment to the community and their generosity, Dave and Barb have impacted the lives of thousands of individuals and families, making our community a stronger, healthier and better place for us all to live.



# Everywhere I turned *I was alone...* until I found *Hope.*



Two years ago, 16-year-old Ashley was standing in front of a mirror at her aunt's house. Her throat was closing and she couldn't swallow. She was panicking and starting to slip into unconsciousness. She knew something was wrong but was unable to yell out for help.

Doctors told Ashley to rehydrate, but what they didn't realize was that she was exhausted, dealing with severe stress and anxiety, and hiding drug and alcohol use because she was too afraid of the consequences.

Ashley's battle with mental health came to a front during her junior year of high school—school couldn't offer enough support to help her cope, she was suffering from daily panic attacks and issues at home were making things worse. She struggled with attending class, meeting credit requirements and truancy.

Eventually, Ashley dropped out. Feeling overwhelmed, depressed and considering whether life was worth living, she started using more drugs and alcohol as a way of self-medicating because she didn't have access to resources for prescriptions.

*"I was determined to work hard for Natalie, to show her you can overcome anything if you find the right support, and I was lucky to find it at Family & Children's Center."*



"Alcohol and drugs made me feel so alive," says Ashley. "In that moment, I didn't feel different. It was as if my mental health problems were gone and everything felt perfect."

Until one day, everything changed. Ashley woke up feeling sick to her stomach, but it wasn't the usual hangover she typically experienced

from a night of partying. "It felt as though my stomach was filled with acid that was burning through me and I couldn't do anything without gagging," says Ashley.

Scared, Ashley decided to take a pregnancy test and, sure enough, it was positive. When she reached out to her friends they would tell her to get an abortion, and her mom, whom she's not close with, said Ashley's baby would have problems because of her bad choices.

"When I tried to talk to my friends, it was always a huge let down. None of them seemed to care," says Ashley. "Everywhere I turned I was alone... until I found Hope."

Ashley stumbled upon Family & Children's Center's Hope Academy program after a change of heart from her mom. As a unique alternative education program, Hope Academy provides teen parents the opportunity and resources to complete a high school credential, while learning to raise a healthy child.

Excited at the idea of connecting with other teen moms, Ashley contacted Hope Academy to set up a tour and fell in love. However, before starting, Ashley had to meet with school administrators to ensure she could attend, and the process would take some time.

"I knew Hope Academy would be better for me than regular high school—it was only a small group of girls, there was child care for my baby and they were going to teach me to be the best mom I could be," says Ashley.

While the school reviewed her case, Ashley kept up with her

prenatal appointments. At 38 weeks, the midwife noticed a slight complication and told Ashley she had to deliver the next day. Ashley was nervous and felt unprepared, but after 13 hours, she got to meet her brand new baby girl, Natalie Jo. And about a month later, she finally received her much anticipated phone call to start at Hope Academy.

Ashley started Hope Academy on her eighteenth birthday. "I was excited and anxious all at the same time, but they had cake for me and everyone was friendly," says Ashley. "I loved it and was so excited to start this new chapter of my life."

After just two weeks, a change started to happen within Ashley. She took it upon herself to send a letter to the teachers and school supports that made it possible for her to attend Hope Academy.

*"I wanted to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to go to Hope Academy. It's only been a couple weeks but it's been the most amazing experience yet. I get home and I can't wait to go to school the next day. It keeps me engaged and wanting to learn. I have gotten to do and learn so many things that I wouldn't have been able to experience if I didn't get to go. They're helping me work on getting low-income housing, we've toured colleges (I never even considered college, but I really liked Viterbo, so maybe I'll change my mind!). Also, the small group helps my anxiety and I'm even starting to make friends, which means Natalie will have friends too! I've never been happier at school and they keep me motivated to graduate and have a great future."*

With Hope Academy's small setting, and a place for Natalie to grow and learn, Ashley was finally able to start making it to class, find ways to work on her mental health and finish her credits to graduate on time.

Staff also connected Ashley with other Family & Children's Center resources to help her manage her mental health and parenting capacity. Outpatient Counseling helped Ashley discover an official diagnosis of ADHD and she was able to enroll in the Healthy Families program which helps Ashley continue successful parenthood by working on her goals and to become a stronger family.

"I have found my potential," says Ashley. "I'm finally independent. I feel like I can advocate for myself now and I'm a better, more confident parent."

After graduating in May, Ashley started a job caring for toddlers and continues to see her counselor. She loves being able to work with other children and hopes to be a teacher someday. She also wants to attend college and buy a house in the future.

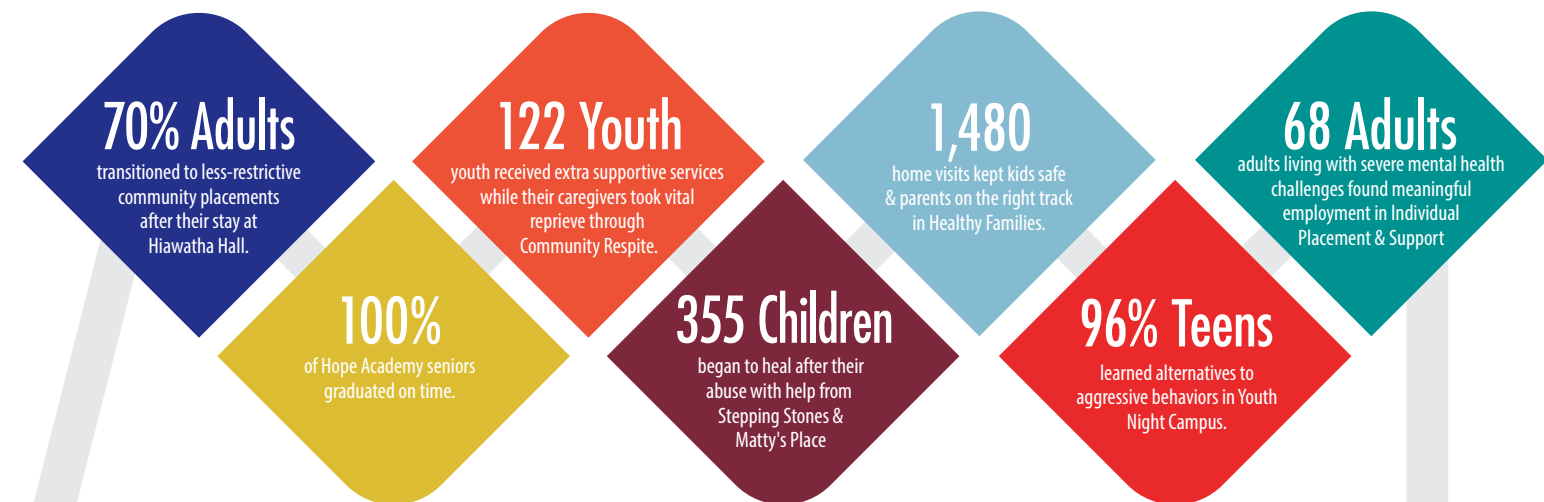
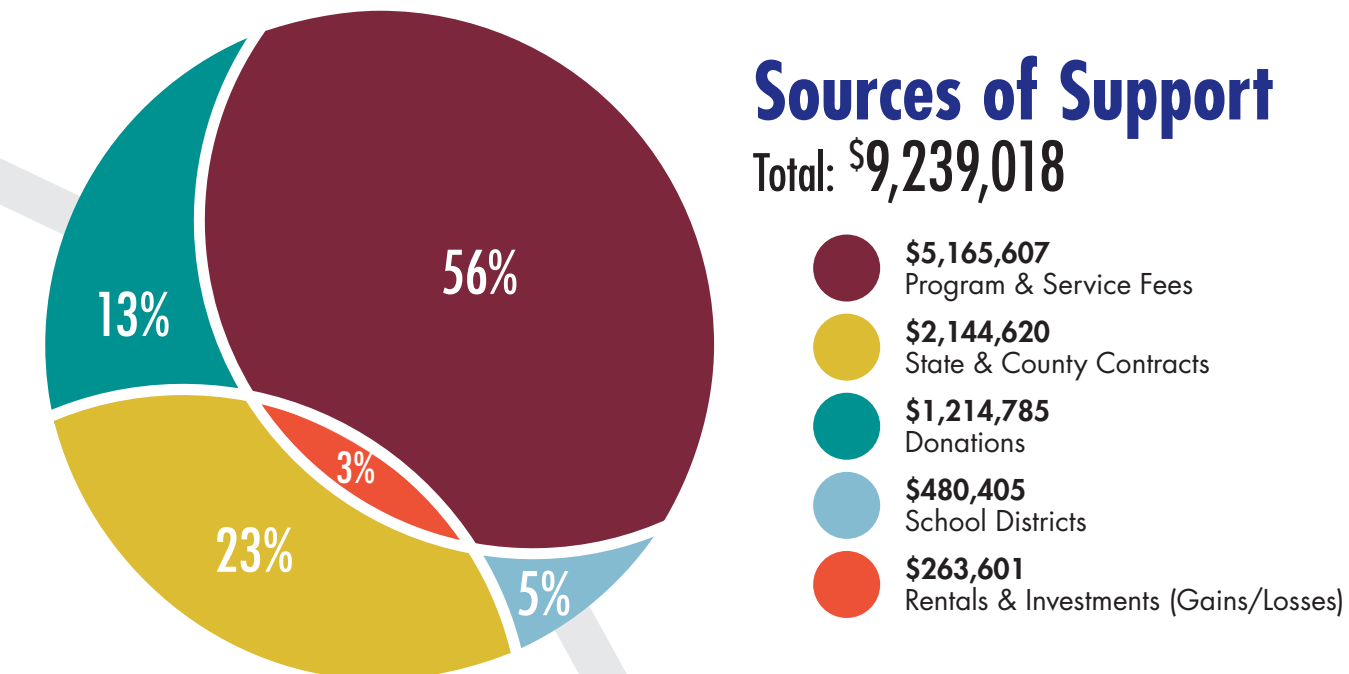
"I've received so much help and support during one of the scariest moments of my life," says Ashley. "Hope Academy completely transformed my life for the better—things are so good for me right now, but I can't wait to see what the future has in store for me next."



# 2016 Annual Report

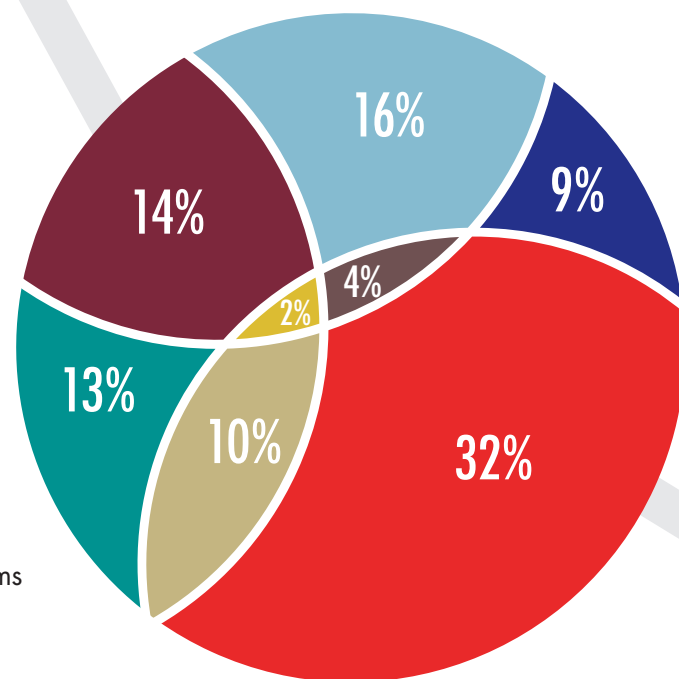
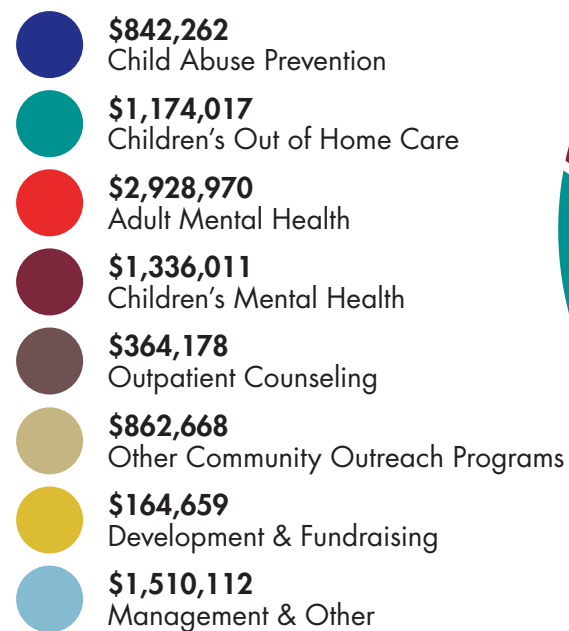
## Financial Highlights

## A Few of Our Program Outcomes



### Expenses

Total: \$9,183,112



### Client Outcomes

# 2887

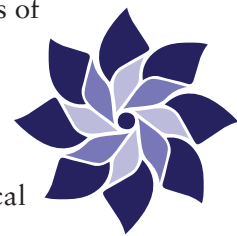
People Served in 2016.\*

\*Some clients utilize more than one program at any given time.

In 1992, Family & Children's Center's President/CEO at the time, John Burgess, championed the start of the Healthy Families program in the La Crosse community. The program is accredited through Healthy Families America and is designed to keep kids safe and strengthen families by helping new parents under extreme stress work on goals, learn child development and address their health concerns.

For 25 years Healthy Families has remained one of Family & Children's Center's premier child abuse and neglect prevention programs—laying a strong foundation of roots throughout the community by helping hundreds of families, thousands of children, and partnering with community members and medical partners. Healthy Families continues to be an outstanding program for involved participants.

Please join us at Myrick Park on Wednesday, August 23rd from 4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. to kickoff our 25th anniversary. This year long celebration will last until June 30, 2018, so keep your eyes open for other special events that commemorate this special milestone.



## Because Child Abuse Has No Place In Our Community

It shouldn't happen here, but it does.



One in ten kids will be abused before the age of 18. Many of them will suffer lifetime consequences. All of them are forever changed.

These companies have had enough. They partnered with Family & Children's Center in 2016 and 2017 to become True Blue by sponsoring programs that give children better tomorrows.

The children thank them.

We thank them.

We hope you thank them, too.



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- Wipfli LLP
- WM Miller Scrap Iron & Metal Company

## Finding Better Tomorrows Through Friendship

Six-and-a-half years ago, Nick and Pierre met in a group home. Since that time, they've overcome barriers, managed their diagnoses and are now using their stories to empower others and reduce the stigma around mental illness.

After a traumatic hospitalization, Pierre started working with Family & Children's Center's Community Support Program (CSP) in 2010. The program provides comprehensive mental health, substance abuse and case management services to adults diagnosed with a severe and persistent mental illness.

At first, it was a rocky road—Pierre was dealing with extreme trust issues, suicidal thoughts and looking for acceptance (where none was to be found) with his family. But that all began to change when he started working with his new case manager, Julie.

Julie connected Pierre with a primary health provider and psychiatric care. She also helped Pierre work on understanding his diagnosis of schizophrenia, medication management and building positive support systems.

And one, if not the largest, positive support in Pierre's life is his friend Nick. "I met Nick at a group home in my darkest hours and he's been a big motivation in my life," said Pierre.

Nick, like Pierre, has mental health challenges that started in his teens. Nick was resilient and made it through part of college, got married

and had a baby, but his mental health started to decline.

"I tried being a stay-at-home dad," says Nick. "I would feed my child, but not myself, and I was having horrible panic attacks."

After being hospitalized every two weeks from anxiety, Nick eventually made his way to Family & Children's Center's Individual Placement and Support program (IPS).

IPS helps people struggling with mental health disorders find meaningful employment. Leah, Nicks' case manager, helped him get his extreme worry, anxiety and depression under control. She also continues to help Nick fill out applications, work on interview skills and stay on track with tasks at work.

In 2015, Nick and Pierre went through a training to become speakers for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) In Our Own Voice presentations. In Our Own Voice gives people in mental health recovery the opportunity to share their stories.

"You know you're making a difference in people's lives," says Nick. "Knowing that I have an impact is very rewarding."

Nick and Pierre have presented In Our Own Voice programs across the state and at local universities. Their work to change minds about mental health earned the two of them a Consumer/Peer of the Year Award at



Nick & Pierre with their coveted NAMI Iris Awards for Consumer/Peer of the Year

the La Crosse Chapter of NAMI Iris Awards this past May.

As shining examples of positive recovery, Nick and Pierre offer education and hope to others through their stories, and they are a constant beacon of light for each other.

"Wherever I go, you'll always have a place in my heart. When you have a friendship like ours, you don't ever let that go," says Pierre.

Nick's dream is to become a peer support specialist, to assist others on their mental health recovery journey, and to someday become a broadcaster, while Pierre wants to take over running his grandfather's cottage in upstate New York. Until then, they'll continue being a role model for each other and for others.



2016 Donor Recognition

Thank You!

To all those who contributed to Family & Children’s Center in 2016 – whether it be with time, talent or treasure – *thank you*. You help provide a better path to tomorrow for thousands of struggling children, families and individuals in our communities.

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Please call the Development Office at (608) 785-0001 ext. 235 if you have a question or correction. We apologize in advance for any inaccuracies.

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~ Maria, Client, Healthy Families

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## Upcoming Events

Please join us at the following events that benefit Family & Children's Center. Your support and attendance helps FCC continue our mission to provide better tomorrows. Visit [www.fcconline.org/events](http://www.fcconline.org/events) for more information and registration details.

 <p><b>September 16<sup>th</sup></b> 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Lube-A-Thon</p>	 <p><b>October 28<sup>th</sup></b> Paint the Town Purple</p>
 <p><b>September 24<sup>th</sup></b> Tri-Quest: Run, Bike, Golf</p>	 <p><b>November 2<sup>nd</sup></b> An Evening in Monte Carlo</p>
 <p><b>October 7<sup>th</sup></b> Winona Lego<sup>®</sup> Contest: Building for Kids</p>	 <p><b>December 2<sup>nd</sup></b> La Crosse Lego<sup>®</sup> Contest: Building Bricks for Hope</p>

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