

# CATAWBA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES

## 2010 ANNUAL REPORT



*To strengthen, with dignity and respect, the quality of life for all citizens through supportive services and advocacy*



# A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is an honor to present our FY 09/10 Annual Report to our citizens and our partners. Catawba County Social Services assists people in need by administering a wide range of programs. Our staff seeks new and cost-effective ways to serve families, children and adults through the delivery of services in a caring and professional manner. Our employees' hard work and dedication to improving the lives of our citizens are reflected in this document.

We continue to see many families suffering from the economic recession. Those seeking our services now include former blue and white collar workers whose jobs have been lost. In FY 09/10, we assisted 23,563 individuals with Medicaid and 23,460 with Food and Nutritional Services per month. The recovery for our county, state, and nation will take some time. However, our staff's commitment to Catawba County citizens is stronger than ever.

The federal government's response to the economic recession has been to expand eligibility for safety net programs such as Food and Nutrition Services and Medicaid. Short-term economic stimulus funds were approved to assist the working poor. Therefore, I expect the number of people we serve to increase in 2011.

Our staff understands the importance of being good stewards of public funds. Our current local county share of the budget is 3.93% (a decrease from 4.39% in FY 09/10). It is important to note that many of the programs have a tremendous impact on our local economy. The local economic impact from Medicaid, Day Care Subsidies, and Food and Nutrition Services for FY 2010 alone was \$342,234,242.

This annual report highlights successes and underscores the importance of creating a sustainable approach to providing services at the local level. There are some celebrations to be noted – more than we can mention. We achieved 96.5% of the outcomes set by our local Board of Social Services. Our staff has worked diligently to reduce the number of children in foster care. Our Family Net Division became a fully accredited Critical Access Behavioral Health Agency to ensure that a continuum of services is delivered to our children and families

needing mental health services. We renovated and opened the Family Services Center, which houses services and staff in a more centralized location next door to our main campus. Our staff continues to strive for excellence and has received many national and local awards for innovative practices.



As we enter 2011, we

plan to work toward the following goals:

- Identify strategies to address issues related to poverty.
- Harness technology to gain efficiencies.
- Implement a balanced scorecard performance management system, which will provide more information to the public about what we do.
- Complete the Children's Agenda and Adult Planning Processes to help us prioritize the needs that exist in our community for both of these populations.

We also thank our Social Services Board members, who volunteer their time and expertise. Glenn Barger and Dan McEachran completed their terms during the fiscal year. We welcomed two new board members, Michael Blackburn and Lynn Lail, who will serve alongside Linda Lutz, Chris Johnson, and Board Chair Jennie Connor.

In today's environment, we cannot solve problems in isolation. We continue to work side-by-side with many volunteers, donors and partners. All of us are doing more with fewer resources. This reality requires effective community engagement and partnerships to meet the needs of our citizens. These partnerships are a pillar of our county's great tradition. It is these very partnerships that will sustain us through these difficult times.

We look forward to serving the citizens of Catawba County in 2011.

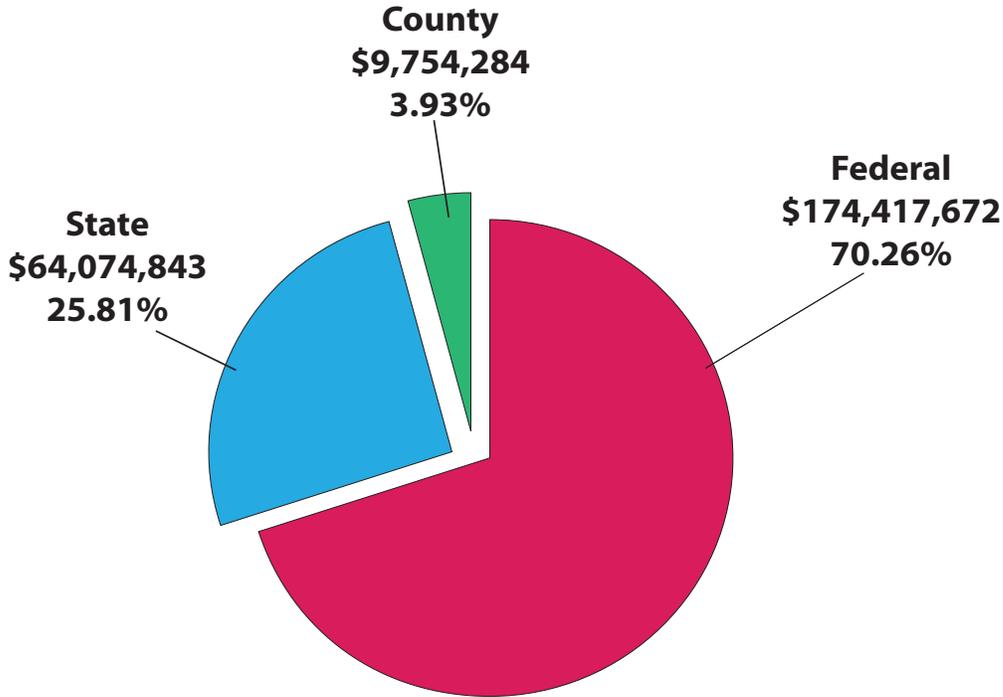
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Eller'.

John Eller, Director

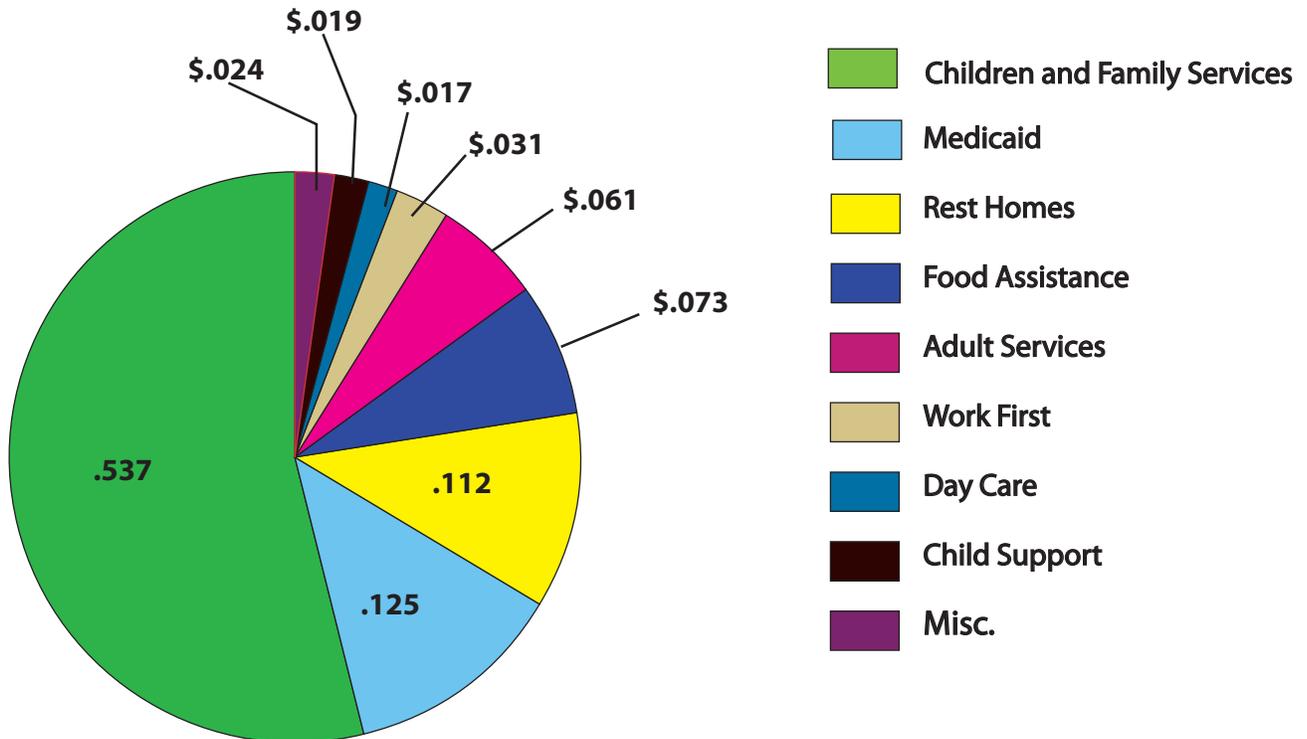
## Total Budget by Sources

FY 2010

\$217,343,781



## How \$1 of County Tax Revenue is Spent



# ADULT SERVICES AND FAMILY SUPPORT

*These programs help the elderly and disabled, giving them a choice of remaining in their home. The goal is to maintain those persons who are unable to care for themselves and to help those who are able to become self-sufficient.*

## Access to Medical Care

*This program provides access to medical attention for Medicaid customers. It assists families, children, the elderly and disabled in getting access to medical and dental coverage.*

### Elderly and Disabled

- 81% of Catawba County's elderly and disabled population who qualify for Medicaid have been identified and are being served.
- 8,930 elderly and disabled individuals were helped in accessing and paying for medical care in FY 2010.
- Citizens received \$153,128,461 in medical services, with the largest portion going to pay for nursing home care.
- More than \$4.8 million in Medicaid expenditures were avoided by providing opportunities for senior and disabled citizens to remain at home through the provision of Community Alternatives Program Services as opposed to entering a nursing home.

### Child and Family

- 94% of Catawba County's uninsured children have been identified and assisted under the various Medicaid programs for children.
- 24,145 children and their caretakers were assisted in FY 2010 in the various Family Medicaid programs.
- 3,874 children were provided medical coverage under the NC Health Choice program.
- 17,428 citizens receiving Medicaid were linked with a primary care physician to coordinate their medical care.
- Transportation to medical services was provided and/or arranged for 18,932 Medicaid eligible citizens.

## Adult Protective Services

*This program ensures that elderly and disabled adults are able to live healthy, independent, and productive lives, free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.*

- Protective services were provided to 110 disabled adults who were abused, exploited or neglected.
- 162 vulnerable older/disabled in-

dividuals received information and referral, educational services and social work assistance to prevent abuse, neglect or exploitation.

## In-Home Services and Adult Day Care

*This program provides elderly and disabled adults the option to stay in their homes rather than seek out-of-home placement.*

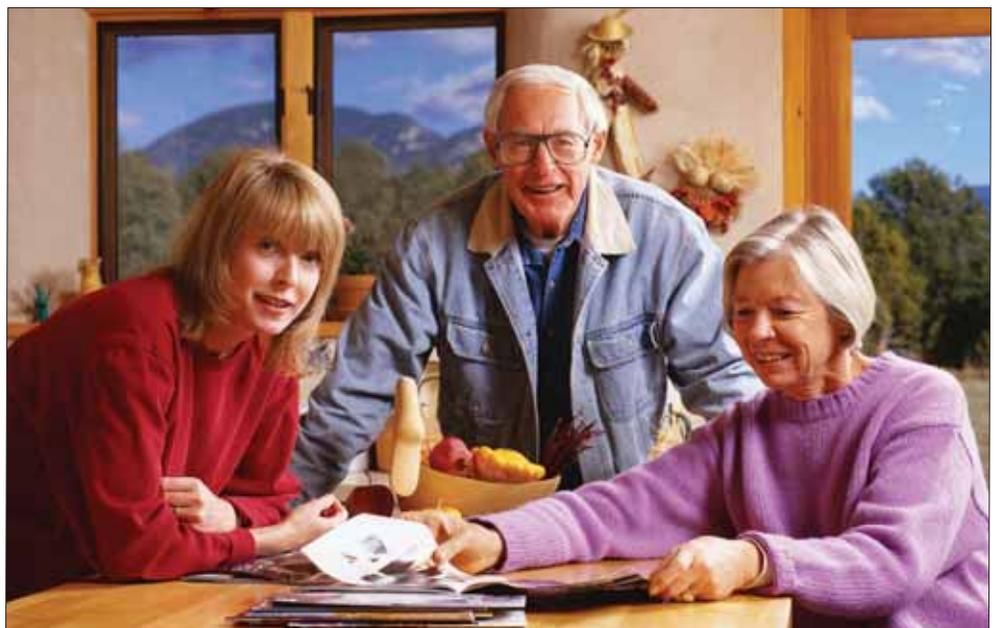
626 senior, disabled and/or visually impaired citizens were able to remain safely at home through the provision of needed services including case management, in-home aide, supplies, equipment and adult day care services.

### What we hear about In-Home Services:

**"Everything is great** with this program. It has kept us from living on the street. We think highly of our social worker. She shows her concern and does her job very well. We love having her."

**"My case manager is a godsend.** She helps me, explains things, and cares. My CNA (certified nursing assistant) takes me to the doctor. I can't remember well or walk and she helps me with this. This program has helped me so much. I think God for the program every day."

**"I could not go to my doctor without this program.** I couldn't stay at home and do all the tasks/things I need done. My family is getting older and have their own health problems. They are not able to do all the tasks my aide does. I couldn't do without this program."



## Food and Nutrition Services

### Food Assistance (Food Stamps)

- \$36,706,539 in Food Assistance (formerly known as Food Stamps) benefits were provided to 29,866 local citizens to alleviate hunger and malnutrition.
- 11,860 Food Assistance applications were processed – with an average processing time of 6 days.

#### By the Numbers: Food and Nutrition Services

10,996	Monthly Households (Avg)
23,460	Monthly Individuals (Avg)
\$271	Monthly Payment per Household (Avg)
\$36,706,539	Total Value of Food Assistance



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### Emergency Financial Assistance, Child Support, Day Care, Work First

*The Child Support Program ensures that non-custodial parents acknowledge and accept financial responsibility for supporting their children.*

*Day Care ensures safe, quality, accessible and affordable childcare for children.*

*Work First helps citizens become or remain self-sufficient and to take responsibility for themselves and their families by linking them with resources, skills, and training. It reduces dependency on public assistance by providing short-term crisis assistance to eligible citizens.*

- \$13,355,729.90 in Child Support payments were collected for local children.
- The lives of 3,243 children were enriched by the provision of Day Care Scholarships
- \$7,312,462 was paid to over 130 local day care providers
- 473 families (980 persons) received cash assistance to support their families while they trained for employment or applied for Social Security Disability.
- 126 clients were able to obtain/maintain employment as a result of services provided by Work First staff.
- 5,057 families in crisis situations were assisted by Work First staff (through collaboration with ECCCM, CCM, and Salvation Army), helping them remain self-sufficient.
- The department identified and investigated more than 409 cases of Public Assistance fraud, generating \$245,626 in savings and collections.

### Senior Nutrition

*This program offers nutritious meals, education, socialization, and health and wellness services to meet needs of seniors so they can remain in their own homes.*

A total of 132,751 meals were provided to 1310 older adults participating in Seniors Morning Out, Home Delivered Meals (Meals on Wheels), Frozen Meals and Nutritional Supplements to reduce isolation and increase independence.

#### What we hear about Senior Nutrition Programs:

**“I am more motivated** toward good health because of the group support I get from my friends at Seniors Morning Out. I exercise my mind with word puzzles and games, get to laugh and have fun.” — **Seniors Morning Out participant**

**“I am eating better** because of Meals on Wheels. I would be eating a sandwich rather than a healthy meal, if I did not have your help. I really appreciate all the food, and especially the fresh fruit.” — **Home Delivered Meals participant**

#### How You Can Help Meals on Wheels

- \$4.20 = Cost per meal
- \$21 = Cost for one week, one meal/day
- \$92 = Cost for one month, one meal/day

1,730 volunteers provided assistance with nutrition programs in FY 2010.

Call 828-695-5617 to find out more.

# FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

*These programs are designed to enhance family functioning and to help children have a safe, permanent home.*

## Child Protective Services

The goal of this program is to ensure that children in Catawba County will reach their full potential by having safe, permanent and nurturing families who will provide for their child's physical, medical, emotional and educational needs.

- 851 (92%) families served did not experience a recurrence of child maltreatment within a twelve month period.
- 547 families received CPS In-Home follow-up services.
- The Family Reunification Program and Intensive Family Preservation provided in-home services to 52 families. All 52 families (100%) maintained their children in the home.

## Foster Care

This program's purpose is to ensure safe, permanent, nurturing families for children.

- As of July 1, 2010, 84% of all children in foster care were living in a family-like setting rather than facility placement.
- 77% of the 197 school-aged children in foster care were on or above grade level in reading or language arts, and 68% were on or above grade level in math.
- 177 children left foster care in FY 2010:
  - 50% were reunified with a parent or other relative. (Of these children, 54% were reunified within one year.)
  - 27% were adopted (45% by relatives)

## Specialized Foster Care

Specialized Foster Care was created to provide more intensive services to meet the needs of older youths in foster care.

**The LINKS Program** focuses on independent living skills for youths transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

**The Family Finding Program** uses intensive research tools to locate family members and supports. In the last year, Specialized Foster Care served 18 youths.

## Therapeutic Foster Care

16 therapeutic foster parents with specialized training



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provide treatment to youth in foster care with high behavioral and emotional needs. Therapeutic Foster Care is nationally accredited.

## Family Builders (Adoption and Foster Licensure)

*This program helps families by matching children who need a permanent home with adults who want to care for and provide for them.*

- 74 regular foster homes were licensed.
- A total of 49 children were adopted in FY 2010.
- Provides Confidential Intermediary services to help adults who were adopted as children reconnect with their birth parents, if both parties are willing.

## Child Protective Services FY 2010

2570	Number of Reports Received
1604	Number of Cases Accepted Following Assessment (3660 children involved)
9%	Reports of Abuse (Includes instances of burns, fractures, internal injuries, sexual abuse)
91%	Reports of Neglect (Includes instances of injurious environment, lack of supervision, and parental substance abuse)

## Prevention Services

**Teen Up** Social Workers equip youth with accurate, current information to prevent risky behavior. Teen Up Social Workers also provide counseling and linkages to community resources for participants and families.

Teen Up provides weekly or bi-weekly psycho-educational groups to 400 middle and high school youth throughout Catawba County, preparing them to make informed, healthy decisions.

**School Social Workers** reduce barriers that affect student academic success. They work individually with students, parents and school employees.

More than 200 students seen by school social workers improved academically. Families strengthened connections to the schools, and referrals were made to needed community resources.

**Project MOVES** was funded by a one-year grant through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act to address families negatively affected by the economic downturn. Through this program, social workers helped families who were having difficulty accessing and using existing community services.

Financial workshops, counseling and consultation, and community education events provided access to credit counseling services, foreclosure prevention, and other strategies for coping with financial challenges.

## Residential Treatment

This program provides high quality therapeutic interventions for abused, neglected, dependent, and/or court involved youth needing family reunification and/or residential treatment in 4 county owned group homes. A total of 44 youths were served in FY 09-10. Our group homes use the Teaching Family model and are nationally accredited.



## Early Childhood Support Team

The Early Childhood Support Team (ECST) provided educational, behavioral, and health/safety related consultative services to 3,896 children ages birth to 5 years who were enrolled in child care programs in FY 2010.

Clinical specialists provided individual and family therapy to 126 children and families.

The team is located at the Sweetwater Early Childhood Education Center with other programs that provide services to preschool-age children.

ECST, funded by Smart Start through the Catawba County Partnership for Children, brings together professionals from different agencies and disciplines to provide educational, clinical, and health and safety services to child care programs, for children ages birth to 5 years old and their families.

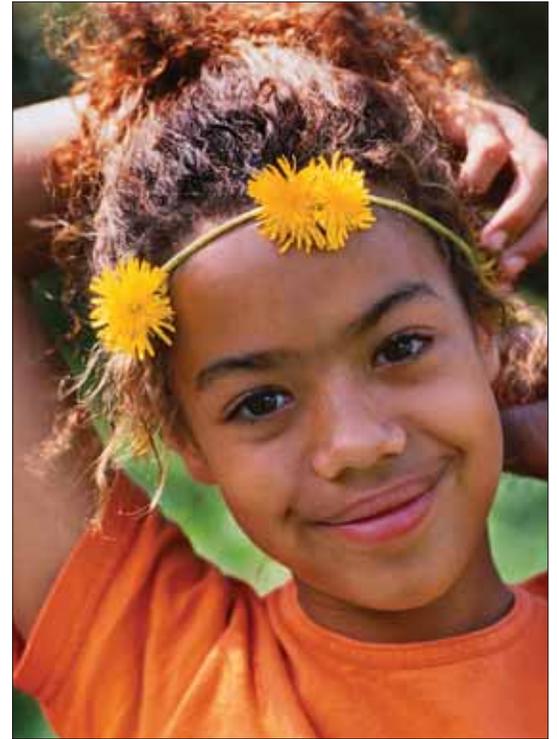
Consultative services were provided to 65 licensed programs to maintain/improve quality:

- 96% of these programs are 3-5 star licensed
- 81% of these programs are 4 and 5 star licensed





# THE CHILD WELLBEING PROJECT



**The Child Wellbeing Project** provides an array of voluntary services to children ages 0-15 and their families when they leave foster care for a permanent placement (reunification, adoption or guardianship).

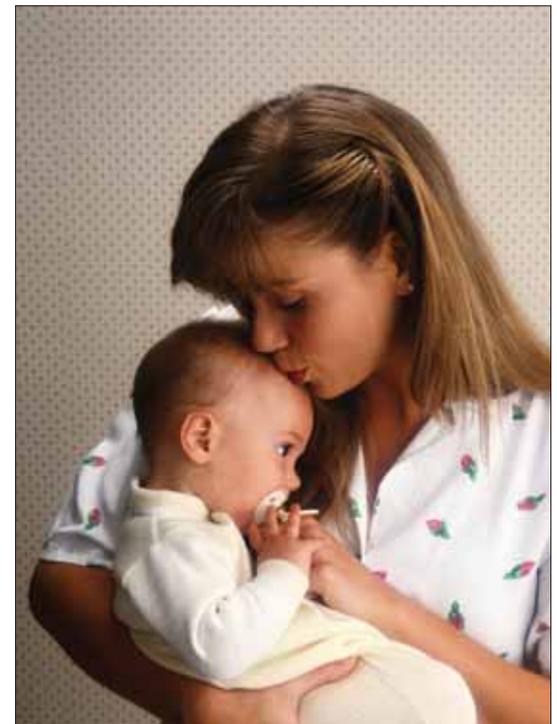
This is a long-term research project funded by The Duke Endowment and evaluated by Independent Living Resources, Inc. to determine if post-care services can improve the wellbeing of children, are replicable and cost-effective. Post Care services available to families include:

**A Success Coach** provides assessment, goal planning, service coordination, skill-building/reinforcement, and crisis intervention/management with families.

**An Educational Advocate** provides tracking of educational stability, achievement, behavior, and attendance for children in foster care and post-care. When school age children exit care, an Educational Passport is provided to parents/guardians with a comprehensive review of their child's educational experience while in care. During the 2009/10 school year, the EA responded to 157 requests for assistance. 81% of school age children experienced fewer than 2 school moves since entry to foster care.

**Parent Child Interaction Therapy** is an attachment-based behavioral therapy for 2-6 year olds with behavior problems. Therapists provide coaching to the parent/caregiver as they play and interact with the child.

**Strengthening Families** is a 14-session parent education model for parents of 6-11 year olds. Parents and children attend separate classes and come together for shared family meal and activity time.



# The Children's Advocacy Center

*Catawba County's Children's Advocacy Center responds to sexual and severe physical abuse in Catawba County.*

During FY 2010 ...

- 232 Children were interviewed by using a multi-disciplinary approach to investigation, treatment and case resolution.
- 97 Children received on-site medical exams in a child-friendly environment designed to reduce anxiety.
- 529 Hours of on-site mental health assessments and treatment were provided.
- 560 Hours of professional development training were conducted so that team members could stay current on best practice methods and research.
- 36 Non-offending parents/caretakers received education and support, enabling them to provide crucial support to the child's healing.
- 102 Adults were trained in an evidence-based sexual abuse primary prevention program (Darkness to Light). This program is designed to produce positive changes in adults' child-protective behaviors over the long-term.



## Help stop the hurt: Report suspected abuse

Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect is the first step in protecting children from future harm. By reporting, the caller is helping the family get services and help that is needed.

Abused children may carry the trauma associated with the abuse throughout their lives unless treatment, assistance, and support are provided. Because child abuse rarely stops without intervention, it is important that every citizen report suspected cases.

North Carolina law establishes protective services for children from birth to age eighteen who are suspected of being maltreated by a parent or caretaker.

The law requires that any person who suspects a minor child is abused or neglected shall report the case to the local department of social services in the county where the child resides or is found.



Reports may be made orally, in writing, or in person. The person who makes the report is immune from criminal or legal liability if the report is made in good faith. The person reporting is encouraged to provide his/her name but anonymous calls are accepted.

The Catawba County Child Protection Unit can be reached by phone at (828) 324-9111 twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven days a week.

A reporter does not have to prove that abuse/neglect has taken place, but needs to have reasonable grounds for suspicion. The reporter does not need permission from caregivers to make a report, nor do they have to be informed that a report is made.

### Information needed to make a report:

- Name, address and age of the child(ren)
- Name and address of the child's parent, guardian, or caretaker
- The child's condition, including the history, nature, and extent of the injury or maltreatment
- Information known about the family's lifestyle which could affect the safety of the child, and perhaps compromise a social worker's safety

# FAMILY NET

*Family N.E.T. provides a comprehensive network of nurturing, educational, and treatment services to enhance the emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal functioning of children, youth, and their families in Catawba County.*

## Day Treatment Programs

**The Assisting Children Together (ACT)** program is a collaboration with the Newton-Conover School District, providing services to children in grades K through five.

**The Life Coach** program at Catawba Rosenwald Education Center (CREC) works cooperatively with the Catawba County School District to provide services to children in grades 6-12.

**The Catawba Valley Choices** program is a newly developed day treatment program serving middle and high school students at the Hickory Career and Arts Magnet (HCAM) campus.

• **84 children/adolescents served**

## Outpatient Services

Outpatient Services staff provide individual, family and group therapy to children and teens residing in Catawba County. These services are divided into two components: Traditional Outpatient Services and Post Adoption Services.

Medication management and psychotherapy are provided to children and youth with serious mental and emotional problems. Therapists are located in schools throughout Catawba County.

• **1,020 children/adolescents served**

## Foster and Adoptive Clinical and Educational Services (FACES)

These services are designed to enhance the emotional, behavioral and interpersonal functioning of adoptive families, prevent adoption disruptions, and ensure the stability of the family. The unit was established to ensure the wellbeing of children who have been adopted. Many of the services are provided in the homes of the children and families served. Support groups and parent education are vital components of this service.

• **186 children and families served**

## Adolescent & Substance Abuse Services

These services are for youths involved in juvenile court and substance abuse, as well as women with substance abuse problems.

**The Department of Juvenile Justice Outpatient Services** is a program supported by the local Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) to provide psychological evaluations, outpatient psychotherapy services, and outpatient substance abuse treatment to youth.

• **232 consumers served**



## School Social Work Services

This program at Hickory High School and Hickory Career and Arts Magnet (HCAM) campuses are partially funded by a contract with Hickory Public Schools. Staff work with youth at the schools to deal with factors that prevent them from being able to complete their education and participate fully in their communities.

• **40 adolescents served**

## Substance Abuse Treatment Services

These services include individual and group counseling, evaluation and case management to individuals who have a substance abuse disorder and are either pregnant, have custody of minor children, are actively seeking custody of minor children, or applying for Work First Public Assistance.

• **42 consumers served**

## Intensive In-Home Services

This is a team-based service working with families of children with severe and persistent mental and emotional disorders. The purpose of this service is to maintain youth in the least restrictive, most normative environment with services provided to the family in the home, school and community.

• **75 families served**

## Community Support Services

This program provides comprehensive treatment services to high needs children and adolescents to prevent disruption in the home and improve functioning in the school, home, and/or community. These services are for Medicaid-eligible children and families. Community Support is required for children who are in enhanced services, such as residential, day treatment, and therapeutic care.

• **152 consumers served**

# PRACTICAL HELP WITH LIFE'S PROBLEMS

## Dealing with a strong-willed child

A 3-year-old boy was referred by his child care center for intense and long-lasting tantrums as well as noncompliance/defiance and physical aggression. In working with the family, parents were given strategies to deal with a strong-willed child and coached on how to recognize their child's triggers and be proactive in intervention.

The child was provided training in recognizing his emotions and developing age-appropriate coping skills to deal with his anger, frustration, and disappointment. In addition, appropriate behavior choices were regularly reviewed through therapeutic board games with emphasis placed on the reward of making good choices and the consequences of making poor choices. At case closing, this child was doing well in kindergarten with minimal issues.



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## Taking the first step toward employment

A MOVES Project client completed the Medical Office Administrative Procedures program through Catawba Valley Community College. Due to her lack of work experience, she had great difficulty obtaining employment in the field. Social Services contacted Greater Hickory's Cooperative Christian Ministry Health Care Clinic and successfully obtained a volunteer opportunity for her.

Her duties there consisted of scheduling patient appointments, filing medical records, and checking patients in and out of the clinic. This individual was also provided the opportunity to volunteer at the clinic's pharmacy, where she helped process patients' prescriptions. To ensure that the client would be dressed appropriately for the health care setting, MOVES Project funds were used to purchase four scrub uniforms and a pair of nursing shoes.

## A successful move

A two-parent family ages 19 and 25 years old relocated to NC after the birth of their third child in May. They were visiting family here and found that Catawba County offered a lot more opportunities than where they were currently living.

In August, they applied for Work First Family Assistance for their three pre-school age children. In September, both parents were enrolled in the 21st Century Employability Skills Training at CVCC through the Work First program. This training assisted them with resume writing and interviewing skills. In the last week of September, the mother found new employment.

The father, however, was having a harder time locating new employment due to his criminal record – a misdemeanor offense committed while a teen. He learned in his Employability Class that employers could qualify for tax breaks by hiring someone with a criminal background. So at his next interview, he told the company about the tax break. Both parents are working and are now able to provide for their own family.



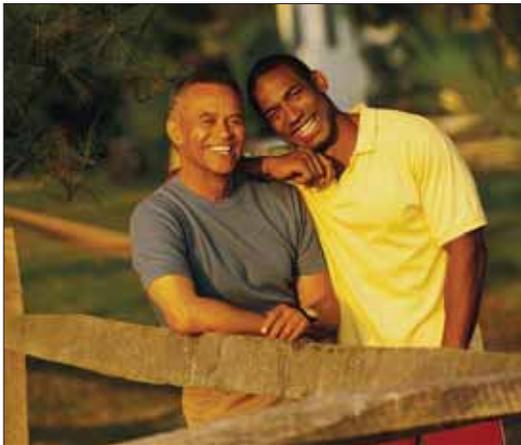
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## Catawba County Social Services wins three 'Best Practices Awards'

Catawba County Social Services recently received three "Best Practices Awards" from the N.C. Social Services Institute.

The awards were for the Specialized Foster Care Team, Medicaid Transportation Automation Team, and Catawba Leadership Excellence Program.

**The Specialized Foster Care Team** was created in October 2009 to reduce caseloads in foster care and to achieve quicker permanence for the county's higher-needs youth. Youth with serious mental health issues, developmental delays and those entering the teen years are often the most difficult to place in a permanent home.



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Caseloads in foster care were very high when this team was created.

Three foster care social workers were moved onto the team from other child welfare units. The LINKS Program coordinator and the Family Finder Program coordinator completed the team. Each position was already established, so no additional funding was needed. The members of the team worked intensively with a smaller case load.

They worked to locate extended relatives who might serve as a support team for these youths. Regular meetings were scheduled with adult services staff to help youths age 16 and older tap into any possible resources before their 18th birthday.

Youths aging out of foster care without an adequate plan often face difficulties such as unemployment or homelessness. This program sought to change the outcome for these teens.

The cases in Specialized Foster Care have had on average two to three changes in placement each year. This team has also located several family members who may be able to assist youths who are about to age out of foster care. In one case, a non-custodial father in another state was located and reunited with his son.

**The Medicaid Transportation Automation Team** was recognized for developing new computer software to track transportation to medical appointments for Medicaid recipients. Medicaid Transportation is a state and federal program operated at the county level. It is designed to help ensure that Medicaid-eligible clients who have no other method of transportation receive medical care at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayer.

In fiscal year 2009-2010, the program made 28,201 trips transporting 19,136 Medicaid clients to medical appointments. The team was created to improve the efficiency of this program. The IT project leader met with others involved in the program to develop an automated system for organizing these trips. The program went live in 2008 and was enhanced during the 2009-2010 year.

This program tracks client appointments, and automates schedules by client, date and driver. It also provides numerous demographic reports. In addition, the computer program is integrated with a phone notification system that contacts clients 48 hours in



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advance to remind them of their appointments. As a result, fewer clients miss their appointments. The program was developed without an increase in funding, using existing staff.

**The Catawba Leadership Excellence Program** was also recognized. This program seeks to develop leadership skills among line managers, lead workers and emerging leaders in Catawba County Social Services.

The purpose is to provide pertinent, transferable skills and support to those in some of the toughest jobs in the agency. The training lasted for three years (September 2007 through June 2010). The participants committed to attending leadership training sessions every six weeks. They also did additional study before the sessions.

The majority of the training was provided by two human resource consultants from the Human Resource Development Section of the N.C. Office of State Personnel. The project was so successful that the department plans to repeat it with 22 employees over an 18-month training period (January 2011 to June 2012).

## Family Services Center opens

This year, the Family Services Center opened in the building formerly housing Catawba Valley Behavioral Healthcare. The renovated facility provides a central location for Family Net employees, as well as employees of the Family Wellbeing Project, a pilot project funded by the Duke Endowment.

Foster and adoption services are also housed in the facility. The centralized location enhances teamwork and collaboration to better serve children, teens and families. The new location will also reduce travel time and costs for employees, who were formerly located in several different buildings.

### *At right:*

*A specially outfitted room in the Family Services Center allows parents to build their skills through play with their children. Parent skills coaches can observe through a one-way mirror and make suggestions to the parents through an earpiece.*



Photo by Margaret Allen/Catawba County Social Services

## Programs recognized for helping foster children, families in crisis

Two Catawba County Social Services programs received several awards for their innovative approach.

**The Educational Improvement Initiative for Children In Foster Care** program was recognized with the Local Government Federal Credit Union Employee Productivity Award from the N.C. Association of County Commissioners. It also received the N.C. Association of County Commissioners Outstanding County Program Award and the National Association of Counties Achievement Award.

This initiative improved educational continuity and stability for children in foster care in Catawba County. Frequent school moves are common for children in foster care. These moves can have a negative effect on the children's academic progress and later success as adults.

The work of the program and its staff reduced the school "move rate" for children entering foster care in Catawba County from 24% to 6% in 2009, compared to the national average of 66% of children experiencing school moves. While 50% of children in foster care were not on grade level in 2006, 79% of children surveyed in 2009 either maintained a passing grade or improved a letter grade in a subject area of need.

This initiative achieved these results by: establishing a communication protocol and identifying designees in 44 schools to minimize school moves or facilitate school record transfers; creating a coordinated database to capture school progress and special needs; including educational information in court reports; raising awareness of the educational needs of children in fos-

ter care among child welfare and educational staff; focusing on special educational needs of children in foster care; and establishing an Educational Advocate position at Social Services to assure coordination of transportation, school enrollment, and information sharing.

**The Community-Based Crisis Intervention Program** received the National Association of Counties Achievement Award and the NC Association of County Commissioners Outstanding County Program Award.

The CIP program provides federal funds to low-income families in heating and cooling crises. Social Services was overwhelmed with the volume of applicants for these funds in late 2008 and early 2009. In April 2009, Social Services' staff met with representatives from three local non-profit agencies to discuss the possibility of joining forces to serve families in a more holistic manner. As a result of these discussions, CIP funds were made available to these agencies.

When families visit those agencies, their needs are assessed and assistance can be provided in a more seamless manner. The agency is able to help the family out of the crisis using their resources or those of the CIP program. In addition, families are able to apply for these services closer to home, as these three helping agencies are located in areas nearer to the population centers of the county.

The non-profits agencies involved include the Greater Hickory Cooperative Christian Ministry, the Eastern Catawba Cooperative Christian Ministry and the Salvation Army of Hickory.

# PARTNERING WITH BUSINESSES

## The joy of reading

Young children in foster care in Catawba County participated in the Super Kids Reading Club, thanks to an Early Childhood Reading Grant from Target. Catawba County Social Services organized the reading program, which took place during September and October.



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Foster children between the ages of 3 and 10 participated. The club kicked off with a party on Sept. 11. At that time, each child was able to select three age-appropriate books to take home and keep.

They were also given materials for hands-on activities related to their books. The children were encouraged to read their books, or have a reading time with their foster parent, at least twice a week.

The reading club concluded with a party on Oct. 29. Each child received a certificate for participating in the program. The grant paid for 300 books plus incentives and activity materials.

There were enough books and materials purchased through the grant to hold another reading club next year.

The Super Kids Reading Club illustrated to the children that reading is enjoyable and exciting. Reading also gives these young foster children some control over their lives with something they can do, or learn to do, on their own that no one can take away from them.

## Backpack program extended

Thanks to BB&T of Hickory, a program to provide food for Catawba County school children has been extended. The Backpack Program was originally created by the Service League of Hickory to provide food for the weekend for school children in Hickory receiving free or reduced-price lunches.

Catawba County Social Services expanded this program with money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

During the 2009-2010 school year, the grant paid for food to be sent home with school children in seven different elementary schools. The backpacks contained enough food for the child to eat three meals a day, plus snacks, during the weekend.

The department also used grant money to send boxes of food home with students at Grandview Middle School, Northview Middle School and Longview Elementary during the summer months. When the grant ended, the need remained. It seemed as if the much-needed program might be endangered.

However, BB&T of Hickory responded to the need by contributing enough money to continue the program for the 2010-2011 school year. In addition, the bank allowed its employees to volunteer their time each week to fill the backpacks.

Many thanks to our community partners, who have seen the needs in our community, and stepped in to help. Additional help is still needed in many other programs. Look on the following page to see how you, or your business, can help children, families and senior citizens in our community!



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# HOW YOU CAN HELP

## Volunteer your time, or make a donation

Social Services shares a mission with its volunteers. Together we serve the public to improve social problems in a spirit of generosity and mutual respect.

Last year, more than 1,100 volunteers partnered with Social Services to help improve the quality of life in Catawba County. Men, women, and children just like you are the links connecting people, organizations and resources to build a world where all people can live free and dignified lives. It wouldn't – and couldn't – be done without you.

### Grace McLeod Adult Services Fund

828-695-5609

Helping senior citizens and the disabled in emergency situations.

### Children's Advocacy Center

828-465-9296

Donations help support efforts to prevent and end child sexual abuse.

### Children's Book Station

828-695-5651

Thousands of families with young children visit the Food Assistance office each month requesting assistance. The lobby has a small book station that the children may enjoy, and they may take the book home with them if they do not finish it during their visit. Donated children's books are greatly appreciated.



### Erlene Sigmon Fund

828-465-9297

Taking donations for children in need. Coordinated by the Children's Protection Council.

### Family and Children's Services

828-695-5602

Internship opportunities for BSW and MSW students.

### Family Builders of Catawba Valley

828-465-8901

Open your home and your heart to a child in need. Become a resource family and choose to foster, adopt, provide respite care or be a visiting resource for waiting children.

### Foster Children's Expense Fund

828-695-4536

Donations help provide children in foster care with the extras that make life memorable, such as school pictures, band instruments, piano lessons, field trips, ballet lessons, and Christmas gifts.

### Gretchen Peed Scholarship Fund

828-695-4536

You can help a child in foster care attend college through this scholarship fund.

### Home Delivered Meals

828-695-4435

Deliver nutritious meals to the home-bound disabled and elderly. Donations help to expand this service to more seniors.

### LINKS

828-695-4546

If you love working with teenagers, witnessing personal growth in others, and having fun working in a group atmosphere, consider volunteering as a mentor with LINKS of Catawba County, an independent living skills development program.

### Nurturing Programs

828-695-4431

Opportunities to support parent education efforts through group facilitation, childcare assistance or product donations.

### Seniors Morning Out

828-695-5617

Help serve senior citizens during this program's activities, socials and nutritious meals.

### TEEN Up and Upward Connection

828-695-4418

Parent volunteers and other adults help teenagers cope with the challenges of adolescence through fun and service-oriented activities.

**This document was edited by Margaret Allen,  
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