

2017 SIGNATURE REPORT

How Communities Across America
Are Creating **Better Futures** for Their
Children and Families



THE EVOLUTION OF **HOPE**

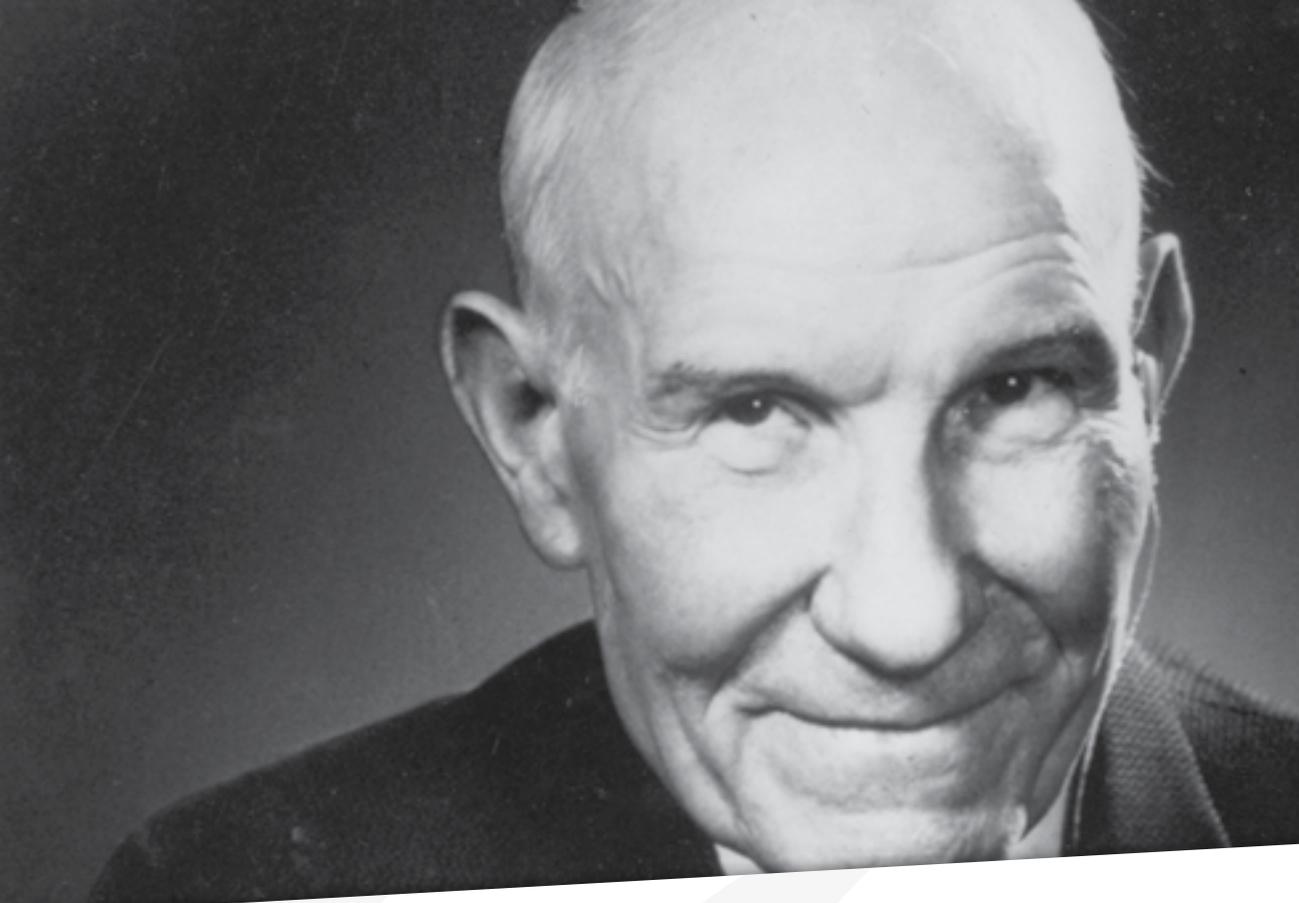
safe children | strong families | supportive communities





Large displays of public art in Gainesville, Florida, illustrate the vibrancy of the community.





Let us get a clear understanding of our objectives.
Only then will we be able to map out the highways
and skyways and byways that will take us there.

– JIM CASEY

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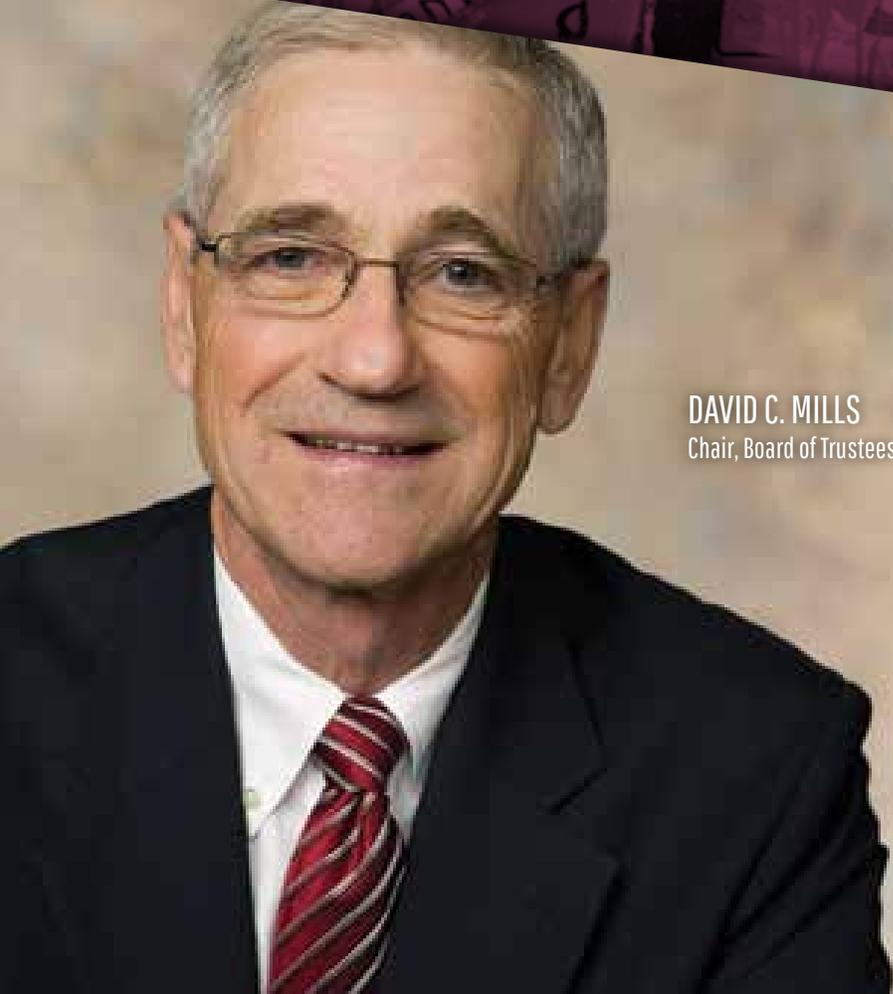
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As we look to the future of Casey Family Programs, **hope remains our cornerstone**. We know that anything is possible when we foster hope – in the children and families we serve, in the jurisdictions we work with, and in the communities where we partner.

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES, IMPROVING LIVES



DAVID C. MILLS
Chair, Board of Trustees

Welcome to Casey Family Programs' 2017 signature report, which explores the evolution of hope that is transforming the way our nation supports our children and families.

Since Jim Casey founded Casey Family Programs in 1966, we've worked to fulfill his vision that every child have a safe, stable and permanent family. Over the decades, a growing body of knowledge and experience — from insights on brain science and the role of data to the power of cross-sector partnerships — has fueled an evolution in how we think about ensuring the safety and success of every child. The stories you're about to read are a powerful testament to the promise that this evolution of hope holds.

As we look to the future of Casey Family Programs, hope remains our cornerstone. We know that anything is possible when we foster hope — in the children and families we serve, in the jurisdictions we work with, and in the communities where we partner.

To be certain, communities all across the country face challenges in many forms, from parents struggling with drug addiction to families working to find their footing in ZIP codes where opportunities to achieve their full potential are too few. We are at a critical point in truly considering what the future will offer our next generation.

It's time to transform our nation's outdated approach to child welfare. We must continue to evolve from an approach that seeks to "rescue" children from their families to one that invests in supporting families before abuse and neglect occur.

I invite you to spend some time with this report, learning about the bold, innovative ways that communities are working together to support children and families and measurably improve their lives. And I encourage you to seriously consider the call to action our president and CEO offers about specific ways that you can make a difference and help build a Community of Hope.

As Jim Casey reminded us, deciding the kind of future we want for children and families is up to us. I couldn't be more excited to be part of this journey.

Sincerely,



David C. Mills



DR. WILLIAM C. BELL
President and CEO

The evolution of hope BEGINS WITH YOU

Every child in America deserves a Community of Hope.

A Community of Hope is a powerful place. It is a place where residents raise their hands and say, "I will stand with you and be the hope that you need to reach your dreams." It is a place where businesses see beyond the bottom line to the promise and potential in every young person and family that walks through their doors. It is a place where people recognize that every family, no matter the conditions they live in, wants the absolute best futures for their children. It is a place where government is a partner with the community in providing the support and services that can change a life.

Hope is a place where every child wakes up knowing that they aren't invisible, that someone sees in them the potential to achieve their dreams.

The way we help build a Community of Hope is evolving.

We can see the evolution taking place in cities like Gainesville, Florida, and small towns like Paintsville, Kentucky, and in many more communities across America that are demonstrating how to improve the safety and success of our children and families.

Hope is evolving when children we've helped are able to safely return to their families. Hope is evolving for parents who are determined to find a way to overcome drug addiction. And hope is evolving when there is a caring adult for every child who is still waiting for somebody in their hour of need.

I'm encouraged by the individuals and communities who are working together, across all sectors, in partnership with each other, to make hope a reality for every child. Even their presence at the planning table for their community's efforts is making a difference, because it has an overwhelming impact on what plans get made at that table.

A decade ago, Casey Family Programs kicked off *2020: Building Communities of Hope*. It remains our framework for safely reducing the need for foster care by 50 percent by the year 2020 and improving the educational, employment and mental well-being of young people. As we stand here today on the doorsteps of our foundation's next 50 years, these bold goals seem more urgent than ever.

This year, as we presented our annual Casey Excellence for Children Awards to people making an extraordinary difference in the lives of others, I saw the miracle that happens when business leaders decide to get involved in the business of creating opportunities for people to change their lives.

And I witnessed a little girl smile, because her grandparents — who adopted her when her mother couldn't care for her, and then helped other grandparents in the same situation — said, "We will stand with you and be the hope that you need to reach your dreams."

So I am asking you to take your own bold step to help America's children and families. No matter how large or how small, whatever you do to take action — whatever planning table you can join — will contribute to our nation's ability to build hope for generations of children to come.

Here are a few steps you can take to get started right now:

- Mentor a youth who is in foster care. Share your life experiences with that young person.
- Share your innovation, expertise and influence with community organizations. Help them to increase their impact.
- Serve on a nonprofit board.
- Donate to an organization that supports vulnerable children and families in your community.
- Align your company's policies to support families, including foster and adoptive parents.
- Join the community conversation on behalf of kids.

These are just a few ideas to spark your thinking. You undoubtedly have more.

Across our nation, there are young people waiting to hear those powerful words: "I will stand with you." There are communities and families waiting for someone to say, "I see you, and I'm going to do everything in my power to make hope happen for you."

I encourage you to look in the mirror and remind yourself, every single day, that hope happens there, inside of you. Because when you have hope inside of you, you can be the hope that helps others to achieve their dreams. Together we can make America a safer and more hopeful place for all of our children.

Sincerely,



William C. Bell, Ph.D.



Families find support services — and room to play — at library-based resource centers in Gainesville, Florida.

A close-up photograph of a child's hands, wearing a bright pink shirt, gripping a metal chain of a swing. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor park setting. The image is partially obscured by a white diagonal shape that contains the text.

FINDING A BETTER WAY

Communities across America are rethinking how **they can keep children safe** and provide the bedrock of support that every child needs to achieve his or her dreams: a strong and loving family.

For decades, communities have used foster care as the primary way to protect children from serious harm. Originally designed to protect children from severe abuse, foster care was never intended to be used widely or for long. Yet today, more than 400,000 children in America live in foster care.

By witnessing the lifelong trauma that can occur when a child is maltreated and then removed from his or her family, and by considering other possible interventions, some communities have begun creating more effective ways to support their children. While each is unique, many draw on the community's own strengths, build new partnerships among child- and family-serving groups, and invest in programs that help struggling families create and maintain safe and stable homes for their children.

This evolution in thinking is the cornerstone of Casey Family Programs' *2020: Building Communities of Hope*. By working with child welfare agencies, policymakers, judges, nonprofits, community leaders and many other committed partners, this ambitious effort seeks to catalyze a 50 percent reduction in the need for foster care and long-lasting improvements in education, mental health and employment for children involved in the child welfare system.

Reaching this goal will require an evolution in how our nation keeps children safe from harm. What does this evolution look like? On the following pages, you will learn about two fiercely determined communities — Gainesville, Florida, and Johnson County, Kentucky — that are building Communities of Hope and paving the way for others.



Gainesville, Florida

TURNING A NEW PAGE

A community builds strength, support and hope
for families at the local library

The Library Partnership is a one-stop shop
where county library services blend with
offerings to support children and families.



It's Tuesday morning, and the lobby of the Library Partnership is filling up – **but not with patrons eager to check out books.** These northeast Gainesville residents are waiting to see the health care providers who come each week with the Mobile Outreach Clinic.

A young woman in a long-sleeved T-shirt and jeans walks in. “How do I sign up for the clinic?” she asks, pointing to the brightly painted converted school bus parked outside.

Also in the crowded entryway: A table with Red Cross volunteers offering information. A basket of free sweaters for the unusually chilly morning. A bulletin board with job postings. And a whiteboard listing opportunities for the day written in marker: preschool story time at 10:30 a.m., homework help at 2:30 p.m. and a beading class for youth at 3:30 p.m.

For anyone looking for more, a receptionist provides guidance to the combined one-stop shop of community resources and services, all housed within this Alachua County library branch.

By design, the Library Partnership doesn't look like an effort to prevent child abuse and neglect. But this library is at the core of an innovative, community-based effort that has dramatically reduced verified reports of child abuse and neglect and

helped more children grow up safely with their own families. The lessons learned from this approach can help transform the way we ensure the safety and success of children and their families.

The results are remarkable. In the Library Partnership's first six years, the count of verified child maltreatment in two corresponding ZIP codes dropped by 44 percent, from 233 to 129, and fewer children have been placed in foster care.

Birth of a partnership

In 2007, Florida was struggling with one of the country's highest child removal rates. And within Florida, Alachua County's removal rates were among the highest.

The state was already positioned to try something new. Florida was among the first wave of states that participated in a federal waiver program that allowed it to spend federal foster care funding on innovative approaches aimed at preventing abuse and neglect in the first place. A few years earlier, the state had overhauled its child welfare system, contracting with community-based care agencies to provide a full range of services to children and families.

"At that time in our state ... there was an explosion of children coming into foster care, and we were very concerned about what was going on," says Ester Tibbs, a district administrator for the state's Department of Children and Families (DCF) at the time.

So DCF worked with the community-based care lead agency serving Alachua County in north-central Florida — Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) — and Casey Family Programs to find the areas of most need.

"We were looking at ZIP codes, and to our surprise, 32609 was one of the ZIP code areas that had a high level of abuse and neglect reports. So we began to take a look at what can we do in this community to get those rates down?"

Meanwhile, the Alachua County Library District was interested in opening a branch in the same area and suggested partnering on a location.

"As you can understand, people weren't real excited about going to DCF, the place that they take your children from you, to try and get help when they needed it, so we were looking for a welcoming, nonstigmatized environment that families could come to seeking help," says Tibbs, who retired in 2011 and now serves on PSF's board.

Since launching the Library Partnership, PSF has partnered with Gainesville communities to open the SWAG Family Resource Center in 2012 and the Cone Park Library Resource Center in 2013 and, in Chiefland, the Tri-County Community Resource Center in 2015. Each center offers support and preventive services, such as food and clothing banks, parenting classes and job-readiness training, tailored to residents in areas that historically have had high rates of verified child abuse and neglect.

Together, the resource centers are changing lives. Data from 2009 to 2015 show a decrease of 44 to 58 percent in verified maltreatment in the Gainesville communities they serve.

Making connections

Rashad Dunbar wasn't at the Cone Park Library Resource Center in Gainesville looking for help. At least, not in the beginning. He was recruiting as part of his job with an early childhood education resource for parents, and someone had told him the resource center would be a great place to connect. Dunbar himself ended up connecting with the resource center's manager, Cherie Kelly.

"I could just tell he had taken a great interest in his kids," recalls Kelly, who now manages the Library Partnership Resource Center.

The Gainesville resource centers go beyond trying to meet the immediate needs of families. By placing the safety of children within the context of their own families, it became important to provide the kinds of tools and support parents need to create a safe, stable home. That included financial literacy.

How did we get here?

To fully appreciate the innovation unfolding in Gainesville, it helps to understand the roots of America's child welfare system.

Today's system reflects the social and cultural forces that have shaped our country — and our attitudes about children's place in society — over the past two centuries. At the core of the government's involvement is a longstanding goal of preventing child deaths and serious abuse among the most at-risk children in our population.

In the 1800s and early 1900s, some philanthropic and religious organizations pushed to “rescue” children from families deemed morally unfit, a definition that shifted over time and included American Indians and new immigrants, especially poor families. By the mid-20th century, the focus on the so-called “unsuitable home” shifted to a focus on the “unfit parent” — driven in large part by a desire to prevent financial support from going to unwed mothers or parents of color. By deciding to support children but not their parents, the nation adopted a philosophy that equated child safety with removing the child from his or her family.

In the 1970s and 1980s, child welfare agencies transformed from foster care agencies to child protective services agencies. They often used foster care as a primary intervention, even in cases where children could be kept safely at home if family challenges were addressed.

Today's child welfare systems handle millions of referrals each year involving neglect. Roughly 84 percent of the children who enter foster care do so because of neglect and other causes, not abuse. Still, most federal funding for child welfare can only be used for foster care.

But we know far more today than we did in past decades. For example, we know that waiting until maltreatment occurs exposes children to ongoing toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that have been shown to have lifelong consequences, including poor physical and mental health and diminished life outcomes. We know that preventive, supportive services can help parents suspected of neglect better care for their children. And we know that interventions can be more successful when offered at the first signs of trouble; we don't need to wait until a family meets a legal threshold of demonstrable harm before providing significant support.

We know that **preventive, supportive services can help all parents better care for their children.**

Investing in prevention vs. paying for repair

Most Americans understand the importance of keeping children safe from harm and helping them avoid toxic stress during their formative years. Yet the financial structures that fund our child welfare programs still reflect the outdated child rescue mentality. They haven't fundamentally changed over the past 50 years.

The federal government provides about \$4.8 billion a year under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to maintain children in foster care. By comparison, about \$652 million a year is available under Title IV-B to be invested in practices and interventions aimed at strengthening families and keeping children at home when safely possible. That means that, for every \$7 available for children in foster care, only \$1 is available to invest in preventive services.

Florida is one of 26 states with a waiver for its Title IV-E funds that provides flexibility in how that money is spent, allowing the state to work with its 18 community-based care agencies to offer prevention services. It was among the first states to take advantage of the waiver, and over the past decade it has placed thousands fewer children in foster care and seen a drop in verified reports of maltreatment.

"I think the flexibility in funding that Florida has had for years now is critical," says Pebbles Edelman, senior vice president of clinical and community services at PSF, the community-based care agency serving 13

counties in north-central Florida. "Every community is different. Their needs are different. Where they're at in their ability to accept help and recognize what might be helpful — every community's in a different place. The fact that we can access funding without a lot of rules around it that tell us exactly what that service provision needs to look like makes all the difference."

Our nation must reform our approach to federal child welfare funding to allow states to more easily adopt and invest in evidence-based and evidence-informed services that provide holistic, preventive support to children and families. Foster care should be an intervention of last resort.

"I can tell you from being in child welfare now for almost 20 years, I think we do more harm to most children by taking them away from their families than we do by working with them," says Stephen Pennypacker, president and CEO of PSF. "Ideally, if we can see what leads to that ultimate progression of why we have to remove a child and get at those root causes earlier through a resource center, then we've been successful."

I can tell you from being in child welfare now for almost 20 years, **I think we do more harm to most children by taking them away from their families** than we do by working with them.

—STEPHEN PENNYPACKER, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG FAMILIES



Kelly had just written a grant to help parents learn to save for their children's college education. To be part of that program, parents had to take a financial literacy class.

"He was always asking questions about resources, how he could help his kids," Kelly says.

Dunbar, raised by his grandmother and now an effervescent father of three girls — ages 4, 4 and 5 — and an infant son, says that financial literacy class kept his family afloat.

One thing he learned was to save a suggested \$1,000 for emergencies. So he faithfully took out \$50 to \$125 from every paycheck and put it in a bank account that he couldn't easily access (another tip). Soon, they had saved \$1,700. And that's when he had a car accident and couldn't work.

"That \$1,700 stretched us months," he told Kelly when they recently caught up with each other at the Library Partnership. "If I hadn't had that workshop, we wouldn't have had that money," says Dunbar, now a parent educator at the University of Florida.

Dunbar, considering getting a master's degree now that his wife has completed hers, credits Kelly with seeing the person he wanted to become.

"I didn't really have plans, I didn't really have goals. But whatever I would tell her, she always came back with something beneficial," he says.

Homework help and life lessons

It's 2 p.m., and 10 kids come through the doors at the SWAG Family Resource Center, across town from Cone Park and the Library Partnership. "Good afternoon!" each one says politely before settling down at tables to do homework with help from volunteers and center staff. A first-grader tackles a sheet that asks her to color in hats with words: green for nouns, yellow for verbs, orange for adjectives.

On the other side of the resource center — a former fourplex in the Linton Oaks neighborhood of apartment complexes and subsidized housing — lead volunteer and neighborhood matriarch Eloise Edwards carefully sorts donations in the Clothing Closet. Jeans and shirts are neatly stacked on shelves by size and gender, while pressed blouses and jackets hang on racks.

The sounds of a drum, tambourine and loud singing carry from the homework room, now transformed into a studio, with tables and chairs pushed to the walls. Four of the children stay on for capoeira, the Brazilian martial art that combines dance, acrobatics and music. They're shy at first, and instructor Joshua Broadhead steps outside the back door, vowing with a smile to stay there until he can hear them reply to his Portuguese call and response.

Broadhead's instruction isn't just in the song and body movements. He weaves in life lessons as well. Three middle-school boys arrive late because their bus was delayed. They slowly take their places.

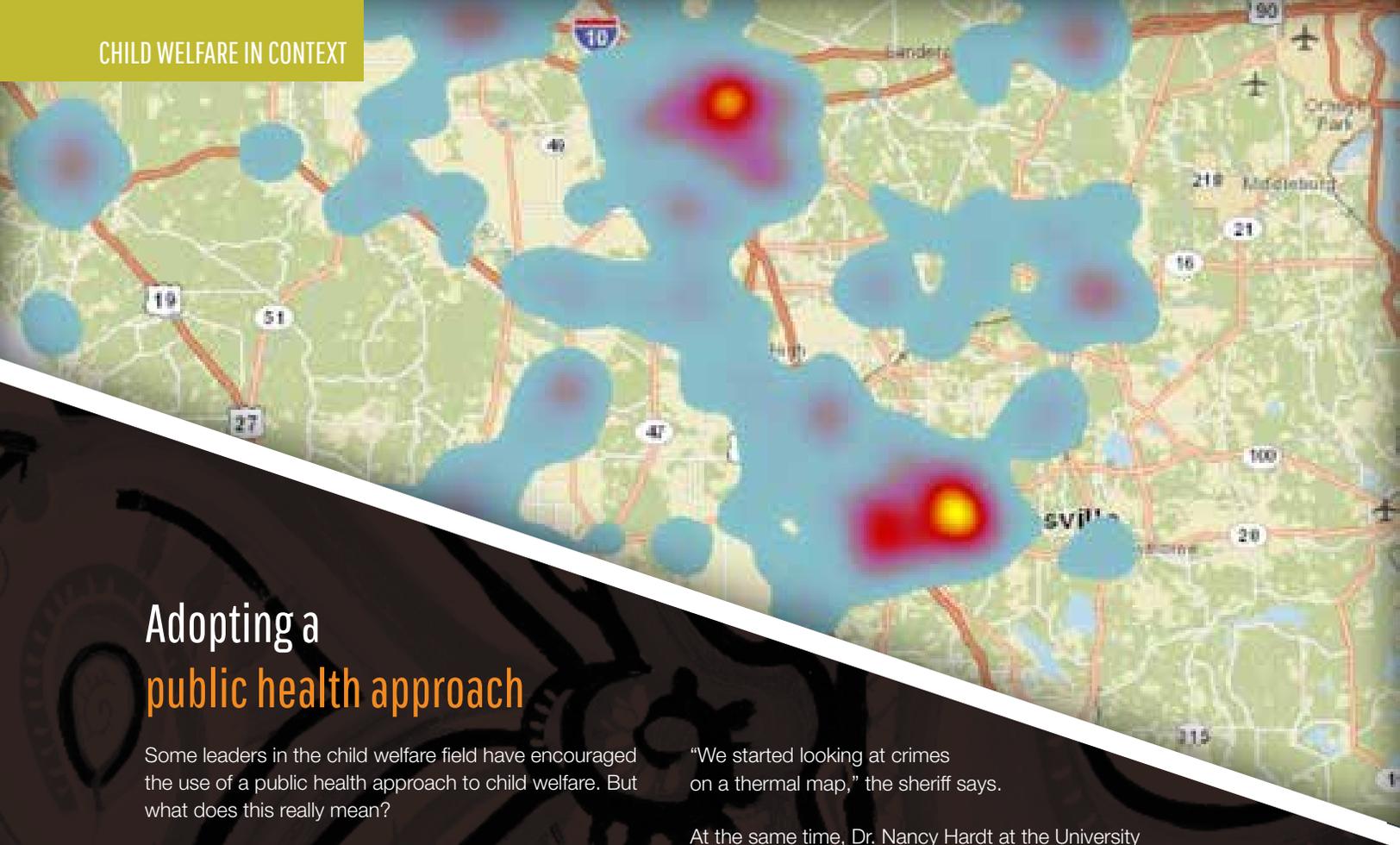
"If you're late for school because your bus was late, you don't go like this," he says, slowly shuffling his feet and looking at the floor. "You hustle!"

After-school programming was one of the things community members wanted, says Dorothy Thomas, Southwest Advocacy Group (SWAG) co-chair. The nonprofit volunteer group formed in 2009 to bring resources and empowerment to this low-income neighborhood tucked into an affluent area on the southwest edge of Gainesville. Most resources were on the other side of town; for the 70 percent of residents without transportation, the county health clinic was 90 minutes and three buses away.

When SWAG decided to partner with PSF to create the resource center, they asked neighbors what they wanted most.

"I think the community engagement piece was key," says Thomas, a former Manhattan lawyer and mother of two. "It is very hard to serve the community if you don't know what they want and need."

The success of the SWAG Family Resource Center has sparked more innovation and partnership. Residents now have a health clinic across the street from the center, and an early learning center is slated to be built around the corner. "If you want children to thrive and succeed, you really have to help their families thrive and succeed," Thomas says. ■



Adopting a public health approach

Some leaders in the child welfare field have encouraged the use of a public health approach to child welfare. But what does this really mean?

Public health programs keep their communities safe from disease and other health risks by focusing on prevention at the population level. They methodically define and monitor health challenges, identify risk and protective factors, develop and test prevention strategies and, finally, work to encourage widespread adoption of effective strategies. Rather than focusing on treating individuals or targeting interventions in a punitive way, the public health model works across the population to look at, and to shape, patterns across an entire community.

A similar approach could help keep children safe from maltreatment. It would start with an accurate assessment of the problem — which might even be visible on a map.

In Gainesville, Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) used “heat maps” created by the Alachua County Sheriff’s Department and the University of Florida to identify the areas of greatest need.

Not long after she started the job in 2006, Alachua County Sheriff Sadie Darnell discovered one of her staff members was running an unlicensed daycare in a converted apartment. “It was well-intentioned,” Darnell says, because the children previously had been unsupervised, but she had to shut it down. That outraged the community, and a petition circulated to oust her. So the department started going door to door in the high-crime neighborhood, asking residents what was important to them. Crime, transportation and medical care were high on the list.

“We started looking at crimes on a thermal map,” the sheriff says.

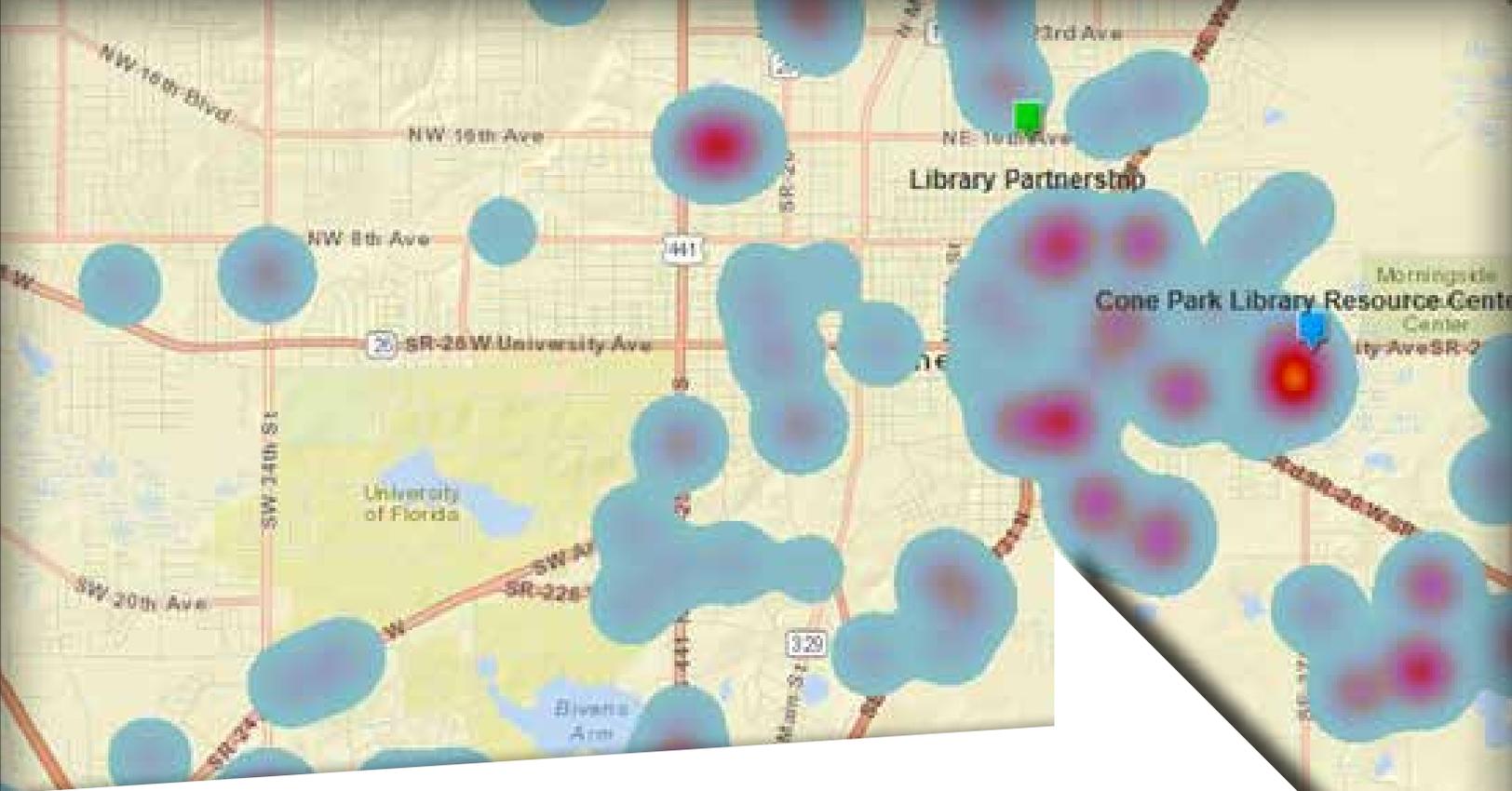
At the same time, Dr. Nancy Hardt at the University of Florida was making her own heat map, looking at Medicaid births and other health issues. When they compared maps, their “hotspots” were on top of each other.

“It was an ‘aha’ moment,” says Darnell, who speaks knowledgeably about the effects of trauma on children’s behavior and poor life outcomes. That’s when the doctor and law enforcement teamed up with community members to form Southwest Advocacy Group on the southwest edge of Gainesville.

PSF used those heat maps and looked at Gainesville neighborhoods with the highest rates of children being removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect, and that’s where they launched resource centers. They tracked who used the programs at each resource center, fine-tuned their efforts based on those data and kept measuring the results.

“There was some hit or miss,” says PSF’s Edelman. When the Library Partnership first launched, experts in areas such as mental health, early learning and child welfare brainstormed about what services the community could benefit from. “What we realized ... fairly quickly is we were right some of the time, but other times we were offering services where people were not showing up.”

So they increased neighborhood canvassing and focus groups, and they asked everyone who came through



Population-level data, such as those illustrated by heat maps, can reveal patterns in conditions or places. **The next step is to emphasize preventing future harm, rather than just responding to it.**

the door to fill out a feedback form about whether they got what they came for and what else they would like.

“As a result, our programming started really shifting and became very patron-driven,” Edelman says, although it remains tied to a set of five protective factors known to reduce the likelihood of abuse and neglect: concrete supports, knowledge of parenting and child development, nurturing and attachment, social connections, and family functioning and resiliency.

Like tools used in public health efforts, population-level data on children and families, such as those illustrated by heat maps, can reveal patterns in conditions or places. The next step is to emphasize preventing future harm, rather than just responding to it.

“Data is able to tell you what the need is,” says PSF’s Pennypacker. “So instead of just trying a shotgun approach or spaghetti approach and say, ‘Let’s try everything and hopefully something will stick,’ you can literally say, ‘This is what’s needed, let’s find it, let’s make it available and see if we can have an impact.’”



Children in the resource centers' **Courageous Kids program**, above, learn about positive relationships with peers and how to resolve conflict.

Rashad Dunbar, below, took classes on finances and parenting at the Cone Park Library Resource Center. **"The library at Cone Park has been the biggest beneficial factor of my life since I've been back in Gainesville."**



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA



"Any time you keep a child from entering foster care, you've reduced trauma, not only in that child, but in their family ... and their neighborhood and in their community."

— PEBBLES EDELMAN,
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG FAMILIES



"The Cone Park Library Resource Center was built to empower individuals and families as a whole. ... When you address a family in its entirety, you're changing the entire family dynamic."

— ERICA REED, RESOURCE CENTER MANAGER

After-school programs such as the capoeira class are popular at the SWAG Family Resource Center. “I think having ways to connect people to the concrete services and then move to the deeper, more meaningful services really changes people’s outlook,” says Dorothy Thomas, SWAG co-chair. “And it makes them realize they can start making decisions for themselves and look ahead to the future.”



Three resource centers in Gainesville aim to help families address issues that could lead to a child needing to be removed from the home, says Stephen Pennypacker, president and CEO of Partnership for Strong Families. “If we can address that need that doesn’t start that cycle of what turns into more serious maltreatment, then we’ve done our job. We don’t want to have to remove kids.”

To see hope in action in Gainesville, visit casey.org/Hope2017 for a video story about this Community of Hope.



Supporting families in Gainesville takes many forms, including a mobile health clinic, left, and homework help, below.





Students gather to celebrate Johnson Central High School's first-ever state football championship. Public schools play an important role in the Johnson County Community of Hope.

Johnson County, Kentucky

HEALING AND HOPE

From businesses to the bench, local leaders help build a Community of Hope

20

Casey Family Programs | The Evolution of **Hope**



Some 700 miles northwest of Gainesville, in a rural county of 23,000 in the heart of Appalachia, is **another community working to build hope for its children and families**. Johnson County, Kentucky, including the county seat of Paintsville, found itself struggling to keep children safe as more families faced overwhelming challenges that threatened to tear them apart.

Families like Tammy Damron's.

The first time Damron lost custody of her three daughters, she was driving a Hoveround mobility scooter while high and crashed into an apple tree on her way to get one of her daughters from the school bus. She had them back within days.

The second time, she thinks a family member called authorities. She and her husband were passed out after taking pills, and her children were removed from their home. Her husband later died of an overdose.

Damron was raised by bootlegger parents who grew marijuana and physically abused each other. She started actively drinking when she was 12 and smoking pot at 13. After her first daughter was born by cesarean section when she was 25, she took the prescribed pain pills. Then she couldn't stop.

“I was going to be a good mom,” says the 43-year-old, whose daughters are now 13, 15 and 17. “They weren’t going to see what I saw. And they didn’t see what I saw growing up. But it was just as bad.”

‘Making the child a victim twice’

“All rise!”

Family Court Judge Janie McKenzie-Wells enters the courtroom, where estranged couples, relatives and their lawyers await their chance to discuss who will have the children during an upcoming holiday break or whether someone looking after the children is currently using drugs.

Judge McKenzie-Wells moves through the cases quickly and expertly. She’s fully aware of the impact of every decision.

“If I remove a child from the home, I feel sometimes like I’m making the child a victim twice,” she explains. “They’ve been a victim of the initial risk and neglect, a victim of the initial abuse, and now I’m making them a victim by changing everything that they ever knew in life.”

Not only do children have to leave their families, but often they also have to leave their schools, their friends and their neighborhoods. The judge said she first realized that impact at the annual Christmas party for children in foster care.

“I’m looking at the foster families, and it hits me like a ton of bricks, that two-thirds of my children — I call them my children because I’m responsible for them — when I put them in foster care at 2 in the morning or 3 in the morning, they’re not staying in Johnson County. ... I’ve changed their teacher, I’ve changed their school, I’ve changed their friends, they probably can’t do

the extracurricular activities they were in, the things that were most stable for that child, I’m changing for them.”

That’s when she connected with Susan Howard, service region administrator for the Kentucky Department of Community Based Services, who responded quickly to an opportunity to work with Casey Family Programs.

“I strongly believe in advocating for our people, families who are struggling with the basics sometimes, how to make ends meet, to substance abuse, to physical abuse of children, to sexual abuse,” says Howard.

So they launched community conversations in late 2012 that sparked a communitywide partnership in this rural region struggling with unemployment and substance abuse.

Known as the Johnson County Community of Hope, it brings together social services, the judicial system, community volunteers, mental health services, substance abuse services, public schools, the local library and the business community, all in support of building stronger families. Its mission is to build a community-based set of services and interventions to help reduce the number of children in foster care and the number of dependency, neglect and abuse cases.

Since the effort started, the number of children in foster care in Johnson County has dropped by about a third, while the number of children in foster care in the rest of the state has been climbing.

The difference is the path that Johnson County has taken. Like Gainesville, Johnson County seeks to engage the entire community and its leaders to more collectively address the issues affecting families that often lead to children entering foster care. As a nation, we have an opportunity to choose a different path as well.



'You are not your addiction'

Inside a small room at Mountain Comprehensive Care Center in Johnson County, peer mentor Samantha Goble starts with her list. She's sharing important tips for how to get through the holiday party season without triggering a relapse:

- Don't be the first to arrive at a party, and don't be the last to leave. You're likely to be tempted to indulge with the host.
- Have an "escape" plan: Tell the host you can only stay a short while because you have another commitment.
- Bring a beverage that's the same color as the alcoholic drinks being served. That way you won't feel self-conscious.

To the nine women listening, the tips make sense, and they know Goble understands them. She, too, once struggled with addiction. This session is part of the women's hard work to stay clean and sober so they can put their lives, and their families, back together.

"A lot of people feel that drug addiction is — they're just bad people," says Phyllis Coleman, addictions program coordinator for Mountain Comprehensive Care Center. "They don't look at circumstances. They don't look at any other aspect of this person's life. ... One of the things we try to teach the women is, you are not your addiction. And you are not the things you did in your addiction. You're worth having a good life."

Mountain Comprehensive offers individual and group counseling. The three-phase program matches up with Family Court, so participants can show their progress. And the stakes are high.

"They've been beaten down by so many people, told them what a bad parent they are and what a bad person they are," Coleman says. "They're the ones held to the highest responsibility of a child. They're the ones that, if help is not there for them, the ones that will lose that child."

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It takes all of us working together to build a Community of Hope

The experiences in Johnson County and Gainesville show what is possible when all of us — business, public, nonprofit, philanthropic and community sectors — work together to create supportive communities that keep children safe and help families thrive.

"It's the community's effort to put the needs of others ahead of their own," says Howard of Johnson County. "I think to make a Community of Hope project such as this work, it takes judicial, it takes child welfare, and it takes your community."

PSF's Edelman agrees:

"Our partners can be from so many different sectors: faith-based, business, social service agencies, local government, our volunteer base. We would not exist without those particular partners. It's our volunteer base that allows us to be open every day of the week and provide services."

Their collective efforts are providing hope in their communities and beyond.



“It took these people to push me and follow me **and tell me they loved me.**”

– TAMMY DAMRON, MOUNTAIN COMPREHENSIVE CARE CENTER GRADUATE

A second chance

It's lunchtime, and customers are ordering at the counter of the Paintsville McDonald's — one of 14 in eastern Kentucky owned by local businessman Bob Hutchison and his brother.

Hutchison understands investment, and it's not just about his bottom line.

“I've opened my doors to those people who are looking for a second chance,” says Hutchison, who also owns a local car dealership and has hired employees with criminal convictions.

“We've got one individual that was released from prison because he was guaranteed a job. He is a general manager. He operates a multimillion-dollar business now because he had that opportunity.

“Though he came in at an entry level, cooking French fries, sweeping, mopping, wiping tables, he made the best of his opportunity at McDonald's Any issues he may have had in the past, I see no reflection of that other than he wants to be the best husband, the best father he can possibly be.”

'Every piece interlocks'

For part of the three years they were out of her custody, Damron's children stayed with family members. But then they were placed with strangers in another county.

“I got so comfortable with family, I wasn't even working on it,” she says. “Then when they got sent off, I started working as hard as I could. I got off drugs.”

She cites the support of her stepmother, who took care of her children, as well as Mountain Comprehensive's Coleman, her staff and peer mentors, and the Johnson County Community of Hope.

“It took these people to push me and follow me and tell me they loved me,” she says.

She describes Judge McKenzie-Wells as tough but very fair. “She gave me chance after chance. She didn't make me feel 'less than' when I was in court. ... I have a lot of respect for her.”

The journey back to her children started with weekend visits, then overnights for the whole weekend. And finally, “They said, we're going to give your kids back. We're closing your case.”

Damron, who recently remarried, lovingly describes each daughter and the simple pleasures they enjoy together: talking about what happened at school, baking, watching movies and making the occasional trip to the Dairy Queen.

She says everyone involved in the Johnson County Community of Hope is a necessity to its success.

“Every piece goes together, every piece interlocks.” ■

Evolving hope in Indian country

While they share many of the challenges facing other U.S. communities, tribal nations also are among those working to overcome historical trauma. For centuries, ever since European explorers made contact with indigenous people in the Americas, Native American families were broken apart. Their children were sent to boarding schools where they were not allowed to speak their native languages or follow their cultural practices, and they rarely saw their families. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Indian Adoption Project removed hundreds of children from their cultural communities and placed them in non-Native foster or adoptive families, before the passage in 1978 of the Indian Child Welfare Act. The resulting historical trauma has left a lasting legacy — which today includes an epidemic of youth suicide across many tribal nations.

Leaders in the Navajo Nation and the Oglala Sioux Tribe are approaching the issue head-on. The Navajo Nation responded to a cluster of youth suicides in 2015 by instituting a nationwide listening tour that included offering resources to those affected by suicide. The tour was part of the Navajo Nation's Building Communities of Hope Initiative, aimed at raising awareness and implementing suicide prevention initiatives. The tour visited every high school across the three-state nation, despite a cultural taboo about discussing suicide.

Similarly, the Oglala Sioux of Pine Ridge, South Dakota, declared a state of emergency when they experienced a cluster of youth suicides in 2014 and 2015. They see the need for more support for culturally appropriate mental health services, job creation and economic development to address the fact that, nationally, suicide is the second leading cause of death for Native American youth ages 15 to 24.

As tribal nations work to overcome this threat to their young people, uphold their unique culture and apply best practices, including those outlined in the Indian Child Welfare Act, they are creating hope for many generations to come.

As tribal nations work to overcome this threat to their young people, uphold their unique culture and apply best practices, including those outlined in the Indian Child Welfare Act, **they are creating hope for many generations to come.**



“We want to give [students] the best tools that we possibly can to allow them to be the best employee they can be for any company they might go to work for.”

— BOB HUTCHISON, BUSINESS OWNER AND SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

“We want to strengthen all of our families. When we do, we have a safer community, we have a more vital community.”

— FAMILY COURT JUDGE JANIE MCKENZIE-WELLS



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

JOHNSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY



Women in the substance abuse program at Mountain Comprehensive Care Center, left, receive individual and group counseling as well as peer support. The program's phases align with Family Court so participants can show their progress.



Education is an important component of a holistic approach that takes into account how a child's home life can affect him or her at school.

Tammy Damron, right, graduated from Mountain Comprehensive Care Center's substance abuse treatment program, was reunified with her three daughters and recently remarried. "I feel like a new person," she says. "I'm so happy the community has pulled together for this place."



"It creates more excitement in our community when a family makes it," says Susan Howard, with the Kentucky Department of Community Based Services. Johnson County was awarded the inaugural Jim Casey Building Communities of Hope Award in 2017.

To see hope in action, visit casey.org/Hope2017 for a video story about the Johnson County Community of Hope.



The success of the Johnson County Community of Hope depends on broad participation. "There is nothing like having a community that is not giving up and still moving forward."

— SUSAN HOWARD, KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES



ABOUT CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS

Casey Family Programs works in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and two territories and with more than a dozen tribal nations **to influence long-lasting improvements to the safety and success of children, families and the communities where they live.** We learn from and collaborate with communities at local, state, tribal and national levels to nurture the safety and success of every child.

Consulting

We offer ongoing strategic consultation, technical assistance, data analysis and independent research and evaluation at no cost to child welfare systems, policymakers, courts and tribes across America to support long-lasting improvements that safely reduce the need for foster care. We partner with communities across our nation — communities like Gainesville, Florida, and Johnson County, Kentucky — to enhance partnerships, improve practice and policy, and ensure that these improvements will endure over time.

Direct services

Through our nine field offices, Casey Family Programs develops and demonstrates effective, practical solutions to safely reduce the need for foster care and improve children's and families' well-being. Each year, we offer a range of services to more than 1,400 children, youth, young adults and families, with a particular focus on education, employment and mental health services.

We've set a bold goal for this work: to secure a safe, nurturing and permanent family for every young person in our care, whether through

reunification with his or her birth family, adoption or kinship care. A 2016 assessment quantified our progress toward that goal, finding that 99 percent of youth who received our prevention services did not experience repeat abuse or neglect in the six months after their case was closed. In addition, 98 percent of the young adults we served had no incidents of incarceration, and 95 percent of young adults had stable housing while receiving Casey services.

As part of our direct service work, Casey Family Programs partners with tribes and American Indian/Alaska Native communities across the country to support their development of effective and culturally responsive child welfare services. Strong sovereign tribal nations keep children healthy, safe and connected with their families, relatives, tribal communities and cultures. We currently have agreements with 16 tribes that honor tribal sovereignty and support nation-building efforts, help build partnerships with the broader child welfare profession and assist in compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

We share what we have learned with state, tribal and county child welfare systems, private providers and community partners — working with them to achieve similar results.





Public policy

We also support federal, state, tribal and local governments by providing comprehensive, nonpartisan child welfare information and education driven by data and based on evidence of what works best to improve the lives of children and families. We draw on our direct services and consulting work to help align and improve state and federal child welfare policies, allowing communities to focus on preventing abuse and neglect and improving outcomes for children in foster care.

We share what we have learned with public child welfare systems, private providers and other community partners across the nation to inform policy. We are committed to supporting federal child welfare policy changes that will provide every state with the ability to invest existing resources in the most effective strategies to safely reduce the need for foster care, strengthen families and improve the safety and success of all children.

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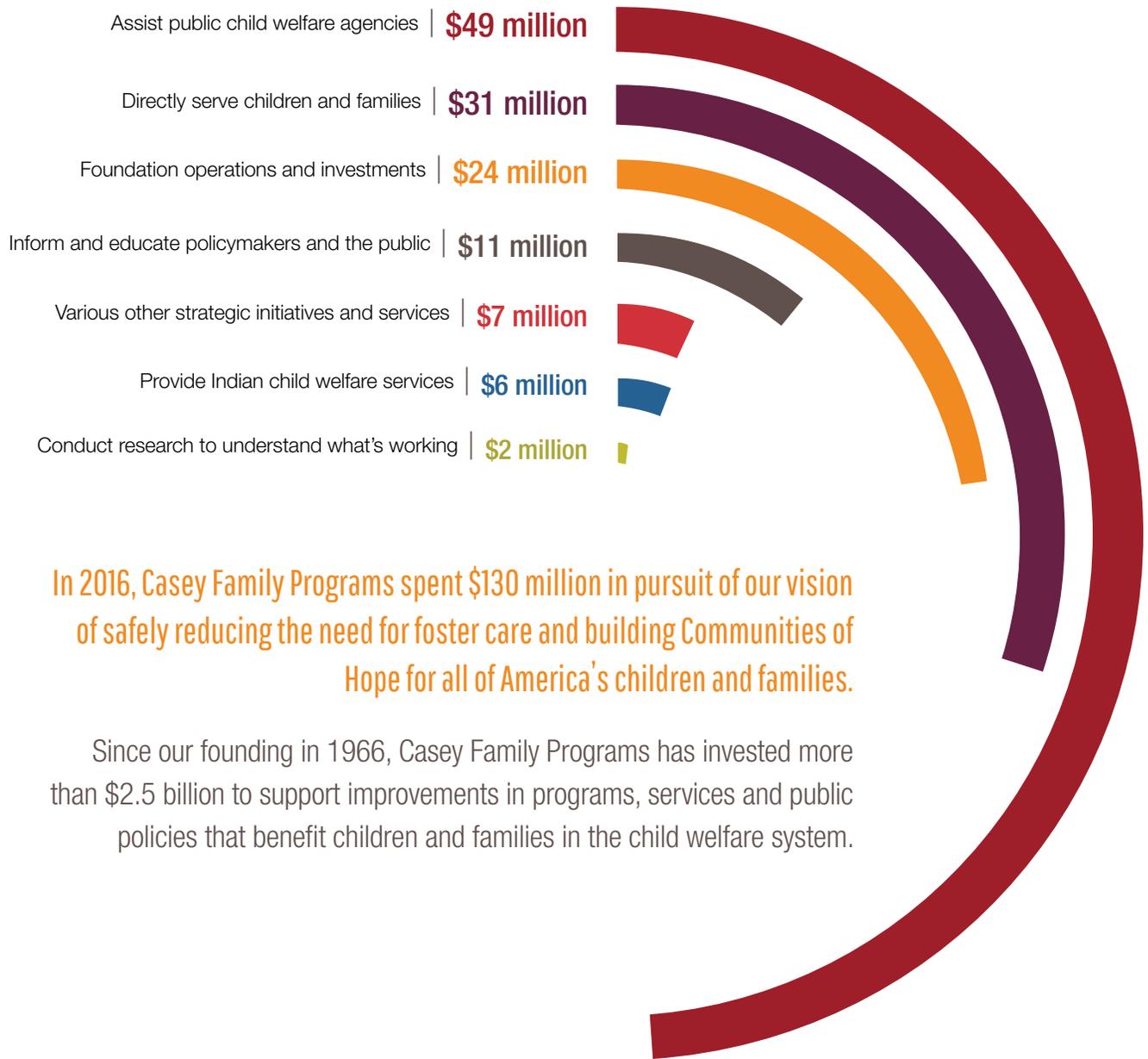
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2016 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

At the end of 2016, Casey Family Programs' assets totaled **\$2.2 billion**.



In 2016, Casey Family Programs spent \$130 million in pursuit of our vision of safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for all of America's children and families.

Since our founding in 1966, Casey Family Programs has invested more than \$2.5 billion to support improvements in programs, services and public policies that benefit children and families in the child welfare system.





Determined people working together
can do anything.

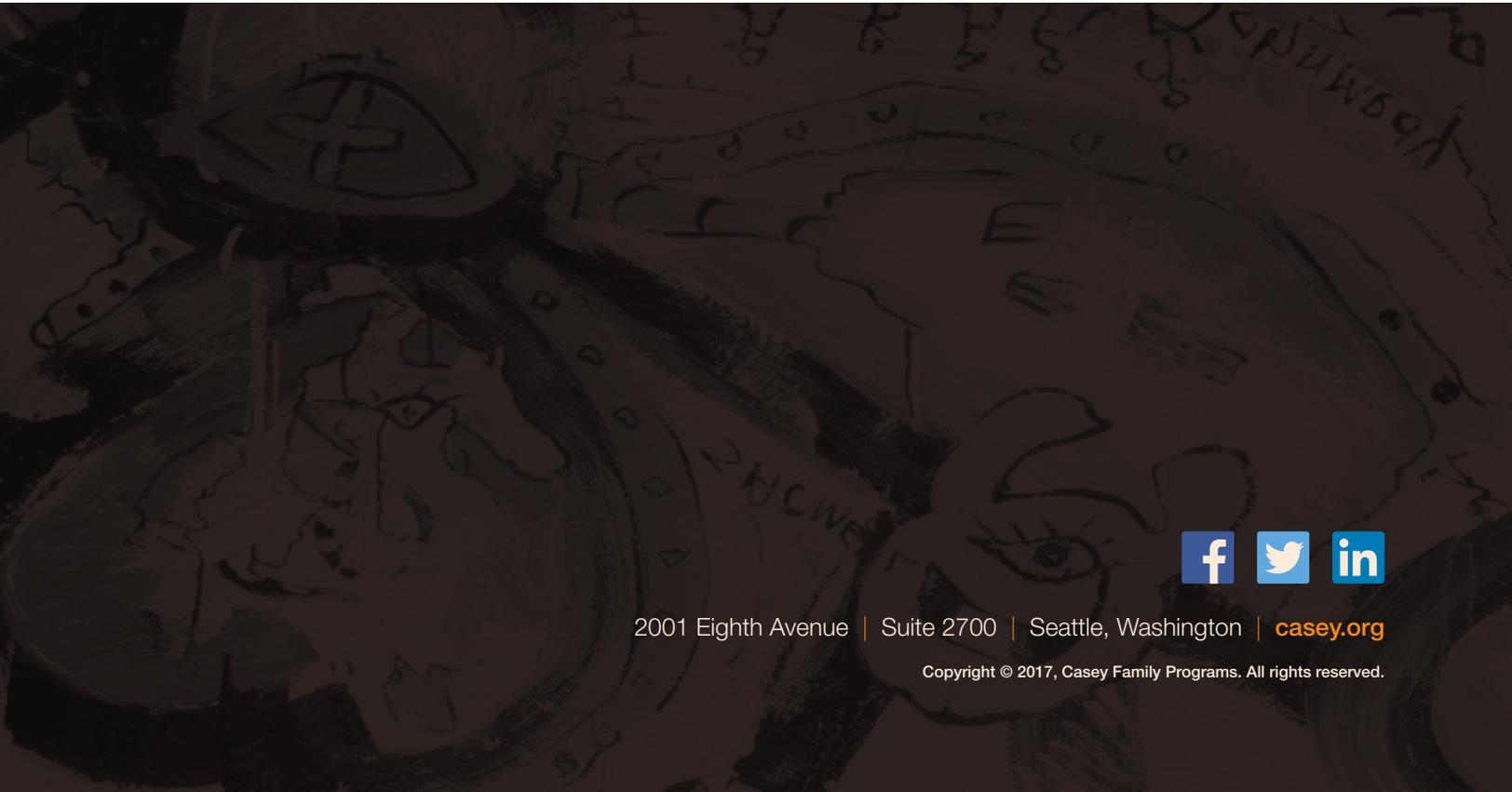
- JIM CASEY





casey family programs

safe children | strong families | supportive communities



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