



# Federation of Organizations

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## **Unlikely Heroes**

A Message from Stephen McCarthy  
Chief Financial Officer

As 2019 continues and the holidays fade, sometimes it's difficult to get back to our normal routines. Having just given up on my own lofty New Year's resolutions – basically, before they even got into gear – I received the call: “We need you to write the leadership message!”

The last thing I felt capable of was *being inspiring*.

I asked for a brief synopsis of the articles that were going to appear in this issue. As usual, I was amazed by our staff and clients. For some reason, “unlikely heroes” came to mind.

In this issue, you will read stories of unlikely mentors, individuals seeking to improve their lives under difficult circumstances, and Federation employees developing and implementing programs with wide-ranging impact for many.

After reading the stories, I now have new resolutions for the this year! Recognize the “unlikely heroes” all around me and let them be my inspiration.



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## **Federation to Develop Affordable Housing in Brooklyn**



The Vital Brooklyn initiative was created by New York State to build 4,000 units of affordable housing. In November 2018, when Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s office announced four winning proposals to develop the housing, Federation was thrilled to be among the winners.

“This is, without a doubt, great news for Federation of Organizations, which will provide quality, affordable homes and supportive services for seniors in central Brooklyn,” said CEO Barbara Faron.

This year, Federation will focus on creating 119 affordable homes on a 21,000-square-foot lot in Brooklyn. The site is across the street from Interfaith Medical Center. Of the units, 59 will be for seniors who meet income requirements, 59 will be supportive units for frail-elderly seniors, and one will house a building superintendent.

Congratulations to all employees who contributed to the winning proposal. Not only is this a monumental opportunity for Federation to provide a critical need for the community, but it will allow many seniors to live with dignity and respect.

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## **James S. Discovers a Whole New World**

At age 74, James S. stepped into a McDonald’s for the first time in 40 years. He was accompanied by Tim Zwolinski, Care Coordinator at Federation, who suggested they get a bite before going to an appointment with the Department of Social Services.

For James, it was like entering a new world. In awe of the touch screens that took orders, he decided on two fish fillets and a strawberry milkshake.

“While he was in prison, he hadn’t watched TV or movies,” Zwolinski said. “He only listened to the radio. He wasn’t aware of all the changes in the world in forty years.”

After being released in 2017, James was in and out of sober homes, sometimes homeless. Then he came to Federation’s attention. Jim Jacquin, Outreach Specialist, helped James apply for SPA housing. Zwolinski created a plan of action and put a psychiatric treatment team in place.

James now has stable Emergency Housing pending placement through SPA and a routine. Once a week, a mobile team picks him up and takes him to a psychiatric treatment center. Zwolinski checks in regularly to make sure he is going to his appointments, taking medications, and managing his money.

“I think it’s the support and guidance that Federation provides that makes a difference,”

Zwolinski said.

James has come a long way since his first visit in decades to a McDonald's. With a positive attitude and new-found stability, he's giving life another chance.

## Senior Volunteer Rosemary Notaro Is Back in the Classroom

RoseMary Notaro, age 67, retired as a classroom teacher in 2004. The year before her retirement, she began mentoring a young woman, Jennifer Rosen, who was getting her teaching certification. The two worked well together, as RoseMary helped Jennifer try out classroom techniques and learn skills that would serve her when she became a teacher.

Both stayed in touch following RoseMary's retirement. Finally, after 10 years of being away from the classroom, RoseMary confided to Jennifer that she felt lost. That's when Jennifer told RoseMary about Foster Grandparents.

"She gave me the number to Federation of Organizations, and the rest is history!" said RoseMary, who was trained as a Foster Grandparent and then started volunteering at JFK Babylon Elementary. To her delight, she was actually placed in Jennifer's classroom.



What was it like to volunteer in a classroom led by a teacher whom she had mentored? "My heart felt full again," said RoseMary, adding that it made her feel useful and needed. "Jenn had become a great teacher and I felt so proud of her! I loved when she would use me as a resource for using a technique."

RoseMary volunteered in Jennifer's Kindergarten classroom for two years, and last year, she moved with her to 2nd grade inclusion. Along with Jennifer, this classroom includes Melissa Dewhirst, a special education teacher.

"Today's curriculum is so intense and extensive that there is always something to do," RoseMary said. "I know the Foster Grandparent Program needed me, but I sure needed them. I would recommend this program to anyone who needs a stress-free opportunity to fill your days and keep your mind alert – the rewards are endless!"

The Foster Grandparent Program is a nationwide program that started in 1965. Federation has been the sponsoring agency of the program in Suffolk County since 1977. While adults ages 55 and up are eligible to participate, many of Federation's volunteers are in their 80's and some are even in their 90's.

"The beauty of the program is that it is individualized to meet each child's specific needs," said Jessica Acevedo, Program Manager, Senior Support Services, who speaks passionately about foster grandparents in the classrooms. "It's a win-win situation. A natural bond forms. The kids know the seniors want to give them nurturing and support. And the older adult is able to do something meaningful and stay connected to the community."

The Foster Grandparents are a consistent source of support in the schools, as they volunteer for at least 15 hours every week. Currently, 130 senior volunteers participate in Suffolk County schools, helping children stay focused on academics and providing social and emotional support for those who may be shy or introverted. They also come to the aid of busy teachers who benefit from an extra set of eyes and ears. And, the program wins praise from parents, who appreciate the TLC the Foster Grandparents provide.

## Graduation from Federation Represents a Journey to Independence

When most people think of graduation, they imagine years of schoolwork and passing

exams.

“At Federation, graduation represents the essence of recovery, which is independence,” said Jennifer Riley, Associate Director, Supportive Scattered Site Housing, describing the ultimate goal of Federation’s RTS and MRS Teams, which strive to help clients become integrated into their communities.

“For these teams, which seek to help clients become independent to the point where they no longer need Federation’s services, graduation is significant,” Riley said.

In 2018, 26 people graduated from Federation’s RTS and MRS programs, marking a journey toward independence. As part of this journey, individuals work on making their own appointments with doctors, psychiatrists, and therapists. They also work toward gradually being able to take medication on their own and get refills. Taking public transportation is also a skill they learn to hone as is applying for benefits. For many, these are all new responsibilities as they were previously living in state-run facilities where there was little opportunity for independence.

“Each person that we work with is different and comes to us with a different set of personal experiences” ,” Riley said. “ We develop customized goals and help them get there. Graduation from our programs is an amazing achievement and we are so proud of all the hard work that our members and staff put in each day. To be able to make your own choices and navigate your life is quite an accomplishment.”

We’re looking forward to many more graduations!

## Holiday Parties Bring Cheer!



Throughout the Holidays, Federation staff, members, and volunteers gathered together as a community to share a meal and spread cheer. Here are some highlights!

Thanksgiving marked the beginning of the holiday celebrations. Thanks to MedSafe Transportation, Federation held a wonderful Thanksgiving meal for their members. Raffles for a turkey and gift cards added to the excitement!

Later in December, 50 members of PROS in Copiague enjoyed a visit from Santa Claus, who brought a bag full of gifts for one and all.

On Christmas Day, doors at the Patchogue Community Center opened to welcome more than 50 homeless individuals. Eight volunteers prepared and served a delicious meal that included smoked ham, potatoes, vegetables, salad, and dessert.

A Toy Drive sponsored by the POWER (Peer Outreach With Evening Recreation) program and Child Protection Services resulted in donations of nearly 100 toys to

brighten the holidays for children in need.

Staff and volunteers of Federation's Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion and Junior Companion programs gathered together for the Holidays to celebrate the joyous season. Items were collected for POWER'S food Pantry and Santa made a special visit!

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## CQI Initiative Aims to Save Lives

When lives are at stake, early intervention is often the key.

That's where the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiative, a project of the New York State Office of Mental Health, comes in. It was created in 2017 with a focus on suicide prevention. The goal was to lower the number of suicide attempts, using screening tools to identify people at risk and provide immediate support.

"In the past, when someone presented as suicidal, they were sent to the E.R. to see a doctor," explained Ryan Busuttill, Associate Director of Clinical Services at Federation.

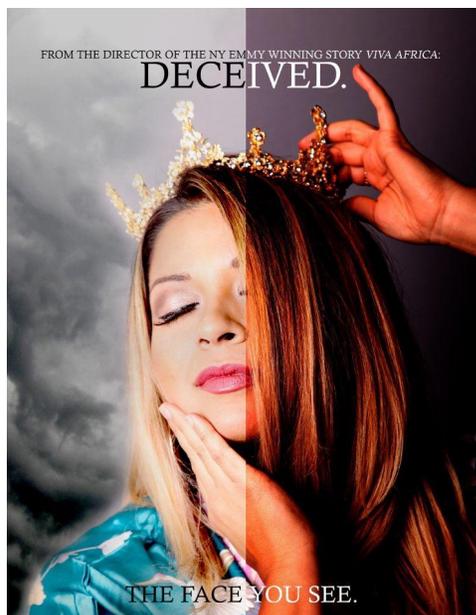
Today, thanks to the tools of the CQI initiative, which Federation uses at its Wyandanch Clinic, anyone who is screened and determined to be at risk gets immediate support, outreach, and therapy once a week.

The results, after almost two years of screening nearly 800 people, are "overwhelmingly great," according to Busuttill. "We haven't had any suicide attempts since the project began. We've been participating in data collection every month. Those who are at risk are provided with services, screened every week, and we follow up with them frequently."

Because guilt and shame are often associated with suicidal thoughts, people are often reluctant to discuss their feelings. However, screening helps identify those who are considering suicide. Frequent screenings with the ongoing Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale also normalizes the conversation. Rather than sending people to the hospital which in many ways exacerbates fear of discussion and can be more traumatic, intensive community based services are offered to provide ongoing support throughout the process of dealing and healing from these feelings. There is no judgment and thoughts of self-harm are met with empathy and support. Individuals develop plans to keep themselves safe through the use of the Stanley Brown Safety Plan.

Given the success of this important initiative, Federation will keep the new process in place. After all, it's saving lives.

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### Staff Spotlight: Federation's Bridgette Bonilla Stars in the Original Play *Deceived*

**Can you tell me a little about the play *Deceived*?**

It is an original play written & directed by the award winning Shadrack Boayke, founder & President Of The Truth Urban Theatre Group. Shadrack is also a writer & actor for Spike Lee's Netflix series, "She's Gotta Have It" & is a motivational speaker for Scholastic Books.

**Why is this play important? What message does it impart?**

This play is important because it covers major topics such as Mental Health, Immigration, & how it affects families. This production

provokes conversations not normally discussed & a chance of seeing & understanding different people's perceptions.

### **What is your role?**

Sarah – The girlfriend of the breadwinner of the Thomson's family residence. She is the master deceiver that makes you wonder with questions like, "What is she doing" "Why is she doing it?" "Are her actions validated?"... As an audience member, it's up to you to decide.

### **How long have you been acting? What other plays have you acted in?**

I've been acting in musicals since I was child. The 1st play I was in was Annie with a local theater at 8yrs old. Then besides local theatre productions, I always participated in musicals throughout grade school including musicals such as West Side Story, South Pacific, Oliver & Wizard Of Oz. Then a few years ago, I auditioned & joined The Truth UTG & was in their Emmy award winning production, "Viva Africa", which was my debut production with the group.

### **What do you love about acting?**

Being able to express yourself in ways you don't normally do on a daily basis. It can be fun or even therapeutic to express yourself through different characters. Also, being able to tell & share someone else's story can be very gratifying & honorable.

### **What is your role at Federation and how long have you worked here?**

I'm Federation's Purchasing Coordinator & I have been working here for 1 year & 2 months.

### **Are you working on any upcoming projects?**

Besides Acting, I'm also a singer & songwriter & will be self-releasing my own EP. As far as the play, "Deceived" goes, since we had such great feedback with this 1st round of shows, we are looking to add shows in the near future. Dates/Times/Location to be announced. So stay tuned!

### ***\*Added note from Bridgette:***

I have to say I really love working here & our family culture/environment. Though I didn't announce/promote show to the whole company as tickets were limited & these were trial shows, I really appreciated some of my fellow co-workers that came to support me & even participated in Q&A after the show. It was an amazing feeling to me because it really showed me the genuine care & kindness of the type of great people we have in our organization. Overall, I feel everyone in our company really shows how we care not only for the work we do, the clients we help, but how we really do make the effort to care for one another & help each other out. I'm forever grateful of this company & the amazing people we have apart of it.



## Federation Makes its Mark at Conferences

Federation staff hit the conference circuit in 2018 presenting on important topics such as the importance of HCBS Services to adapting services to meet an aging population. Great work team!

**Honora Stephen**, Director of Outreach Services, and HCBS Counselor/Mental Health Advocate **Julie Burrows** made presentations about Federation's HCBS program at two conferences: **The New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services** in Ellenville, NY; and, at the **Association for Community Living** in Lake George, NY.



**Jennifer Riley**, Associate Director, Supportive Scattered Site Housing and **Danielle Mann** (*pictured right*), Program Manager for the 6th Street Residence, the Irving Berkowitz Residence, and the Sunken Meadow Residence, spoke before the **State Society of Aging at New York's 46th Annual Conference** in Saratoga Springs, NY. They discussed how Federation teams are adapting to a growing population of individuals who are aging and in need of medical attention.

**Karen Gorman**, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Resource Development, **Jennifer Riley**, and **Danielle Mann** also presented at the **39th Association for Community Living Agencies in Mental Health Conference** in Lake George, NY. They discussed how Federation has tailored its residential services to meet the needs of an aging population.

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## Staff Achievements!

Congrats to our staff on these impressive milestones with Federation!  
We truly value your service!

### 5 Years of Service

Tamara Taylor-Anderson  
Lisa Bogi  
Bernadette Denne  
Susan Kelly  
Krista Nohs  
Richard Peart  
Andrene Williams

### 10 Years of Service

Cathy Celeste  
Nicole Dawson  
Jessica Koenke

### 20 Years of Service

Anne Kavanagh (21)

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## Come Bowl With Us!

Raise money and have fun at the same time! Come down to Farmingdale Lanes on Sunday, March 10th from 1-4pm!  
Food, drinks, face painting, and AMAZING raffles!

Click the image below to buy your tickets or sponsor a lane!



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