A NOTE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The theme of the newsletter is: “Personal Experience as a Life-Long Learner” and this is right up my alley! As a child I struggled with something that people did not truly understand – Dyslexia! Even today we know what it is, but schools hesitate to support children with this difficulty. The definition is a general term for disorders that involve difficulty in learning to read or interpret words, letters, and other symbols, but that does not affect general intelligence. It can affect reading comprehension, spelling, writing and math (word solving problems) to name a few areas.

I’m a seasoned person (you might say senior person) but I prefer seasoned, who has struggled all my life with this disorder and still do. When I was a child starting school in the late 50’s, no one really had any idea about Dyslexia. I was labeled a slow reader. Spelling and reading were extremely difficult for me and my Mom and I had no clue why. I did well in everything else, except, word problems in math. I was extremely happy when computers had “spell check,” it was like a life saver to myself. I began to read out loud at home. I discovered that it helped my comprehension. I would encourage everyone to never settle but strive ahead, learn as much as you can to reach that next phase of your life. Your attitude and motivation can lead you to learn and be able to achieve what you always wanted to do!

I would encourage everyone to never settle but strive ahead, learn as much as you can to reach that next phase of your life. Your attitude and motivation can lead you to learn and be able to achieve what you always wanted to do!

I became a nurse, worked in the mental health field for 20 years as a Team Leader and then Program Director and now, I am the Chief Executive Officer at Allegheny Family Network. I’m still learning and loving it every minute! Learning is truly a Long Journey!!

CONTINUE TO LEARN UNTIL YOUR “AMERICAN DREAM” COMES TRUE!!

Ruth Fox
Chief Executive Officer
AFN’s 7th Annual Mental Health Expo on May 5, 2017, focused on the theme of “Journeys through Mental Health” - Awareness, Acceptance, and Advocacy.

“Awareness: My loved one has a disorder/illness and I will get educated and understand it to eliminate isolation and fear.

Acceptance: This is the reality in my life and I will support the dreams of my loved one.

Advocacy: I will work to change attitudes of mental illness, change policy to help my loved one be as productive as possible and to stomp out STIGMA.”

Ruth Fox, AFN CEO

As family members, everyone at AFN understands the “awareness, acceptance, and advocacy journey” needed by a parent to approach the challenges that can come with raising a child with mental health or behavior concerns. In our journey to, we work to support and help parents to advocate for their children and for their own needs in order to move their families forward.

Keynote speaker Darrin L. Harris, CEO of Ekhaya Youth Project, Inc., spoke on “Mental Illnesses Impact on the Family”, and of his journey with mental health.

Forty-eight providers from Allegheny County supplied resources and one-on-one sharing of information in order to enable families to explore services their child may need.

In the afternoon, Laurie Mulvey, MSW, Director of Service Demonstrations, University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, shared her interactive presentation on “Family Voice.”

Mach to Ms. Mulvey’s surprise, she was awarded the 2017 Patricia L. Valentine Champion Award for going above and beyond to ensure family voice and working tirelessly on behalf of families in Allegheny County raising children with mental health or behavior concerns.

Congratulations to Ms. Mulvey!

For some toe-tapping, the Funky Fly Project, a Pittsburgh based Funk & Jazz collective of four under 18 years of age musicians blended classic jazz with contemporary funk.

The recognition of the AFN Support Groups and raffles brought a close to this year’s Expo. A special thanks to the Department of Human Services of Allegheny County, Community Care Behavioral Health Organization and the Heinz Endowments for supporting AFN with the funds to serve the families.

Congratulations to Ms. Mulvey for going above and beyond to ensure family voice and learning opportunities.

Mary Morgan, JPT FSP

One of my favorite FUN learning experiences was going camping with my grandparents. I wanted to ride in front in the motorhome. I had to be able to tell my grandfather where to go by reading the map. I can now get from point A to point B by mapping it out on paper if I have to.

Sylvia White JPT FSP

My mother and my stepfather or one of her friends always took us on trips to spend time with family members that we did not see often. These trips were good because we were able to get along with each other. My mother would sing and we would play games. It was because of those times, that I always take my children and grandchildren on trips and plan family time, so we would always be close and love each other.

Christine Snyder, JPT Supervisor/Coach

Something that I have learned over time and is a life-long experience is that things happen for a reason. Certain things that occur only make you stronger. Never give up and have your goals set and reach for the stars. You can succeed in anything you put your mind to.

Julie Barry, AFN Parent Coordinator

My mother took us to every free cultural event in our city from belly dancers in the park to the travelling Holocaust exhibit at our local museum. She really broadened our horizons and opened our minds to many learning opportunities.

Nikki McCoy, JPT FSP

My family would go on vacation to Ocean City every summer and I learned family values and the importance of family time.

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Thanks to the efforts of Doug Henry and Aaron Jennings of Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (WPIC), University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and six mental health professionals from WPIC who provided trainings on May 31, 2017 on ADHD, Psychotropic Medications, Bipolar Disorder, Autism and Depression.

Over 100 family members, professionals and AFN staff enjoyed a day of education and networking in a relaxed atmosphere. Based on the evaluations, the day was a valuable asset and something that should be repeated.

### DYNAMIC DUO

Gotham City may have Batman and Robin but AFN has Julie and Alda! Two halves that make a whole to better serve the families of Allegheny Family Network. The position of Parent Coordinator has been split so more focus and time could be given to the areas that make up the job.

Join us in welcoming Julie Barry to the position of Parent Coordinator. Julie comes with a lot of experience both professionally and personally. As a single mom of seven children, both biological and adopted, there is not much she hasn’t seen. Julie comes to us from Children’s Hospital where she was a social worker. As Parent Coordinator she will be responsible for overseeing all requests for parent involvement such as focus groups, board and committee membership as well as the Parent Advisory Board and other special requests. In addition, she will be in charge of planning the large events including the Back to School Cookout and the Mental Health Expo. Julie wants everyone to know that she is excited to be at AFN and that she loves to meet people so don’t hesitate to stop by, call or email her at: jbarry@alleghenyfamilynetwork.org as no question is too big or too small.

Picking up the other half of the duties will be Alda Walker. Alda just celebrated her five-year anniversary at AFN and is known to many of you as the Parent Coordinator. Her new title is Training Coordinator and she will be responsible for all facets of training for staff and families, conducting needs assessments, curriculum development and delivering training courses, as well as coordinating outside trainings. Alda is a Master Trainer with over 40 years of training experiences. She is certified in several parenting and mental health programs such as ACT Raising Safe Children, Nurturing Parents, Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health First Aid for Youth. Alda believes that learning should be fun and is known for her interactive style of training which includes games, activities and group discussions. Look for more training events like Peeling Back the Layers. Alda is eager to hear what families want to have trainings on so feel free to send an email to: awalker@alleghenyfamilynetwork.org or stop by with your suggestion.

In true Dynamic Duo form, Julie and Alda share the same Bat cave, I mean office, so you are bound to catch one of them so stop in and say hello.

### PEELING BACK THE LAYERS - A TRAINING CONFERENCE

My mom was 40 when she got her GED, learned to drive and went to nursing school. Whenever I have to learn something new I start to think “but I am too old!” But then I remember how my mother never gave up the chance to learn. Truth of the matter is, we are never too old as long as we are willing.

Learning is a lifelong process that actually can help keep us young. As children we were expected to learn a lot, mostly through school but really our first teachers are our parents. We learn so much about the world and what we can expect by watching them. Parents pass on their values, priorities and beliefs.

#### GRANDPARENT AND GRANDCHILD—PRICELESS!

When a child has a relationship with a grandparent, and the grandparent with a child, the two are richer. While grandparents are known for wisdom, grandkids can be good teachers, too.

As grandparents, we can look at the world through the eyes of our grandchildren seeing again, as we did when we were kids, how life can be surprising, full of wonder, and humorous.

Grandkids are abound with energy, always moving and looking for entertainment. In my own experience with my two-year-old granddaughter, my energy rises to meet hers even after a long day at work. I get to surprise her doing something silly or having an art craft to do together. She tells me about her friends at daycare, or taking a bath with her “ducky” and “froggy.” Quiet time with my granddaughter can be anything from using her Amazon Fire, playing with her block sorter or reading together while she sits on my lap. In the next minute we can be up and dancing to “Elmo’s Slide”.

Capture those moments you see your grandchild looking at something. Watch their face as they ponder, wonder, and take in the experience. Join in acknowledging what they are seeing, adding to their experience with your own perspective. As she gets older, and I get “wiser” we will learn from each other in so many different ways. We will share each other’s day, her current events with my history, we will practice patience as we share our thoughts together. We will agree and disagree.

As grandparents, we have many years’ worth of living experience and wisdom to share with our grandkids. Take the time to know and to learn from them, too. I cherish what I have learned from my grandparents. I look forward to being invaluable for my granddaughter as our relationship grows together.

Sharon Shaw
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>AFN - SUPPORT GROUP CALENDAR 2017</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>September</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Moms United — Building the group:</td>
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<tr>
<td>What would the families like to see?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brainstorming ideas for the direction of the group.</td>
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<td><strong>October</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Moms United — To Be Announced</td>
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<td>11 Dual Diagnosis — Open Discussion:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactive group talk about the coming</td>
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<td>holidays and brainstorming on as</td>
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<td>assistance if needed and where to find</td>
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<td>11 Highland Community Cabinet—Health</td>
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<td>and Financial Wellness: Heart</td>
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<td>Healthy Freezer Meals and food</td>
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<td>preparation with speaker, Bobbie</td>
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<td>Niese.</td>
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<td>18 Tri-Boro Networking Support Group—</td>
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<td>Creative Art Box: A time to be</td>
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<tr>
<td>creative with learning how to make</td>
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<tr>
<td>memorable art boxes. Presented by</td>
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<td>Alda Walker, AFN Parent Teacher.</td>
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<td>21 Turn It Up Network—Affordable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance Group—Ticket availability</td>
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<td>for the day and giving thanks.</td>
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<td>15 Tri-Boro Networking Support Group—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Celebration: Let’s come</td>
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<tr>
<td>together to celebrate our thanks and</td>
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<tr>
<td>talk about upcoming holiday grab bag.</td>
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<td>16 Turn It Up Network—Thanksgiving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebration: Coming together in</td>
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<td>celebration of thankfulness.</td>
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<td>16 Foster Parents Support Group—</td>
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<td>Create a cookbook: The group will</td>
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<td>in January 2018.</td>
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| **November**                           |
| 8 Dual Diagnosis—Images of Self      |
| Collapse: Purpose of group is to dis- |
| cuss the effects of superheroes in    |
| today’s society and its effect on     |
| women’s approach to wellness. Guest   |
| Speaker TBA.                          |
| 8 Highland’s Area Community Cabinet— |
| Wellness and Physical Fitness: Walking |
| group and finalizes dates for        |
| continued walks and accountability.   |
| Group creates a booklet on how to     |
| track and monitor accountability of   |
| ourselves and each other.             |
| 13 Moms United—Thanksgiving Time:    |
| Preparing for the holiday and giving  |
| thanks.                              |
| 20 Tri-Boro Networking Support Group— |
| Thanksgiving Celebration: Let’s come   |
| together to celebrate our thanks and  |
| talk about upcoming holiday grab bag. |
| 21 Turn it Up Network—Thanksgiving    |
| Celebration: Coming together in       |
| celebration of thankfulness.         |
| 21 Foster Parents Support Group—      |
| Create a cookbook: The group will     |
| create an individualized book of      |
| coupons that the foster parents can    |
| give to the youth as a reward for     |
| good behavior and other things.       |
| 21 Foster Parents Support Group—      |
| Movie Night: The group will watch the  |
| movie, Pursuit of Happiness and see   |
| the lengths that the dad goes through |
| to provide and save his son while     |
| being homeless.                       |
| 21 Foster Parents Support Group—      |
| No group in December: Group meets     |
| every other month. Next group meeting |
| in January 2018.                      |

| **December**                           |
| 21 Dual Discussions—Holiday Gathe-    |
| ering: the group will gather and     |
| celebrate the upcoming holiday        |
| season.                              |
| 13 Dual Diagnosis—Holiday Celebra-    |
| tion: The group will join to         |
| celebrate the upcoming holiday        |
| season.                              |
| 13 Highland Area Community Cabinet—  |
| Wellness and Mental Health: The       |
| group will be exposed to a Nurtur-    |
| ing Parenting presentation and how to |
| handle stress.                       |
| 20 Tri-Boro Networking Support Group— |
| Holiday Celebration: Our end of the  |
| year celebration and grab bag        |
| exchange.                            |
| 20 Turn it Up Network—Thanksgiving    |
| Celebration: Coming together in       |
| celebration of thankfulness.         |
| 20 Foster Parents Support Group—      |
| Create a cookbook: The group will     |
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**AFN Family Support Groups and AFN Events Information**

- **Foster Parents Support Group**
  Allegheny Family Network
  405 North Craig St, 3rd Floor
  Pittsburgh, PA 15213

- **Third Thursday of the month:**
  Noon - 2:00 pm
  Sept. 21, Oct. 19, Nov. 16, Dec. 21
  Facilitator Contact: Chrystale Mosley at 412-438-6101

- **Fathers Involved Now-AFN**
  Fathers Involved Now, North Craig Street
  Suite 500
  Pittsburgh, PA 15213

- **Holiday Celebration:**
  Finish family and finalize dates for
  holiday gathering.

- **Fathers Involved NOW-Braddock**
  Braddock Carnegie Library
  419 Library Street
  Braddock, PA 15104

- **Third Friday of the month:**
  Noon - 2:00 pm
  Sept. 29, Oct. 27, Nov. 24, Dec. 21
  Facilitator Contact: George Fleming at 412-438-6106

- **Fathers Involved NOW-Bridgeport**
  Bridgeport Carnegie Library
  419 Library Street
  Bridgeport, PA 15104

- **Third Thursday of the month:**
  6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
  Sept. 21, Oct. 19, Nov. 16, Dec. 21
  Facilitator Contact: George Fleming at 412-438-6106

- **Fathers Involved NOW-North Side**
  Providence Family Support Center
  3113 Brighton Road
  Pittsburgh, PA 15212

- **Fourth Monday of the month:**
  5:00 pm - 8:00 pm
  Sept. 25, Oct. 23, Nov. 27, Dec. TBD
  Facilitator Contact: Brian Chatman at 412-438-6121.

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**CHILD CARE**

If you would like to receive this calendar electronically, please call our CHAT Line at 1-888-273-2361, and we will email it to you as a PDF file.

The PDF file will open with Acrobat Reader which you can download for free.