

FRIENDS OF JFS.



Nick Haines, Executive Producer of Public Affairs for Kansas City PBS and Kansas City, Missouri Mayor Quinton Lucas

FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY GOES VIRTUAL—HIGHLIGHTS HOPE AND CARING

March 17th, 2020 was the last day Ariel was able to work after being furloughed from her job in the food service industry due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. She turned to Jewish Family Services to meet her family's needs.

“We’ve been coming to the food pantry,” said Ariel, a Keshet KC Client. “There are people there that can support us during this unprecedented time. It’s priceless.”



Mayor Quinton Lucas visits JFS in 2019

Ariel shared her story during the Friends of the Family virtual event September 10th, 2020. Nick Haines, Executive Producer of Public Affairs for Kansas City PBS, hosted the gathering that pulled back the curtain on what’s been happening with JFS programs and clients during the pandemic.

Attendees heard from clients, staff, and Kansas City, Missouri Mayor Quinton Lucas from the comfort of their homes, and were invited to contribute to the 2020 JFS Friends of the Family Annual Fund.

Don Goldman, JFS Executive Director and CEO, said the need is greater than ever. For example, the number of clients using counseling services has increased 25 percent. The amount of people using the food pantry each month continues to increase and is expected to double. JFS has pivoted to help older adults by handing out more than 100 tablets, so they can connect with family and friends or set up delivery of their medicine. This new service was among several highlighted in the virtual event.

Several years ago, Charryse Berry also turned to JFS after losing a job. She found the comprehensive services she needed to get out of a negative place.

“I’m grateful to be a friend of JFS, I say that because I feel like a friend – I’m not just a client or a number, I really have relationships with people here,” Berry said.

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Jonah Stein and his grandmother Esther Stein

MASKERAID SALES SUPPORT JFS

Jonah Stein wanted to create a Bar Mitzvah project that would benefit the community in a thoughtful and timely way. He and his family are now making MASKerAIDs – beaded necklaces that attach to a face mask to keep the mask handy when it’s not in use.

The money raised from selling MASKerAIDs goes to the JFS Food Pantry and Keshet KC Care Bags. Josh Stein, Jonah’s dad, is director of philanthropy for the Jewish Community Foundation. He and his wife, Sheryl, have always taught their children the importance of tikkun olam and helping others. For Jonah, giving to JFS was a natural choice.

“I have always loved volunteering at the food pantry and seeing the great work they do,” said Jonah.

He also feels a special connection to the Keshet KC Care Bags. He mentioned seeing a similar program in another city to JFS Director of Volunteer Engagement

Taly Friedman, and discovered it was in development here. When the program began, he helped make the first bags.

Jonah quickly met his goal of \$1,800 and nearly \$4,000 has been raised so far. He learned how to create a website and is trying to keep up with the growing demand as word spreads.

“Orders are starting to come in from people we don’t know, which is really exciting,” he said.

As Jonah gets a taste of running a small business, he wants to inspire more people to find a way to make a difference in the community.

“I hope that others realize the impact that each one of us can make if we put our minds to something that we care about.”

To purchase, please visit www.jfskc.org/maskeraid.

EMPOWERMENT MOVES FAMILIES FROM CRISIS TO STABILITY

A safe, stable place to call home makes a huge difference in a child’s ability to attend school and learn. Through the Family Empowerment Program, JFS and the Shawnee Mission School District work together to prevent homelessness and promote academic success.

Families in the program can connect to resources such as financial and legal assistance, mental health and employment support, credit repair, and food. JFS also partners with Project Home, a collaboration of Johnson County, Kansas, human service organizations, to address housing needs.

“The program has joined with other organizations to provide a home for me and my daughter. They’ve

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Your support empowers parents and gives kids a chance to succeed at school. Please note the family pictured is not the family quoted in the article.

TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE CONNECTING OLDER ADULTS

JFS has launched a new initiative to provide older adults with tablets so they can connect with family and friends and use online services during the pandemic.

Three hundred clients of JFS Older Adult Services do not have electronic devices that connect them to digital resources and communication. They face higher risks with COVID-19 and feel isolated at home. JFS is in the process of delivering tablets to more than 100 of these clients.

“We’ve made sure technology support and tutoring is available and able to be conducted remotely,” said Program Operations Manager Rachel Ohlhausen, MSW.

“The tablets also have been adapted so clients have simple access to the activities and apps they want to use and will use most frequently.”

JFS interviewed clients to understand their needs, interests, and fears about engaging online. Training covers everything from device usage to how to avoid fraud and scams.

Clients are already expressing gratitude.

“Giving them understanding of how to use the internet, email, video calls, and specific apps to navigate daily life will be so helpful,” Ohlhausen said.

Clients are already expressing gratitude. One man let JFS know that many places assume everyone has an email address, and he didn’t. This was a barrier to him seeking services. JFS is helping clients like him set up a gmail account.

“One client commented that she knows how far behind she is, and she’s really looking forward to this. Since leaving the workforce, she hasn’t had access to the internet or technology. She told us that she wants to ‘stay relevant,’” said Ohlhausen.

The initiative is empowering for older adults as they gain the ability to chat with loved ones, order groceries, and use telehealth services. One woman told JFS staff it was giving her a new life.

Ohlhausen is excited. “This program allows clients to connect to new resources and hopefully meaningfully re-engage in things they had to stop doing.”



Freddie Mae Slaughter receives tablet from Michael Ross, JFS Tech Connect Program Coordinator.

NEW CONNECTIONS THROUGH ART



The “Connection” art exhibit in partnership with Buttonwood Art Space provided a unique opportunity to introduce more people to the work of JFS while raising funds to meet the needs in the Kansas City area. Thank you to everyone who participated in the virtual events that took place, and to the artists and patrons who made it a wonderful and successful exhibit.

Pictured above: Family Tree by Sheri Dodd.



Special thanks go to Babs and Bill Lowenstein, honorary event chairs and long-time friends and supporters of JFS, for generously giving of their time and talent. In addition to championing this art exhibit, they donated an original painting by Babs that was auctioned with the proceeds going to JFS.



Charyse Berry and Nick Haines

Friends of the Family Goes Virtual—Highlights Hope and Caring, continued from page 1

Mayor Quinton Lucas expressed appreciation for the work of JFS, which he knew from growing up in Kansas City, but sees even more, now, as mayor of the city.

“Success for Kansas City isn’t just the politicians or business community,” Lucas said.

“It’s how much our charitable community and volunteers can make a difference in giving people dignity each day, letting them know they have respect. JFS has been a leader in that for years.”

“The best part about an organization like JFS is that it gives people hope,” said Lucas.

“It might be food today that gets a family through the week, but what it really means is that a child knows someone cares about them, and they’ll want to give back one day. I would not be mayor today if not for good people who cared about my family.”

The amazing generosity of our supporters makes it possible for JFS to adapt to the changing circumstances we’re all living through. If you’re able, please make a gift to the Friends of the Family campaign to ensure we can keep helping everyone who needs us at www.jfskc.org/friends-donation.

JFS thanks the sponsors of the 2020 Friends of the Family Virtual Event: Creative Planning, MarksNelson, St. Luke’s Health System, and Krigel & Krigel.

If you missed the virtual event, you can view it on the homepage at www.jfskc.org.

Empowerment Moves Families from Crisis to Stability, continued from page 2

helped with food, clothing, books, toys, and many resources to help along the way,” said one client who prefers to remain anonymous.

“They’ve never made me feel embarrassed or ashamed by looking to them for help. They go out of their way to help others. It was truly a blessing to get introduced to this program. They make you feel like family.”

Currently, the program serves more than 70 children and their families.

The Family Empowerment Program is especially important now as more families face housing insecurity with the growing impact of COVID-19. “Many families participating in this program have experienced a medical emergency or a job loss that has made it extremely hard to make ends meet,” said Family Empowerment Coordinator Laura Stadler-Tobaben.

“With a lack of affordable housing and childcare in Johnson County, families are finding it increasingly difficult to live in the community where they work and attend school.”

JFS seeks not just to meet emergency needs, but to help these clients move from crisis to stability, and have a positive, long-term impact on their lives.

Our client is extremely thankful, saying, “The program has made a tremendous difference for me and my daughter. We’re forever grateful for all they’ve done for us.”

FILL GROCERY BAGS FOR FAMILIES IN NEED

The JFS Food Pantry is delighted to partner with participating Cosentino’s Price Choppers to offer an amazing donation opportunity. Shoppers can purchase a virtual bag of food for \$5 or \$10 at the checkout stands and Cosentino’s Price Chopper will match that donation. Look for the display in your local store, and provide food for JFS clients while you shop for your groceries! See jfskc.org/pricechopper for the store list.

