



PACT FOR FAMILIES COLLABORATIVE

www.pactforfamilies.org



RESPONDING IN 2021

YEAR IN REVIEW



2200 23rd Street NE Ste 2030
Willmar MN 56201
Tel: 320.231.7030
Fax: 320.231.7033
E-mail: pactoffice@pactforfamilies.org

Partners working together to strengthen families and support children in achieving their highest potential .



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

I am proud to share the work we have accomplished in 2021! The staff and partners have worked incredibly hard to think outside the box and endure the work that has become more challenging in the past year.

We continued to tackle important work and added more work to meet the needs of community. We will continue to connect, learn, and share important strategies with our community. This will help PACT and its partners to become more equitable in its approach to serving individuals. In growing our partnerships in the community, we become healthier and more equitable people. I genuinely thank you for your kind support in 2021 and look forward to a bright 2022!

CONTENT

03

MESSAGE FROM
THE DIRECTOR

.....

04

CHANGE IN 2021

.....

05

BRAIN
CONFERENCE
2021

.....

06

CULTURAL
AWARENESS IN
EVALUATION

08

FINANCIAL
UPDATE

.....

09

LCTS

.....

10

FAMILIES
FOREVER

.....

11

MUSING FROM A
SCHOOL SOCIAL
WORKER

12

JOURNEY TO
INDEPENDENCE

.....

13

FAMILY LIAISON

.....

14

GUIA

.....

16

PARTNERSHIP
FOR SUCCESS

18

CONNECTING
FAMILIES

.....

19

MHAT

.....

20

WRAPAROUND

.....

21

FAMILY GROUP
DECISION
MAKING

.....

22

COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
AWARDS 2021



MESSAGE

FROM THE DIRECTOR





Responding in 2021

I thought last year would be the only year I would talk about making it through the pandemic, but here we are again. However, I feel we can highlight a lot of great and transforming work that has happened during the past year.

PACT is known to be a nimble and responsive agency. We are an agency that responds and evolves to the ever-changing needs of the community. We are unique in the fact that we can pool resources and people to raise awareness, focus on prevention, give voice, and hopefully change. In 2021, we have found ourselves focusing hard on our mission and being responsive to the unique challenges of our time and our rural communities.

As in 2020, we responded to the COVID needs of kids and families. In 2021, we also realized that our prevention efforts weren't always reaching the people we wanted and needed. In the summer of 2021, we completed listening sessions within our cultural communities to better understand where we fell short. We learned many things about our connections with community. One of the biggest takeaways is, we can't just "learn" these things and move on. We must be intentional with what we do with that information. So often, we go to a training or we hear a speaker, read an article, or interview community members and think, "that was good information". Learning good information is not enough. We must honor our work with community. Our work going forward needs to be responding with action.

We talk a lot at the collaborative about collective impact. Collectively, we are the group to do this. But we need to create collective impact for our entire communities' well-being. All communities- not just the ones we have always served. We need to look at our agencies and institutions and create strong allies and leaders to do the change work. It can't be done alone. It's not just awareness. In 2022, PACT will not just be responding, we will be "responding in action".

The programs and efforts we performed in 2021 are a collective effort of so many agencies and staff alike. I would like to thank all the staff at PACT and our partners for all the hard work that has been done to serve families and children!

Rochelle Peterson
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

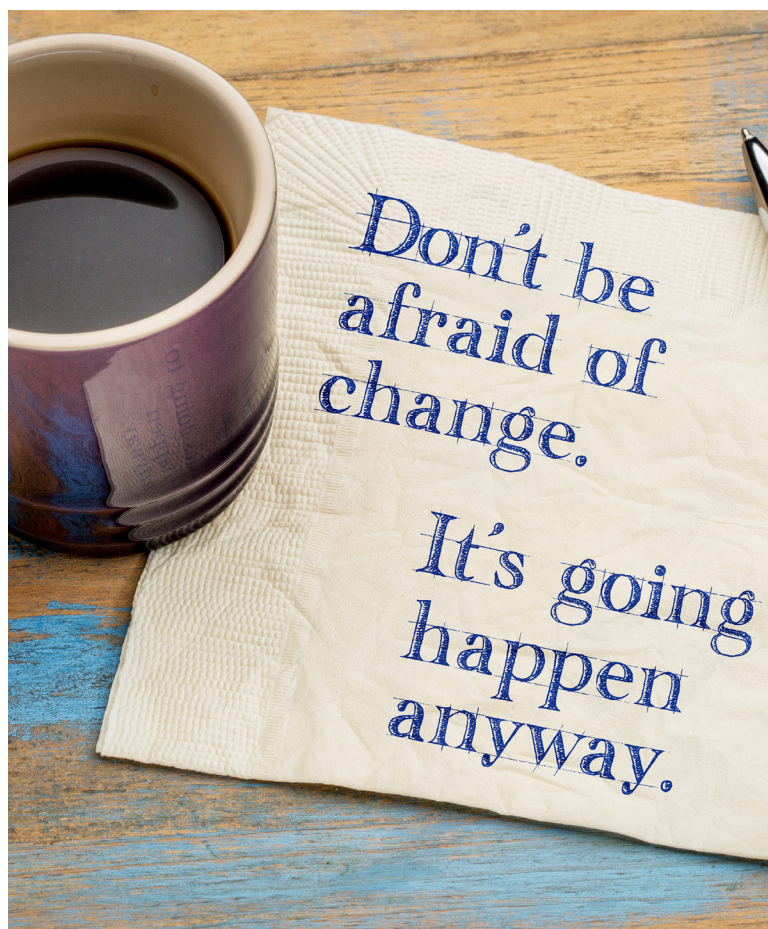
ORGANIZATIONAL

CHANGE IN 2021

We planned on updating technology before the pandemic, but it couldn't have come too soon.

We took a deeper dive into the “why and how” we are missing cultural communities when we do prevention work.

2021 brought many changes during the year. Often, one change illustrates a need for more change. How we live and work has evolved during COVID and it is no different for PACT. We planned on updating technology before the pandemic, but it couldn't have come too soon. Prior to having Microsoft Office 365, working from home would have been a huge challenge. Converting to a completely cloud-based system has been a way for all of us to work where we needed to work and when. Those with families have juggled working from home in the daytime and evenings. If we had children at home, workdays may have been extended to various hours and a lot of WI-FI! Besides upgrading for staff, we were fortunate to receive a grant from the MN Department of Human Services to get technology in the hands of students and families. Families had more devices and technology to help them carry on in 2021. In the recent fall, Meghna Subba, our incredible communication specialist, worked on converting our newsletter to a more media-friendly view. We had some technology adjustments, but I think you can have an easy to open and read newsletter going forward.



During the pandemic, when it was difficult to connect with community; we wondered how well our messages were received. We began analyzing and realized that we are missing a vast part of local communities. We took a deeper dive into the “why and how” we are missing cultural communities when we do prevention work. During this time, we have learned so much and made some wonderful connections. These connections have helped shape the work we have done this year and the work we will continue in 2022.



BRAIN CONFERENCE 2021

In April 2021, PACT for Families organized its - first virtual- 8th Brain Conference “Finding Balance – Connecting Your Brain with Nature” with a keynote address from Julie Athman-Ernst, PhD, Professor in Department of Applied Human Sciences at the University of Minnesota Duluth. The sessions were divided into two days events breakout sessions on April 15th and 22th and keynote address on April 29th.

Brain Conference 2021 had been a long time in the making. Finding Balance - Connecting Your Brain with Nature was originally scheduled for 2019. Ironically it got cancelled due to nature’s snowstorm. We then also had to cancel Brain Conference 2020 because of the Covid pandemic.

2021 Community Conference on the Brain brought the information on

the brain health but also practical information for our personal and professional lives. We had two evening breakout sessions. On April 15th the choice sessions were “Nature Playscapes: Designing outdoor play spaces that nurture children’s development and learning” by Dr Julie Athman-Ernst, University of Minnesota-Duluth and Kaitlin Erpestad, Hartley Nature Pre-School Director Duluth, “Seasonal Affective Disorder – SAD” by Kati Klitzke, PsyD, LP, Hutchinson Health, and “What’s in your backyard?” by Arielle Courtney, M.S MN DNR Parks and Trails Partnership Consultant.

On April 22nd the breakout session choices were “Self-care for Mental Health and Well-being” by Karen Urban, PsyD, LP, Woodland Centers, “Master Naturalist Program” by Amy Rager, M.ed, University of Minnesota Extension, and “School Focused Support” by Ronda Niefeld-Sundermann, LICW and Melissa Aaker M.S., Willmar Public Schools.

On April 29th we had our keynote session on “Flourishing in Nature: The Nurturing Effect of Nature on Children’s Well-Being and Well-Becoming” by Dr. Julie Ernst. Dr Ernst shared the importance of contribution of nature play to children’s well-being and unfolding capabilities, in the midst of the pandemic and as we look forward to a post Covid world.



Dr. Julie Ernst

ORGANIZATIONAL

CULTURAL AWARENESS IN EVALUATION

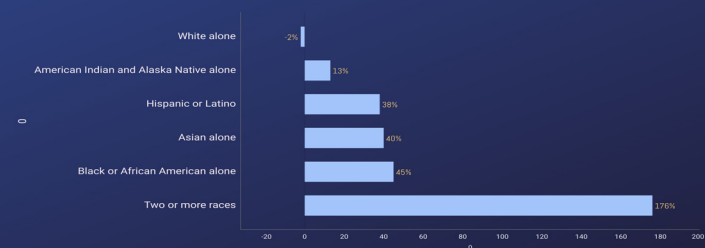
By Joe Maffit and Meghna Subba

Multicultural Minnesota

Since 2010, the population of Minnesota increased by 8% reaching 5,706,494. Although most of the state population is white, it is the non-white population that has been the driving force of growth.

Change in Race/ Ethnicity, 2010-2020

CHANGE IN TOTAL POPULATION RACE/ETHNICITY FROM 2010 TO 2020



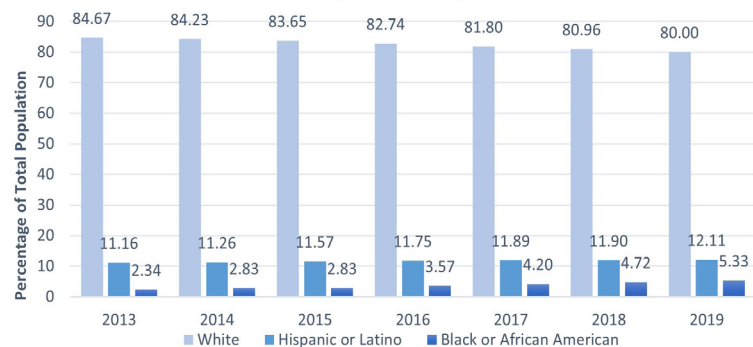
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171)

In the above figure we can clearly see the changes in Minnesota's total population over the last decade growing into a multicultural environment. Although all 87 Minnesota counties remain majority white, the state's diversity index increased to 40% from 30% in 2010.

This change in diversity is not just limited to the metro cities of the state. We can observe such change taking place in one of the counties that PACT serves.

For example, Kandiyohi County is home to a population of 42,841, with the three largest ethnic groups being White (80%), Hispanic or Latino (12.11%) and Black and African American (5.33%). Over a period of seven years (from 2013 to 2019 - Figure 1), there was a pattern of increasing numbers of Hispanic or Latino and Black and African American people moving into Kandiyohi County whereas the White population declined. In 2013, the Black and African American population was 2.34% which increased to 5.33% by 2019. Similarly, the White population in 2013 was 84.67% in 2013 and has declined to 80% by 2019 (Source: American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year estimates, 2013-2019).

Change in White, Hispanic and Black Population in Kandiyohi County, 2013 - 2019





To address the growing population, change and equitable impact of the PACT intervention, the evaluation team decided to explore the deeper cultural needs of the community.

Participants-focused Assessment

To address the growing population, change and equitable impact of the PACT intervention, the evaluation team decided to explore the deeper cultural needs of the community. Working with the Partnership for Success program team, PACT evaluators designed a cultural equity assessment focused through the lenses of authenticity and health equity.

In line with PACT's vision and mission, the Evaluation Team gave the research process a level of humanism and grace by creating an interview environment that put these considerations at the center. Engagement for the sake of the research was never going to be adequate and the team was instructed to engage to listen, understand, and learn about the struggles experienced by each culture. The only expectations were that the exchange was seen as authentic, empathetic, and that it led to some sort of measurable outcome. After all, these communities were letting our team into some of the most intimate feelings and thoughts – the safety factor, anonymity, and preservation of tradition had to be upheld. The experience of our team and the participants was one of humility, reverence, and mutual respect. It was a transformative experience for researchers and participants. The methodology helped protect these values and produced a replicable structure model that could be used in the future.

Cultural Awareness in Evaluation

Increasing cultural, racial and ethnic diversity of the community requires PACT staff to support the youth and families with a cultural humility mindset. Adopting cultural awareness and humility as implemented through a humble and respectful attitude towards individuals of other cultures allows one to challenge cultural biases. It ensures that no person will come into the process with complete knowledge about other cultures. Thus, these personnel will continue to approach learning about other cultures as a lifelong process that grants appreciation and understanding. Enhancing our understanding of each culture builds empathy and compassion which act to cement the disparate cultures together into one, strong, thriving community. Community resilience stands as one of PACT's deepest held mission objectives and the work done on this cultural equity assessment stands as a testament to PACT's commitment to building a more resilient community.

ORGANIZATIONAL

FINANCIAL UPDATE

By Jolene Lambert

Since our development in 1993, PACT for Families has worked to assist our partners and deliver services that exceed our members' expectations. Guided by our Mission as well as our Vision and Values, our Chief Elected Officials and Executive Boards participate in an annual retreat to develop and adopt a strategic approach that points the directions of the Collaborative. PACT continues to look for ways to be more effective and responsive to members in order to remain vital and necessary. We have done this with changes and enhancements in the use of our personnel, infrastructure and technology.

The PACT for Families budget is determined by the dollars available through several funding sources, including state and federal grants, foundations, local dollars, and membership contributions. These dollars are put into an Integrated

Fund and used to address the goals and programs that have been established by the Collaborative. The 28-year history of PACT for Families, combined with lessons learned thus far, have demonstrated that system integration does help to extend the resources that are in place and help to develop new resources. We have worked closely over the years with our partners to reduce duplication and maintain and expand services for families.

Each year PACT for Families undergoes an audit by the Minnesota Office of the State Auditor to assure that solid accounting principles are followed, and dollars are distributed correctly. The PACT for Families budget is developed by the Executive Board and approved by the Chief Elected Officials Board annually. PACT continues to set a standard of performance that distinguishes us from the other collaboratives in Minnesota.

FUNDING SOURCES



MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION



FEDERAL AND STATE GRANTS

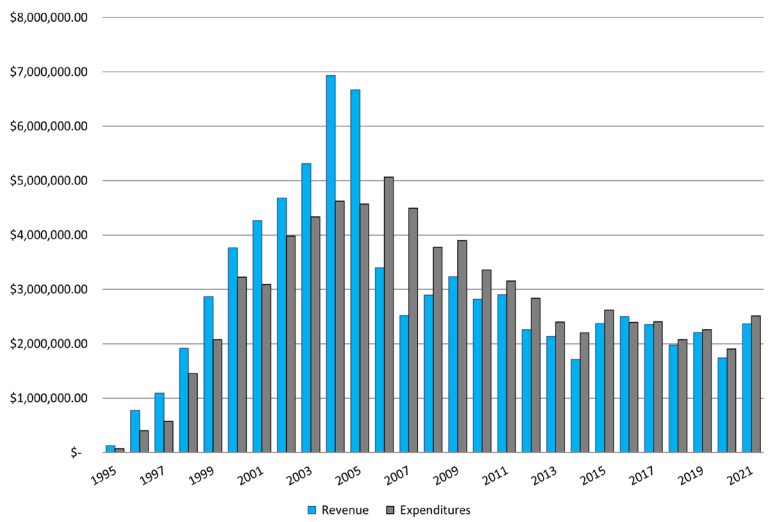


FOUNDATION

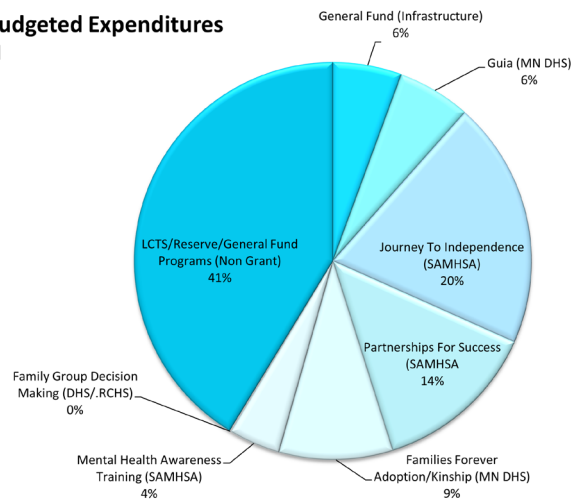


LOCAL DOLLARS

Historical Budget Review



2022 Budgeted Expenditures By Fund



ORGANIZATIONAL

LOCAL COLLABORATIVE TIME STUDY (LCTS)

By Lynnette Sommers

In 2021, our LCTS select staff participants and partners continued to be the keys to our success with this federal program that earns our collaborative funds to enhance and expand services for children and families in our 5-county area.

You may wonder, what is LCTS and what is its purpose?

LCTS is an acronym for the Local Collaborative Time Study. A time study is a process that documents time spent by select staff on various work activities. “Random Moments” are generated using randomly selected dates and times as snapshots of the activities being performed by those staff. When a random moment is received, staff refer to a list of codes and definitions and choose one that best matches the activity they are doing at that specific moment. These “moments” are used as the statistical basis for estimating total time spent on different activities which in turn result in the federal reimbursement earned by our Collaborative, based on these time study results and other data.

The purpose of the time study is to earn federal reimbursement which is then used to expand services to children and families including early intervention and prevention, support collaboration and system redesign and to support the mission and vision of the collaborative and its members.

School Districts, County Public Health and Community Corrections staff who are members of the collaborative are eligible to be participants in the time study. Specific staff in

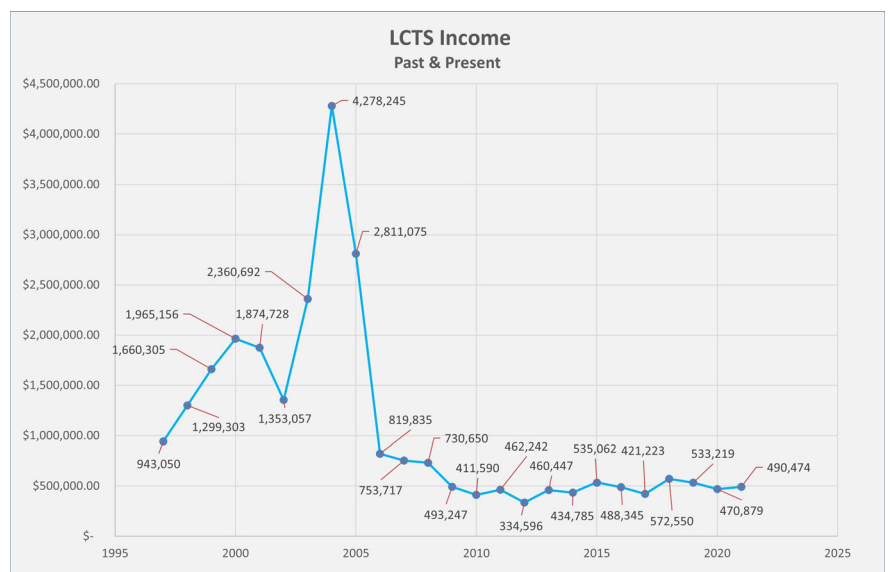
these organizations who perform coordination and case management activities for children at risk of out-of-home placement, or who perform the coordination activities which focus on the physical and mental health needs of children are the select staff included in the time study. Eligible employees include social workers, special education staff, ECFE and ECSE educators, juvenile probation officers and maternal child health nurses, to name a few.

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to present some very real challenges to the staff who participate in the LCTS. Distance learning was in place for many of our partner school districts, which was a daunting task balancing in-person and at-home student learning. Some districts have asked parents and other community members to step into roles in the school to cover for staff who cannot work due to illness or to cover staff vacancies. Our partners

in Corrections and Public Health have also had difficult situations due to the pandemic. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all our partners who have remained faithful to the LCTS despite the constantly changing landscape over the past couple of years.

We have continued to see good things emerge from enhancements made to the time study in 2020. Validation of random moments was streamlined by defaulting the Validator’s email address in the profile of each select staff member. The additional “time shifts” added have also continued to allow us to match the timing of the random moments more closely to the actual work hours of each staff, which in turn reduces the number of “missed” random moments.

We are looking forward to another great year with our LCTS participants and partners in 2022. Thank you all for the work you do to make the time study a success!





PROGRAM

FAMILIES FOREVER

m DEPARTMENT OF
HUMAN SERVICES

By Jessica Erickson

Our two Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Liaisons have been able to make several connections over the past year to share their lived experiences with one another.

We been facilitating two support groups monthly specifically for families that are in the world of foster care, kinship care, and/or adoption. We continue to facilitate these support groups via zoom which allows families from our large area to participate and connect regardless of the geographical distance between families.

We organized several meet ups at local parks connecting parents and foster/adopted kids for family fun .

Robbin's Island Regional Park was scheduled for the first Saturday mornings of the months of June, July, and August. We saw parents and caregivers connecting, sharing the ups and downs of their foster care, adoption, kinship journeys with care for one another and some laughs too. The kiddos in attendance were able to have time to just be kids running, playing, blowing bubbles, reading books in the shade, and of course snacks!

Our meet up at Lion's Park in Willmar had families doing a nature scavenger hunt, playing yard games, planting flowers and creating appreciation gift bags for a special caregiver in their life.

Ripley Park in Litchfield was the perfect location for families to build Home Depot sailboat kits and play at the splashpad. Lots of sunshine and laughs at this event!

At each event we saw families making connections with others that share some common experiences.

We have collaborated with the local Foster Stitches in Willmar as well as Wings in Hutchinson with donations as well as distribution of needed items for local foster and adoptive families.

One of our goals this year was to build collaboration with our five counties. Kandiyohi county is the first county we presented ideas to and they jumped right on board. Our mission was to be proactive with families that have said yes to the unknowns of caring for children in need of a safe and healthy home. As a result, we are able to make connections early in the licensing process, building relationships as a resource and support before a family is in crisis and feeling as if fostering children with trauma is too hard.

If you have any questions or have a family that may benefit from connecting with a Families Forever Liaison, please feel free to reach out to one of us!

EVALUATION

The Evaluator created several surveys to assess family need for support groups and topical suggestions. These groups provide a powerful tool for families to cope with the challenges of foster care, adoption, and/or kinship. PACT provides these networking opportunities to assist families by providing speakers and other resources to families.

PROGRAM

MUSINGS FROM A SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

By Elizabeth Kruger Hommerding

If it felt like all you did in 2021 was respond to things being thrown at you, you are not alone. After an extended distance learning period of November/December 2020 that lingered into January 2021, many school staff returned to their buildings to self-contained classrooms, hybrid models with synchronous or asynchronous learning, unknown amounts of students distance learning due to covid exposure or a positive test. Oh, and don't forget masks, social distancing, contact tracing and email after email regarding new/changed/removed protocols for safety. How did school staff respond? New schedules, figuring out the best way to schedule zoom meetings for students who were quarantining, hoping they would "show up" and allow us to virtually be in their homes...again. We had to remember how to do in-person meetings behind plexiglass and masks keeping in mind that anything that is touched had to be sanitized after use. Our offices smelled like cleaning wipes and we should have had stock in lotion for our dried out hands from the sanitizer. Pivoting back and forth between learning models tended to be complicated at times. Yet we responded the best we could. We remembered that by taking a few deep breaths and grace that cool heads

would prevail. We ended the 2020-2021 school year with anticipation of a more "normal" fall.

Fast forward through a summer that seemed to go by in a split second. The new school year is filled with high expectations of returning to a normal school day. Do we even know what normal looks like? We masked then didn't mask. Slowly moved away from social distancing and then understanding the changes for testing and isolation began. 5 days out...10 days out... every illness checked for covid symptoms. Attendance concerns, academic concerns and social emotional concerns skyrocketed or at the very least were brought to the forefront. We helped students navigate what it looked like to be a student again. We helped to remind classroom teachers that some of these kids haven't had any sense of normal school in 18 months. Social workers and counselors did their part to respond to the increase in anxiety, depression and other mental health needs. Community agencies have wait lists miles long, school mental health professionals and practitioners try to fill that need. We continue to respond because it's what is best for kids and the thank you's, smiles and 'can't make this stuff up' moments make it all worth it.



PROGRAM

JOURNEY TO INDEPENDENCE

By Cynthia Schumaier



The Journey to Independence (JTI) program began implementing mental health supports for community youth in January 2021. Months previously, JTI staff were hired along with reorganization of existing PACT staff to develop a JTI Team that began training on Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model[®] with Stars Training Academy. The TIP Model[®], an evidence-supported model, demonstrates improvement in real-life outcomes for youth and young adults with emotional/behavioral difficulties and designed for personnel serving transition-age youth, young adults, and their families. Three JTI Transition Facilitators, JTI Program Coordinator, JTI Family Liaison, and PACT Director completed three intensive sessions of TIP Model[®] trainings throughout the year. The training encompassed three days each in December, March, and June with a total of 45 hours.

During year one of the JTI Program, there were a total of 38 youth referrals who identify as 20 female,

15 male, and 3 non-binary. The needs, supports, and aspirations of youth participants varied as well as their mental health status and it was discovered by the JTI Team that a common need by the youth was social experiences. Because food and eating are common denominators, a monthly Culinary Skills Group was created for youth to engage in learning how to plan a menu, budgeting and purchasing of groceries, preparing of meals, and sharing responsibilities of clean up. The JTI Team were able to access funding from Thrivent Financial to support the costs of groceries and a community church offered free kitchen space for the group to meet and prepare meals. A Peer Support Group also began for youth participants to gather for a variety of activities in their communities. Youth have joined together for movies, lunch/dinner, art activities, and bowling - at times in groups or with one other individual.

The JTI Sustainability Task Force was created and consists of members from PACT communities who bring their knowledge and experience to help guide the direction and growth of the JTI Program. They met virtually, beginning March 2021, meeting for a total of four times in year one. The JTI Sustainability Task Force worked together to look at rural mental health needs and challenges, compiled a list of barriers for access, and researched gaps in funding.

JTI staff collects youth data and family data, providing useful and timely information that can be shared with the JTI Team, JTI Sustainability Task Force, and program stakeholders. SAMHSA/SPARS data and TIP Model[®] data are reviewed together. This data guides the development of JTI Program next steps to achieve goals and objectives, to revise for unexpected derailers, to evaluate for quality and fidelity, and to plan towards future program effectiveness and sustainability.



CONTACT

Cynthia Schumaier
Program Coordinator
cynthia.schumaier@pactforfamilies.org

PROGRAM

FAMILY LIAISON

By Debbie Gerrety

2021 has been an exciting time as the Journey to Independence (JTI) program made headway in getting the program up and running. PACT had three coaches hired, Dione Wangen, Jackie Thorson, Hailey Condon, the Program Coordinator Cynthia Schumaier and myself as the Family Liaison/Lead Family Coordinator. The referrals started coming in for coaches to work with the youth and families could choose to have the support of the Family Liaison.

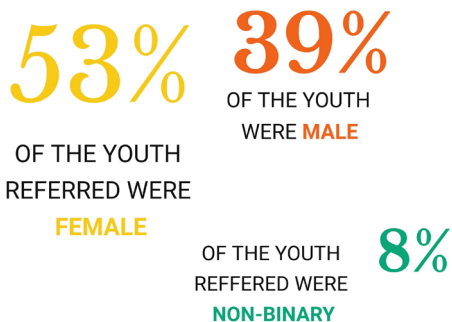
Not all families need the support of the Family Liaison and the ones that do choose to utilize the Family Liaison have differing needs and levels of support. Depending on the needs of the youth and the family, the coach and I may occasionally team up together to help facilitate a “meeting of the minds” to ensure that youth and family voice are being heard and that everyone is on the same page as families and youth meet their goals for the program.

Not all the youth have a parent that is involved in their life and the identified adult may be a relative, grandparent or foster parent that I meet with. As the Family Liaison, my role is to support, help find resources and navigate systems such as Children/Adult Mental Health, School, Social Services and Judicial.

One youth was residing with “Aunt Mom” and independent living was a goal of both of them. The Coach worked with the youth and the two of them went over all the things involved in finding an apartment, searching, filling out applications, dropping off applications. I was there to support Aunt Mom and in time the youth found an apartment.

Debbie Gerrety
Family Liaison/Lead Family Coordinator

TOTAL YOUTH SUPPORTED BY THE JTI PROGRAM IN YEAR 1



EVALUATION

Continuing to support programming, ensuring that consumer needs are being met while maintaining fidelity to the program model. Assisted with the development of the Monitoring & Evaluation Framework which was adopted as a supplement to the primary work plan.



PROGRAM GUIA



Cultural and Ethical Minority Integrated Grant - Somali Outreach

By Amina Kharie

I started working for this position on June 2021, in these six months my target was to establish trust and connection between the community. My community lost trust between each other which makes things harder for all the community workers. There is a lot of need in my community which I made myself available to help them in many aspects. I do help with filling different applications that they need like snap/cash assistance, housing and job applications. Translating is another thing that my community do struggle which I helped different parents when it comes to insurance, hospitals, attorneys,

paying bills. I have helped with attorney couple different parents that had different issues going on, some of the cases are still going while others were solved.

In this journey I met with different moms and youth, we are trying to establish trust between us because my community have had so many trust issues. I met store owners and so many different moms and explained to them that Pact for families come back and I will be replacing Hamdi who use to work this position before. A mom reached out to me regarding her son, the youth had a brain injury which caused him memory issues.

He cannot remember what he reads, hear from other people or even wants to do. The mom wanted to get somebody who can help when she is not around or working because he gets in trouble the minute she gets out of the house. Some elder friends of him were giving him drugs that caused him to overdose ones which made things harder for the mom. She quite her to be with him, so, I did apply a PCA person that can help her and she got some hours for him.

We held a focus group meeting for Somali community, it was one day I couldn't be both of meeting adults and youth. So, I decided to be part of the adult since they needed an interpreter, but I spent little time with the youth too. This meeting was a great meeting, as a pact we discover that parents don't know much about drugs or anything that their children use. There is a lack of knowledge when it comes to drugs and mental health and this community deserves to have that knowledge. I am planning this new year to have some educational meeting, so that moms can have some knowledge about drugs and mental health. It is rare to find couple moms who knows what their youth are going through when it comes to mental health and substance abuse, but they are willing to understand so they can help their kids.





PROGRAM GUIA

Crear el mejor tú...que ha existido Create the better you that has existed

By Jeanette Morales

I constantly remind the youth that I support that they didn't come this far to just come this far. As the GUIA Coach, and resource specialist, it's my responsibility to help youth discover and create the better version of themselves. For me, personally, helping the youth see the value of education as a way of learning about the world is the most important part of my job. It's important for youth to understand self-regulation and how to deal with adversities and challenges of life. That is the purpose, for me, as a mentor or GUIA coach. I teach youth that they have

choices every day. But the better way to make a choice is to think of the consequence which in turn is greater than a mere minute of making a choice. I remind youth that choosing better and being better is the better option in life to reach the real purpose.

Some youth look for the true meaning of their lives. They want to strive to fulfill their dreams, or unlock their destiny. To them, I remind first discover their life's purpose. Discovering it, is part of the journey to fulfilling it. To strongly travel the path there are essential things one must do in

order to find personal achievement and a true sense of their compass. It's a puzzle we want to put together each day finding reason and purpose. I remind them that although life gives us scars, we must always get back up to wear the crown of a fulfilled life. My metaphor for this is my drive to go to the gym without looking at it like I'm dragging to get there each day. I keep going because, it's the weights, it is each training, it is each repetition that has taken me out of the darkness of worry, I not only go to build muscles, I also go to rebuild my life.

EVALUATION

Throughout the year, PACT's Evaluator worked with the coaches to finalize a data reporting model that is helpful in prioritizing client needs and ensuring that PACT meets CEMIG requirements. Putting together a set of data practices that are both non-invasive to clients and easy to implement is a tough balancing act. However, using the 40 Developmental Assets as provided by the SEARCH Institute, the Evaluator has worked with the GUIA coaches to prioritize their workflows and improve the data keeping practices.

In addition to shoring up data practices, the Evaluator assisted the coaches in realizing their immense value especially in what they do and how their role modeling and consistency leads to engaged youth. This provided additional value as the work done by PACT staff can be challenging when working with clients and youth. The hardships faced by clients and the struggles to survive in the home and outside of it make the coaching positions a valuable tool in accomplishing PACT's mission of serving families and children.



PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS

By Sarah Vonderharr

Intending to reduce substance use rates by youth aged 11-20 for alcohol, vaping, and marijuana, the Partnership for Success grant team began their work by evaluating communities' readiness for prevention efforts throughout the grant service region of Kandiyohi, Renville, and Yellow Medicine Counties. Using the information gathered from the readiness assessment, the team recognized that critical information was missing that would be important in implementing prevention messaging and culturally equitable interventions across the diverse service region. To foster engagement with these groups, the grant team utilized community liaisons firmly embedded in the individual groups to help the team engage with individuals. Focus group conversations with youth and adult participants from each minority group helped the team understand how prevention messaging and interventions have historically been received and perceived among these individuals and groups. The relationship building that occurred during these conversations was instrumental in helping bridge the gap in data and fostered the opportunity

to build capacity within the coalitions by offering and encouraging future engagement opportunities.

During the initial assessments, the grant team also focused on capacity building within the two already established coalitions in Kandiyohi and Renville counties. The team also started conversations to successfully re-establish the previous Chemical Health Coalition in Yellow Medicine County. As the Partnership for Success project is a partnership between the three counties, members from each coalition joined in a collaborative effort to develop a strategic action plan to guide prevention efforts across the service region. The team recognizes that establishing a collaboration between the three counties may be critical to achieving sustainability of prevention across the service region. Focusing on this collaboration and with sustainability in mind, a goal of the program is to develop one full-time, shared coalition coordinator position between the three counties following the end of the grant cycle. The grant team has established partnerships within communities

and keeps open dialogue with County Commissioners on prevention efforts, accomplishments, and successes to promote this goal.

When implementation and dissemination of prevention messaging and interventions began, efforts were met with cooperation and strong collaboration from coalition members, school districts, and community members throughout the service region. The project team successfully began implementing interventions and messaging in quarter four of year one. Following evaluation, capacity building, and planning efforts, successful implementation efforts for the first grant year included:

- Dissemination of Snap Chat Advertising to youth aged 13-20 addressing vaping prevention.
- Dissemination of youth and adult vaping education along with smoking cessation resources at Three County Fairs in July.
- Youth Snap Chat Campaign disseminated at fall sporting events integrating a Natural High message and Positive Community Norms (PCN) message to address youth vaping at 15 schools across the service region.



- Adult Snap Chat Campaign disseminated at fall sporting events using SAMHSA “Talk They Hear You” messaging at 15 schools across the service region.
- Holiday PCN Campaign- Snap Chat Campaign, poster campaign, and Radio ads across the service region stating- “Most youth DON’T drink alcohol when hanging out with friends!”
- Thanksgiving Sticker Shock and SnapChat Campaign addressing youth access to alcohol across the service region using stickers with a “Don’t Supply Alcohol to Minors” message.
- “Wait” Posters Disseminated across the service area to address youth access to alcohol with the “Don’t Supply Alcohol to Minors” message from the sticker shock campaign.
- New Year’s Holiday Sticker Shock in all three counties - promoting responsible choices and planning for adults making plans for the Holiday.
- Mailing and media distribution of “Talk, They Hear You” messages to parents addressing underage drinking.

As the team continues implementing and disseminating prevention strategies, they will also evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to ensure that the selected evidence-based interventions fit youth’s overall needs across the service region. The team continues capacity-building efforts throughout the region by engaging with schools, community organizations, individuals, and other youth-serving organizations. Strong collaboration with Public Health and other key stakeholders, including County Commissioners, will continue to be crucial in our efforts to promote the sustainability of prevention within each county. Monthly coalition meetings in each county are open to individuals interested in promoting prevention within their community. The team works to ensure active engagement with all voices within the community to develop effective strategies that promote prevention to all youth in your community and invites you to join us!

EVALUATION

Community Readiness Assessment

Community was in a state of preparation ready to move forward with the proposed prevention efforts. Found that cultural views outside the majority were underrepresented

Cultural Equity Assessment

Worked with the three primary minority populations in the region (Latino, Native American, and Somali). Most of these groups feel a lack of representation in local policy and planning efforts resulting in minimized voice. Sense of belonging matters to these populations as it provides the sense of togetherness/connectedness we all seek. The positive messaging approach in the Positive Norms Campaign was found to be effective and work. Members of each culture expressed a desire for more community support and guidance from leadership - to create a landscape where actions and words align. Information dissemination - most youth and adults receive a steady stream of information through local schools. There is a craving to receive additional prevention education, especially when it comes to familiarization with substances to ensure adults are aware of the subtleness with which they can sneak into the home. These communities identify better with messaging that utilizes their own likeness.

PROGRAM

CONNECTING FAMILIES

By Becky Sook

The Connecting Families Program (CFP) is an arm of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). It serves families raising children with mental health needs, disabilities, developmental delays, social and behavioral concerns, sensory issues, or other life challenges. Connecting Families Program includes:

PARENT SUPPORT NETWORKING GROUPS

In 2021 we offered 2 groups that met monthly for Kandiyohi and Meeker County. These meetings were facilitated by Becky Sook the first Tuesday of the month from 11:30-1:00 at The Goodness Coffee House in Willmar & by Zoom Meets. The second group met the 4th Monday of the month from 6:30-8:00 pm at a local church in Litchfield & by Zoom Meets. Look for an expansion to our other 3

counties in the near future. Topics of discussion vary each month. Some of the past topics that parents have requested include Social Stories & tips to help those with autism, anxiety & sensory processing disorder during the holidays, Resiliency, Burnout & Self Care, Therapies, Guardianship, Diagnosing, Overlapping Behavioral Characteristics and sharing resources available through our PACT programs. Parents do not need to feel alone in their journey. We are here for you!

WEIGHTED BLANKET PROGRAM

From March through December 2021 we placed 50 weighted blankets into the hands of adults and children in need through a referral process. Thank you to our quilter for her donations and time.

SPECIAL FAMILY EVENTS

During December 2021, we held Sensory Sensitive Santa Photos & Visits at the Hutchinson Mall. During the year we held 4 Sensory Friendly Movies at the State Theatre in Hutchinson for families to attend a movie theatre with low sounds and lighted isles. We had an average of 64 participate at each event. In May 2021 a Family Fun Event at Lions park in Willmar provided yard games, scavenger hunt, and gift making.

MINI GRANTS FOR EQUIPMENT, ETC

Connecting Families awarded several mini grants in 2021 for summer camp experiences, sensory equipment, and safety equipment for the home. Over the 2021 year we have seen and heard what a great program this is for our families - here's to many more great moments!



EVALUATION

The Evaluation Department continued to collect verbal reaction data from our family sensory-friendly movie outings via recorded post-movie interviews. These outings were made possible through a grant from the United Way Foundation in McLeod County. The reaction was overwhelmingly positive with many parents requesting additional movie outings. The feedback from families ranges from a state of bliss from the children to expressions of relief and acknowledgement that PACT has met a significant need in the lives of these families. PACT sought out additional funding for similar events throughout the region as we have uncovered a significant need for sensory-friendly family events. The organization will continue to advocate for these kinds of events as we have built a strong network of parents with youth who face emotional and mental health challenges.



PROGRAM MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TRAINING

By Rochelle Peterson

Mental Health Awareness Training grant was applied for in 2018 but was awarded at the onset of the COVID pandemic. In last year’s annual report, we discussed the difficulty of introducing a program during these unprecedented times. We predicted we would have an easier time in 2021. We expanded our scope of consumers to more than schools. In fact, we offered to any person or agency who would like to access Kognito. However,

we have had a hard time getting it into consumers hands. Having one more thing to do during the pandemic has made items like additional resources somewhat of a luxury. However, there have been some strides with several schools, agencies, and parents using Kognito training. For those who have accessed the training, they have shared positive feedback saying it has helped in their work and have been able to make referrals to appropriate services.

Kognito Conversations that change lives.

What is Kognito?

Kognito is a **health simulation company** that comprises learning experts, designers, technologists and implementation professionals.

Our evidence-based simulations build a variety of competencies and shape attitudes through **role-play conversations with virtual people.**

Over 1+ million educators, students, and health care professionals have used Kognito simulations to change lives, including **over 500,000 K-12 educators.**

Our **innovative approach** has resulted in partnerships with government agencies and NGOs.

American Academy of Pediatrics
ADVANCING THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN

NYC Department of Education

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

UNICEF children first.

NORC at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

CDC



PROGRAM

WRAPAROUND

By Char Erickson



“HYBRID WRAPAROUND”

Wraparound is a small-scale example of the larger picture of collaboration.

Of all the definitions of Wraparound, the one above is my favorite. At PACT for Families, a great deal of collaboration happens as agencies come together to fulfill our mission: “Partners working together to strengthen families and support children in achieving their full potential.” PACT committees get together regularly (usually in hybrid fashion these days), pooling ideas and resources so that our work is most streamlined and robust. Ultimately, we do this on behalf of the families we serve. If you want to see this principle carried out on a smaller scale, be a mouse in the corner and observe a wraparound team in action. You will see representatives of various entities – as well as a family’s support system - pooling ideas and resources on behalf of a family.

If 2020 was the year of “Virtual Wraparound,” 2021 was the year of “Hybrid Wraparound.” Like any other committee or group that began to meet once again in person, there are some who find it easier to participate virtually for distance or other reasons. Keeping this as an option made it easier for everyone to participate. Hybrid wrap meetings are here to stay! For me, that means honing my virtual facilitation and technology skills so wraparound meetings can be balanced and true to the value system. A recent tutorial on facilitating hybrid meetings was helpful. Things are not “equal” when some are in person and some are on screen; those on screen, for example, are missing the nuances of body language and team “spirit.” It takes extra work to create a sense of equality, but it is my goal to make hybrid meetings as equitable and positive as possible!

In 2021 I had the privilege of facilitating twenty-three wraparound teams, spanning all five counties. Some were

shorter term and have disbanded; others have been meeting for months or even years. The majority of the meetings in 2021 were done in hybrid fashion.

Wraparound funds continue to be available when there is team agreement and supervisory approval. Fewer wraparound funds were expended in 2021 than in previous years; this is likely because COVID/grant resources became available for family needs. The bulk of wraparound funds went to support activities or equipment for children and youth. Other funds were used for transportation or other individualized needs.

A Wraparound Orientation was scheduled and cancelled again in 2021 as we held out for meeting in person. We are planning to do a hybrid orientation for new workers in the spring of 2022.

Reflections from Wraparound in 2021:

- Hybrid meetings are here to stay!
- There are practical things that can be done to make hybrid meetings as equitable as possible. (Free tutorials are great!)
- Focusing on strengths and recognizing progress – great or small – is as important now as it has ever been.
- Hybrid or not, Wraparound is still a small-scale example of the larger picture of collaboration.



PROGRAM

FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING

By Char Erickson

Since 2014, PACT for Families has provided overhead and facilitation for Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), serving four of our five counties. (McLeod County contracts with an outside agency for FGDM). Until the start of 2022, PACT has also contracted with an outside provider, Cindy Koll-Tengwall, for facilitation. In addition, some of our counties have utilized internal designated workers under this grant to facilitate safety meetings.

The philosophy of FGDM is that parents and families are in the best position to make decisions on behalf of their children. They know their family the best. During times when parents are unable to care for their children, it is heartening to see family members step in and work with their social service agencies to keep children with family members. During a traditional FGDM conference, family members create a plan within the parameters of court and agency requirements. Research shows that when families create their own plan there is greater hope for its success.

In 2021, there were fourteen traditional FGDM conferences facilitated by Cindy Koll-Tengwall and myself. Nine of these were held in Renville County and five in Kandiyohi County. Attendance at these conferences ranged from 7 to 17. While some of these were in person, most were held via zoom or hybrid. Holding hybrid FGDM conferences is something that is here to stay!

In addition to these traditional conferences, counties have held internal safety meetings. Safety meetings fall under the umbrella of Family Group Decision Making, although they are separate processes with their own tools and purposes.

Satisfaction surveys were distributed when possible. Some comments worth noting include:

- “Despite difficult things being asked and discussed, everyone stayed connected, respectful and engaged through the meeting” (from a participant)
- “The kids did a good job stating their wishes and asking questions” (from a provider)
- “I am so happy to have all this support and that they now know what is going on because ‘secrets keep you sick’” (from a parent)
- “Our circle is stronger because it is bigger” (from a family member)

One noteworthy comment came from a participant who said: “These families did not know each other until today...there are a number of relatives who are willing, and want, to take the youth.” On more than one occasion, FGDM has provided the opportunity for family members to come together for the first time on behalf of children. It is a significant thing when FGDM lays the groundwork for planning and future collaboration between family members who previously had not known each other well.

From these samplings it appears that, by and large, hybrid Family Group Decision Making worked well in 2021. Collaborating, partnering, empowering, working together – these are all tenets of Family Group Decision Making and they fit well with our mission at PACT: “Partners working together to strengthen families and support children in achieving their highest potential.”

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AWARDS IN 2021

We have been incredibly fortunate to have been awarded multiple community grants in 2021. Some have been utilized in 2021 and some will begin in 2022.

WILLMAR WOMEN'S FUND

The Willmar Women's Fund from the Willmar Community Foundation has awarded PACT grants to continue the work of Trust Based Relational Intervention® for therapists and providers in our region. We were finally able to hold a 4-day training in Willmar with over 50 attendees. There was so much energy surrounding this conference and networking to keep trauma responsive practices growing in our region.

This fall the Women's fund awarded PACT additional dollars to hold a training for early childhood providers. Due to COVID, this training will be offered in late spring 2022. We are grateful for the Women's Fund and their commitment to support trauma informed practices to our community. We are thankful for their foresight in allowing PACT, as an agency to offer this beyond the geographic borders of Willmar and Kandiyohi County. It is wonderful to have the support of organizations that understand the impact of sharing information and building community!

[Willmar Womens Fund : communitygiving.org](http://communitygiving.org)



MARDAG FOUNDATION

The Mardag Foundation supports Minnesota nonprofits to remove barriers and create opportunities for low income or traditionally marginalized children, youth and families; older adults with barriers to living independently; and to build capacity of organizations supporting the arts and humanities. PACT was extremely fortunate to receive funding for our mini grant program within the Connecting Families program. We know that there are barriers that families face to meet the unique challenges within their family. The \$10,000 we received from Mardag will allow us to continue to provide weighted blankets, therapeutic resources, and camps and learning materials to families that otherwise have no other options. We are grateful for the foundation that recognized the barriers that rural families can face.

[A legacy of generosity | Mardag](#)



Mardag Foundation

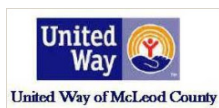
A family legacy. A partner for Minnesota.



MCLEOD COUNTY UNITED WAY

In 2021 we received a grant from McLeod County United Way to hold Family Sensory Movie Events. We held four events at the Hutchinson State Theatre, with an average attendance of 65 participants. As word spread, attendance jumped. Attendees included children, youth, young adults, parents, foster parents, and grandparents. Sensory Friendly in a theatre means the lights are turned up just a bit, and the sound is turned down just a bit, and we have open hearts to all. Children are free to move, dance and sing along without judgment. It has been a wonderful experience for all. One mom was crying her words said it all, “we have never been able to do a community event like this as a family, thank you”.

[McLeod County United Way](#)



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT GRANT

Community spotlight grants from KWLM Radio and West Central Sanitation are awarded to organizations in West Central Minnesota and a different organization is selected for each

month. We received a month-long radio advertising campaign on KWLM valued at \$2,985. We were able to share the history of PACT, where we serve and what we are all about. We were incredibly fortunate to have these daily spots through the month of April 2021!

UCARE FOUNDATION

In 2016, Alia was formed with sights set on transforming all organizations across the country who are entrusted with the welfare and wellbeing of children. In 2021, PACT began its work with Alia in our 5 counties from a generous grant from UCare Foundation. We received impactful presentations from Alia at our May and June Collaborative meetings. We began the work with county leaders in December 2021. This work will continue through most of 2022. Thank you UCare and Alia for supporting change work!

[Alia | Resources \(aliainnovations.org\)](#)

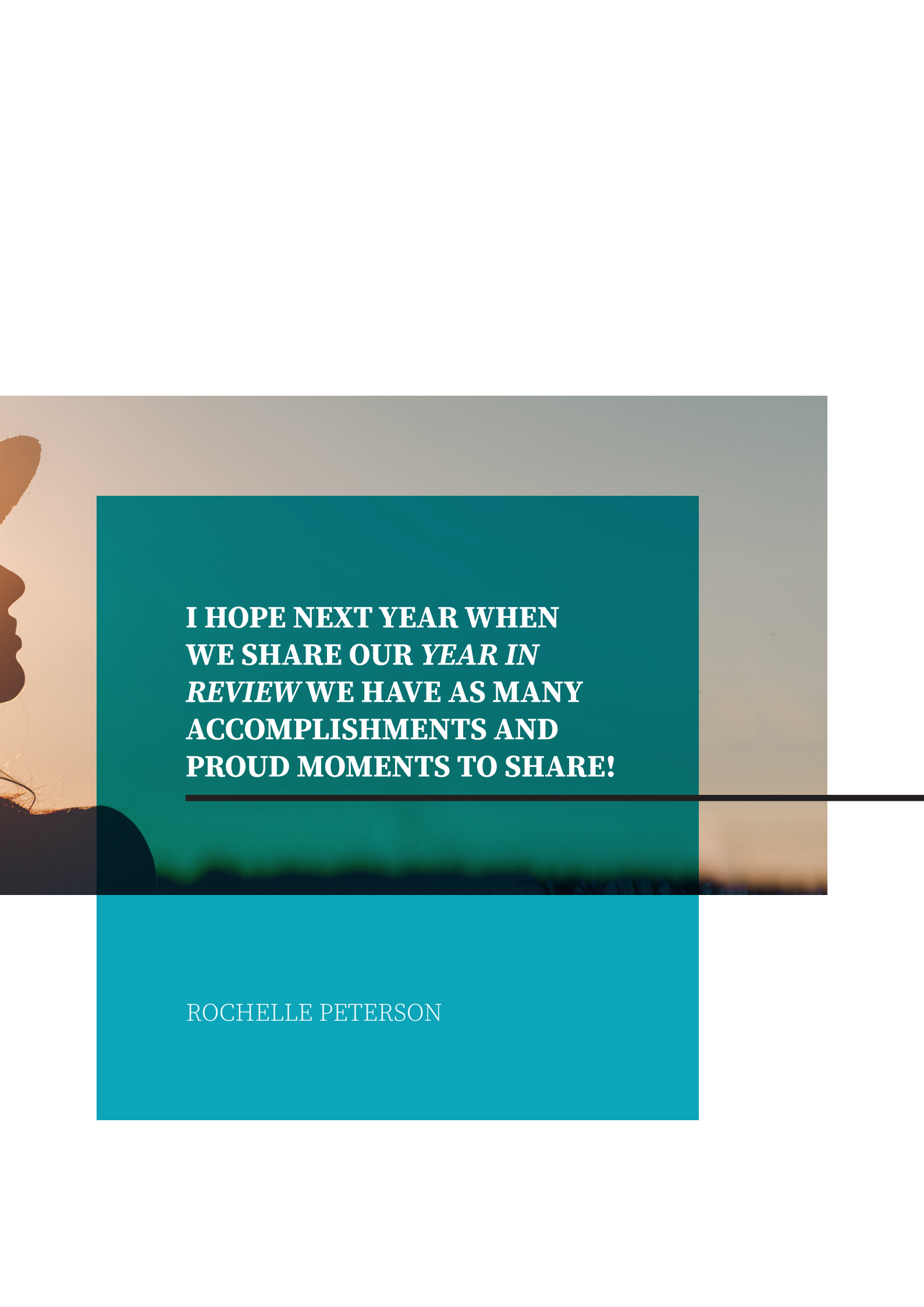
[UCare Foundation | UCare](#)





I would like to personally thank a fantastic staff and our boards for the hard work this year! Thank you to all the staff for your unwavering determination to fulfill the commitment to children and families in our communities. Thank you to the boards for recognizing the need for extra support for families during the pandemic. I hope next year when we share our Year in Review we have as many accomplishments and proud moments to share!

Photographs: PACT for Families and Adobe Stock. Design by Meghna Subba



**I HOPE NEXT YEAR WHEN
WE SHARE OUR *YEAR IN
REVIEW* WE HAVE AS MANY
ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND
PROUD MOMENTS TO SHARE!**

ROCHELLE PETERSON



PACT FOR FAMILIES COLLABORATIVE



THANK YOU!



2200 23rd Street NE Ste 2030
Willmar MN 56201
Tel: 320.231.7030
Fax: 320.231.7033
E-mail: pactoffice@pactforfamilies.org