



## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

### TAKING A MOMENT TO SAY 'THANKS'

by *Tim Wayman*

As I reflect on the past year, I want to take a moment to pause and express a heartfelt “thank you” for your support, on behalf of the board and staff at FamilyForward. Your generosity and belief in our mission have made a real difference in the lives of the families we serve.

In this edition of our newsletter, we list the many organizations and individuals who supported FamilyForward throughout 2025. Since we receive limited governmental funding through local townships and villages, and no federal funding, we depend on donors like you to fund our operations and family programs. I am thrilled to share the fact that we brought in record contributions this past year, allowing us to serve our client families more broadly and more profoundly.

Every donation, every sponsorship, every event attended, and every act of volunteerism you’ve shared with us fuels our mission. Your commitment is helping us create real, lasting change in the lives of families participating in our program.

We know there are many causes you could choose to support, and we are deeply honored that you have chosen ours. Together, we are connecting people and resources to build a stronger community.

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you for standing with us. We look forward to sharing more stories of hope and progress with you in the months ahead.

## MEET OUR NEW CASE MANAGER

### WELCOME, JESSICA KIM

FamilyForward is delighted to welcome Jessica Kim, MSW, LSW, to our program staff.

A licensed social worker based in the northwest suburbs, Jess earned her Master of Social Work degree at Loyola University Chicago and has experience in case management and trauma-informed therapy. She is passionate about mental health advocacy for diverse communities and facilitates workshops and community-based programs to de-stigmatize mental health and promote equitable access to care. Jessica also specializes in working with individuals of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) descent to heal from spiritual abuse and racial trauma and thrive in their unique identities.

Since her first day on the job last November, Jess has contributed to the FamilyForward program with her compassionate demeanor, active listening skills, and unique insights into the holistic well-being of parents and their families. Thank you, Jess, for sharing your experience and skills with FamilyForward families and volunteer mentors.



Jessica Kim, MSW, LSW

# JOY STORIES

Read these brief stories of progress and hope from several families in the FamilyForward program as of late 2025.



When Mom K joined the FamilyForward program, she knew she needed new glasses. Between having no time in her schedule and a change in her insurance coverage, Mom K had not been to the eye doctor in several years. Her FamilyForward volunteer mentors kept the eye doctor on her to-do list. They gave her regular reminders. FF staff provided the names of two local eye doctors who accept her insurance. Very soon after that, Mom K went to the eye doctor and got new glasses!

Mom and Dad P suspected their toddler daughter had a speech delay. The FamilyForward case manager connected them to some resources for early childhood intervention and accompanied them through the application and evaluation process. After only a few weeks of speech therapy, Daughter P said her first word. Mom and Dad P are delighted with the progress she is making.

Mom S joined her local chapter of Toastmasters. She knows that if she wants to advance her career with her current employer, she needs to get more comfortable giving presentations. Congratulations to Mom S for having the courage to step outside her comfort zone and work on her public-speaking skills!

After seven months of searching and applying, Mom H finally got a higher paying job! Her income increased by more than \$3 per hour, and the new position guarantees full-time hours every week. Now, for the first time since she can remember, Mom H is not behind on any of her bills. *These stories illustrate some of the many ways the FamilyForward program challenges and encourages parents and supports families as they seek to improve their circumstances and create stable households. Visit [family-forward.org/blog](http://family-forward.org/blog) for more Joy Stories.*

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: NXT Capital

Thank you to NXT Capital, a Chicago-based direct lender to US-based middle-market companies, for its generosity in supporting FamilyForward. NXT Capital, a wholly owned subsidiary of ORIX Corporation USA, has a corporate social responsibility platform, NXT Cares, focused on promoting the welfare of its communities through monetary donations and volunteerism by the company and employees. The firm has supported more than 60 charities and has donated over \$1 million since the inception of the NXT Cares program. Through NXT Capital's sponsorship of our *Giving Hope* event, financial support through its holiday giving program, and ORIX Corporation USA's employee donation-matching program, almost \$10,000 was donated to FamilyForward over the past few months.

NXT Capital employs our newest board member, Steve Young. Steve, who serves as a director of Direct Lending at the firm, has taken the lead in gaining the company's support as well as proactively participating in many other FamilyForward initiatives. Kudos to Steve and NXT Capital for their commitment to our cause!



### MISSION STATEMENT

Strengthening northwest suburban families to achieve financial stability and independence through mentoring, rental assistance and support services.

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*Special thanks to Elk Grove Township, Palatine Township, Schaumburg Township, Wheeling Township, and the Villages of Arlington Heights and Palatine for providing significant financial and other assistance to our client families.*

# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FINANCIAL DONORS

We are grateful to the following people and organizations for their generous financial donations in 2025.

With your partnership, FamilyForward continues to help local families build a brighter future.

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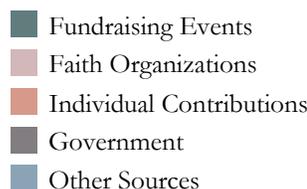
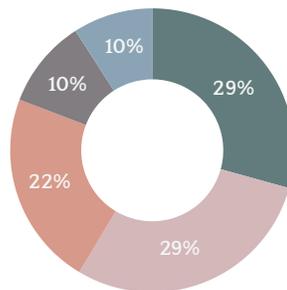
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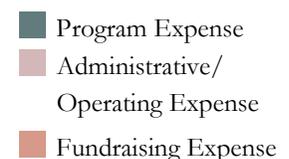
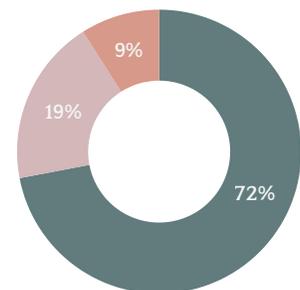
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### INCOME % FOR FISCAL YEAR



### HOW OUR MONEY IS SPENT



# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS IN-KIND DONORS

We truly appreciate all who donated special items, products and services for FamilyForward families, events and fundraisers in 2025. We value your partnership in our mission!

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## HOLIDAY DONATIONS AND OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT

Thank you to all who generously donated holiday items, gifts and gift cards in 2025, including the following individuals, groups and organizations:

- Ashley Hall and Beth Krueger, Family and Friends (*See the back page!*)
- First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights, PDO and Preschool
- First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights, Presbyterian Women Circle 2
- St. Edna Catholic Church, Arlington Heights
- St. James Catholic Church, Arlington Heights, Women of St. James

Additional types of support for which we are also very thankful include sponsoring events, purchasing event tickets, and participating in auctions. Thank you! [Visit family-forward.org/supporters](http://visit.family-forward.org/supporters) for more.



*Presbyterian Women Circle 2, of First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights, donated Aldi gift cards to help our FF families with their holiday planning.*

# MENTORS TEAM UP FOR GOOD

## JUDY HOCKENBERRY AND LARRY SOPHIAN PROVIDE STRONG FAMILY SUPPORT



Larry Sophian



Rev. Judy Hockenberry

The Rev. Judy Hockenberry and Larry Sophian make a great team. In 2023, they were paired together to serve as volunteer mentors for a single mom in the Family-Forward program. She was over her head in debt and needed financial coaching and other guidance to turn things around for her family, which includes three children. Using their two very different skill sets, Larry and Judy worked together to equip and encourage their client throughout her time in the two-year program.

### *A way to help people improve their lives*

As an accountant who worked with many not-for-profit agencies in his career, Larry knew he wanted to use his professional skills in a new way, to help others improve their lives, once he retired. “I think my background works very well with a program that is all about getting the family on a more solid financial footing,” Larry said. “I’m able to use those skills to help the family analyze their expenses and develop strategies to reduce expenses to make things more manageable.”

Judy, too, was looking for ways to help people. As a recently retired Presbyterian minister who served for 38 years, her skill set, which centers on pastoral care, is quite different from Larry’s. “I think my strongest gifts are in being a good listener and being able to meet people wherever they are,” she said. “Even though I may not have walked in their specific shoes, I am willing to try and imagine what that might be like.”

### *Putting in the work pays off*

Judy and Larry recently celebrated their client’s graduation from the FamilyForward program. They were both thrilled that she was able to pay off her credit card debt and keep up with monthly expenses under their guidance and with their caring encouragement.

“It was very satisfying to see her move from dreading when the other shoe might drop in her finances to having confidence that she had the resources to handle something unexpected,” Larry said. “Watching her self-confidence grow during the two years as a result of the improvement in her finances was very gratifying.”

The impact of their coaching was palpable: “I watched our client become a happier person as she began to feel safer financially. A weight was slowly being lifted off her shoulders,” Judy said.

### *Different talents working together to help families*

As Judy and Larry worked together, it was the combination of their two sets of abilities that proved to be ideal as they partnered to assist and encourage their client. And that’s exactly how the family program is designed to work: Two mentors with complementary strengths work with the parent as a team, imparting financial and other life skills, offering empathy, and providing empowering emotional support for the family.

“I think the most fulfilling thing about being a mentor is that you get the chance to walk side by side with an individual and witness their success,” Judy said. “Month by month, the debt receded. Month by month, our client stayed on track, and every week she sent her budget spreadsheets to us. Developing a relationship with both the other mentor and with the client were very fulfilling for me.”

As for Larry: “I have found that helping the clients I’ve worked with at FF very satisfying, in a hugely different way than the satisfaction I would get from helping my professional clients. With each of the two families I have helped, my co-mentor has brought very different, and complementary, skills to our work. I learned a lot from them, as well as the families, about the various resources that are available in our communities and how people can utilize those.”

Thank you, Judy and Larry, for sharing your many talents in your compassionate and impactful work to empower FamilyForward families.

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*This article has been abridged. Read the complete story at [family-forward.org/blog](https://family-forward.org/blog). To learn more about serving as a volunteer mentor, contact Program Director Sarah Harte, at [sarah.harte@family-forward.org](mailto:sarah.harte@family-forward.org).*



**FamilyForward**

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**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**FamilyFOREward Golf Outing | Thursday, May 28**  
Chevy Chase Country Club  
1000 N. Milwaukee Ave, Wheeling, IL 60090  
*Registration opens soon!*



**CONNECTING IN THE COMMUNITY**  
**Turkey Trot for Families**

Last fall, local supporters Ashley Hall and Beth Krueger — along with many of their friends and family members — came together for a Turkey Trot in support of FamilyForward.

All told, this wonderful group collected nearly \$5,000 in gift cards and monetary contributions for FamilyForward families!  
Thank you, friends!

