

## **FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** **THE POWER OF POSITIVE MOMENTUM**

*by Erica Chianelli*



After an exciting 2023, FamilyForward enters 2024 with the power of positive momentum and a renewed passion to serve low-income, working families in the northwest suburbs. Our year-long 20th anniversary celebration was truly inspiring. THANK YOU to all who have supported this journey, empowering us to fulfill our important mission.

In addition to our anniversary celebration, we achieved a number of other milestones in 2023: We served 133 family members through our programs. We implemented a new and innovative debt-reduction matching program. We celebrated the one-year anniversary of the creation of our FamilyForward Advisory Board (now up to 20 active members!). And, we hosted our most successful ***Giving Hope*** fundraising event ever (see all the details at [family-forward.org/blog](https://family-forward.org/blog)).

### ***New milestones on the horizon***

We plan to continue to reach new milestones in 2024. We are embarking on a strategic-planning process to review, reflect on, and re-evaluate the organization's priorities toward fulfilling our mission. We are committed to finding new and inventive ways to address the mounting challenges our client families face.

Because the availability of affordable housing continues to be a major problem, we spearheaded the formation of a coalition of northwest suburban nonprofits, faith organizations, government entities and interested citizens around this issue. This group is committed to working together to advocate on the local and state levels to find affordable-housing opportunities to build stronger, safer and more vibrant communities. We are grateful to now have the expertise and partnership of Joining Forces for Affordable Housing to help guide us in this process. Evanston, Ill., based Joining Forces, a program of Connections for the Homeless, focuses on affordable-housing advocacy and serves more than 40 municipalities across northern Cook County.

### ***Meeting clients — and supporters — where they are***

The families in our program are dealing with a multitude of obstacles, with no easy solutions. We must stay vigilant, and relevant, and meet our clients where they are, especially during these ever-changing times. We are always looking for ways to build awareness of FamilyForward, to grow our reach and engage more donors, volunteers, partners and clients. We welcome the opportunity to speak at community meetings as well as social gatherings such as faith groups, book clubs, and more. Feel free to reach out to me, at [erica.chianelli@family-forward.org](mailto:erica.chianelli@family-forward.org), to explore how we can work together. I look forward to meeting new people and developing long-term relationships to help keep our positive momentum going and power our work for another 20 years.

**THANK YOU to the Palatine Area Chamber of Commerce** for selecting FamilyForward as Community Organization of the Year at its "Key to Success" awards program held January 25! We are delighted to receive this award and honored to be in the company of so many deserving organizations.



## MISSION STATEMENT

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

## STAFF

**Executive Director**  
Erica Chianelli

**Program Manager**  
Sarah Harte

**Case Manager**  
Pam Van De Walle

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Chair**  
Tim Wayman

**Vice-Chair**  
Greg Ford

**Corresponding Secretary**  
Chris Farnsworth

**Recording Secretary**  
Donna Anderson

**Treasurer**  
Tina Richards

**Members**  
Paul Cochran  
Jane Drezen  
Steven Gaus  
Jim Mayer  
Courtney Podkowa  
Becky Reel  
Claudia Starck  
Jennifer Strimling  
Chet Tambe  
Lou Walton  
John Sonderegger, Board Member  
Emeritus

## FAMILYFORWARD

302 N. Dunton Ave.  
Arlington Heights, IL 60004  
(847) 342-0846  
family-forward.org  
info@family-forward.org

To opt out of newsletter mailings,  
email us: info@family-forward.org

*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.*

# FAMILY SUCCESS STORY

## FINDING THE FINANCIAL BREATHING ROOM TO HEAL AND GROW

“Ellie” had recently become a single mom when she entered the FamilyForward program. With housing in flux, decreased income during the pandemic, and a challenging child-custody schedule, Ellie’s life was in upheaval. When she entered our program, Ellie had less than \$500 in the bank and debt totaling more than \$20,000. She also had some serious health problems that she had left untreated for years, due to long-term stress in her life.



*Stock photo from Pexels*

### *Getting housing and finances in order*

The FamilyForward rent subsidy allowed Ellie to catch up on bills and chip away at her debt.

As pandemic restrictions began to decrease, resulting in fewer shutdowns, Ellie was able to increase her hours at work and grow her hourly wage. With stable housing and regular coaching visits from her volunteer mentors, Ellie’s life was no longer in turmoil. Two years after she started at FamilyForward, Ellie now earns more, has paid down a significant amount of debt, and has brought up her credit score by more than 300 points.

### *Escaping survival mode leads to healing*

For Ellie — and for many FamilyForward participants — the benefits of our program were more than just financial. Because she had some financial breathing room, and because she knew her housing was stable, Ellie started to address some of her ongoing health concerns.

For years before beginning our program, Ellie had been putting off dealing with her health problems. She was living with chronic pain and spending money on symptom management instead of treatment or a cure. Simply put, she had been existing in survival mode.

Once in our program, Ellie felt empowered to find the right specialists, undergo effective medical procedures, and finally receive much-needed treatment. Ellie’s volunteer mentors encouraged her to address her own health, because financial stability depends on the wellness of the parent, inside and out.

Ellie’s story is an example of “success” that cannot be quantified. With monthly rent support from FamilyForward and encouragement from her mentors, Ellie gave herself permission to finally get her own health under control. Now that she is pain-free, Ellie is a better parent and a better worker.

As with so many FamilyForward participants, the most meaningful part of the experience for Ellie was not about money — it was about relationships, and the support and respect she received. In her final review, Ellie wrote: “I have experienced tremendous personal growth. I was treated as a smart, capable mom.” Ellie’s mentors provided the encouragement she needed to heal and grow, making a difference in her life for years to come. Visit [family-forward.org/blog](https://family-forward.org/blog) for more family stories.

# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FINANCIAL DONORS

*We are grateful to the following people and organizations for their generous financial donations in 2023.  
Through your invaluable partnership, FamilyForward continues to inspire hope and change lives in our local community.*

## CHURCHES & RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Christian Church of Arlington Heights  
First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights  
First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights,  
Men's Club  
First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights,  
Presbyterian Women  
First United Methodist Church of  
Arlington Heights  
First United Methodist Church of  
Arlington Heights, United Women in Faith  
First United Methodist Church of Waukegan  
Holy Rosary Auxiliary,  
Knights of Columbus Council #4483  
Luther Village Spiritual Enrichment Foundation  
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Arlington Heights  
Presbyterian Church of Palatine,  
Presbyterian Women  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Palatine  
Sisters of The Living Word, Des Plaines  
Southminster Presbyterian Church,  
Arlington Heights  
St. James Parish, Arlington Heights  
St. James Parish, Arlington Heights,  
Women of St. James  
St. John United Church of Christ,  
Arlington Heights  
St. Mary Parish, Buffalo Grove, Men's Club  
St. Theresa Parish, Palatine

## INDIVIDUALS, CLUBS, BUSINESSES & FOUNDATIONS

Aetna MMAI  
Joan and Alan Ahr  
Barbara and Glenn Ahrenholz  
Dorothy Albright  
Allstate Foundation  
Michele Ambach  
Assisting Hands Home Care, Arlington Heights  
Avion Technology, Inc.  
Debra and Piero Ballardini  
Lisa Ballotti and Dean Koif  
Bear Family Restaurants (McDonald's)  
Gail and Mark Becker  
Michael Beecher

Benevity Community Impact Fund  
Mary and Robert Bernd  
Laura and Philip Bertram  
Pat Bethel  
Patricia Bielat  
Bradish Associates, Ltd.  
Marilyn Breiding  
Elizabeth and Robert Bridier  
Janelle Brown and Matt Holda  
Joanne Brownell  
Sheila Brunetti  
Alison and Bob Burdick  
Tim Burge  
Sue Campbell  
Anne and Dan Campbell  
Nancy and Robert Cardella  
Tom Carroll  
Alissa Catalan  
Celeste and Eric Cecchi  
Linda and Steve Cecchi  
Chinmoy Chatterjee  
Pat and Chuck Chianelli  
Mary Cay Chisholm and Kenneth Kirk  
Perla and Linval Chung  
Claremont Management Corp.  
Lana and Paul Cochran  
Patty and Gary Colabuono  
Comparion Insurance – George Young  
Corporate America Family Credit Union  
Costible & Steffens, P.C.  
Mary and Edward Cullen  
Kim and Dino Damato  
Steven Daugherty  
Kathy Day  
George Demos  
Patricia and Mike Dennehey  
William Dillon  
Marianne and William Dixon  
Mike Dolan  
Cindy Doris  
Donna Lee Doughty  
Beth and George Drost  
Drost, Kivlahan, McMahon &  
O'Connor, LLC  
Barbara Durso

Ecolab Foundation  
Pat Eitz  
Tory and Brendan Eitz  
Kathleen and James Ekeberg  
Louann Engler  
Christine and Clayton Farnsworth  
First Bank Chicago Foundation  
Dale and Greg Ford  
Chuck Frankiewicz  
John Franz  
Pete Froehlich  
Jean and Paul Frost  
Janet Fuller  
Carol and Steve Gaus  
Jane Gauss  
Sue and Tom Gaynor  
George M. Eisenberg Foundation  
Virginia Gerhold  
Doreen and Scott Gibrich  
Gretchen and Gerry Gilbertson  
Sharon and Maury Goodman  
Terry and Robert Gorski  
Arlen Gould  
Kerri Grabowski  
Mary Ann and Roger Grabowski  
Judy Grimes  
Carol Grossmann  
Cheryl Grouzard  
Jim Hader  
Maria and Doug Hall  
Sue and Mikel Hankey  
Jack Hargett  
Harper College Educational  
Foundation  
Alison and Robert Harrald  
Cindy Harris  
Deborah Harrison  
Lois Hartung  
Barbara Heitzman  
Susan and James Henderson  
Carol and Ralph Henrikson  
Natalie and Kirby Herazy  
Sue Hjertstedt  
Rev. Judith Hockenberry

*continued on page 4*



# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FINANCIAL DONORS

Sandra and Donald Hoffman  
Margaret HoFung  
Dave Hogaboom  
Tajalli Horvat  
Barbara Hoskins  
Ruth and Donald Howard  
Hoyne Savings Bank  
Illinois Spinal Care  
Laura Janus  
Mary Ann and George Jeczalik  
Patricia and Bob Jostes  
Sue Judson  
Kerry and Jack Kammerer  
Gilda Karu  
Judy Kaselow  
Eileen Kaser  
Vincent Kelley  
Kendra Scott Deer Park  
Mary and John Kenesey  
Ann Kimberly  
Kiwanis Club of Arlington Heights  
Kleinschmidt, Inc.  
DeAnna Klokkena  
Leona Kolovos  
Judy Kriston  
Robin and Gary LaBedz  
Mary Ann Laforet  
Lakeside Bank  
Janet and Dave Landeweer  
Connie and Peter Landwehr  
William Langtim  
Joan and James Lanter  
Lavelle Law  
Law Offices of John Corbett  
LeTip of Northwest Suburbs  
Scot Leonard  
Lance Levine  
Gg Levine  
Meredith and Richard Levinsky  
Jen Lewellen  
Michelle and Jonathan Lewis  
Charles Lewis  
Nancy and Robert Lincoln  
Patricia Lind and Gary Drake  
Jackie Lindert  
Carol and Tom Loch  
Louis Knox Financial  
LPL Financial  
Amy and Stewart Lumsden

Catherine and Roger Lundstrom  
James Mackey  
Kris and Scott Mainellis  
Kathleen Marsh  
Mary and Jim Mayer  
McCarthy, Pacilio, Oliva & Co.  
Haven and Gary McClung  
Ruth McCormick  
Kristen McGirk  
William McGovern  
Marian and Marty McGowan  
Samir Medhekar  
Vivian and Gregg Menzies  
Pam Miller  
Martha Ross-Mockaitis and Thomas Mockaitis  
Laurie and Dick Mole  
Kathy and George Motto  
Tom Munz  
National Association of Theatre Owners  
(NATO)  
Network for Good  
Linda and Jim Nicholas  
Nicholas & Associates, Inc.  
Christine and Bryan Nobbe  
Linda and Keith North  
Northwest Community Healthcare  
Northwest Speech and Hearing Center  
Earl Oak  
Brian O'Hara  
Roseann O'Hara  
Stuart Olin  
Faith and Frank Oriold  
Catherine and George Ostendorf  
Palatine Jaycees  
Beverly Palmer  
Jasmine Panayotov  
Jim Parker  
Barbara Pastirik  
Joyce Pavelko  
Sue and Tim Perek  
Chris and Keith Perkinson  
Elyse Perlik  
Maggie Peshek  
Bruce Piepenbrink  
Susie Pierce  
Sandy Pifer  
Carol and James Pinson  
Cindy and Jim Platt  
Courtney and Richard Podkowa  
Sandy and Michael Polanski

Ralph H. Simpson Company  
Marion Rayner  
Becky and Chris Reel  
Reel Home Care Consulting  
Trisha Rich  
Tina and Todd Richards  
Nancy Richardson  
Phyllis and James Ritt  
Christine and Rick Rochetti  
Corrie and Dennis Roesslein  
Regina and James Roland  
Alan Rose  
Rotary Club of Elk Grove Village  
Rotary Club of Palatine  
Rotary Club of Schaumburg/  
Hoffman Estates  
Kristi and Charles Ruckstaetter  
Rev. David Russell  
Eva and Jason Sagan  
Diane and John Salazar  
Antonette and John Scaletta  
Bonnie and Dave Schaap  
Joan and Michael Schade  
Rosemary and Marty Schaar  
Schaumburg Business Association  
Women's Alliance Group  
Joan and John Schmidt  
Carolyn Schmidt  
Alicia and Bruce Schoumacher  
Kathy and Wally Schultz  
Randi Schwarzbach  
Matt Semenza  
Iris and Steven Shapiro  
Suzanne and Stephen Sharer  
Curt Siegel  
Solstice Power Technologies, LLC  
Bea and John Sonderegger  
Larry Sophian  
Ralitsa Sotirova  
Karen and Gordon Souden  
Ross Spencer  
Paula and Kenneth Spengler  
Joseph Stanhope  
Claudia and Tom Starck  
State Farm Insurance  
State Farm Insurance –  
Matt Trembley  
Karen Steil  
Jennifer and Floyd Strimling  
Gary Stubits

# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FINANCIAL DONORS

Patricia and Jack Sturgeon  
Denise Swanson  
April and Mark Swenson  
Ann and Richard Tani  
Tap House Grill  
Barbara Taylor  
Sue Tharp  
Donna and Michael Thompson  
Joann Thompson  
Laurie and Jeff Thomson  
Thomson Insurance Agency, Inc.  
Margaret Tidrick  
Michael Todt  
Sue and W.R. Toussaint  
Linda Townsend  
Lucy and Tom Tucker  
UBS Financial Services –  
The Daugherty Group  
Colleen and David Ungurean

Pam Van De Walle and Brad  
Hargett  
Village Bank and Trust  
Edie and Doug Wade  
Mary Kay Walsh  
Mary and John Walters  
Chad Walton  
Jill and Greg Walton  
Lou and Dwight Walton  
Noel and Andy Walton  
Tamera and Brian Walton  
Mary and Chuck Warner  
Linda Waycie  
Connie and Tim Wayman  
Jayne Wellman  
Christine Wellner  
Jo Ann and Theodore Wiemann  
Sr. Donna Williams  
Wines For Humanity, LLC

Denise and William Wozencraft  
Francis Wren  
Melissa Wright  
Janet Zage  
Diane and Richard Zielinski  
Karyn and Carl Zielinski

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS

Elk Grove Township  
Palatine Township  
Schaumburg Township  
Village of Arlington Heights  
Village of Palatine  
Wheeling Township

## OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT

In addition to the financial donors listed, we are grateful to all who contribute in other ways, including sponsoring events, purchasing event tickets, participating in auctions, and donating goods and services. Thank you!  
*Visit [family-forward.org/supporters](http://family-forward.org/supporters) for more.*

# THANK YOU FOR HOLIDAY DONATIONS

*Thank you to the following groups, organizations and individuals whose donations of gifts cards and other gifts made the holiday season brighter for the families in the FamilyForward program.*

Arlington Heights Chamber of Commerce,  
Women's Networking Group  
Assisting Hands Home Care, Arlington Heights  
Sid Doshi  
First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights,  
First Pres PDO & Preschool  
First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights,  
Presbyterian Women  
First United Methodist Church of Arlington Heights,  
United Women in Faith  
Ryan Gable  
Grace Unfolding Yoga  
Ashley Hall and Family  
Dave Hogaboom and Capital Point Financial Group  
Kim Hogan  
Eva Holzer  
Jen Lewellen  
Sr. Barbara Mass  
Linda McGrath and Family  
Rand Medical Group  
St. Edna Catholic Church, Arlington Heights  
St. James Parish, Arlington Heights, Women of St. James  
Denise Tripp



*Assisting Hands Home Care,  
Arlington Heights*



*FamilyForward staff with gifts from First Pres PDO &  
Preschool of First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights*

## SHARING STORIES OF SUCCESS

What's the secret to FamilyForward's success? In short, it's our leadership. Over the past 20+ years, leaders at FamilyForward, formerly known as Faith Community Homes (FCH/FF), have led the development and growth of our family program while widening and deepening our base of support.

We recently connected with several of these long-time leaders to collect their insights. It was encouraging to hear their memories, stories and favorite highlights from the past two decades. What emerged was a clear picture of the most significant objectives, strengths and achievements of FCH/FF — encapsulated in five key objectives — and primary markers of success:



*Stock photo from Pexels*

**MENTORING FAMILIES.** At the top of the list is the success of the mentoring component of the family program. Tim Wayman, current board chair and board member since 2009, sums it up: “Mentoring of families with guidance by professional social workers [including current Program Manager Sarah Harte and Case Manager Pam Van De Walle] is the differentiator and key element of our program. Challenging families to reach their goals while providing necessary support makes all the difference.”

**EXPANDING REACH.** Another major highlight for FCH/FF was the expansion of services beyond Arlington Heights and across the northwest suburbs. The expansion into Palatine, followed by reaching into Elk Grove Village, Hoffman Estates, Mount Prospect, Prospect Heights, Rolling Meadows, Schaumburg and Wheeling, “was significant, as it marked the growth, maturity and broader acceptance of the concept of our program,” according to Chuck Warner, executive director from 2010 through 2021.

**INVOLVING PASSIONATE LEADERS.** The value and achievements of committed board members, staff and volunteers cannot be overstated. “Each board member has something special to add and does so unselfishly. We are extraordinarily blessed by board members and committee volunteers. They are the heartbeat of the organization,” says Donna Anderson, FCH/FF co-founder, original and ongoing board member, and former board chair. Additionally, the expert leadership of our executive directors (Chuck Warner, followed by Erica Chianelli), has been critically important in advancing our mission, adds Chris Farnsworth, who joined the board in 2007.

**HOSTING SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING EVENTS.** FCH/FF has hosted many exciting events, including the highly successful annual *Giving Hope* event. These activities have played an important role in getting the word out about FCH/FF and raising critically needed funds to assist families. Jim Mayer, former board chair and board member since 2010, deeply appreciates the family testimonies presented at *Giving Hope* and cites the importance of hearing these stories of remarkable family achievements empowered by volunteers, staff and supporters.

**IMPACTING THE COMMUNITY.** One the greatest impacts FCH/FF has had on the community has been to raise awareness of “the existence and concerns of low-income families in our suburbs,” according to Lou Walton. For Chuck Warner, “the most significant element is simply our presence with families. Financial support, mentoring, all the work to get families to record and justify their expenses, is important and useful. But what makes FamilyForward unique and impactful is to just be with the family, to listen and understand.”

Throughout two decades of continued development, growth and expansion, FCH/FF leaders have focused on the five areas of strength outlined above. Along the way they have cherished the journey and celebrated each milestone. But they also know there is much more to do. The work of FamilyForward continues, thanks to these and many other leaders who have stepped up and joined the mission over the years. Here's to another 20 years!

*This article has been abridged. Read the complete story at [family-forward.org/blog](https://family-forward.org/blog).*

# BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

KLEINSCHMIDT, INC.



## KLEINSCHMIDT

We appreciate the local business community for generously giving back to the community. One such business is Deerfield, Ill., based Kleinschmidt, Inc., whose employees planned and participated in a holiday donation drive and raised over \$15,000 to support the transportation needs of FamilyForward families. Kleinschmidt CEO Dan Heinen said, “Kleinschmidt likes to help the community we live in, and for several years FamilyForward has been a great organization to work with. We appreciate the important work FamilyForward does and are happy to support the families they assist.” Thank you, Kleinschmidt, Inc., for your generosity and dedication to “uplifting the human spirit” through your outreach activities!

### MENTORS NEEDED

#### PROVIDE DIRECT GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR ONE FAMILY

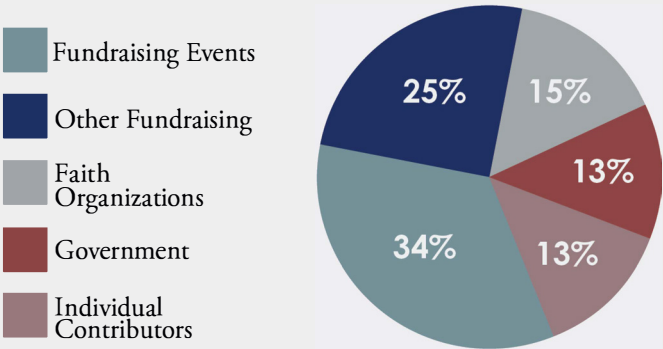
Are you looking for a local volunteer opportunity to get involved with a neighbor in need? FamilyForward is looking to expand its pool of potential volunteer mentors.

Working in pairs, volunteer mentors assist their family in making and following a realistic budget and developing reachable goals. Most of all, mentors form a relationship with their family over two years and provide support and guidance as they get back on their feet.

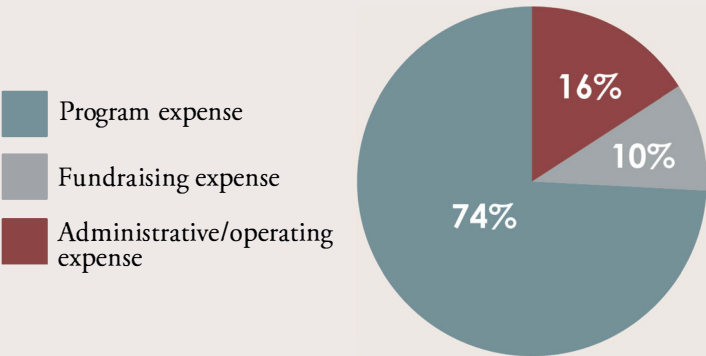
The time commitment is four hours per month, and training is provided. If you would like to learn more about this opportunity to shine a little more light in our community, please contact FamilyForward Program Manager Sarah Harte at 847-342-0846 or [sarah.harte@family-forward.org](mailto:sarah.harte@family-forward.org). For additional volunteer opportunities, please reach out to [info@family-forward.org](mailto:info@family-forward.org).

## FAMILYFORWARD FINANCIALS

INCOME % FOR FISCAL YEAR



HOW OUR MONEY IS SPENT







NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PALATINE IL  
PERMIT NO. 869

## FamilyForward

302 N. Dunton Avenue  
Arlington Heights, IL 60004

family-forward.org  
847-342-0846

Follow us on social media:



@FamForward | FamilyForward



*Scan this code for instant  
access to news and events!*

## CONNECT WITH FAMILYFORWARD

### GET E-NEWS

Help spread the word about FamilyForward by following us on Instagram and Liking and following our Facebook page! Find us @FamForward. Connect with us on LinkedIn at FamilyForward Arlington Heights and subscribe to our YouTube channel as well (search for FamilyForward). With your help, we can reach more people and assist more families!

### FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Sign up to stay in touch and discover more ways we are making a difference, together, in the lives of local families. You'll also receive important news and advance notice of opportunities to support FamilyForward through fun activities and special events. Simply send an email to [info@family-forward.org](mailto:info@family-forward.org) to subscribe. Please include "Subscribe" in the subject line. Thanks!

### SAVE THE DATE

**FamilyFOREward Golf Outing | Thursday, June 13**

*Chevy Chase Country Club*

*1000 N. Milwaukee Ave, Wheeling, IL 60090*

Shotgun start at noon. Registration opens soon!

