

*Helping People Live Positive and Productive Lives...Since 1854*

## “Adolescent Family Life” (AFL) Program Helps Teen Moms Achieve Their Dreams

Every teenager has dreams for the future, and every teen makes mistakes along the way. For young girls who become pregnant, their dreams may seem impossible to reach. And, unfortunately, statistics show that teen mothers often fail to reach their full potential.

National statistics show that:

- Only 40% of teen moms graduate from high school;
- 75% of all teen moms go on welfare within 5 years of having their first child;
- About 64% of children born to teen mothers live in poverty;
- A child born to a teen mom is 50% more likely to repeat a grade in school and drop out before finishing high school.

*Data from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.*

In the City of Lawrence, teen pregnancy is all too common. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports that Lawrence has the fifth highest rate of teen pregnancy in the state. This situation is an important concern as teen mothers and their babies face increased risks to their health, and their opportunities to build a future are diminished. Family Service is committed to making sure that teen parents break the cycle of academic failure and poverty. The Agency's “Adolescent Family Life” (AFL) Program is an important resource in the community for helping pregnant and parenting teens begin their parenting journey on the right foot.

*“I never pictured myself not going to prom, not getting my permit at sixteen, and not completing junior year.”*

AFL works with teens individually to help them reach their personal goals, support them while they pursue their education, make sure they learn parenting skills, and ensure their baby's health and welfare is protected. Program participants also meet as a group to talk about parenting skills, healthy relationships, making good decisions,

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## Samaritans of Merrimack Valley Receives State Award for Suicide Prevention

On February 9, 2009, the Samaritans of Merrimack Valley was presented with the **Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention's** “Leadership in Suicide Prevention Award”. This award is presented to individuals and organizations in the state of Massachusetts who are champions in suicide prevention and are deserving of statewide recognition.

The Samaritans was honored for its outstanding service to the communities of the Merrimack Valley, and in particular, for its attention to suicide among older adults. The Samaritans provides an array of suicide prevention services, including four crisis line numbers (see below), outreach and education, support to families in the wake of a suicide, and education to individuals who come in contact with high risk groups, such as the elderly.

Our heartfelt congratulations go out to the Samaritans staff and volunteers.



*(L to R) Debbie Helms, Program Coordinator, Peg Serley, Founder, Bob Laprel and Mary Quinn, Samaritans Trainers, display the Leadership Award at the Statehouse ceremony.*

## Samaritans 24-hour Crisis Help Lines:

- Merrimack Valley: 978-688-6607
- Toll Free: 1-866-912-4673 (HOPE)
- MA Statewide: 1-877-870-4673
- For Teens: 978-688-TEEN

All lines are confidential.

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## Family Service Participates in Lawrence’s First City-Wide Mentoring Jamboree

As part of National Mentoring Month, Family Service, together with the Lawrence branch of the **Merrimack Valley YMCA**, “Stand and Deliver”, **Raytheon** and **CitiBank** teamed up to host a Mentoring Jamboree on January 21, 2009. The event was held to recognize the power of mentoring, recruit new mentors, and raise awareness of the need for mentors in the Lawrence area. The **Mass Mentoring Partnership** was also on hand, as was Lawrence **Mayor Michael Sullivan**, Lawrence Schools **Superintendent Dr. Wilfredo Laboy**, and **Senator Susan Tucker**. This fun, free event attracted 200 community members who enjoyed



*(L to R) Nylmarie Gomez, AMIGOS Program Coordinator, Manny, AMIGOS mentee, Superintendent Laboy, Michael, BFLF mentee, Mayor Sullivan and Lina Serna, AMIGOS Program Coordinator*

face painting, a free throw contest, obstacle course, yoga and a dance demonstration.

If you or someone you know is interested in mentoring, please contact Leah Feroce of the Big Friends Little Friends Program at 978-327-6640 or Lina Serna of the AMIGOS Academic Mentoring Program at 978-327-6638.

## Second Annual Latin Dance Night



It may have been cold outside...but it was hot on the dance floor! On January 23, 2009, Family Service held its second annual “Latin Dance Night” fundraiser. Over 100 guests came to learn Merengue, Salsa, Cha Cha, and many more dance steps. The event was a great success and raised needed funds for Family Service’s programs.

Thank you to our premier event sponsor:

**Comcast**, as well as **Encore Staffing**, **Crusader Paper**, **The Financial Advisors**, **Enterprise Bank**, **Vicor**, **David Witham** and **Rip and Nancy Haak**. Thank you also to dance instructor extraordinaire, **Greg Coles**, and to committee volunteers who helped make the event a success: **Ron Pollina**, **Carol Reid**, **Louann Basillio**, **Norah McCarthy**, **Matt Kushner**, **Joan Ponti** and staff member **Mary Lyman**.

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and other relevant topics. Since the program began in 2001, over 200 teen parents have completed the program and achieved important milestones for themselves and their children. Rossyra's story below illustrates the impact and importance of Family Service's AFL Program.



*Rossyra and her sons Eliasjose and Josemil*

**ROSSYRA'S STORY**

I became pregnant at the age of 17. My parents were devastated. They took me to the doctors and I learned that I was having twins. I was shocked. What in the world would a 17-year old do with twins? I didn't know anything about life. I dropped out of school in my senior year. My parents and I didn't have a good relationship anymore. I knew they had the right to be angry. I was angry at myself.

When my children were born, everything happened so fast. I didn't have time to get ready to be a mom. I went from having schoolwork to changing diapers. I was not a child anymore. But I had a lot of support from many people including [Family Service's] AFL Program. Recently I got my GED and am very proud of myself. I am an example to my children that no matter what life brings you, you can always reach your goals. I've learned that every day I need to work harder to get my kids a better future. I am going to break the pattern people expect from a Latina teen mother.

*“The AFL Program has helped me achieve my goals. They were supportive in my time of need.”*

The AFL Program has helped me achieve my goals. They were supportive in my time of need. They told me so many positive messages that I keep with me to this day. I learned that I was not alone and that inspired me to keep moving forward. I will always be grateful for them. Five years later my children are in preschool and I am working on furthering my education.

**Family Service Receives Grant for HIV/AIDS Prevention**

Family Service was recently awarded a \$10,000 grant from the **M•A•C AIDS Fund** to support MAPA, its HIV/AIDS prevention program targeting adult Latina women. MAPA (“Mujeres en Acción Protegiéndose Ahora” translation: Women in Action Protecting Themselves Now), works with adult Latina women who are at high risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. The program curriculum addresses the risk factors that lead to HIV/AIDS exposure among Latina women, including skills for successful condom negotiation, forming healthy intimate relationships, and using positive coping skills to deal with stress. To date, 265 women have participated in the MAPA program at Family Service.

*“The MAPA program to me has been like an escape from a world where I used to feel claustrophobic. Now I feel free to live a happy life with my son. I thank Family Service for being there and showing me a way to a better life.”*

The grant from the M•A•C AIDS Fund results from the M•A•C Cosmetic Company's **VIVA GLAM Lipstick** campaign to combat HIV/AIDS worldwide. M•A•C Cosmetics has underwritten the costs of developing the VIVA GLAM Lipstick and contributed all profits associated with its sale to the M•A•C AIDS Fund. Worldwide sales of VIVA GLAM has enabled the M•A•C AIDS Fund to commit more than \$135 million over the past 14 years to help men, women and children affected by HIV and AIDS.



*Alexandra Bolaños, MAPA Program Coordinator (L), and Geovanna Gomez, Program Facilitator (R), celebrate program graduation with Eneroliza (center)*



# Please Reserve the Date

Family Service's "Rhapsody in Black and White" Dinner & Auction Gala

Friday  
May 8, 2009  
Andover Country Club

Family Service relies on the generosity of donors who make tax-deductible contributions to help us strengthen families. You may make a secure online contribution by going to [www.FamilyServiceInc.com/giving](http://www.FamilyServiceInc.com/giving).

Family Service, Inc. is a member of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce, and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, Inc.



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