



Man Dedicates His Life to Helping Homeless Youth



When Karl Blade started working at Family Counseling Agency of Tucson, George H. W. Bush was president of the United States, Johnny Carson was host of the Tonight Show, and Kris Kross was demanding that people jump, jump. A lot has changed in the 25 years since then – we’ve had four new presidents, the Cubs won a World Series and Family Counseling Agency merged with Our Town to become Our Family Services. But Karl is still here, still dedicated to serving our community’s most vulnerable people: homeless youth.

You might have seen him around. Well over six feet tall and clad in a bright orange t-shirt, Karl cuts a conspicuous figure on the streets of Tucson as he hands out food, water, hygiene packs, and business cards. His job takes him all over the city: Fourth Avenue, downtown, bus stations, gas stations, parks, camps, tunnels, washes, and anywhere else homeless youth congregate or live.

Karl is a member of Our Family’s Street Outreach team, which seeks to engage and connect homeless youth with an array of supports such as access to shelter, case management, counseling, and legal services.

“The main goal is to build a relationship,” he says about his job. “Be yourself, kids on the street can sniff out if you’re trying to be phony or fake with them. They will tune you out; I learned that from the start.” He laughs. “You have to chip away at their barriers. That’s why it helps them to see us on a regular basis and to offer them regular support.”

Once that trust is built, and the youth decides that they’re ready to make a change, they pull out Karl’s old, crumpled business card from their pocket and call him. Or, sometimes, they’re even waiting outside Our Family when he pulls up in the morning.

Karl talks about his client, “Mark.” The team initially found Mark sleeping behind the Quincie Douglas library at the corner of Kino and 36th Street. Mark has had a rough life: he suffers from schizophrenia, autism, and had a very limited ability to care for himself. After his parents died, Mark quickly found himself on the streets.

Over the next few months, Karl reviewed Mark’s history and helped to reinstate the Social Security benefits that he lost when his parents passed. Karl connected him with emergency housing through Our Family, as well as food assistance, health insurance, and mental health treatment (including medication for his schizophrenia). When Mark expressed an interest in returning to school, Karl helped him re-enroll. Today, Mark lives independently, attends school, makes his medical and therapeutic appointments, and is able to take much better care of himself. “None of this is easy,” Karl says with a smile, “patience is key.”

Why has Karl stayed for 25 years? “I like interactions with the kids, the coworkers I’ve had over the years, and the stability of the agency,” he says. “It’s challenging, but my coworkers make it enjoyable. There’s never a dull moment.” And even, sometimes, kids from the program will come back years later to thank him. They tell him about their job, their spouse, their kids... Try to give him all the credit. He’ll take some of the credit, but reminds them of all the hard work they put in to get themselves to this point.

After all his years of service, Karl sometimes jokes about retirement, but we at Our Family Services hope he stays another 25.

Beth's Corner



Happy Summer! I'm excited to give you a sneak peek as to what we have been working on diligently over the past nine months. After much conversation, exploration of our history and future, discussion, and due diligence, we have crafted a new foundation for Our Family. This foundation is outlined below, and in future newsletters, I will provide more in-depth information on each component, so stay tuned! We are currently in the process of completing our strategic plan which will be shared in our June e-newsletter (not signed up? – see the next page for more information).

On behalf of our entire team – staff, board, volunteers, and those we serve – it is my pleasure to unveil for you the results of our work.

Mission: Our Family's mission is to eliminate homelessness and strengthen our community. We do this by:

- Providing stability in times of crisis
- Linking people to support and resources
- Supporting social connectedness
- Engaging our neighbors to tackle tough community issues

Vision: Our community is a better place to live, to grow up, and to grow older.

Our Values:

- Cultivate the Human Spirit
- Honor Our Differences
- Pursue Bold Aspirations
- Lead with Integrity
- Foster a Culture of Care

Our Beliefs:

- We believe that transformative personal and community change is possible.
- We believe destructive cycles can be broken.
- We believe that safe homes and economic opportunity are fundamental human rights.
- We believe in every person's right to make their own choices.
- We believe that every person has value and deserves our respect.
- We believe that continuous learning enriches the human experience.
- We believe that open communication creates new avenues for cooperation and mutual understanding.

I will continue to look forward to new opportunities to engage you, our supporters, in our work. Enjoy your summer!

Sincerely,

Beth L. Morrison
Chief Executive Officer

Thank You 2017 Spring Luncheon Sponsors:

Table Sponsor:



Tucson Electric Power

125 YEARS OF SERVICE

Supporting Sponsors:

Anne Maley Consulting
BMO Wealth Management
Duley|Bolwar|Pederson
DeConcini, McDonald,
Yetwin & Lacey, P.C.
HSL Asset Management
Kittle Design & Construction
Lovitt & Touché
MEB Management Services
National Bank of Arizona
Nextrio
Peter DeLuca, Long Realty
Pima Dermatology
Russo, Russo & Slania, P.C.
United Healthcare

Special Thanks: Mayfield Florist

For providing beautiful
flower arrangements for our
centerpieces!

Our Family's Senior Leadership

Beth Morrison, Chief Executive Officer
Lisa Reams, Senior Director
Emily Brott, Development Director
Joan Hubele, Chief Financial Officer
Laurie Mazerbo, Dir. of Housing & Homeless Services

Board of Directors

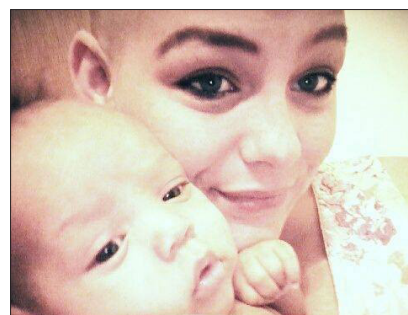
Michael Beals, Rachel Chanes, Joseph Chimienti,
Larry Cochran, Abigail Cota, Peter DeLuca,
Geneva Escobedo, Jessica Hayes, Hazel Heinzer,
Scott Koenig, Kay Nelson, Stella Rivera-Varela,
JC Rivers, Ann Ventola

Spring Luncheon Brings Crowd to Tears

"I'm like an ocean
cuz I'm never consistent
good days
bad days

I'm beautiful
but I've got some of the ugliest creatures inside me"

– excerpted from I'm like an Ocean, a poem by Shalyn*



The dining room went silent and eyes welled with tears as Shalyn, a 20-year-old Our Family client, poet, and survivor, began speaking, bravely sharing personal stories of abuse and sexual exploitation with more than 200 attendees at Our Family's 2017 Spring Luncheon.

Shalyn first became homeless after she was abandoned by her family and ran away from her abusive group home. In this vulnerable position, she was preyed upon by a sex trafficker who used the words and false affection that she – a child desperate for love and understanding – craved most. This quickly devolved into cycles of cruelty and exploitation, which lasted for years before she was able to break free permanently.

Shalyn told us how, through hard work, her life is changing. She spoke of her two young children, who she is driven to care for as best as she can. She now has stable housing, with support from Our Family Services. She often thinks about the future. Her long-term goal is to become a social worker, in order to help others overcome similar, traumatic experiences.

"I am more than my past," she said.

Most people are aware of sex trafficking – the commercial sexual exploitation of a person, especially a minor, often through the use of force – and are justifiably horrified. Fewer people are aware of how prevalent the practice is in our Southern Arizona backyard.

According to an Arizona State University study, one in every three homeless youth report that they have been forced or pressured to exchange sex acts for money, drugs, food, a place to stay, clothing and protection or other items while on the street.

Because of this reality, Our Family Services now provides specialized interventions for sex trafficked youth. We have developed targeted training, housing, and counseling service strategies for survivors like Shalyn. Part of that commitment is our participation in community-wide efforts to educate people on the issue.

To that end, Our Family was privileged to host speaker Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz at the Luncheon. Dr. Roe-Sepowitz is a national expert on women and violence whose work spans the prevention, detection, and trauma-focused treatment of sex trafficking survivors. These were tough conversations to hear, but we believe strongly that these are tough conversations that should take place.

Rounding out the Luncheon, Our Family Services recognized more than 120 Legacy Donors who have supported our work for 10 or more consecutive years. QuikTrip was honored as the Corporate Partner of the Year for its crucial support of the Safe Place program, which offers 24-hour intervention for youth in crisis at more than 20 locations throughout Pima County. Many thanks to Whitney Clark from KGUN9 who served as emcee.

Between sponsorship, donations raised on the day of the event, and matches from several generous donors, the 2017 Spring Luncheon raised more than \$50,000 for Our Family's community services. Together, we are making Tucson a better place to live, grow up, and grow older.

*name and photo used with permission

Stay Connected Year-Round



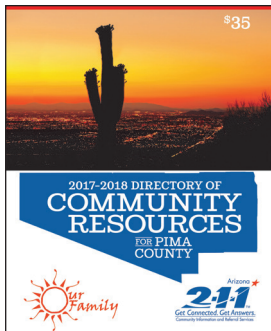
In addition to our regular print mailings, Our Family Services has electronic newsletters. Sign up for our e-newsletters and receive monthly updates on what's happening in our programs, as well as information on how you can help. Rest assured, Our Family will not share your information and you can unsubscribe any time you like. To sign up for our e-newsletters, simply text OUR FAMILY to 22828 (message and data rates apply) or email us at info@ourfamilyservices.org. You can also like us on Facebook, just search: Our Family Services.



Nonprofit Org
US Postage Paid
Tucson AZ
Permit #992

2590 N. Alvernon Way, Tucson, AZ 85712

Change service requested



Get your 2017 I&R Directory
of Community Resources
online or in our office!

Our Family Services publishes this newsletter three times a year. If you no longer wish to receive it, please let us know.

Companionship Makes a Difference for Isolated Elders

Our Family's Senior Companion Program* is a unique volunteer approach that allows homebound seniors in our community to continue living independently. Our Family recruits, trains, and supports volunteer Senior Companions, who are then matched with a senior to serve as a friend and caregiver.

For Ramiro, a Senior Companion and Vietnam Veteran, volunteering with the Senior Companion program has had just as profound an effect on him as it has on those he serves.

"Companionship made me evolve into a better person," he says. "It's great to serve other people."

Ramiro is paired with five seniors who are each veterans themselves. Through the program, they have formed strong, trusting friendships and have even been able to work through some of the trauma that they experienced during their military service.

"When we get together we open up." Ramiro says. "We talk and cry, and when we leave, we feel peaceful. We help each other heal."

Our Family Services brought the Senior Companion Program to Pima County in 2001 and has since served more than 4,000 seniors in our community.



* The Senior Companion Program is now recruiting volunteers 55 and better to provide companionship to homebound elders and adults with disabilities. Please contact Paz Preciado at (520) 323-1708 x248 for more information or to apply, or visit the Senior Companion webpage at www.ourfamilyservices.org/programs.html.