

# Good Works

Heartland Family Service Newsletter - *Issue 2, 2018*

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family  
SERVICE  
*Good works.*

## *Anita Turns Her Life Around for Herself and Her Family*

Anita grew up in a traumatic home environment, regularly witnessing an abusive relationship between her mother and father. Both of her parents were also alcoholics. By the time she finished high school, Anita was drinking daily. After having two children in her twenties, her dependence on alcohol was out of control.

*Read Anita's full story inside!*



# Anita Turns Her Life Around for Herself and Her Family

*(Continued from cover)*

Due to witnessing abuse at a young age, Anita became trapped in an abusive relationship when she was 25 and became abusive herself. During that time, her son Carson\* and daughter Holly\* were frequently left alone with no one to look after them in their Fremont home. That relationship lasted until she was 33.

“My obsession with drinking and constantly fighting with my boyfriend just consumed me,” Anita explains. “It was really Carson and Holly who suffered the most.”

One night, Anita and her boyfriend drank too much and had a heated argument while they were driving home with her children in the car. Anita’s boyfriend hit her, and she quickly pulled onto the side of the road to avoid a wreck. She was upset, and told everyone to get out of the car. As soon as they did, Anita sped away, leaving her boyfriend, Carson, and Holly standing on the edge of the highway. Scared and confused, Carson, now nine years old, ran after her car, crying and begging her to come back. Four-year-old Holly stood behind him and sobbed, unsure of what to do.

A few miles down the road, a police officer pulled Anita over for speeding, where he discovered she was too intoxicated to drive. After he checked her record, he found she was already on probation for other alcohol-related offenses and arrested her on the spot. She was later charged with Driving Under the Influence and Child Neglect. Anita went to jail, and her children went to live with her parents.

“That was really my turning point,” Anita remembers. “I knew then that I couldn’t keep going down the path I was on. My kids needed me.”

After she left jail, Anita started an inpatient treatment program at a facility in Omaha, where she had supervised visits twice a week with her children. During her time there, she was referred to the Heartland Family Service **In-Home Services** program. She later moved into a recovery home in Fremont where she continued to receive counseling and substance abuse treatment on an outpatient basis.

Gradually, Jessica, the Family Support Worker from Heartland Family Service who worked closely with Anita and her children, saw the bond between them strengthen, and she decreased the amount of supervision they needed. In February of 2018, Anita, Carson, and Holly were finally reunited. They now live together at the same recovery home in Fremont so Anita can continue to improve her life and the lives of her children.



“I feel like I can finally have the life I always wanted for me and my children,” Anita says. “I’m so grateful for all the support and guidance from Heartland Family Service. They genuinely care.”

Anita is no longer in an abusive relationship and hasn’t had a drink in more than five months. Instead, she is now focused on her establishing a safe home for herself and her children, improving their relationship, and maintaining her sobriety.

*\*Indicates name has been changed to protect client privacy.*



Learn more about the In-Home Services program at:  
<http://heartlandfamilyservice.org/child-and-family/in-home-services/>

**Dear Friends:**



In the past year, **Heartland Family Service (HFS)** experienced a significant amount of growth, and that growth is just beginning. Our **Heartland Bridges** program recently wrapped up its first full year of operations. While we are still working on collecting six-month and one-year follow-up data, we do know that at least 95% of **Heartland Bridges** clients were also referred to at least one other HFS program.

Our **Homeless Services** programming is also expanding. Last year, a private foundation awarded us a grant to help at-risk individuals and families in the metro area avoid or exit homelessness. We utilized this funding to start a new project called **Navigating to Home**, which will soon be fully operational.

HFS will be venturing into other opportunities for expansion within the next year, and we are excited to see how it will benefit the tens of thousands we serve in the community each day. Thank you for all you do to help vulnerable children, individuals, and families. Happy summer!

Sincerely,

John Jeanetta, MSW, MBA  
President and CEO



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## *HFS Welcomes New Chief Development Officer*



In May, Heartland Family Service welcomed **Marzia Puccioni Shields** as the agency's new **Chief Development Officer**. Marzia comes to HFS with nearly 25 years of development and non-profit management experience. Most recently, she served as Director of Development at Creighton University for their School of Pharmacy and Health Professions. Prior to that, Marzia worked at the Arthritis Foundation as the Executive Director of the Nebraska Chapter, and eventually as an Area Vice President of the Heartland Region.

Marzia immigrated to the United States from Italy in the 1960s with her parents and younger sister and still speaks Italian fluently. She has been married to her husband, Jim, for 10 years. She has two daughters and two lovely grandchildren, as well as a rescue dog named Princess, whom she considers her "third daughter."

"Having made a career in the non-profit world, being versatile and having a positive outlook are key," Marzia says. "It is also important to respond to changing priorities and circumstances in an open-minded, constructive, and focused manner."

Marzia is excited to join the Community Relations team at Heartland Family Service. She looks forward to developing new strategies to increase major gifts and the endowment of HFS, as well as increasing the visibility of the agency in the community.

# “Strike a Chord” 14

More than 240 guests came to celebrate with Heartland Family Service at the 14th annual “Strike a Chord” event at the Mid-America Center on Friday, June 15. This year’s event had a superhero theme and featured a silent auction, a live auction, a DJ, a costume contest, a raffle, two caricature artists, and a wine toss.



Master of Ceremonies Matt Wilber kicked off the program by auctioning off a pitcher of Mean Green Hulk Punch. Guests then played a game of Heroes or Villains before hearing about the agency’s life-saving programs from Heartland Family Service President and CEO John Jeanetta. The recipients of the Iowa Salute Awards were also introduced, and guests watched videos featuring each honoree’s amazing journey. **Nicole Rocha** was presented with the **Salute to Achievement Award**, and former HFS employee **Nancy Schulze** received the **Salute to Leadership Award**.

This year’s live auction featured some amazing travel packages from our nonprofit partner AmFund. The top-selling item was a trip to tropical Costa Rica, which sold for \$5,500.

- **Honorary Chairs:** Brooke & Jeff Hubbard (*pictured above*)
- **Estimated amount raised:** More than \$89,000
- **Proceeds benefit:** All HFS programs and services in southwest Iowa



View more photos at [Facebook.com/HeartlandFamilyService](https://www.facebook.com/HeartlandFamilyService)



Larry Dostal shows off his superhero style with Donna Dostal.



President & CEO John Jeanetta speaks during the evening’s program.



Nancy Schulze (*middle*) and members of her family pose for a photo at the start of the night.



Members of the Community Relations team pose with their capes after the event.



Nicole Rocha and her fiancé Phil Vazquez take a photo before dinner starts.



Master of Ceremonies Matt Wilber and Auctioneer Byron Menke smile during dinner.



Guests of Veridian Credit Union take a group photo during dinner.



Members of “Team Nancy” pose onstage after winning the costume contest.

# 2018 Omaha Gives!

Heartland Family Service participated in **Omaha-Pottawattamie County Gives!** for another year on Wednesday, May 23. We are pleased to announce the agency received a total of **\$39,884.21!** This important community event is about participation and a chance to show which organizations you support in the metro area. This year, we had a total of 142 unique donors. Also, the Scooter's location near 180th and Q streets generously donated 50% of their sales to us between 7 and 9 a.m. that day.

We would like to thank all of this year's donors, our staff, our supporters, and everyone who liked, shared, and commented on our social media posts. Our agency would not be successful without the help of each and every one of you!



Staff at our Central Office stand outside to show a fundraising update.



Members of our Homeless Services program show their support during Omaha Gives!

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Did you know May has been observed as **Mental Health Awareness Month** since 1949? The **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** reports that one in five adults in the United States is affected by a mental health condition each year. Those who suffer from mental illness often do not seek help because of the stigma that surrounds it.

Mental health disorders affect men and women differently, as well as people of various ages, races, and socioeconomic statuses. According to NAMI, the rates of severe youth depression have increased over the past five years. Women are twice as likely to have an anxiety disorder as men, and African Americans and Hispanic Americans each use mental health services at half the rate of Caucasian Americans. Also, an estimated 26% of homeless adults staying in shelters live with serious mental illness.

Mental health and physical health go hand-in-hand, and the two greatly impact each other. Some easy ways you can nurture your mental health are to exercise regularly, drink lots of water, establish a healthy sleep schedule, and eat a well-balanced diet.

If you or a loved one are feeling sad or troubled, there is always help available. Take our free, anonymous mental health screening at: [screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/HEARTLANDFS](http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/HEARTLANDFS)



A green ribbon signifies Mental Health Awareness.



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# Staff Spotlight: Nicky Clark



Heartland Family Service has nearly 500 employees, and we value each of them as individuals. This quarter, our **Staff Spotlight** is on Assistant Vice President **Nicky Clark**.

Nicky has received many Outstanding Employee recognitions throughout her time at Heartland Family Service. Most recently, Nicky was the recipient of the **Open Heart Award**, which is given to an individual or team who exemplifies the trauma-informed and inclusive culture of HFS.

Nicky has been with Heartland Family Service for almost seven years. She began as the **Ready in 5** Coordinator, where she worked with preschool-age refugee children and their parents. She then moved on to become the Community Education Program Director, overseeing eight programs that focus on early childhood, parenting, education, refugee populations, juvenile justice, and restorative justice. These programs include, but are not limited to, **Ready in 5**, **Baby TALK**, **HALO**, and our **Positive Parenting Group**. Nicky is an expert in the community on working with refugee populations and cultural responsiveness, especially in the early childhood field.

She was promoted to Assistant Vice President last year and now acts as the lead on the agency's place-based and workforce initiatives. Nicky currently trains new employees on the **Trauma-Informed Care Initiative** after it was started several years ago, as well as training them on Heartland Family Service's **Culture of Inclusion**.

"Working at Heartland Family Service has given me a lot of opportunities to develop myself both professionally and personally," Nicky states. "I am grateful to work for an agency whose culture is closely aligned with what I value as a person."

Nicky serves on several agency committees including the **Trauma-Informed Steering Committee**, the **Culture of Inclusion Council**, and the **North Omaha Community Council**. She also serves as the co-chair of LinC, the Employee Resource Group (ERG) that focuses on race and identity.

"I am where I am in this agency because I have an amazing team where we all support each other," Nicky says.

## 2017-2018 Student League Graduation

A total of 47 students graduated from the 2017-2018 **Student League** class on Sunday, April 15 at Happy Hollow Club. The ninth-grade students gained practical leadership skills and first-hand experience in human services by volunteering for several agency programs, such as **Family Works** and the **Generations Center**. These students also participated in a number of educational events, including a poverty simulation, to learn how to relate to people from diverse backgrounds.

One group of students wrote a grant for the **Youth Links** program, which was approved to install a permanent basketball hoop at their facility. This year's students attended at least 17 educational and service events from September through March for a combined total of 640 volunteer hours. If you are interested in having your son or daughter join **Student League**, contact Community Engagement Manager Melinda Eames at [MEames@HeartlandFamilyService.org](mailto:MEames@HeartlandFamilyService.org).



Colin Mahoney receives his Student League graduation certificate.

### HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED



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TogetherAGreaterGood.com



smile.amazon.com



**Wish Lists**  
[HeartlandFamilyService.org/wish-lists](http://HeartlandFamilyService.org/wish-lists)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Comedy Night**  
August 17, 2018  
Fremont Golf Club  
Fremont, NE



**Safe Haven Golf Tournament**  
September 10, 2018  
Oak Hills Country Club  
Omaha, NE

**Salute to Families**  
November 15, 2018  
Happy Hollow Country Club  
Omaha, NE

**Good Works 101**  
Learn about HFS,  
enjoy lunch on us!  
(402) 552-7418



For more information about our upcoming events, check out our [Calendar page at HeartlandFamilyService.org](http://HeartlandFamilyService.org), contact us at [Events@HeartlandFamilyService.org](mailto:Events@HeartlandFamilyService.org)