



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
ILLINOIS

SOS NEWSLETTER FALL / WINTER 2015

# **FAMILY:** **A PATCHWORK** **OF LOVE**

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**FAMILY MATTERS - MEET OUR NEW COO**  
**PG 5**

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**THREADS OF GOLD:**  
HOW OUR EXTENDED FAMILY MAKES THE SOS DIFFERENCE  
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**SOS CHILDREN'S  
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## SPECIAL THANKS

Hanging over the fireplace mantel inside the Lockport Village Administrative Office is a quilt made from the artwork of boys and girls who have since grown up and left the Village. The pieces were sewn together by the Lockport Heritage Quilters and hung in 2002. For over fifteen years, the Lockport Heritage Quilters have quite literally wrapped each child in warmth and love by sewing every boy and girl a quilt, personalized with each child's name. Moreover, every December, the quilters add to our holiday cheer by making stocking stuffers for everyone at the Village. The support of the Lockport Heritage Quilters is a reminder of how our lives are like quilts – bits and pieces, joy and sorrow, stitched together with love.

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## DO WE HAVE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS?

Don't miss out on event announcements and Village news. Send your e-mail address to:

[KKAVANAGH@SOSILLINOIS.ORG](mailto:KKAVANAGH@SOSILLINOIS.ORG)

We'll make sure you're on the list!

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CEO Message

## THE COMMON THREAD

WE ARE UNITED IN A COMMON SENSE OF CARE,  
AND LOVE IS THE THREAD THAT BINDS US

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS CEO - TIM MCCORMICK



As we approach the end of the year, each of us recognizes the holiday season is a time-honored opportunity for friends and family to gather, pass on stories, and share a meal. This is certainly true at each of our homes throughout every one of our Villages, which provide care 24 hours of every day and continuously work to ensure that families can be together not just for the holidays, but throughout the year. A safe, loving home for brothers and sisters, a full-time Foster Parent, and an intentional community: these are the pieces by which we operate, woven together by the common thread of family.

The sad reality is 75% of brothers and sisters in traditional foster care are separated and end up living in different homes. If a child is removed from the only environment he or she knows, no matter the situation, and experiences physical and emotional isolation, then trauma is compounded. In fact, the loneliness causes even more harm in the most stressful situations.

Because of the support of many people like you, we are able to offer an alternative that focuses on keeping families together. Your dedication to helping us unite brothers and sisters allows our children the chance to create an even greater bond

with one another, especially at a time in history when the nucleus of a family is changing. While it is true the notion of family continues to be refined and debated by political, legal, and faith-based groups, I would suggest there are certain core elements that are essential to the meaning and understanding of family.

We, as members of our own families, share not only a common space, but also a common purpose in living together. We are united in a common sense of care, and love is the thread that binds us: a love known in service to others; true authentic friendship with each other; and providing support and charity to others. I also suggest that as we understand and experience not just our SOS families, but all our families, we consider three other essential elements that make up a family today.

First is the element of struggle. Struggles appear both outside of the home in our day-to-day lives, as well as inside the home with the challenges that come with living in close quarters with one group of people. In the midst of those struggles, a family can provide healing and restorative strength to move forward. The second element of any family is the notion of commitment. Commitment

provides a true sense of stability for each member of the family unit, who knows despite the struggles and hardships they may encounter that each member of the family stands together united as one. And third, a core element of family is that of nourishment. The holiday meal is just one form of nourishment, but families can nourish each other every day with physical, emotional, and spiritual guidance to help each loved one reach his or her true potential.

I encourage you, as you read this newsletter, to reflect upon not only your experience of family, but also the common experiences threaded through: our mutual struggles of understanding one another; commitment to stand with each other; and nourishment of our minds, bodies, and souls. Together as we build families at SOS Illinois, we patch the hopes and dreams of many lives and in doing so strengthen the fabric of our communities, allowing us to become one united Village.

## VILLAGE VOICES

STITCHED TOGETHER WITH LOVE: THE FABRIC OF FAMILY



"Everyone needs their family, but your family doesn't need to be blood."

**TERIK, SOS ALUMNI**



"My big sister helps me do my best thinking."

**CIARA, AGE 6**



"My brothers and I would do anything for each other."

**RICHARD, AGE 13**



"I remember the first time I really laughed here. All the worry I had to have for my sister and I vanished."

**JULIA, AGE 17**



## RESOURCE LIST – EVERY CHILD NEEDS A FAMILY



Family can take many forms and be defined in different ways, but the influence of family on the development of young children cannot be disputed. A recent Annie E. Casey Foundation report called *Every Kid Needs a Family* speaks to the priceless value of family.

As we reflect on the importance of family bonds this month, we invite you to visit our blog to read about a few other great resources we appreciate for their perspectives on and commitment to family. Visit [sosillinois.org](http://sosillinois.org) to continue reading.

"EVERY KID NEEDS A FAMILY. THIS, WE KNOW. WE KNOW IT WHEN WE LOOK AT OUR OWN CHILDREN AND THINK ABOUT OUR DREAMS FOR THEM. WE KNOW IT IN OUR HEARTS, IN OUR BONES AND FROM OUR OWN STORIES. WHETHER 'FAMILY' MEANS A MOTHER AND FATHER, A SINGLE PARENT, A BELOVED AUNT OR UNCLE, A GRANDPARENT OR A CARING FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE FAMILY, THIS BOND GIVES MEANING TO OUR SUCCESSES, CUSHIONS OUR HARDSHIPS AND ALLOWS US TO BE MOST OURSELVES."

ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

# FAMILY MATTERS: MEET OUR NEW COO

*We ask you to join us in extending a warm welcome to Ms. Tracy Levine, who became a part of the SOS Children's Villages Illinois family in November of this year. As the new **Chief Operating Officer**, Tracy brings twenty-five years of direct service, clinical, supervisory, and administrative experience serving youth and families in a non-profit setting, and a great deal of knowledge regarding child welfare policy.*



Tracy comes to SOS Children's Villages Illinois from Lawrence Hall Youth Services, a child welfare agency established to assist at-risk youth and their families to overcome past trauma through a continuum of care encompassing clinical services, and educational support. As Vice President of Foster Care and Older Adolescent Services, Tracy developed and implemented the first Illinois Treatment Foster Family Home (TFFH) Program in cooperation with the Department of Children and Family Services, and authored an award-winning Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Tracy was responsible for achieving program compliance and stability, and led her program to a number-one performance ranking. She also served as a delegate for the Chicago Sister Cities International-Paris Social Services Exchange and is a guest lecturer and field instructor. We are grateful that Ms. Levine has chosen to lend us the benefit of her vast experience and leadership. We recently interviewed Ms. Levine to share with you her thoughts about her new role at SOS Children's Villages Illinois.

## WHAT DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO MOST IN YOUR NEW ROLE AS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AT SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS?

I am really excited to meet the children and families in the Villages, as well as all of the staff. I look forward to learning more about our strengths and challenges and how I can work collaboratively with the team to move the agency forward, as well as connecting us with the greater Foster Care community and ensuring we are providing quality trauma-informed services.

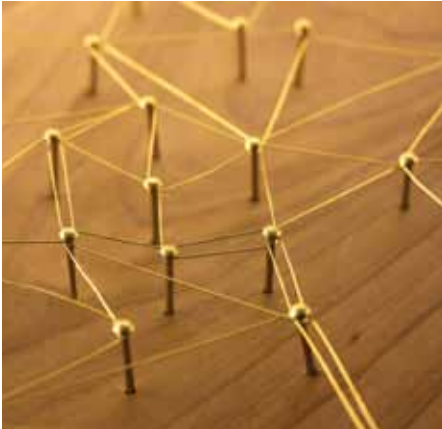
## WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL PART OF OUR VILLAGE MODEL OF CARE?

I have always been intrigued with the micro-community that the Village creates, with the inherent support of neighbors who are also Foster Parents, and the accessibility of staff and resources. The Villages' mission to keep siblings together, or at least within proximity, is essential for children who are experiencing the trauma of separation from their primary caregiver(s).

## LIKE MOST FAMILIES, THERE ARE HOUSE RULES. WHAT "HOUSE" RULES HAVE YOU FOUND TO BE HELPFUL AT YOUR PREVIOUS WORKPLACE?

Be patient. Be fair. Be available and accessible. Balance support and accountability, as well as independence and teamwork. Listen with an open mind. Be a part of the solution.

# THREADS OF GOLD: HOW OUR EXTENDED



*FRIENDS ARE THREADS OF GOLD  
IN THE QUILT OF LIFE.*

We proudly regard our corporate partners, sponsors, and supporters not just as our friends, but as extended family. It is thanks to your generous contributions that we continue on the path to better serve the children and youth in our care. Your support helps ensure that our educational and activity programming can provide supplementary academic support at every level of learning so that each child can become a contributing member of society.

## PROGRAMS

### College Bound and Beyond

Our College Bound and Beyond program involves a care team of Foster Parents, educators, and community members, who work in unison to ensure each child successfully matriculates to the next grade. The goal is to empower youth to figure out where they are going after high school – be it college, trade school, an apprenticeship, or employment.

SOS Children's Villages Illinois emphasizes education throughout its programming and services. This indoctrination results in a 100% high school graduation rate year after year. Its design ensures that foster youth in grades 7-12 have the skills and support to graduate from high school and be on the road to self-sufficiency. Our 100% high school graduation rate far exceeds the national average of 50% for children in foster care. Our Foster Parents, volunteers, and employees also receive training so they can create an environment that helps youth succeed.

We are grateful for the major support received in 2014 and 2015 for the College Bound and Beyond program from: **Christian and Sibi Bale**; the **Caterpillar Foundation**; the **Chicago Blackhawks Community Fund**, a McCormick Foundation Fund; **HSBC**; the **Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation**; and **U.S. Bank**.



## EVENTS

### Evening of Hope

This year's *Evening of Hope* was the 5th annual fall fundraising event benefitting SOS Children's Villages Illinois. The Cirque Soiree-themed event took place at Venue One on October 15 and raised over \$260,000. At the main event, Illinois' Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti delivered remarks and congratulated the Evening of Hope Honorees, children from our Villages who have shown progress and success in their educational goals.



# OUR FAMILY MAKES THE SOS DIFFERENCE



The evening began with a VIP Backstage Reception attended by special guests including: Thomas Powers - Commissioner - Chicago Dept. Of Water Management; Paul Kovacs - Chief of Engineering - IL State Tollway Authority; Mike Stone - Chief of Staff - IL State Tollway Authority; Gustavo Giraldo - Chief of Diversity and Strategic Development - IL State Tollway Authority; and select guests of \$5,000-and-above level event sponsors.

The evening's in-kind donors included: food and beverage from: **Lagunitas Brewing Company; Garret Popcorn; Eli's Cheesecake; Edrington - Macallan; Hershey's Chicago; Solemn Oath Brewery; Southern Wine & Spirits; and Argus Brewery.** Professional services were provided by: **Images, Inc.; Zzazz Productions; and Cushing.**

This year's presenting sponsor was **WSP - Parsons Brinckerhoff.** Other top sponsors included **CivCon Engineering; HNTB; Images, Inc.; and TranSystems.**



## Related Lend Lease Annual Charity Golf Classic



Our valued extended family members at **Related Midwest and Lend Lease** sponsored their Annual Charity Golf Classic at Harborside International Golf Course on September 17. This year's event, presented by Snaidero, was once again sold out with over 300 golfers. Proceeds benefitted SOS Children's Villages Illinois and two other child welfare organizations. SOS Illinois received over \$165,000. This year's Golf Classic also marked \$2 million raised throughout the history of the annual event.

## OUR GRATITUDE

With the gracious support of our extended family, the organization continues to improve its ability to strengthen the lives of the children in our care. Words will have to suffice to express our appreciation, as well as the gratitude from the hundreds of youth who have and will continue to benefit from the generosity of our partners.

And with your support, we proudly announce that SOS Children's Villages Illinois was recognized as one of twenty "Best Charities in Chicago" by *Chicago Magazine* in its November 2015 issue.



**CHICAGO**  
MAGAZINE

## SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS

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### ONE STITCH AT A TIME: YEAR-END GIVING

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO YOU AND  
YOUR FAMILY FROM THE FAMILIES AT  
SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INSPIRING  
SUPPORT IN 2015. PLEASE HELP SOS  
ILLINOIS FINISH 2015 EVEN STRONGER  
BY CONTRIBUTING A YEAR-END GIFT

As the end of the year approaches, charitable giving provides an opportunity for tax savings. However, making a charitable gift is more than just careful tax planning; it is also an opportunity to make a difference for the children and families who call our Villages home. Now is the time to consider making year-end charitable contributions to SOS Children's Villages Illinois. To ensure your gift is credited in calendar year 2015, your gift must be received or postmarked by December 31, 2015.

**NOW IS THE TIME TO  
CONSIDER MAKING  
YEAR-END CHARITABLE  
CONTRIBUTIONS**



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
ILLINOIS



The end of year also offers the opportunity to review your charitable giving intentions. Consider including SOS Illinois in your estate planning as a beneficiary of your will, trust, life insurance, and individual retirement accounts (IRA).

Help SOS Children's Villages Illinois provide for more children in future years. One stitch at a time, one gift at a time, your contribution can make a difference.

We look forward to continuing to help you achieve your charitable goals!

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GIFT PLANNING OPTIONS OR TO MAKE  
A GIFT, VISIT [SOSILLINOIS.ORG](http://SOSILLINOIS.ORG).**

