



2020 Highlights

Healthy Futures: Social Service Team members include one supervisor, five licensed social workers, three case managers, four practicum students, and one college student. In addition, Children First partners with Holy Family Clinic, which provides one registered nurse.

By the Numbers:

- 4,422 social service impacts on students and their families (vs 2,763 in 2019)¹
- 1,581 student impacts from group sessions (vs 529 in 2019)
- 2,810 impacts from items in the Basic Needs Pantry (vs 1,138 in 2019)²
- 153 pairs of new shoes
- 210 winter coats
- 27 students provided with school uniforms.
- Assistance with utility bills (37 families) and rent/mortgage payments (27 families) to keep their children in school.
- Assisted one single mother with five children living in their car to secure safe housing.
- Provided learning experiences for four practicum social-work students from Newman University, University of Kansas, Wichita State University, and Bethel College.



The Children First Ambassadors program provides middle-school students with the opportunity to learn leadership skills through service-learning projects. For example, students at St. Patrick Catholic School created 24 bags for homeless youth in partnership with the Wichita Children's Home. Each bag consisted of hat, gloves, socks, hand warmers, feet warmers, toothbrush kit, shampoo and conditioner, body wash, lotion, and chap stick.

Christmas Store: In December, we piloted the Children First Christmas Store at Evergreen Community Center. With gifts provided by Tanker 3 McConnell AFB, NuStar Energy L.P., and an anonymous corporate partner, over 300 gifts were provided to 140 low-income students.



¹ Each visit with a social service team member is one impact

² For example, if one student received a one-on-one session, one pair of shoes, and one coat = 3 impacts



Response to COVID-19: As COVID-19 became a reality, Children First made rapid adjustments in services. For example:

Emergency Workers: Children First was proud to assist St. Patrick Catholic School during COVID-19, providing additional workers in the kitchen to prepare 1,100 meals per day, with an impact of 8 weeks x 5 days x 1,100 meals = 44,000 meals. From March 30 through May 21 (8 weeks), Children First provided 630 hours of labor, employing individuals who had lost their jobs due to COVID-19 or who had received assistance from Children First in the past. As stated by Mr. Brandon D. Relph, Principal, St. Patrick Catholic School, "We are so appreciative of the help that Children First was able to provide during the final quarter of the school year. We would not have been able to minister to the community in the same fashion without the assistance. Thank you!"



Emergency Food Boxes: With COVID-19 came overwhelming calls for help with emergency food. From mid-May through December, Children First's social service team delivered 476 Food Boxes (13,328 individual meals) to families in need. The boxes included shelf-stable food for a family of four, lasting seven days (breakfast, dinner, and a few snacks).



Beef Up the Pantry: As the social workers began home visits with emergency food boxes, they began to understand the level of food insecurity experienced by families. Children First created a food system to address the needs of families at a basic level to get more food and capacity to store food into the home. Level One: Most rental houses have exceedingly small kitchens, so storing bulk amounts of food is difficult. Beef Up the Pantry Level One provided commercial-strength shelving and two air-tight storage containers for 50 lbs. of rice and 50 lbs. of beans to 21 families, impacting 126 individuals. When Children First Ambassadors collected shelf-stable food, these families receive the food to fill their new shelves. Level Two: six families scored extremely high on our food insecurity survey and received a freezer with an order of self-selected meat.





STEM PLUS: Our Food and Garden focus continued to grow with one Education Garden Manager, one VISTA and one AmeriCorps member.³

The Children First STEM Plus team was able to utilize the unexpected turns of 2020 to establish a stronger infrastructure and preparedness for coming years of garden education at three locations while also safely working with more students than ever before. While COVID-19 started to shut things down right as we were getting started with garden time in the spring it led three great college students Conrad Sissell, Abby Noyes, and Caroline Honas to join our Summer VISTA program led by Wesley Moore. Together they were able to grow several hundred pounds of tomatoes, cucumbers, potatoes, greens, herbs, and more that were sent directly to families in need. They also installed 10 new garden boxes at St. Anne's, irrigation at St. Patrick's, and removed yards of Bermuda grass and bindweed from the St. Margaret Mary garden to prepare it for boxes to be installed in 2021.

During the summer, a crew of parish members volunteered to construct a large pergola at St. Anne's that will provide much needed shade in the paved area of the garden so students can read, do homework, and hold class out in the garden. This success also led to supplies and initial steps of a pergola being constructed at St. Patrick's that will be finished in the spring. Families from the St. Patrick's Parish also came out in the fall to help with garden cleanup and to allow kids to contribute to the WSU class's art project by painting butterflies on the sides of the garden boxes.



Children First VISTA Lauren and AmeriCorps member Catalina have spent the past six months working with teachers and students in the three education gardens. Using the garden playbook lessons, students have learned about planting, growing, and harvesting food. Many students were able to try new foods, such as bok choy, basil, and radishes! Teachers love the education gardens and curriculum, stating "...they will never get the same thing from my science lessons they get from garden time. By participating in garden, we get applicable life skills which is not an opportunity many students are offered."

³ VISTA and AmeriCorps programs are similar to the Peace Corps, with a focus on local programs to alleviate poverty, managed by Wichita State University



The Children First Education Garden at St. Patrick Catholic School received a blessing from the Wichita State University Community Arts Engagement Class. Led by Robert Bulp (Associate Professor at the School of Art, Design, & Creative Industries), the class engaged the neighborhood to select a design for a



mural to be painted on the garden wall, and then completed the work. WSU student Ali Miro (who is of Cuban,



Mexican, and German heritage) based her images on sources she found from historic Aztec and Mayan codices that featured gods of nature: Sun, Wind, Earth, and Water. Children First is grateful for funding support from Sherwin Williams, Wichita State University Foundation, St. Patrick Catholic Church, and Sprouts Healthy Community.



Remembering Alf Marrin: In 2020, Alf Marrin, died leaving us with sadness and the delight of remembering his passion for life. His wife, Ilenya Marrin, has provided a financial gift to open an endowment for Children First to continue his legacy of cooperation and joy.