DABSJ SHINES ON
Supporting Kids and Families During a Pandemic

2020 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT
Dear DABSJ Supporters and Friends,

Crisis spurs innovation. When the pandemic hit, DABSJ was challenged to rethink how we support our children and families. We dedicated ourselves to finding new and innovative ways to do this critical work and continue to provide support. We worked to keep our teams, families and children safe. We recognized that the stressors that came along with a pandemic would mean kids and families needed us now more than ever. We quickly moved to virtual appointments and tele-health services while ensuring that families had the technology needed to receive their services.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the children and families we support have continued to be our top priority. Our residential program remains open and our dedicated team members are there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to support the kids on our campus. Our adoption team successfully placed 38 children in loving, permanent homes while navigating the complexities of a virtual courtroom. One loving couple, Kelly and Jason Noling, adopted teen brothers this year, and Jason shared, “I think my two sons, Harley and Koda, have been the best things to happen to me and Kelly.”

Our foster care team embraced the opportunity to be creative in order to ensure continued engagement despite the barriers presented by COVID-19. Care packages were put together for our foster parents and delivered to their doorsteps. Even during a pandemic, we were able to support 223 children in foster care and ensure their safety in loving homes.

Our Family Preservation team continued important behavioral health therapy by providing more than 500 virtual counseling sessions. We also provided services to support the stability of 1,787 children and families through 13 different programs. In one instance, our clinical team counseled a teen girl who lost a loved one during the pandemic. The teen was struggling in school and having nightmares. After our clinician worked with her, her social worker provided the following update: “She has improved her grades, talks to her family about her needs and smiles every day!” This is just one example of the many bright spots we were able to provide for kids and families during a challenging year!

While 2020 was difficult, we are humbled by the positive outcomes our team achieved for children and their families. Achieving successful transformations during crises requires the dedication and commitment of everyone, including people like you! We are so grateful for the outpouring of support from our generous donors, who remained a consistent bright spot throughout the pandemic. While 2020 had many challenges, we focus on the good that occurred and all the children and families we were able to support by working together. We look forward to all the bright spots in the years ahead through our combined efforts to support children and empower families by providing safety, advocacy and support.

We appreciate your amazing support in 2020 and are grateful that DABSJ can shine on for kids and families because of your continued dedication to our mission.

With gratitude and focus on the future,

Mary Muliett, 
President/CEO

Sonali Allen, 
Board Chair
COVID-19 challenged DABSJ’s delivery of support. The closure of schools, delays with the courts, and changes in the state’s funding and regulations changed the way DABSJ meets children’s needs. Many of our programs pivoted to virtual delivery and developed creative ways to address the new stresses of pandemic life. Thanks to the innovation, passion and dedication of our team and donors, DABSJ offered unwavering safety, advocacy and support to children and families.

7,100 Children & Families Supported in 2020
**Foster Care**

Providing a temporary and nurturing home until children can be reunited with their parents.

- **223** children in care and **73 children** successfully discharged
- **101** families licensed to provide foster homes: including 15 approved relative homes and an additional 32 new licensed homes

**Adoption**

Providing loving homes and forever families.

- **97** children were supported toward achieving permanency through adoption
- **38** children were placed with an adoptive family
- **370** families in 52 counties received support from Adoptive Family Support Network (AFSN)

**Family Preservation Services**

Strengthening families one session at a time. Trained therapists, mentors and counselors help children and parents learn how to deal more effectively with trauma, developmental disabilities, substance use, stress, and mental and emotional health.

**Programs** include Behavioral Health, Early Childhood Attachment, Enhanced Foster Care, Family Support Services, Foster Care Supportive Visitation, Kent School Services Network, Mentoring, Multi-Systemic Therapy Program, Trauma Focused — Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Young Delinquent Intervention Program.

- **1,787** children and families supported through 13 different programs

**Medical Services**

Medical Services team managed the medical, dental and/or psychiatric care of **346** children

**Residential**

Treatment that focuses on community integration and permanency for kids.

- **81** children supported in Residential Treatment
Danielle is a high school student who has navigated many challenges this past year. On top of the stress from COVID-19 she was grieving the loss of her aunt. They were close; in fact, she considered her aunt a second mom, so this loss was very difficult. At the time Danielle was living in a very small residence with 8 people. She wanted to talk about her aunt to help work through her grief, but her family worried they would upset her by saying the wrong thing and avoided speaking about what happened. Due to her inability to grieve in a healthy manner, she began experiencing nightmares, which were making it difficult for her to fall asleep at night. She began working with her school counselor through the Kent School Services Network (KSSN) program at DABSJ.

During counseling sessions Danielle would frequently yawn and fall asleep. Her counselor thought the nightmares would go away with time, but they did not. When school resumed in-person she spent much of her first semester feeling tired and unlike herself. Dealing with the loss of her aunt, a pandemic and a changing school schedule was very stressful. They tried different tactics, such as meditation and anxiety medication to no avail.

The KSSN counselor taught Danielle how to grieve on her own and communicate with her family. She was slowly feeling better and gained more confidence to talk to her mom and others. Danielle was also seeing a psychiatrist who worked with her DABSJ counselor to find a new prescription that finally helped. Danielle gained the energy to improve her grades in school, plan and talk to her family about her needs, and smile day to day.

“She was able to sleep, finally, and has the energy again to smile in my office and laugh like she used to when we began working together a year prior,” her counselor said. “It can be difficult to reach families through virtual meetings. Danielle has a great heart, and an even greater smile. It was sad to see a bright soul dimmed by circumstances of nightmares and a pandemic that caused no room in her home to grieve as her family was in close quarters together due to finances.”

Although it took many months and a lot of effort from everyone involved, Danielle is very happy that she opened up and spent time on her treatment plan. Danielle recently said she would like to thank DABSJ but is also proud of herself for her willingness to seek help and advocate for herself. Through this experience, her counselor believes that in the future, she will be more capable of tackling hardships that may come her way.

Danielle, DABSJ wants you to know we are proud of you too!

Find more stories and statistics at dabsj.org.
Mallory Korpalski grew up in an almost overly involved family – with parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins around for every birthday, every athletic event and every milestone. Her extreme gratitude for her own experience encouraged Mallory to support others. As a current board member, she leverages her time, talents and financial support to help DABSJ realize our mission. Mallory states, “Too many children in our community are in situations and have barriers that no child should have to face, and DABSJ does incredibly important work to change those situations and remove those barriers.”

What keeps Mallory committed is both the kids and the passion of those at the agency. “Everyone I’ve met who is connected to the agency is extremely passionate about the mission, from volunteers to administrative assistants to senior leadership. It is a group of people deeply committed to supporting families and children,” said Mallory. The children are the driving force behind Mallory’s commitment. As a former member of the Emerging Leaders Council, she volunteered at a summer BBQ with some of the children in our residential program as well as handed out baskets full of apartment-warming supplies to a teen who had aged out of foster care and moved into their first independent living situation.

In addition to supporting children and families at DABSJ, Mallory and her husband, Kyle, work hard to involve their children in understanding why and how they support DABSJ. Her children participate in holiday giving by being paired with children of similar ages and helping to pick out gifts for them. One of their favorite Sunday afternoon activities was a family trip to the store to fill backpacks for children in foster care.

DABSJ is incredibly grateful for Mallory and the Korpalski family’s inspiring passion and investment in the lives of vulnerable children and families.

We wish to acknowledge and thank the following supporters who have designated DABSJ as a beneficiary in their estate plans:

**BEQUESTS**
DABSJ is most grateful for the generous friends who remembered children and empowered families through their legacy giving.

Estate of Gerald L. Whitten
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THANK YOU
Community Support Is a Bright Light

DABSJ is grateful for the outpouring of support from our generous donors, who remained a consistent bright spot throughout the pandemic. We greatly appreciate the emergency grants we received, including a $100,000 grant from Kent County’s Coronavirus Response Fund through Heart of West Michigan United Way as well as $150,000 in funding from the CARES Act to support behavioral health services for vulnerable families and academic support for children living in our residential program.

THANK YOU to all our donors who donated in response to COVID-19 to help children and families stay safe and healthy!

Additionally, DABSJ received an incredible amount of in-kind donations, including personal protective equipment, supplies, activities and gifts to ensure children were both safe and had some small comforts during the pandemic.

1,799 masks were donated – totaling $7,842.99 in value to keep children, visitors and staff safe

Over 400 children received backpacks and school supplies through our Backpack Drive

674 children were able to enjoy the holidays thanks to the generosity of nearly 400 donors

The Power of a Mentor & Family

Growing up, Naomi never knew when her next meal would be or if the roof they were living under would last long. In 2008, the summer before Naomi entered sixth grade, she joined D.A. Blodgett – St. John’s mentoring program as a mentee. This is when she met her mentor, Connie.

“When I was with her, I knew that everything was ok and that nothing bad was going to happen,” said Naomi. “I was able to tell her anything. I know even now that if I need anything, she would help me.” Not long after Naomi joined the mentoring program, she was removed from her mother’s home and placed in foster care. Connie stood by Naomi’s side through it all.

Even though Naomi had Connie’s constant support, she described her time in foster care as a very difficult part of her life. When she was in middle school, her foster mom worked at an elementary school as a substitute teacher. On the days that her foster mom would have to teach, she would spend time at the elementary school after she got out of her own classes. This is where she connected with Tom Rhein, a teacher, and got to know him and his wife, Sarah.

Their connection continued to grow and in 2010 Tom and Sarah told Naomi they wanted to adopt her and her younger brother. Shortly after they moved in with the Rheins and became a family.

“I know now that I have two parents who love and treat me like I am their daughter and not their friend,” said Naomi. “I couldn’t have asked for better parents. They both love me and care for me. I know I can go to them for anything. They have given me so much in life that I don’t know where I would be in life without them.”

To read the whole story and hear what Naomi is up to today, visit dabsj.org.
REVENUE & EXPENSES

TOTAL REVENUE $15,277,832
- 80% Public Grants & Contracts
- 11% Charitable & In-Kind Gifts
- 2% Restricted Funds
- >1% Investments & Fees
- 8% Paycheck Protection Program

TOTAL EXPENSES $15,277,832
- 24% Family Preservation Services
- 32% Foster Care & Adoption
- 26% Residential Services
- 14% Management & General
- 3% Fundraising
TOGETHER FOR KIDS CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

We have raised $9.6 million – bringing us to 96% of our $10 million goal.

A lot has changed in the world and at DABSJ since the capital campaign began, and we are currently working on refining and revising the plans for our new building to best accommodate the needs of our kids, families and the DABSJ team. The architectural design will be finalized in May 2021 and the contractor selection process will follow. We look forward to breaking ground this fall and moving into the facility in late 2022.

WHILE THE TIMELINE TO START CONSTRUCTION AND THE SCALE OF THE BUILDING HAVE SHIFTED SLIGHTLY DUE TO COVID-19, OUR CAMPAIGN GOALS REMAIN THE SAME:

• INTEGRATE OUR PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES, IMPROVING OUR EFFECTIVENESS AND YOUTH AND FAMILY OUTCOMES.

• SAVE APPROXIMATELY $100,000 IN ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS.

• INCREASE OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT.