



# Connections

Your Donor Newsletter

## Hope and Healing

by Liza Long

**W**hen a child is diagnosed with any serious illness, the first question parents often ask is "Why my child?" Accepting a diagnosis is hard enough, and in the case of mental illness, parents tend to blame themselves. To make matters worse, oftentimes, teachers, friends, family members, other parents, and healthcare providers also believe the parents are the source of their child's mental illness.

Not only is the process of diagnosing a mental illness flawed and confusing, but the mental health care system itself is fragmented and stigmatized. We would

**“My son is not a bad kid. He is a wonderful boy who has a mental illness.”**

never blame a parent for their child's cancer. Yet parents of a mentally ill child are ostracized, accused, and left to suffer in shame and silence.

That was my experience. As a young mother, I knew my sweet second son was struggling. He had night terrors and frequent ear infections. His tantrums would last for hours; leaving us both exhausted. The pediatrician simply said, "He's just a boy. He'll grow out of it." He didn't.

In fact, as he got older, his behavioral symptoms became more extreme and unpredictable. We embarked on a complex journey through a maze of systems— educational testing, psychiatry, occupational therapy. The medications he took didn't help; they just caused him to put on weight.

By the time my son was ten years old, he had already been evaluated more than once for autism spectrum disorder.



He was also diagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder, ADHD, and intermittent explosive disorder, all of which only meant that he would become a small blonde-haired terrifying whirlwind without warning.

He threatened to kill himself and me many times. One month after his 11th birthday, he was arrested and sent to juvenile detention. He would return there three more times and endure three psychiatric hospitalizations before we finally got a diagnosis of bipolar disorder and treatments that work for him. It was during one of my son's hospitalizations that the Sandy Hook tragedy happened, and I wrote the blog post "I am Adam Lanza's mother." My son is not a bad kid. He is a wonderful

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## Facts about Childhood Mental Illness

<p><b>1 in 5</b> U.S. children have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder</p>	<p><b>\$247</b> billion in societal costs, i.e. health services &amp; crime</p>	<p><b>1/2</b> of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14</p>	<p><b>1 in 4</b> parents struggle to find mental health services for their child</p>
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# Hope and Healing

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boy who happens to have a significant health challenge. Now that he finally received a proper diagnosis and treatment, he has embraced self-advocacy and works harder at his own mental health than anyone I know.

And I am not a bad mother. Like any parent of a child with an illness, I have done everything I can to find the best care for my son.

When a child is diagnosed with any serious illness, the second question parents ask is "How will my child get better?"

**Children – and adults – who have mental illness deserve our compassion and respect.**

Again, in the case of a mental illness, getting access to needed treatments can be difficult, if not impossible.

That's why the Jewish Family & Children Service is so important to the Phoenix community. They provide the support children and families need to survive and thrive despite a mental illness diagnosis, without judgment or blame.

In 2012, I wrote, "It's time to talk." Now, in 2015, I am saying, "It's time to act." Children – and adults – who have mental illness deserve our compassion and

respect. They should not be treated in jail or left homeless on the streets. Mental illness affects one in five kids in this country. It is treatable if diagnosed properly.

When we talk about stigma, what we really mean is discrimination. I urge every parent of a child with mental illness to share your story. Together, as we speak up for our kids, we can create the world we all deserve: a world of help and hope. 

**We are proud to have Liza Long as the keynote speaker at our 6th Annual Brighter Tomorrow Luncheon. For more info, visit [www.jfcsaz.org/luncheon](http://www.jfcsaz.org/luncheon).**



# Join Us for the 6th Annual Brighter Tomorrow Luncheon

## Brighter Tomorrow

**February 27 @ 11:45 a.m.**

**Arizona Biltmore Resort**

**\$180 per person**

Funds go toward behavioral healthcare and social services that help over 37,000 children, teens and adults.

**For more info:**

**[www.jfcsaz.org/luncheon](http://www.jfcsaz.org/luncheon)  
or call (602) 567-8334**



**T**his year's keynote speaker, Liza Long, is a writer, educator, mental health advocate, and mother of a child with bipolar disorder. Liza has made appearances on CNN, Dr. Oz, NBC, CBS, TedTalks, NPR and PBS to bring to light the inadequate way we address childhood mental illness in this country. Her book, "The Price of Silence" will be available for sale at the luncheon. 

*Presented by*





# Embracing the Spirit of Giving



A new record of 160 guests came bearing gifts and had a wonderful time wrapping them at our annual **It's A Wrap Holiday Luncheon**. Truckloads of beautifully wrapped gifts were distributed to over 200 foster care youth and 125 of the neediest families across the Valley. This event was supported in part by the **Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix**.

We are grateful to all the volunteers who brought food and helped serve over 200 foster care teens at the **Youth Holiday Dinner**. We would especially like to thank **General Mills** and **Pardes Jewish Day School** for their generous support of these teens.

More than 70 seniors received care packages to celebrate Chanukah, and were comforted to know that they were not alone during the holidays.





# Donor Profile: Jan and Thomas W. Lewis

## Moving from Success to Significance

Acknowledged as an industry leader in the design and construction of luxury homes, the T.W. Lewis Company has received numerous accolades since its 1991 inception. For instance, the Phoenix area luxury home builder was recognized in 1998 as one of America’s Best Builders by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and “Builder Magazine.”

Having focused on creating a successful business since leaving graduate school, Thomas W. Lewis, taking stock of his life at age 55, decided to dedicate much of

“My family’s DNA has a strong charitable component,” says Lewis. “And, quite frankly, I was looking for another reason to continue working.”

his energy to helping others. In 2000, he and his wife Jan founded the T.W. Lewis Foundation, contributing approximately 10% of pre-tax company profits to support higher education as well as community needs.

Inspired by his experience of guiding three sons through the higher education application process, Lewis initially focused

on scholarships for deserving students. Over the past 15 years, his generosity has expanded to numerous charitable efforts, ranging from sports to cultural activities to social services.

## Approaching philanthropy like an investor

When deciding what individual and/or group will benefit from his generosity, Lewis applies his keen business acumen and clearly-defined giving philosophy. Guided by values such integrity, reliability and compassion, the T.W. Lewis Foundation believes in supporting organizations that are effective, receptive,

grateful, and will have a significant positive impact in the community. These standards came into play when he chose

**Shelter Without Walls**, the domestic violence program at Jewish Family & Children’s Service.

“I have a special interest in this area since I encountered these problems during my childhood,” points out Lewis. “And I was really impressed by how **Shelter Without Walls** focuses on helping abused women gain independence by



recognizing the patterns of an abusive relationship, seeking support, and empowering themselves to leave.”

Recipient of the JFCS 2013 Spirit of Philanthropy Award, and the 2014 Outstanding Philanthropists of the Year Award, Lewis describes the vital role the case managers at **Shelter Without Walls** play in advocating and assisting DV survivors and their children.

“The funding we granted this JFCS program added an additional case manager who can aid 40/50 families at a time,” explains Lewis. “This is what I call efficient use of financial assistance,” he adds. “Especially since Phoenix police get more than 50,000 calls related to domestic violence each year, and there are countless more who never call for help.”



## Shelter Without Walls

Survivors of domestic violence face a myriad of challenges. Some survivors may have already left their abusive partners but are struggling to remain independent. Some may have been in a shelter and are leaving after a 30 to 120-day stay with nowhere to turn. And yet others, reluctant to go to a shelter, may not have been able to break free from their abusers due to lack of resources and support.

Designed for survivors of domestic violence living outside of a shelter setting, **Shelter Without Walls** offers assistance, legal advocacy, safety planning, counseling, educational support, and linkage to resources necessary to attain and maintain independence.

"In my own childhood, I witnessed domestic violence in my family," recalls Mimi Kaplan, Director of Shelter Without Walls. "At that time there was nowhere my mother could go and no resources."

Mimi's experience and perspective led her to a career in counseling with a focus on women's issues, domestic violence and sexual assault. "This work is so meaningful to me," she reflects.



"Every day I am inspired by the courage and strength of the women who have been through our program and are now growing and thriving."



## Child Crisis Hospital Team

The clinicians and family specialists of the **Child Crisis Hospital Team (CCHT)** are often referred to as the "first responders of behavioral health." Striving to avoid costly hospitalizations and resolve family crises in a compressed timeframe, the team helps family members who have brought a child to the emergency room for an acute emotional crisis or psychotic episode. Because these children often do not meet the criteria for hospitalization, CCHT skilled professionals provide

support at the family's home to stabilize the child, and help the parent(s) or caretaker formulate a plan which includes life-skills, coping strategies, as well as referrals for further treatment for the child and the family.

**Child Crisis Hospital Team** Director, Patti Ritchie knows first-hand the positive impact that a program like CCHT can have on the impressionable young



lives of those we serve. "Growing up in a world filled with abuse and neglect, I was fortunate to have a few special loving people in my life who made me feel valued and encouraged

me to find my purpose," explains Patti. "I became a social worker to make a difference in the lives of others, especially for children who are experiencing what I had experienced."



# Donor Profile: Meri and Steven Friedman

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## Giving through the Generations

Steven and Meri Friedman became involved with Jewish Family & Children's Service on a philanthropic basis more than three decades ago.

"We have been very impressed with the work that JFCS has done over the decades," says Steven, a retired Phoenix attorney who served several terms on the JFCS Board of Governance. "JFCS went from helping Jewish seniors find nursing homes in the



1930's to providing a broad range of exceptional social services to people of all faiths in modern-day Phoenix."

Meri Friedman, a retired portrait gallery owner, holds a special place in her heart for JFCS programs that help families who are living through a crisis. "The JFCS therapists, clinicians, case-workers and facilitators are consistently the most effec-

healthcare group to assist severely handicapped infants and children.

Recipients of the JFCS 2014 Spirit of Philanthropy Award, the Friedman's dedication to supporting worthy causes and organizations

**"All of our family members have discovered that giving to others is very rewarding," points out Meri. "Both the giver and the recipient feel better—it really is a win-win endeavor."**

tive group of behavioral health professionals I have ever encountered," she stresses.

"Their dedication and expertise truly reflect what a fine organization JFCS is."

For the Friedman's, philanthropy is a family tradition. Meri's father created an organization for needy children, and Steven co-founded a

has been passed onto their three daughters who are also involved with philanthropic endeavors. Phoenix daughter Jen Kirschner has recently decided to make a career of helping others. "Jen is in the process of pursuing a Master's degree in counseling," says her proud father.

The Friedman's legacy will continue to grow beyond their own philanthropic giving to their future generations to come.



**Jewish Family & Children's Service**  
4747 North 7th Street, Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85014  
(602) 279-7655  
www.JFCSAZ.org