



THE VOICE

NEWSLETTER

Serving Maryville's children and families since 1883

FALL 2021

Maryville's re-accreditation affirms its mission of providing best care to children, families

Maryville has earned its re-accreditation from the Council on Accreditation (COA) for the next four years, as announced by Maryville Executive Director Sister Catherine M. Ryan, O.S.F., in an all-staff email in late August.

COA's official letter to Sister Cathy expressed the significance of this achievement for Maryville.

"It represents the fulfillment of countless hours of hard work and the dedication of many people—notably your staff and the members of your board and/or leadership," the COA letter said in part.

The re-accreditation process measured Maryville's work in protecting and caring for children and strengthening families.

"We need to measure how we are doing, so that we can ensure that our children and families are better off for having been with Maryville," Sister Cathy said.

The approval of the re-accreditation process through April 2025, according to Sister Cathy, is a testament to the collective work of the Maryville staff, its Board and the leadership team for living out the values, the vision and the mission of Maryville—employing best practices, thoughtful analysis and compassion for children and families.

"The accreditation process is very important. It offers a template for client safety and protection, and delivery of best practices in service. Our Strategic Performance team helps us with this critical work," Sister Cathy said.



Chalk Art! Ramona, one of the children at the Maryville Crisis Nursery, engages in chalk art and beams as she shows off her colors and shapes. The Crisis Nursery was one of the Maryville programs that underwent the re-accreditation process.

Maryville has started the work to improve identified challenges, replicate good practices, recognize and motivate staff, and improve services for the communities that it serves and assists to fulfill its mission.

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John Brdecka, a story of resilience and triumph

John Brdecka was 4 years old when he was first brought to Maryville's intake facility on the North Side of Chicago. Not knowing much at that age, he said he remembered having to deal with a case worker who told him "to go here or go there," prompting him to move around frequently in the next four to five years.

John recalled having to go to different schools and getting evaluated for 30, 60 or 90 days to see where he was going to be placed and what foster homes he was going to go to.

Brdecka was finally "mainstreamed" when he was 8 years old and attended a regular school through Maryville until he was 12. It was also during this time that he realized that his life, or what he thought was normal wasn't.

"One Saturday, I went over to my friend's house to play for the day, and it blew my mind," he said. "Cause my whole frame of reference of what life is at that time, I just thought everything was normal because this was my life and everyone around me kind of fits a similar life."

While at his friend's house, he realized what was missing in his life. "When I went over to his house, I was like 'Who's this? Who are these two people?' It was his parents," he said. "It was his house. He had his own room. It was like a family atmosphere."

"I realized at that point in time that my life wasn't what I thought it was—normal," he said. "I figured out that my friend's life was normal and my life wasn't like that because I had a case worker and I was at Maryville."

"It was a brutal realization," he said. "I put two and two together and I realized I was not going to have that type of childhood."

However, he remembers being told that if he does well in school while at Maryville, if he gets an education and graduates from high school, Maryville was willing to support him in college in order for him to do whatever job he wants to do in the future.

"That was when I realized that in order for me to have a wife and a family of my own, I need to go to school and get educated," he said.

"Well, now I know that you don't need to go to school to have a good job, but that was instilled in me at Maryville and through the opportunities of the scholarship program that Kathleen Samuelson (Jen School school counselor) ran for many years," he added.

To get through his childhood, Brdecka said that he was determined to get a good education after high school.

Brdecka said Maryville taught him three things that shaped him to who he is today: activities, staff and structure.

"There was always something to do at Maryville. There is the gym that we can play basketball, a roller rink, softball, soccer and volleyball in the field to occupy our minds. And I learned to play golf and fell in love with the game. That was a huge deal," he said.

He said that the many activities kept the children's minds off the negative things in their lives. "All the kids—I am just one story out of the thousands that walked through the doors of Maryville—had gone through negative experiences and trauma in their lives and these activities helped us keep our minds off reality," he said.

Brdecka is grateful to the Maryville staff who has had a lasting impact in his life. He said that a handful of them are still a part of his life to this day and he considers them family.

"The first 19 to 20 years of my life were hectic, chaotic and unstable," he said. "Because of the staff at Maryville, I met people like Jim Quilter who instilled values and life skills in me, and gave my life direction."



John Brdecka, Maryville alumnus and Hancock County Library System executive director.

Brdecka credited the structure at Maryville for teaching him lifelong learning skills and for his success. "We were on points program and if you do something good, you get points. If you do something bad, you get negative points," he said. "It was valuable in terms of getting to the real world."

Brdecka completed his undergraduate degree in criminal justice at Illinois State and his master's in library information at Dominican University.

Before starting his new position as executive director for the Hancock Library System in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi in September, he worked for Northwestern University for 16 years and considered working there as "the most stable thing" in his life.

Brdecka and his wife, Brittni, have four children: Presli, Brody, Brandon and Berkli.

When asked what he would tell his 4-year-old self, he said he would tell him that it's going to be okay. What about his 18-year-old self and the young man in his 30s? To trust the process.

"I have learned to take it a day at a time and to focus on what I can do today," he said. "I believe that it's in all of us to succeed. Do not be afraid to fail."

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL NEWS



Using data completes picture in advancing Maryville's mission

By Adam Avrushin, Director of Strategic Performance

Describing Maryville's impact on children, their families, and the communities where they live is challenging. When we describe our impact to the public and other external stakeholders, we often rely on carefully crafted "success" stories that illustrate the positive experience of individuals. We begin with a picture about who the person was before they engaged with Maryville Academy and then describe their experience with our staff and services. We typically conclude with a client statement that describes how our services positively affected their lives.

These stories ably promote Maryville Academy's good work. They present a positive picture about what we do and deliver a general overview of our programs' effect on people's lives. Although these stories are great for marketing our work, they provide an incomplete picture.

Our staff use data from multiple sources to inform their work and to reveal a more complete narrative about the organization, its programs, and the people and families we serve. We use this information to improve our work, make our programs more efficient and effective, and to bring our clients closer to their service goals.

Like many other organizations, Maryville Academy's major story this past year has been about COVID-19 and the numerous challenges it created for the organization and its service population. It impacted the

services offered, how staff provided those services, and who received the services that were provided.

State and local restrictions severely limited access to our programs while our vigilant efforts to prevent COVID's spread impeded the movement of new staff and service recipients into our programs. As a result, during the first few months of the pandemic, our service population declined.

From the third to the fourth fiscal quarters of FY 2020, our service population decreased 47%.

Throughout the pandemic, however, all programs remained open, and the number of individuals and families served gradually rebounded. The organization prioritized the safety of our staff and clients and continued to offer services and supports that did not compromise on the quality or the expectations of our mission that "children and families reach their fullest potential by empowering intellectual, spiritual, moral, and emotional growth."

The organization implemented new service strategies and protocols and expanded services that minimized the risk of harm to clients and staff. This includes the following:

- CDC-guided COVID health protocols for all service environments that allowed us

to continue serving children and families in our residential programs;

- Over 350 mental health and substance use disorder telehealth services in our Family Behavioral Health Center and residential programs; and
- Responding to 942 telephone helpline calls, providing 777 service referrals, and distributing nearly \$26,000 in financial aid and in-kind support to families in need throughout the Chicago metropolitan area through the Crisis Nursery.

Despite the challenges with the pandemic, the staff persisted and adapted so that Maryville not only survived but thrived in advancing its mission. After a very challenging year, Maryville Academy is now serving more people than before the pandemic.

Since the lowest period in the fourth quarter of FY 2020, our service population has increased 94%.

For Maryville to advance its mission and positively impact children and families, it must continue to evolve and use better strategies that improve the work we do. A key approach in this effort is using data that informs our work, describes our impact, and reports an accurate account about how of how we respond to the challenges we face.

Maryville creates History Project, team to prepare for 140th anniversary milestone celebration in 2023

The excitement mounts as Maryville officially created the History Project a few months ago in preparation for celebrating its 140th anniversary in 2023.

Helmed by two avid Maryville historians, Arlette Quinn, a member of Maryville's Development team, and Mary Ryan, a volunteer and retired elementary school teacher, have been busy researching and compiling information relating to Maryville's history since 1883.

Already they have discovered interesting stories and "quirky facts," according to both Quinn and Ryan.

Quinn is particularly struck by what both younger and older alumni are saying. "We are finding that some of the same things that the younger alumni are saying now were the same words that the older alumni are saying," Quinn said.

According to Quinn both generations of alumni have said that if it were not for Maryville, they don't know where they would be. "I'd be out on the street or in jail. I value Maryville's programs," Quinn said alumni have told her.

Currently both Quinn and Ryan, in addition to doing a lot of research, are also collecting memorabilia and artifacts.

"We are also trying to bring out certain trends, the impact of women on Maryville



The History Project Team of Arlette Quinn (wearing red and black) and Mary Ryan (wearing green) took a break from doing research to go through and show some of the collected historical memorabilia and artifacts for Maryville's milestone celebration in 2023.

for example, stories that have not been told," Ryan said.

They pointed out that in spite of the shifts and trends that Maryville has experienced since 1883 and at the heart of why Maryville exists, its mission has not changed through the years.

"It's amazing that many years later," Ryan said, "the programs that existed back in the early years are still continuing the same message. Maryville is not an orphanage anymore and people are surprised to hear

about Jen School. It is amazing how we have stayed true to our mission."

Quinn and Ryan are interested in talking and hearing from alumni, staff, donors or anyone who might have something to share—memorabilia, artifacts, pictures, old yearbooks and stories. "We invite them to share their stories and whatever they have and reach out to us as we continue to put everything together," Quinn said.

They can be reached at
historyproject@maryvilleacademy.org



Maryville

Celebrating 140 years of protecting children and families.

Commemorative Logo

Preparations are underway for Maryville's 140th anniversary in 2023. To honor this significant milestone, we are introducing the special commemorative logo on the left that you will see in Maryville's communication and marketing materials going forward.

Beyond cutting hair, this barber has a superpower

On the big screen as well as the small screen, we watch heroes with capes fly and fight the bad guys. In real life, we hear and read about everyday people who are called heroes, the ones without capes, don't fly or fight the bad guys.

The latter you will find in abundance at all Maryville campuses in Bartlett, Berwyn, Chicago and Des Plaines.

But this story is not about those two types of heroes. There is a third kind. The kind that our Maryville children and staff call hero.

Like Ahmad "Alex" Abuhasheesh.

Alex, as he is fondly called by his friends, customers and our children and staff, is the epitome of a hero.

"The Children's Healthcare Center is incredibly blessed to have an amazing barber," said Kristen Lawrence, a former Maryville staff member who brought the children to see Abuhasheesh for haircuts.

The Children's Healthcare Center (CHC) children have medical and behavioral complexities that can make haircuts challenging, but according to Lawrence, Abuhasheesh is not fazed by the ventilators or other medical equipment.

"When Alex sees the Maryville van pull up, he immediately moves his barber chair to make room for each child's wheelchair to be pulled up to his station," Lawrence said.

Lawrence said that Alex talks to the children, offers videos on his phone for distraction and provides a sweet and warm environment for each child to get their haircut.

"He puts care and precision into each haircut and makes sure each child looks their best," Lawrence said.

Abuhasheesh works at his family's hair salon, Fade by Tom and Mario Family Hair Salon, just

down the street from the CHC on Irving Park Road in Chicago.

"We tried other local salons," CHC Nursing Director Helene Pochopien said. "One place told me not to bring the kids there. Another place was not pleasant to our child, another charged us a lot."

"And we found Alex who refuses to take money for the haircuts," Pochopien said.

"I do it from my heart," Abuhasheesh said. "They are like my kids that's why I do it for free."

Lawrence said that one time, another patron heard the Maryville staff talking to a child about picking up a Happy Meal as a special treat following the haircut. The patron gave the Maryville staff \$40 and said that he wanted to buy dinner for the children.

"Alex and the community at Fade by Tom and Mario are so generous, and we are so grateful for all they do for us," Lawrence said.

Abuhasheesh does not have a cape or does he fly, but he is a hero to our Maryville children and staff. And his superpower? He has the biggest and kindest heart!



Super Barber Alex Abuhasheesh (top), the facade of the salon (middle), former staff member Kristen Lawrence holds our Giovanni Martin as Alex cuts his hair, (bottom right), Alex finishing Giovanni's haircut (bottom left),



PROGRAM UPDATE



The Saint Mary of Celle Home will welcome young mothers and their babies soon at their new home in Berwyn.



Newest program for teen moms

Saint Mary of Celle Home to open its doors soon

Maryville's newest life-changing program will soon open to help parenting teen mothers. The Saint Mary of Celle Home in Berwyn, IL., considered Stage Two of the existing Casa Imani Home program located in Bartlett, will offer young mothers more opportunities for community development, including possible part-time employment and an increased focus on life skills development.

The new residential program will be beneficial for parenting youth who are getting ready to move to a transitional living program or independent living, or foster care placement with their child, as well as for youth who are presently ready to transition, but a stepdown placement has yet to be solidified.

"The purpose of the extension program is to provide an additional resource that will help keep children with their mothers and keep families intact," said Maryville Executive Director Sister Catherine M. Ryan, O.S.F.

"By providing a comprehensive and holistic program that supports young mothers, we are offering an opportunity for parental and familial success," she said.

The program is designed to help break the cycle of generational abuse and neglect; something that many of the young mothers have endured, but do not want to repeat in their own immediate family system.



Maryville

Celebrating 140 years of protecting children and families.

Mission. Passion. Service.

Helping children and families soar to a better future.

Join our growing Maryville family and community with 17 programs in Bartlett, Berwyn, Chicago and Des Plaines.

- Be part of our dynamic team and enjoy a rewarding career. Visit our employment page at <https://www.maryvilleacademy.org/join-our-team-2/>
- Support our programs, outreach and fundraising events as a donor, sponsor, friend or volunteer.
- Partner with us to make a difference and build a better future for the children, youth and families in our care.

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PROGRAM UPDATE

Maryville forms network for two recovery programs to help mothers on the road to sobriety, better future



Maryville Academy Mother's Recovery Home Network



Maryville

Caring for Children. Strengthening Families.

The Maryville Academy Mother's Recovery Home Network is now a reality for pregnant and parenting women who suffer from substance use disorder and wish to seek treatment for a better future for them and their children.

Two Maryville programs, the Saint Monica Homes and Saint Josephine Bakhita Homes, fall under the Network. These programs serve pregnant and parenting women, ages 18 to 35, and their children, ages 10 and under.

The women and their families are offered individual and group treatment, mental health services, parenting classes and job-readiness training.

The Saint Monica Homes Program provides residence for up to 18 women and their children. It is designed to last for six months. The Saint Josephine Bakhita Homes Program lasts six to nine months and can follow Saint Monica.

"The Network's goal is to inspire the women to bond with their children and acquire skills to live an independent, safe and sober life," said Jim Eaglin, recovery home operator for the Family Behavioral Health Clinic (FBHC).

The FBHC will provide the women admitted to the Network bio-psycho-social assessment and a treatment plan designed to help evaluate their mental health, socio-economic and neurobiological conditions.

The women will engage with a parenting coach and participate in parenting classes. A vocational coordinator will work with them through a workforce development program and provide them with job-readiness training.

"During these challenging times, people need what is considered to be sure things and people in their lives," said Katrina Ivory, parenting coach at Saint Monica Homes. "That's why I check in with our clients every week. Saint Monica represents these for them."

One of Saint Monica's success story is Audrey. She and her children are doing extremely well and according to Ivory, Audrey has a stable environment for her family while she is working on her sobriety. Ivory said that Audrey attributes her success to the program and what she has learned while she was at Saint Monica.

Ivory also said that former clients continue to check in. "For the mothers and their children, Saint Monica represents calm and consistency. They know that we are family and we only want what is best for them."

For more information on the Network, call 872-250-9720. To schedule an appointment or to make a referral, contact the Family Behavioral Health Clinic at 847-390-3004.

GIVING TUESDAY

SAVE THE DATE

November 30, 2021

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