



STARFISH
FAMILY SERVICES

**You're
Helping
Build
Resilient
Families**

2017
DONOR
REPORT

Strengthening
families to
create brighter
futures for
children.



Childhood Trauma

Should You Care?

Dear Friend,

I'm writing today to thank you for your commitment to our shared mission of **creating brighter futures for children**. Your support has been invaluable to me, to Starfish, and to the thousands of families we serve.

Access to a great education is one key to halting the cycle of generational poverty and creating brighter futures for children and our community. But access to quality education is *not* enough. For too long, chronic adversity stemming from issues like poverty or family mental health challenges has been a barrier to the education, health, and long-term success of too many Michigan children.

Our passion at Starfish is to help children arrive at kindergarten well-developed and ready to learn and thrive. Unfortunately, children often struggle with learning, trusting, and interpersonal relationships. **When a child has trouble learning, making friends, and trusting authority figures, how likely is it they will grow into self-reliant, happy, flourishing, RESILIENT adults?**

Research shows that, unaddressed, children who face repeated adversity face incredible risk. When children are repeatedly exposed to trauma – including neighborhood or family violence, abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction – **their physiology is negatively affected**. Healthy brain development is stunted and can lead to learning and emotional challenges. **Studies show 1 in 4 children experience repeated trauma by preschool.**

That's where you come in through your support of Starfish. Fortunately, a bad start doesn't destine a child to a sad ending. Early interventions and a positive, supportive, relationship with an adult are the best defense against the long term negative effects of trauma. Thus, Starfish is on its way to becoming a trauma-equipped organization.

I'm very excited to share the various ways Starfish has been addressing childhood trauma with you in this report. Thank you for your continued support.

Ann Kalass, CEO



Studies show 1 in 4 children experience trauma by preschool, and that a positive, supportive relationship with an adult is the best defense against the long term negative effects of trauma.

**Your
Support
Saves
Lives**



*Angela Burgess,
Starfish Therapist*

Children Who Experience Trauma Can Still Have a Happy Ending

Two years ago, my client who I'll call Lainey was in bad shape. She was failing school, severely depressed, and in my office because of a recent suicide attempt. She suffered from hallucinations and hearing voices. She felt scared and alone.

Therapy revealed that she had been keeping a secret from everyone. Her mother's boyfriend had been molesting her. Her mom had no idea. Once Lainey felt comfortable revealing the truth of what was troubling her, swift action was taken. The boyfriend went to prison. The relationship with her mother grew stronger and more trusting, the hallucinations and suicide attempts stopped.

Today, Lainey is thriving. She recently graduated high school and intends to be a doctor. At one of our last sessions I asked, "Why do you want to be a doctor?" "To save lives," was her response. I replied, "You don't have to be a doctor to say lives." She replied "You're right. You saved mine."

Tough Work Tackled

How Starfish is Addressing Childhood Trauma

**Starfish is a leader in
successfully incorporating
mental health supports in early
childhood care and education.**

As a full service agency, Starfish is fortunate to benefit from having a large clinical staff that is expert in dealing with trauma. We've taken advantage of this in-house expertise and since 2004 we've embedded trauma trained therapists into our preschool classrooms.



Is Childhood Trauma One of Today's Most Serious Public Health Threats?

If You Have 4 or More Adverse Childhood Experiences, you are:

12x as likely to **attempt suicide**

10x as likely to **use injection drugs**

7x as likely to **be an alcoholic**

and **Twice** as likely to **have heart disease**

have a stroke
have cancer
have diabetes

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) like neglect, abuse, divorce, or death of a loved one, are traumatic experiences that a child has no control over and that can have a considerable impact on a child's developing brain and health outcomes once they become an adult.

What is the Link Between Trauma, Toxic Stress, and Disease?

We now know how trauma leads to disease. Toxic stress is the culprit. If the brain's stress response is activated for prolonged periods of time, the constant flood of adrenaline and cortisol leads to increased blood pressure and blood sugar levels. It also leads to loss of brain cells, damage to brain connections, and enlargement or shrinking of certain parts of the brain. Areas of the brain responsible for memory, learning, decision-making, judgment, impulse control and attention all become impaired.

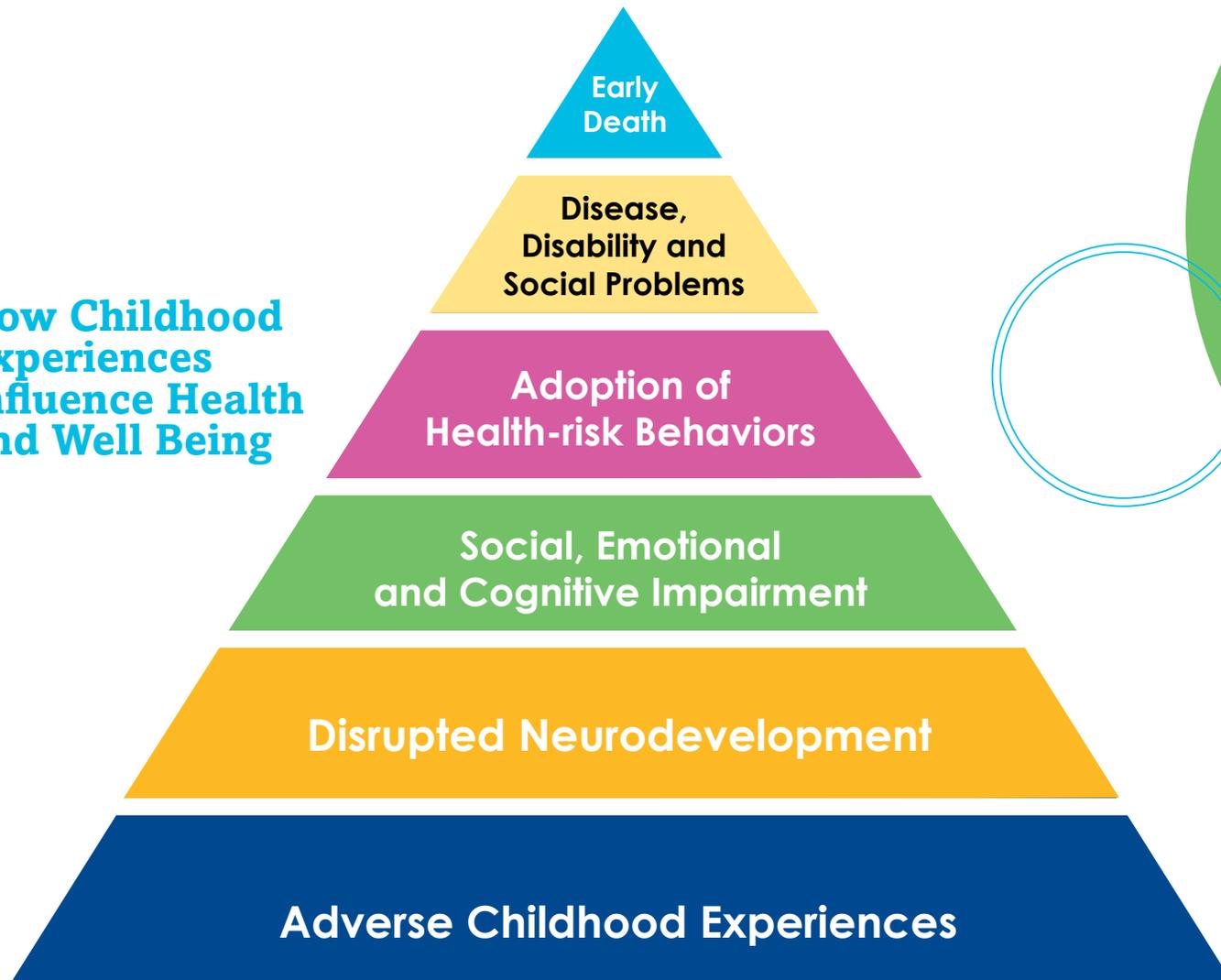
Not only is the overloaded stress response causing physiological changes in the body that lead to disease, it also causes changes in the brain architecture which leave the brain vulnerable to making poor life style choices that lead to disease. It's a double-whammy.

Even more alarming after correcting for all conventional risk factors such as smoking, obesity, and high cholesterol, there is still a strong relationship between ACE's and disease, suggesting there is a direct link between ACE's and the development of chronic disease.

Any Family Can Experience Toxic Stress...

But, growing up in poverty presents the type of chronic adversity that often leads to toxic stress. Low-income families are more likely to face high stress situations like food insecurity and living in neighborhoods with high rates of crime, drug abuse, and failing schools. In addition, low-income families are less likely to have the support systems to buffer against such adversity.

How Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well Being



“Children’s exposure to adverse childhood experiences is the greatest unaddressed public health threat of our time.”

*Dr. Richard W. Block,
former President of the
American Academy
of Pediatrics.*

Source:
Center for Youth Wellness



**You Helped
Us Launch
Trauma Smart®**



Starfish is the first organization in Michigan to implement Trauma Smart®

Looking for more impactful ways to tackle the public health issue of childhood trauma, Starfish is incorporating a nationally recognized program into its services as part of a multi-year initiative to equip staff, parents, and the community with the tools to help families address trauma in healthy ways. Trauma Smart® was developed by Crittenton Children's Center in Missouri to address childhood trauma and is recognized by the U.S. Department of Public Health and Human Services as a leading practice for addressing childhood trauma.

The initial launch includes:

Training of mental health professionals to provide clinical expertise in the classroom and the coaching of preschool staff. Each class receives regular visits from a trained trauma therapist to observe and assist when necessary.

Systematic trauma screening of all Starfish children. Children in our early education programs automatically receive an annual trauma screening from staff professionals.

A ten-month training provided to the first wave of 140 staff members from across the agency including administrators and teachers. The next phase will consist of training for additional staff members, followed by a rollout to parents and the community-at-large.

Trauma Smart® Philosophy in Action

Preschool Teacher Chris Kruck Shares Her New Approach

What we've learned from Trauma Smart® just makes sense for working with both children and people. It's now habit for us to think "**what happened to this child,**" instead of "**what is wrong with this child**" when a child is acting out.

I have a student who acts out if there is not a set of keys for him to play with. He's very attached to keys and will take them from the other children. He has a hard time calming down if he doesn't have them. Before I might have worked with him to get over his attachment to keys so that it wasn't a source of tantrums. Instead, I bought a bunch of keys and key chains so there is plenty for all the children and so he always has access to a set.

We've learned that the best course of action is to give the child what they need. And validate his feelings and needs. Once the child is soothed and supported, then you can work on modifying the behavior and help them express what they are feeling. "I can see that you are angry, that you are hurt, tired, etc." Often children don't yet have the words to explain what they are feeling. Helping them label their emotions is beneficial to them. Hugs, deep breathing together, talking through their emotions – all validate their feelings and help them self-regulate in the future. Now we lead with soothing the child instead of disciplining the child. It has been very rewarding to see the improvement in the children with this new approach. I love my job and after 20 years doing this work it's exciting to be a part of an organization that is always pushing the work forward and helping us all to continue to learn and improve.

Thank you for caring about Starfish and the children we love.

Sincerely,

Chris Kruck, Preschool Teacher



95% of our
enrolled children were
screened for trauma

Nearly **60%** of our
children **had at least one
Adverse Childhood
Experience**



Building Resilient Communities

Building a trauma AWARE, INFORMED, and EQUIPPED community.

On May 3, 2017, Starfish hosted our first ever **Building Resilient Communities Forum**. Over 200 health professionals, community leaders, and public servants heard featured keynote speaker, national childhood trauma expert Dr. Bruce Perry. Our goal is to build a stronger base of understanding about trauma so that collectively – social service organizations, funders, law enforcement, legislators, educators, and advocates – can better support children and families in our community who have been exposed to high levels of adversity that, if unchecked, will hold children back from realizing their full potential in life.





BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES FORUM 2017

Building trauma aware, informed,
and equipped communities!



National Childhood Trauma expert Dr. Bruce Perry delivers his keynote address at the inaugural **Building Resilient Communities Forum**.

Mark Your Calendars!

Due to the overwhelming interest and important nature of this topic, we've decided to make the ***Building Resilient Communities Forum*** an **annual event**. We are thrilled to announce that on **Friday, June 22, 2018**, we will welcome keynote speaker, **Bryan Stevenson**. Bryan is a noted lawyer, social justice activist, and the **founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative**.

Donor Spotlight



*Left to right:
Jamie Jacob, Megan Fenkell,
Denise Jacob, Rebecca
Fellenbaum, Nick Jacob*

Starfish and the Jamie and Denise Jacob Family Foundation are natural partners. Both organizations realize the importance of the two-generation approach when tackling generational poverty and the role trauma plays in hindering progress. Impressed with the Starfish vision to foster resilient communities, the **Jamie and Denise Jacob Family Foundation began supporting Starfish Family Services 2 years ago. Thus far, they've contributed \$66,000 and are committed to continue funding in 2018.**

Executive Director, Megan Fenkell shares why they support Starfish and Trauma Smart®. *"As a former teacher in Detroit, I worked with children that showed signs of trauma. At school, I often wished more adults were knowledgeable about the signs and effects of trauma in order to more effectively help kids. What I didn't realize until later, is that what I really was wishing is that adults would learn the Trauma Smart® philosophy. Our foundation's ultimate goal is to help children and their families become economically and emotionally secure. This goal aligns perfectly with the work of Starfish and Trauma Smart because we need to remove as many barriers as we can to help the family as a whole, and we know that Trauma Smart does just that. We are an advocate of the two-generation approach and are excited to see that the second year of Trauma Smart will be focused on educating the parents. We intend to continue to support Starfish and build a lasting partnership."*

**Thank You to the
following donors who
support our trauma work**

**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
Foundation**

Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan

Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation

Jamie and Denise Jacob Family Foundation

The Kresge Foundation

United Way for Southeastern Michigan

David and Diane Wallen

Your Gifts Matter

Our work is dependent on **generous supporters like yourself**. We are fortunate to have partners, individual donors, and foundations who are invested in our vision to create resilient communities by addressing the adverse effects of childhood trauma.

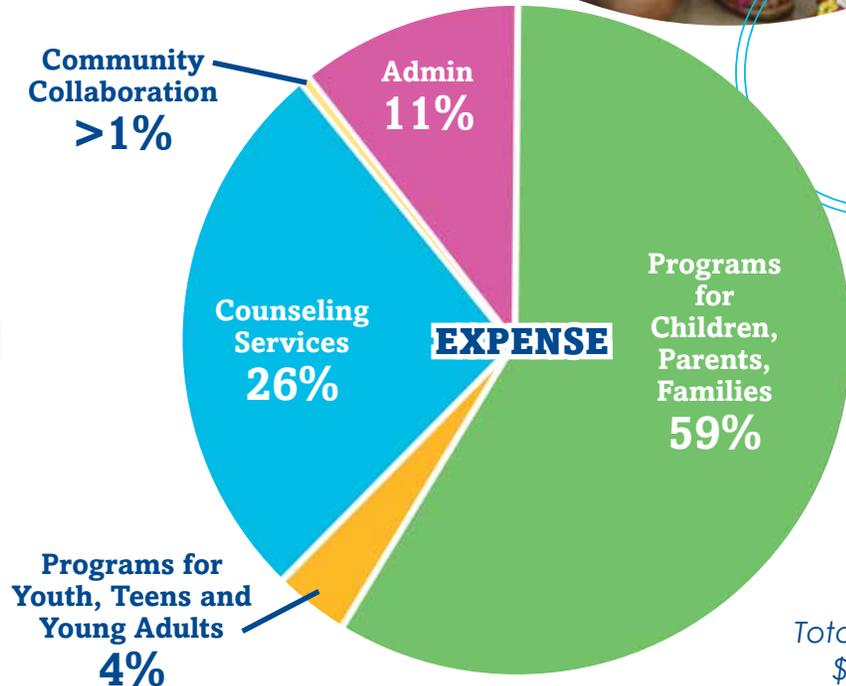
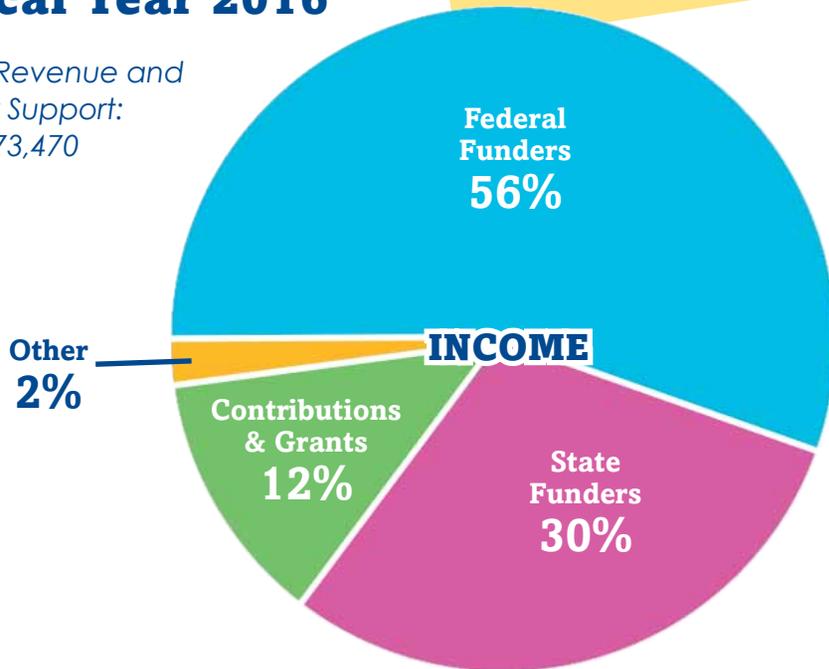
Your donation matters to each mom, dad, child, and baby we have the privilege of serving. **You are changing lives** by offering education to children and parents, hope to parents who want a better life and ultimately a path out of poverty. **Thank you for helping create brighter futures for thousands of children each year.**

Heather Rindels, Chief Development Officer



Fiscal Year 2016

Total Revenue and Other Support: \$35,373,470



Total Expense: \$35,568,703

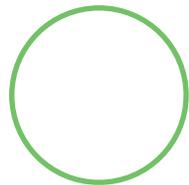
About Starfish Family Services



A Hand Up, Not a Handout

We help individuals and families create personal success stories through strategic programs and focused outreach. By providing access to the right resources at the right time, children and their families are better equipped to cope with challenges related to education, financial management, and mental health issues. This helps prevent serious setbacks to a family's standard of living and quality of life.

Starfish employs more than 400 professionals – including educators, social workers, psychiatrists, nurses, nutritionists and administrators. These individuals work with parents, caregivers and others to help children thrive. As a community-based nonprofit, Starfish has more than 50 years of experience providing the highest caliber programs that improve the lives of infants through teens. Our efforts touch thousands of lives every day.



STARFISH
FAMILY SERVICES

30000 Hiveley Street • Inkster, MI 48141 • 734.728.3400 • starfishfamilyservices.org

Starfish Family Services is a community benefit organization, classified as a 501(c)3 by the IRS. Gifts are tax deductible.