

A FOND FAREWELL

Family Service director retires after 18 years



Robin Foster, executive director of Family Service Society Inc., is retiring after 18 years and is being praised for her work. ERIC WENSEL/THE LEADER

By Jeffery Smith
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CORNING | After more than 18 years of service, Robin Foster, executive director of Family Service Society Inc., announced she will retire at the end of the year.

"It has been an honor and privilege to serve our community," Foster said.

Under Foster's

leadership, Family Service Society, Inc. increased staffing, the variety of programs offered, and the number of individuals and families served.

During Foster's time at Family Service Society's budget went from about \$1 million annually to over \$2 million annually, said Janalee Orfanides, of Family Service. The majority of that increase

was due to the expansion of free after school services to youth in the Corning area.

One of those programs is the After School Advantage Program, Orfanides said. More than a decade ago Foster helped attain state funding that allowed Family Service to implement the program for middle schoolers in the Corning-Painted Post

School District.

Orfanides said the Advantage program continues to operate in the school district, providing a variety of activities aimed at improving the social, emotional, academic and vocational competencies of its participants.

Foster said one of the most memorable accomplishments during her

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DIRECTOR

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time with the agency was the merger of Family Service Society and the Corning Area Youth Center in 2000.

“Both the Advantage After School Program and the Corning Youth Center fill gaps in a modern family’s life by offering a safe after school option for their children,” Foster said. “They provide wonderful opportunities for local youth and give parents peace of mind that their children are being nurtured by caring staff and have access to opportunities they might not otherwise have.”

Another program that has grown under Foster’s leadership is the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Central Southern Tier.

“Robin has always been a great supporter of the Big Brother Big Sister program,” said Tricia Shirey, Big Brothers Big Sisters coordinator. “Not only has she provided great oversight of the program but also in her personal involvement as a volunteer with the program. She has been matched with her ‘Little’ for three years and has made a great impact on her life.”

Shirey said Foster was also a very important part of Big Brother Big Sister annual Bowl for Kids’ Sake fundraiser.

Foster believes the success of Family Service Society is due to the team of employees that carry out the mission of the agency on a daily basis.

“Competence is not enough,” Foster said. “The staff members at Family Service Society not only have tremendous competence, but also compassion and respect for the people they serve. They are very passionate about what they do.”

Carly Cushing, Youth Service program director, said describing Foster’s impact on the agency and its staff is difficult.

“Robin’s kindness and compassion for the people we serve, especially the children, never ceases to amaze me,” Cushing said. “No matter how busy, stressful, or chaotic work seems to get sometimes, she is always so careful to consider how what we do as an agency impacts the clients we serve. And it’s not only the clients, but the staff as well. Her understanding and compassion with us is part of what makes her a leader, and not

just a ‘boss.’ She has truly been a mentor to the staff at Family Service and we all are ever so grateful.”

Foster is especially grateful for the support that local foundations, the United Way, Steuben County, and individual donors give to Family Service Society.

“The best part of being in this line of work is to see how generous the community is at lending a hand to those in need,” Foster said. “I am grateful for Family Service Society’s Board of Directors for the tremendous encouragement and support they’ve provided and selfless giving.”

Sal Trentanelli, current Family Service Society board member, said it’s truly been an honor to work with Foster.

“I can’t think of another person I know that truly cares about people and is as dedicated to serving the people of our community as much as Robin,” Trentanelli said. “She is a very compassionate person whose life mission is to help other people and encourage others to do the same. I wish her well as she enters her well-deserved retirement. She may be small in stature but she’s left some very big shoes to fill.”

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