



# COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMS

healthy people • families • communities

Newsletter | Summer 2021

444 Stockbridge Road | Great Barrington, MA 01230 | [chpberkshires.org](http://chpberkshires.org) | Lia Spiliotes, Chief Executive Officer

## Back to School!

*Family Services is preparing for in-person time with young children and parents who are getting ready for kindergarten or preschool.*



Friends,

This summer, we have some important reasons to celebrate, and to thank you for your ongoing financial support for CHP.

CHP is on track for in-person services for some of our most important clientele: children and families.

Our Family Services facility in Great Barrington will be re-opening (with indoor masks required) for parents seeking

on-site, in-person connections with our staff and programs, for themselves and their children. We will visit outdoors when we can, and indoors as appropriate, for playgroups, drop-in visits and other events and activities.

With schools reopening in the fall, CHP's Family Services team is enthusiastic about providing in-person support for children facing school transitions after many months of limited social contact. Family Services is also ready for younger toddlers (and their parents) who can benefit from our preschool and kindergarten readiness programs, such as ParentChild+.

Your financial donations have their strongest impact within our Family Services program, for which outside funding sources cover only partial costs of this essential work.

We can't do this work without you, and we thank you for continuing to include us in your generosity.

On the healthcare side of CHP, we have other good news: after many

## Mission Moment

*Emerging from Covid Anxiety, with a CHP Clinician Tag-Team*

The isolation of Covid-19 was hard on Isabelle Conlon. An engineering student at Northeastern University in Boston, she headed home in the spring of 2020 as the pandemic set in, to live with her parents in Lenox. She was safe at home with family, but still, Covid tripped an anxiety wire for Isabelle: worry about getting sick, fear of infecting others, overwhelmed by the cascade of bad Covid news, warnings and deaths. The world felt out of control.

Isabelle began to overdose on aggressive exercise to feel better. Anything less than 10,000 steps per day was not good enough. Her appetite vanished. Over the months, she shed far too much weight. This wasn't a lifetime issue, it was new, and somehow sparked by Covid worry.

Then she had an annual physical at Berkshire Pediatrics in Pittsfield. At age 21, she was on the cusp of graduating from pediatric care, but not quite, and she'd been a longtime patient at the Pittsfield practice. But her clinician that day was new to her: Gina Nickels-Nelson, pediatric nurse practitioner.

"She didn't know me, but she took

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## ADMINISTRATION

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**Kenneth Faber, MD**  
Interim Chief Medical Officer

**Michelle Derr**  
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*CHP is a Health Center Program Grantee under 42 U.S.C.254b, and a Deemed Public Health Service Employee under 42 U.S.C.233(g)-(n). As an FQHC, and HRSA grantee, Community Health Programs, Inc. is a "deemed" entity under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA).*

## Donor Spotlight: Jack Polizzi

*Jack Polizzi of T.P. Saddle Blanket Pitches In for CHP*



Jack Polizzi

Years ago, the T.P. Saddleblanket shop in Great Barrington hired a young woman, an immigrant from Hong Kong, as a tailor and pattern maker. She was excellent at her job, but English was not her first language. When she needed dental care, she was unsure how to navigate local health care, so store owner Jack Polizzi stepped in to help. And that was Jack's introduction to Community Health Programs: witnessing how CHP treated and cared for his valued employee, a new immigrant with limited English language who needed good dental care.

"I tried to be an advocate for her, and so I took her to CHP Family Dental in Great Barrington," said Jack. "I was so pleased with how they cared for her, how they managed to get past language barriers, they were so gentle and caring with her."

Since then, Jack has referred others to CHP. And this year he was even more impressed in learning about the proactive work of CHP's Mobile Health Unit during the Covid crisis.

"The way the Mobile Health Unit has helped our community – it just really struck a chord with me, with their Covid testing and vaccination clinics around the Berkshires," he said.

This year, he wanted to help out CHP financially. So, like others in the business community who periodically direct sales proceeds to a local organization, Jack would do the same.

Each year, T.P. Saddleblanket has a warehouse sale to thin out its inventory, and Jack would direct a share of these proceeds to CHP.

During one weekend in early June, the Housatonic warehouse was flung

***"The way the Mobile Health Unit has helped our community – it just really struck a chord with me..."***

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***CHP's mission is to improve the health of people throughout the Berkshires by delivering exceptional, compassionate health care.***

As a federally qualified health center, we care for patients and work with families whose needs are not always reimbursed by health insurance. Your support matters. Please donate today at [chpberkshires.org/donate](http://chpberkshires.org/donate).

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## Back to School

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years of flat reimbursement rates MassHealth will increase its reimbursements for primary care, dental care, and behavioral health services. These substantial increases – about 50 percent over prior reimbursement rates, are long overdue and will vastly improve access to care, especially for lower income patients who often face barriers to equitable health services.

CHP will strive toward these goals by investing in staff and technology. We will strive to shorten patient wait times for appointments. We will continually evaluate how to best serve our most vulnerable patients, and all our patients across the income spectrum. As our patients' health improves, so does the health of our wider community.

These MassHealth changes arose through strong advocacy by the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, of which we are a part. Your support plays an important role in building a strong voice for CHP in this advocacy. I thank you.

Wishing you a happy, healthy August and back-to-school transitions.



Lia Spiliotes, CEO

## Mission Moment

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Isabelle Conlon - Engineering Student, Northeastern University, Boston

one look at me and read me like a book,” said Isabelle. “It was then that I realized I had a problem. I weighed 90 pounds, and I realized I had to fix this. She took care of me, and she’s been here for me ever since.”

Nickels-Nelson tended to the medical side of Isabelle’s care and referred her to CHP nutritionist, Christina Garner. Christina and Isabelle kept as close as possible to a bi-weekly schedule.

Recently, Isabelle returned to Boston to begin an engineering internship. Her two CHP clinicians have kept connected with her via telemedicine, and are helping guide her back to better health, sensible eating and mental health support.

Her health is improving; her anxiety easing. She’s reaching a healthy weight. She’s found a good counselor through Northeastern University. She loves her job with a Boston start-up company.

Isabelle was a curious child who always liked to disassemble and reassemble things, figure out how things worked. She loved math and puzzles. So now she’s in her element, balancing a busy job with her desire for healthier behavior. Christina Garner makes time for their appointments at odd hours when Isabelle is free from work. She’s in regular touch with Gina Nickels-Nelson.

Isabelle says she now more fully appreciates the intricate connection between mental and physical health. And she’s experienced the impact of dedicated “tag-teaming” clinicians, which is a hallmark of CHP’s integrated, patient-centered care. And she herself knows even more about reassembling things, including herself.

## Family Services: By The Numbers

FY 2021



- 1,288 Visits by mentors



- 28 Graduates



- 4 Parent Child+ mentors



- 644 Toys and books distributed

June 2021



- 44 Playgroup sessions



- 123 Families participating



- 150 Children participating



- 3 Group leaders



A mentor is someone who  
allows you to see the hope  
within yourself.

- Oprah Winfrey

## Donor Spotlight: Jack Polizzi

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open to scores of shoppers who found great deals on clothing, including T.P. Saddleblanket's cowboy/cowgirl western flair fashion and other, softer styles. The sale offered home décor and furnishings, textiles, fabric and more. It was a generous gesture.

Like other retailers, the Main Street retail store suffered badly with the Covid shut down. The Polizzi family's designer brand, Tasha Polizzi, was also brought to a standstill. Tasha Polizzi designs manufactures clothing for 600 U.S. retail outlets. With operations in Turkey, China and India, retail shops shut down everywhere and the business took a painful hit. Now, things are looking up as the area opens up and shopping is now back on Main Street.

T.P. Saddleblanket is celebrating its 31st year in business in downtown Great Barrington. Polizzi and his late wife Tasha were among the early arrivals who staked out a prime corner spot, at Main and Railroad streets, when Great Barrington was a sleepier town.

Today, Polizzi's older son, John and daughter-in-law Ashley, work full-time for Tasha Polizzi. Another son, Chris, and his wife, live in Tennessee, where Chris is a college football coach.

"We hope that by promoting our warehouse sale we may have picked up some extra customers," said Jack. "We hope to do this again, to support CHP."

**Are you a business owner who  
would like to partner with CHP  
through creative giving?**

**For more information, contact:**

Carrie Barth

Director of Grants Administration  
Community Health Programs, Inc.

442 Stockbridge Road  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

413-528-9311 x 1179  
cbarth@chpberkshires.org

## Gifts & Grants

- Berkshire United Way – \$25,000
  - ParentChild+ Home Visiting Program (FY22)
- Berkshire United Way - \$25,000
  - Care Coordination at Berkshire Pediatrics (FY22)
- Mass League of Community Health Centers – Increased from \$25,000 to \$50,000
  - Outreach Vaccines for Underserved Populations Program: working with community partners to address vaccine hesitancy and disparities
- Mass League of Community Health Centers - \$5,000
  - Vaccine Outreach summer 2021
- MA Department of Early Education and Care - \$82,500
  - ParentChild+ Home Visiting Program (FY22)
  - Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Program (FY22)



## Children's Programs Supported by You

CHP offers programming, led by our expert staff, who help to identify and address the non-medical issues that impact local children and families. All of these programs focus on children and their health and education, and are funded by your private donations and state funding. This includes a Care Coordination program at our pediatric practice which cares for children and families' social, behavioral, and mental health, helps connect them to services in the community (supported in part by Berkshire United Way). The ParentChild+ program is funded in part

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*100% of these programs which focus on children and their health and education, are funded by your private donations and state funding.*

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by Berkshire United Way, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, and the Berkshire Taconic

Community Foundation. The Coordinated Family and Community Engagement program, funded in part by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care supports early childhood education and kindergarten readiness, and includes daily educational playgroups, parent education and support programs - offering programming at multiple sites throughout the County.

CHP also offers additional parent workshops to help support the positive social and emotional development of local children and families such as the Check Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself series, funded by the Jewish Women's Foundation of the Berkshires. Emergency food, fuel, and funds are provided to families in crisis via multiple avenues including Neighbor to Neighbor, Project Milk, and an Emergency Pandemic Relief Fund, all funded in part by the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and your donations. Additional programs and support are offered in response to community needs and recent events, such as the pandemic.

To continue this vitally important work CHP relies on the generous support of grants and donations, including gifts from the Green Foundation, the Crane Foundation, and a multitude of individual donors.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, for your support of the future of our children.

Consider making a donation today, which will allow us to continue and expand the great programs and services benefitting our Berkshire families.



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**ParentChild+**  
Equal Possibilities From The Start

The ParentChild+ program is part of a nationwide initiative begun in 1965 to prepare children for success in school.

The free program is a collaboration with Muddy Brook Elementary School in Great Barrington, and is open to Southern Berkshire County families with children 18 months to 3-1/2 years of age.

A trained community based early learning mentor visits the family home twice weekly, bringing a book or educational toy that families can keep. Our mentors share reading and playing skills with parents and caregivers to enhance child development and eventual success in school.

The program takes place over two-years and coincides with our local public school calendars.

**Parent Child + Team Mentors**



Parent Child + Staff L to R: Claudia Ocampo, Olympia Casivant, Cynthia Segui, Marcela Urrea

**If you know of someone who can benefit from the great programs CHP has to offer, please have them contact Family Services at 413-528-0457**