

Our Commitment to Mission

1837

“To provide for the support and education of indigent children... who are in a suffering condition...”

1890

“To encourage self-dependence for each family...”

1920

“To promote sound family life...”

2002

“To improve the lives of children and promote strong families”

THE FIVE STEP HISTORY OF CHILDREN’S FRIEND AND FAMILY SERVICES

THE ORGANIZATION WE KNOW AS **CHILDREN’S FRIEND AND FAMILY SERVICES** IS ONE OF AMERICA’S OLDEST CHILDREN’S CHARITIES. It is the result of several historic agencies, merging over the years into a single, vibrant entity.

STEP ONE • THE JOURNEY BEGINS

On May 1, 1833, “at a meeting of the Ladies of Salem...” held in Hamilton Hall, The Seamen’s Widow and Orphan Association was founded. The Association’s mission was to make articles for sale, the proceeds of which would be used to support “...the fatherless and widows of Salem”. At the annual meeting in May 1837, the ladies of the Association decided to open membership to men. Membership dues were \$1.00 annually or \$20.00 for life.

Two years later, on February 27, 1839, “a number of ladies”, by public invitation, met in the vestry of the Tabernacle Church in Salem. This small group gathered “for the purpose of considering the expediency of forming a society to rescue such children from destruction and prepare them to become useful and respectful, as are, from poverty, indolence and intemperance of their parents, so entirely neglected as to render their situations pitiable”. The decision was made to form an orphanage called “The Salem **Children’s Friend Society**”. Initial funding came from private donations and church collections. The first home utilized as a safe haven for the children was that of the Reverend Michael Carlton, whose wife served as the first treasurer of the Society. From the Reverend Carlton’s home, on what is now Briggs Street in Salem, the Society moved to larger quarters on 13 Charter Street, in July 1840. At the 1843 annual meeting it was noted that 16 children had been served that year; 13 girls and 3 boys.

A number of families, including the Osgoods, Richardsons, Browns, Carltons and Chamberlains were involved in the founding of both these organizations and this contributed to their merger, in 1844, into the “Salem Seamen’s Orphan & **Children’s Friend Society**”. Its’ goal was “not so much to give alms, as to raise the poor above the need for alms.” In 1879, it was noted that in first forty years of the society, 431 children were served...

STEP TWO • THE FOCUS BROADENS

The Family Service Association of Salem was organized in 1891 as the Associated Charities of Salem. The Association’s original mission was to organize a central registry of all families receiving help and assistance from any organization, church or individual in Salem and “personal investigation” by a friendly visitor (precursors to social workers), in order to prevent duplication of giving and to provide knowledge as a basis for helping families in need.

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In 1925, the Association changed its name to the Family Welfare Society of Salem, and in 1939 to the Family Service Association of Salem. By then the Association was providing homemaker services, marital and budget counseling and emergency relief grants.

In 1949, the name of the organization was again changed to the North Shore **Children's Friend** Society, professional workers were employed and the doors of a new comprehensive child care agency were opened at One Broad Street in Salem.

In 1955, the Thomas March Woodbridge house, built around 1809 and designed by famed architect Samuel McIntire, was deeded to **Children's Friend**. Since that time, the Woodbridge house has served as the headquarters of the agency.

STEP THREE • THE MERGER

In 1960, representatives from **Children's Friend** and the Family Service Association, and community planners began discussions about combining the agencies. Formal discussion was implemented in the spring of 1961 and in 1963 the merger was complete. The new combined agency was named the **Children's Friend** and Family Service Society of the North Shore.

The focus on enabling, rather than supporting, children and families guided the agency for the rest of the century. By the 1970's, **Children's Friend** was a counseling agency serving the youth and families of the greater Salem area.

STEP FOUR • A TALE OF TWO AGENCIES

As **Children's Friend** was growing to serve the North Shore, another historic agency was growing to serve the Merrimack Valley.

Founded in 1865, the mission of Children's Aid was "to provide a suitable home for indigent and neglected children" until permanent homes could be found. One hundred and seventy-five Haverhill citizens initially joined the Society, contributing \$1,285 for the establishment of a home. Parents who were too poor or too ill to care for their children often brought them to the home, secure in the thought that they would be cared for, "be trained in the development of their character", and become self-reliant. The home grew rapidly and moved several times over the next 40 years. The agency began placing children in private homes after 1900, as the numbers of homeless and "wayward" youths increased.

By the 1940's the agency had changed to keep pace with community needs. It began to provide counseling to children and families, both at the agency and in families' homes, hiring professional clinical staff.

STEP FIVE • EXPANDING OUR HORIZONS

In 1996 **Children's Friend** and Children's Aid joined in order to strengthen and expand their services and their geographic reach. The new agency now serves Lynn, Salem, Gloucester, Lawrence, Haverhill and Amesbury. Expanding services to meet the ever greater numbers of high risk youth during the 1990's, a Teen Parent Day Care Center; a Juvenile Court Clinic Program to serve court involved youth; a volunteer-driven youth Mentor Program; family respite services; and other innovative programs were created. Today, this thriving organization cares for over 4,500 children and families each year throughout Essex County.