



# 2015

## Kids Connection



When the world shouts – “Give up!”  
Hope whispers – “Try one more time.”

*Breaking Cycles for At-Risk Families & Children  
For Total Family Recovery*

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## I. ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

### A. Summary of Organization



**History - In the Beginning:** In 1976, a small group of women came together, dedicated to addressing a deadly disease. Their goal was to increase community awareness around the issues of addiction and its systemic consequences. With committed hearts and a defined vision, Perspectives was founded.

A major shift occurred in the 1980s when the current President/CEO was hired and Perspectives departed from its initial focus of addiction recovery advocacy and community awareness to begin providing direct services. In the 1990s, Perspectives specifically sought to serve

homeless, recovering women and their children with the purchase of five apartment buildings in St. Louis Park. The buildings are all connected on one campus and provide a supportive housing community for a portion of our clients.

**Expansion of Services:** In 1991, Perspectives adopted a new mission statement reflecting our target population and our philosophy of providing opportunity. In 1994 we purchased a 22,000 square foot office building, which was renovated into the Perspectives Family Center. The Family Center houses the majority of our programming and staff. It is conveniently located just one mile from our apartment community. Currently, our properties are valued at a total of \$7 million.

Our new mission drove the development of strategies which targeted our population's core needs, such as safe housing, chemical treatment, and mental health services. Addressing these issues stabilizes a family and sets the stage for breaking dysfunctional cycles. For the next 10 years we developed numerous programs, all with the goal of breaking cycles. In 2006, we became medical assistance providers. Our case managers all have extensive chemical health experience and we recently hired additional mental health staff.



In October of 2009, Perspectives was chosen as one of nine supportive housing programs in the nation to be awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The grant of \$1.8 million over five years funded the Main Street Collaborative. The Collaborative is a partnership between Perspectives' Supportive Housing Program and our sister agency, Wayside Housing. The grant enabled both agencies to expand their mental health service capacity. Also in 2009, Perspectives became a United Way agency through the award of a Reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade grant, which became a component of our Kids Connection Program. In 2011, United Way began to fund our Supportive Housing Program. In 2012, so impressed was United Way with our Reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade outcomes, that they increased our current Reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade grant from \$60,000 to \$100,000.

**Today:** We are *the* largest supportive housing program for women and children in Minnesota, housing over 75 women and over 130 children annually. Our services are extensive and span from recovery and

mental health programs to employment and parenting education. In addition, Perspectives is the only supportive housing program that provides a 12-month, comprehensive, in-house academic, social, and nutritional enrichment program for the children. Because of our excellent outcomes, in 2012 our Kids Connection Program became one of 18 grantees across the state of Minnesota to receive funding from the Minnesota Department of Education to become a 21st Century Community Learning Center. As a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center, Kids Connection provides critical 12-month academic programming for



homeless and at-risk children who are in kindergarten through eighth grade.

**Our Facilities:** One of our major strengths is the quality of our facilities and grounds. We want them to be attractive and well-maintained for our families. All too often, non-profit organizations allow their facilities to deteriorate, which we believe sends a message to the families they serve that they are not special, they are not welcomed, and life is a struggle. Our strategy is different. We want our families to feel as though they are very important to us. We believe that the condition of our facilities contributes to communicating that feeling.

The five apartment buildings that make up our housing campus sit next to each other at the end of a cul-de-sac. This campus adjoins a large city park with basketball courts. The courts are heavily utilized by our teens and local police officers, who form a summer team each year. (Our local officers have become outstanding mentors for the hundreds of youth living in our supportive housing and in the surrounding community.) In addition, with the City's consent, the park has become the site for two large gardens that are planted and maintained by our residents. Many of our families have their own garden plots, which are filled with flowers and vegetables. Down the road from the housing campus, Perspectives' Family Center is also busy seven days a week throughout each year, providing services that reunite and strengthen families. In all aspects of programming, Perspectives does not seek short-term solutions. Our strategies are designed to address both the mental and physical health issues of our families in a comprehensive manner, over a substantial period of time. We believe that these areas are essential to strengthening the family unit for the long term.

## B. Summary of Mission and Goals

**Mission:** Over the years Perspectives has made a major shift from providing broad-based community addiction education to providing direct services to those most affected by the disease – the addict, and, to a greater extent, the addict’s children.

**Our mission is: Breaking the cycle for at-risk families and children for total family recovery.**

### Agency Goals:

- Return homeless/recovering women and children to the economic and social mainstream.
- Unlock potential for homeless and at-risk children by providing comprehensive academic, nutritional, and social opportunities.
- Remove barriers to chemical and mental health services for homeless and at-risk families and children.
- Increase opportunities for employment through counseling, advocacy, and removing barriers for enhanced education and training.
- Reunite families and children by providing supervision and parent education.

## C. Kids Connection Program – A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center

**Program Goal:** To increase the academic, social, and health outcomes of homeless and at-risk children from kindergarten through middle school.

**Target Population:** Homeless and at-risk children, kindergarten through eighth grade, on the free/reduced lunch program, living within the St. Louis Park School District.

**Program Summary:** Perspectives Family Center is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center, as designated by the Minnesota Department of Education. Kids Connection, a fully licensed program, is a comprehensive “extended-day academic environment” taught by five licensed teachers and supported by over 50 trained volunteers. The program is operational five days per week, twelve months per year. All services, including transportation, are provided at no charge to parents. Components of the program include: *Reach for the Stars* – extended-day academic enrichment for elementary-age children; *Reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade* – facilitates guided reading; *Kids Cafe* – a nutritional and culinary program that provides evening dinners prepared by students under the direction of our full-time Chef (over 8,000 meals served annually); *Summer Explorers* – summer school education and recreation throughout the summer months; *Little Explorers* – a 10-week school readiness program for all four- and five-year-olds living in our Supportive Housing Program; and *The Connection* – a sixth-through-eighth grade youth mentoring/homework program.



### The following is a typical profile of children participating in our Kids Connection Program:

- Live in single-parent households.
- Enrolled in free or reduced lunch programs.
- Live in supportive or affordable housing, e.g. Perspectives’ Supportive Housing Program.
- Defined as high-risk by St. Louis Park School District.
- Have special needs, including 15 percent who have IEPs and receive special education services from St. Louis Park School District.



- Have suffered or are suffering major trauma of homelessness or actively addicted parent(s).
- Have been recipients of child protection services.
- One to two grade levels behind in school when they enter the program.

### Program Statistics 2013:

• Unduplicated students served:	129
• Little Explorers (4 & 5 year olds, Summer 2014)	15
• Total parents participating in program:	102
• Summer enrollment kindergarten through 5th grade:	69
• School year enrollment 2013-14:	82
• Retention from summer program to school year:	83%
• Met district 90 percent attendance goal:	83%
• Average school attendance rate:	93%
• Maintained or improved their academic performance:	82%
• Hours of parent involvement over 12 months:	950

### Program Objective

#### Children enrolled in Perspectives Kids Connection:

- Improve academic performance.
- Raise reading levels.
- Raise math levels.
- Improve nutrition and overall health.
- Improve social skills.
- Meet district requirements for school attendance.
- Embrace positive and productive lifestyles.
- Gain leadership and team-building skills.
- Experience positive outdoor recreation i.e. camping, gardening, sports, etc.
- Are exposed to positive adult role models.



#### Kids Connection Program Services – Offered Year-Round:

- **No-Fee, Out-of-School Programming:** All services are provided at no cost to eligible parents.
- **Academic Assistance:** Licensed teachers and trained volunteers work with children on individual lesson plans five days per week throughout the school year.
- **Special Education:** Separate classroom and special education teacher on staff for special needs children.
- **Responsive Classroom Approach:** Implemented to foster positive attitudes and build citizenship.
- **Mentorship by Adult Role Models:** Positive interaction with nurturing adults provides role models in both the after-school and summer programs.
- **Modeled Positive Social Behavior:** Teachers and tutors mentor and role model effective conflict resolution on continual basis.
- **Recreation:** A guided all-summer recreational program.
- **Enhanced Student Involvement:** Students are encouraged to volunteer in senior centers and engage in area learning opportunities, e.g. music, karate, arts programs.
- **Learn Healthy Cooking:** Professional chefs from around the Twin Cities volunteer to teach culinary skills to students on a weekly basis.

- **Nutrition Education:** Kids Café’s Chef, a licensed teacher, educates students while furnishing nutritious meals (FDA approved) five days per week throughout the year.
- **Recognition Awards:** Children receive Kids Café certificates which can be used to purchase a variety of items (e.g. books, scarves, sweaters, games).
- **Transportation:** Two-way school bus transportation for programs eliminates a major service barrier for our children.
- **Parent Involvement:** Parents are involved in the Parent Advisory committee, as well as attending numerous events with their children, e.g. talent shows, workshops, book drives, dinners in Kids Café, etc. Kids Connection teachers also will assist parents with parent-teacher conferences.
- **Community Involvement:** Community volunteers serve as tutors, mentors, kitchen helpers and chefs while providing ongoing adult mentoring.

#### D. Perspectives’ Partnering Organizations

Perspectives has an extensive list of community partners – the following represent just some of our long-term relationships and their services to Perspectives.

##### Agency Partnerships:

- **St. Louis Park Schools:** A formal partnership exists to share pertinent student information and work together to create a plan for success.
- **St. Louis Park Parks and Recreation:** Provides reduced rates for summer community pool and free rental of park shelter site.
- **Project for Pride in Living (PPL):** Refers students living in the Louisiana Court affordable housing community (shared site of Perspectives’ housing campus) to Kids Connection Program. Helps to support registration of students and participates in community events. Joint partner in summer basketball league and shares staff training resources/workshops.
- **St. Louis Park Police Department:** Co-sponsors with Kids Connection a community basketball game every Thursday evening throughout the summer in Ainsworth Park, a large city park that adjoins the Perspectives Louisiana Court housing campus. Sixty children/youth from Kids Connection and the surrounding community play ball with our community’s police officers. This is an evening of fun, recreation, mentoring, and bonding.
- **Emergency Food Shelf Network (EFN):** Provides food at a reduced cost to supportive housing residents.
- **St. Louis Park School Bus Transportation:** Provides transportation to and from the Kids Connection Program school rates.
- **myHealth/West Suburban Teen Clinic:** Clinical staff from West Suburban Teen Clinic facilitates a weekly “Healthy Bodies and Healthy Relationships” group for girls ages 11-14.
- **The Foundation for Small Voices:** Each year, a three-day songwriting workshop with New York composer, Jim Papoulis, is held in the Perspectives Family Center Rotunda. Jim works with the Summer Explorers Program students who write, produce, record, and perform the song.
- **American Chef Federation (ACF):** Guest Chefs provide nutrition while teaching our students culinary skills.
- **Animal Humane Society:** Animal Ambassador Program provides monthly visits from ‘Otis’ the sheepdog.
- **Benilde/St. Margaret’s School:** Provides student volunteers during the school year.
- **General Mills - Big G and Meals Divisions:** Provides volunteers, special events support, and supplies to the Kids Connection Program.
- **Cargill - Horizon Mills, Animal Nutrition, and OELD Divisions:** Provides volunteers, special events support and supplies to the Kids Connection Program.

- **Jewish Family and Children’s Service:** Provides referrals and case management support to Kids Connection families.
- **Hennepin County’s Family Court System:** Provides referrals to Parenting Time Program.

#### E. Number of board members, full-time paid staff, part-time paid staff and volunteers

Perspectives has 21 active board members, 26 full-time paid staff, 20 part-time paid staff, and a volunteer pool of over 100 active volunteers at any given time.

In 2014, over 9,000 volunteer hours were provided to the agency with the involvement of over 460 volunteers.

#### Our Executive Management Team Includes:

- Jeannie Seeley-Smith, **President/CEO:** Founder and developer of all of Perspectives’ current programs; celebrated her 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary in January 2015.
- Cheryl Cochrane, **CFO:** In her 22<sup>th</sup> year at Perspectives and is a CPA (licensed as inactive) with 24 years of experience.
- Chris Kelly, MSW, LICSW, **Vice President of Programs:** Joined Perspectives in January of 2013. She has a 20-year history involving program administration, leadership, clinical work (children and adults), clinical supervision, parenting assessments, DBT group facilitation and training.
- Amy Littman, **Vice President of Development:** A graduate of Northwestern University and the University of Minnesota Law School. She joined Perspectives after having spent the previous 14 years directing fundraising programs and activities in the Twin Cities for organizations such as Minnesota Children’s Museum, Youth Frontiers, and Jewish Family and Children’s Service of Minneapolis.
- Linda Domholt, **Vice President of Marketing:** Entering her 7<sup>th</sup> year and has over 25 years of corporate marketing experience.

#### Supportive Housing Program Services – a 24/7 Residential Program:

- **Basic Needs:** All apartments are fully furnished with couches, chairs, lamps, beds, dressers, and kitchen supplies (pots/pans, dishes, utensils). In addition, each has an approximately two-month supply of necessary toiletries and cleaning supplies.
- **Sober Housing:** Random checks are made to insure residents remain drug-free.
- **Case Management:** Each resident meets weekly (sometimes daily) with a Case Manager who assists her and monitors her progress toward her program goals.
- **Mental Health Assessments and Counseling:** Perspectives offers clients a full array of mental health services through the Main Street Collaborative.
- **Relapse Prevention Services:** Clients are offered relapse prevention counseling and outpatient treatment through the Main Street Collaborative.
- **Family Reunification:** 50 percent of the women entering our program have children in child protection. 95 percent of these families will be reunited within the first six months of being in our program.
- **Twenty four hours per day/seven days per week Supervision and Crisis Response:** Perspectives has four Resident Managers living on-site at the apartment campus.

- **Smoke-free Environment:** Apartments are smoke-free in order to promote healthy life styles and to protect the children from exposure to secondhand smoke.
- **Participation in Perspectives Kids Connection Program:** A comprehensive after-school and summer youth development program that provides academic and social enrichment for children at the kindergarten through eighth grade level.
- **Life Skills Training at the Perspectives Family Center:** Includes programming to build skills in parenting, finances, wellness, etc. There are weekly parenting, stress management, recovery, and health groups, as well as periodic workshops and classes focused on other needs (budgeting, spirituality, anger management, co-dependency). During the day there are early childhood development classes with mothers and their infants. All are conducted at the Family Center and are provided exclusively to our residents. Free transportation and childcare are provided. Often meals are served in the Kids Cafe.
- **Culturally-Specific Programming:** Perspectives staff recognizes the cultural differences within our population of residents. We have a diverse staff of case managers who bring expertise from the Native American and African-American cultures. Referrals are also made to other services in communities of color.
- **Transportation:** Perspectives employs a part-time mini bus driver to transport our families to grocery stores, doctors, daycare, and to the Perspectives Family Center for programming.
- **Childcare:** Free childcare is provided for our residents while they are attending our programming at the Family Center.
- **Reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade for Preschoolers:** Ten-week (three hours per day, five days per week) school readiness programming for four- and five-year-olds.
- **Dental Services:** Through a partnership with another nonprofit organization, a dental lab is provided quarterly to serve the 120 children living in supportive housing.
- **Job Readiness and Employment Training:** Much of our case management is directed at preparing residents to address their training needs so they can move from welfare to work. Part of each resident's program plan is to become successfully employed.
- **Community Childcare:** Perspectives assists residents in identifying and accessing community childcare services, including providing transportation to and from daycare in our mini bus.
- **Emergency Food Assistance:** This service is available when women first enter the program or on an emergency basis.
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Each resident must provide five hours of volunteer service to the program per month, for the purpose of building solidarity and community in a variety of ways.

## 6. Long-Term Funding Strategies

Perspectives has a long history of launching and sustaining programs. Our Supportive Housing Program was launched in 1992 with the purchase of two apartment buildings. At that time, the annual program budget was \$300,000. Today we own five apartment buildings and a 22,000 square foot Family Center with a combined value of \$8 million. The annual supportive housing program budget has grown to over \$1 million, and over the past 22 years, all our programs have grown exponentially. Our budget is now supported by government contracts at the state and county levels, the United Way, and numerous foundations, as well as a growing donor base which allows us to meet our expenses. Another example of increased funding is in our Kids Connection Program, which includes Kids Cafe. First launched in 1998 by Novartis, it is now sustained through Target, United Way, and the Minnesota Department of Education. (A significant accomplishment is that United Way, impressed with our outcomes, has tripled their funding to us over the past three years).



However, going forward we recognize that we cannot take this history for granted. Considering the new economy, our plans must be strategic and realistic. As Twin Cities corporations and foundations redefine funding priorities or adopt “focus funding,” as government funding shrinks, and as individual donors more carefully scrutinize and reduce their donations, it is critical for us to position ourselves and prepare for the significant shifting of Minnesota and the nation’s philanthropic focus. Fortunately, our programs, which “help create pathways out of poverty”, have become a high funding priority for area funders, including the Twin Cities United Way. We anticipate continual new funding from United Way over the years, as well as growing our individual donor list. Over the last couple of years, we note a 50 percent increase in individual donors.

For several reasons, including financial sustainability, Perspectives’ Board of Directors has launched a \$6 million capital drive to address our long-term goals. The Perspectives capital drive, *SEEDS OF CHANGE: Transforming Families and Futures*, just completed Phase I with the replacement of the Family Center roof and addition of 135 solar panels. An adjoining rooftop garden will be used to grow vegetables and herbs for our Kids Cafe. It will be attached to a greenhouse, which will house our new Children’s Earth Science Program.

Over the next three years, the plans include expanding our Family Center by an additional 7,500 square feet to enhance family programming, including the implementation of a Behavior Health Home, which will provide both family and children’s mental health services to homeless and at-risk families.



**Proposed Renovation of Perspectives Family Center**