



FAMILY SERVICES
SUPPORTING TULARE COUNTY

Winter 2018

Family Matters

Caroline's Story

Coping with Childhood Trauma while Building her Future

"It's a lifelong thing. You don't get over it. You learn to cope."

Caroline's mom brought her to Family Services' Counseling Center 28 years ago, where she started building her capacity to cope with the sexual abuse she had experienced throughout much of her childhood. She met regularly with a therapist, but she said the most helpful thing was the youth support group she attended.

"It was good to just know I wasn't alone," said Caroline. "As a child, you think you're the only one this has happened to. Knowing that other people my age, even from my school, had gone through the same thing really made an impact."

"At the meetings we talked about feelings a lot, and they focused on making sure we knew it wasn't our fault," said Caroline. "When something like this happens to you, it's really hard to understand and express how you're feeling. As a child, you're confused. You don't understand what happened and why you're feeling this way."

Treating trauma in children is especially important because it can change the way the still-developing brain grows. But early intervention with appropriate mental health services means children can learn how to cope with the trauma they've experienced and begin to heal. Intervention helps children access their

[Story continued on next page](#)



"It's so easy to hate, and to hold on to anger, and to want to use drugs to escape the feelings. I'm at a time in my life when it doesn't have to be like that."

Life doesn't have to end."

Connect With Us

815 West Oak
Visalia, CA 93291

Phone (559) 732-1970
Fax (559) 732-1987

www.fstc.net
info@fstc.net

 @FamilySvcstc



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resilience and internal strength—strength to deal with existing and future challenges, to bounce back from setbacks, to express empathy, and to thrive in relationships.

Caroline did experience some major setbacks later, including using drugs as a young adult to avoid dealing with overwhelming feelings. But during her recovery from drug addiction, Caroline was able to revisit the coping skills she first built as a child with Family Services and dig deeper to find her resilience and inner strength as an adult.

As she was still working through her recovery, Caroline began an entry-level position at a laboratory. Over the next 18 years she worked at the lab full time, got married and started a family, and earned a bachelor’s degree in environmental resources management and master’s degree in administration. Today, she manages the laboratory as Laboratory Superintendent.

Her next goal is to continue her education in a different field: clinical psychology. Caroline is now in

a post-baccalaureate certificate program in clinical psychology, and after completion she plans to apply to a Ph.D. program.

“I want to know everything about sexual abuse, and that’s why I’m going into clinical psychology,” said Caroline. “It was a scary part of my life, but it pulls me into a purpose of helping other children. I’m so driven with my new goal. ”

“As I’ve gotten older, I’ve grown to know who I am. I’m at a point in my life where I finally understand how the abuse affected my life. There are so many people out there who have gone through the same thing, and I hope my story can encourage them. It’s so easy to hate, and to hold on to anger, and to want to use drugs to escape the feelings. I’m at a time in my life when it doesn’t have to be like that. Life doesn’t have to end.”

Caroline’s unequivocal message to other survivors: You can get through this.

If you or someone you know have been affected by sexual abuse or assault, help is available. Please call our Sexual Assault Hotline at 559-732-7273 or 559-784-7273.

Lowe’s Heroes Volunteers Renovate Counseling Center

The interior of Family Services’ Counseling Center has been updated with a fresh new look, including a new coat of paint, durable vinyl plank flooring, and new trim, thanks to the **Lowe’s Heroes** Program. The program encourages Lowe’s employees to team together to do a group volunteer project to benefit a local nonprofit organization. Visalia’s Mooney Boulevard Lowe’s store selected Family Services for its team project this year, donating all of the materials and providing volunteers to do the work over two weekends in September.

Family Services has operated its Counseling Center out of the same Oak Street location for 30 years and while the space was functional, it was ready for an upgrade. Thanks to Lowe’s, clients are now receiving counseling services in a fresh, updated, and peaceful space.

Top Photo: Lowe’s Heroes volunteers from the Visalia Lowe’s store on Mooney Blvd. in front of the Counseling Center.

Bottom Photo: Lowe’s volunteers install laminate flooring in the hallway.



Prevention Spotlight: Getting There First

When the founders of Family Services opened our domestic violence shelter 35 years ago, they envisioned a social service agency that would be able to serve individuals and families with issues that stem from violence. Today, we specialize in serving many victims of crime, including those who have experienced sexual assault and human trafficking. Although much of our programming focuses on helping victims of crime after the crime has occurred, we want to make an impact early on. As we celebrate our 35th anniversary in Tulare County, we reflect on our efforts to shape our community by focusing on education and prevention to create a future without violence.

Family Services acknowledges the need to get there before it happens, to prevent someone from experiencing any form of violence in the first place. Prevention education needs to go beyond the classroom. In order to make an impact on social norms, culture, and behaviors that condone victimization – we must address people of all ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultures.

Primary Prevention Clubs

Almost 10 years ago, there was a shift in our field toward preventing violence instead of focusing only on responding to it. As a way to do this, Family Services formed prevention clubs, MyStrength and MyVoice, at Lindsay High School. MyStrength clubs began as a club for young men to explore prevalent notions of masculinity and their role in preventing sexual violence. MyVoice clubs were created with the concept of a safe space for young women to discuss their role in preventing sexual violence. Collectively, these clubs teach students skills to safely intervene, educate, and prevent sexual assault, harassment, and teen dating violence. Students engage their peers, school faculty, and community members by providing informational presentations and organizing outreach events.

Story continued on next page



Woodlake and Lindsay High School MyVoice and MyStrength members attended the REACH Youth Symposium in March 2018, where they met author and speaker Ashley Rhodes-Courter.



FAMILY SERVICES
SUPPORTING TULARE COUNTY

Our Mission

The mission of Family Services is to help children, adults, and families throughout Tulare County heal from violence and thrive in healthy relationships.

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Four years ago, our prevention program expanded to Woodlake High School with the same concept used in Lindsay, to saturate a community with only one public comprehensive high school. Some students have participated in the program since it began at Woodlake High School. MyStrength President, Raul Reynoso, began his senior year this fall. Raul says, “Educating my peers and the community about how they can prevent sexual assault is important because it allows more people to be informed about the topic and hopefully decrease the rate of sexual assaults and unhealthy relationships.”



Club members at Lindsay High School organized Denim Day on campus to engage classmates in discussions about sexual assault.

Many participants say they will use what they have learned in the future. “I will definitely use the knowledge I learned in MyVoice later on in life because sexual assault is a big role in my life. I will always educate my friends and family about sexual assault so that together we can help prevent it,” said first-year MyVoice member Jhovana Reyes.

Prevention club members and staff work closely with the community of Woodlake and created the Sexual Assault Primary Prevention Committee. The committee is made up of educators, school officials, parents, and students who provide guidance for planning primary prevention efforts in the community.

Community Outreach

Our outreach program engages the community to raise awareness and prevent domestic violence, teen dating violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Family Services provides educational presentations and information booths for agencies, service clubs, schools and other groups throughout Tulare County. As of October 2018, we have reached 5,816 adults and 2,935 adolescents through 243 presentations and outreach booths we attended or conducted.

Family Services' outreach and prevention staff and volunteers helped educate students at the 9th Annual Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency Red Ribbon celebration.



Promotora Project

With the success of the prevention program and community education efforts, Family Services began the Promotora Project in 2017. Promotoras are women trained to educate and raise awareness on important issues, all while empowering other women and girls. The goal of the project is to help Latino families have healthier, safer lives. Family Services' Outreach Coordinator trains the promotoras how to conduct *pláticas*, which are group discussions where they educate their community on topics of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking. Our Promotoras say it is rewarding to help others who have experienced violence.



Family Services' Promotoras were recognized for their *servicio de corazón* (service of the heart) to improve the well-being of their community at Visión y Compromiso's celebration for Promotora Month.

Through these programs, Family Services has been able to reach youth and adults who will take the knowledge they have learned back to their communities. These efforts are just a few of the ways Family Services is working to prevent violence from happening in the first place. With the help of our community partners, we have been able to start necessary conversations about healthy relationships and create safe spaces where victims can receive help. Prevention is possible when we all work together.

Project Update: High-Risk Team Completes First Year



One year ago, Tulare County reflected on a bleak statistic: 11 domestic violence-related deaths in the previous year. Research provides that the escalation of domestic violence to a lethal level follows an identifiable pattern, with identifiable indicators. If communities can identify which cases are escalating towards a homicide, there are opportunities for the system to intervene. If it's predictable, it's preventable.

In order to do this, Family Services, the Tulare County Sheriff's Office, the Tulare County District Attorney's Office, and the Tulare County Probation Department have joined together to implement the Domestic Violence High Risk Team (DVHRT) Model, a nationally-recognized domestic violence homicide prevention framework, identified by the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women as a "leading promising practice in the field."

The DVHRT Model incorporates evidence-based risk assessment into the domestic violence response system to identify the most dangerous cases—those that are at risk of lethal or near lethal assault. Once the most dangerous cases are identified, the multidisciplinary team closely monitors each case, meets regularly to share case information, and implements case-specific intervention plans to reduce the likelihood of a homicide.

After undergoing intensive training, the DVHRT began accepting cases in October 2017. As of this printing, there have been zero domestic violence homicides in the Tulare County Sheriff's Office jurisdiction since.

Year One Indicators

October 2017-September 2018

45

High-risk cases accepted

An average of four per month

38% of high risk victims utilized Family Services' domestic violence services

498

Danger Assessment Screenings

TCSO asks victims a series of questions when they are on a domestic violence call to determine whether the victim is at high risk

25% of cases screened in as high risk

Risk Indicators

62% - Abuser attempted to kill victim

80% - Abuser strangled victim

55% - Abuser strangled victim multiple times

55% - Abuser owns a gun

We know from the research that the escalation of domestic violence to a lethal level follows an identifiable pattern, with identifiable indicators.

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**If it's predictable,
it's preventable.**

Incarcerated Teens Gain Parenting Skills



Family Services facilitates free parenting classes throughout Tulare County to help parents build safe, healthy parenting skills. The Nurturing Parenting Program is an evidence-based parenting education curriculum that teaches parents how to effectively communicate with their children and use discipline in ways that

promote positive self-regard. Nurturing Parenting emphasizes the importance of raising children in a caring and trusting home. Its philosophy is that children who are cared for develop the capacity to trust, care for, and respect themselves, other people and living creatures, and the environment.

This fall Family Services' staff began facilitating a Nurturing Parenting program for teen parents at the Tulare County Juvenile Detention Facility. Five incarcerated teens participated and graduated from the six-week parenting class. The teen parents gained skills to help them be active nurturing parents, while taking into consideration that they themselves are still young and developing.

Parenting Coordinator Evette Salcido and Parent

Instructor Maria De La Torre facilitated the classes with four young fathers and an expectant mother. Initially, some parents were reluctant to participate and share their experiences and opinions. However, after some time, participants began to feel comfortable and share during class. One participant said they wanted to learn how to be a good parent to prevent their child from experiencing the same things they did.

All five parents successfully completed the 12 sessions and received certificates of completion. On October 22, Family Services held a small ceremony at the Juvenile Detention Facility for the five teens. Their family members were invited for a celebratory breakfast and were able to witness their children being honored for their achievement. After receiving their certificates, the teens had additional time with their loved ones to take a picture and even share a hug, which is typically not allowed during a regular visit.

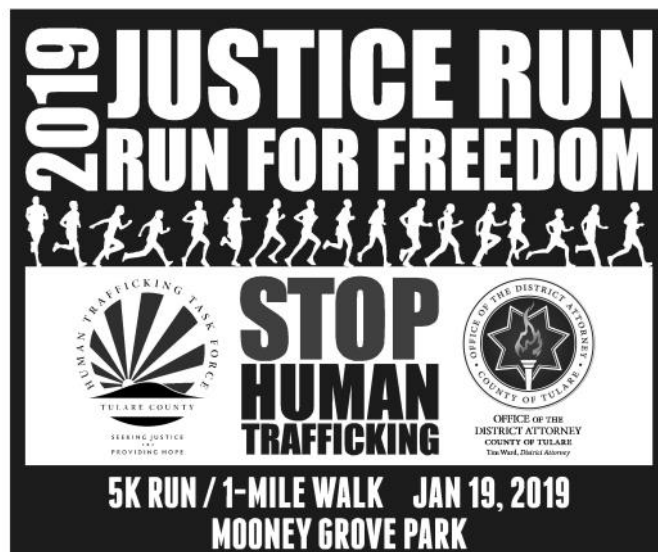
With the successful completion of the first group, Juvenile Probation has already referred four additional teen parents to participate in the Nurturing Parenting Program. Maria began working with the new group in late October.

Family Services also offers Nurturing Parenting classes for parents with children ages 0-12 free of charge throughout Tulare County. For more information, including a schedule of classes, please contact Family Services' Supervised Visitation and Parenting Department at 559-625-4894.

Run for Freedom Set for January 19

The Tulare County Human Trafficking Task Force and the Tulare County District Attorney's Office is organizing the Justice Run: Run for Freedom, a 5k run and one-mile walk, on Saturday, January 19 at Mooney Grove Park in Visalia. January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and a portion of the event's proceeds will benefit Family Services' Freedom House, where we work with survivors of human trafficking and youth at risk of being trafficked. Another portion will aid Porterville's Central California Family Crisis Center in raising awareness about human trafficking. The cost for the event is \$30 per participant and includes a t-shirt. For more information or to sign up, please visit:

<http://bit.ly/JusticeRun>



20 Years of Thankfulness: Annual Mum Sale Reaches Milestone

For 20 years, businesses and community members in Tulare County have been purchasing chrysanthemum plants every November to show their support for safe homes, safe relationships, and safe children.

While brightening up offices, decorating front steps and Thanksgiving tables, and bringing smiles to the faces of those who receive them as gifts, the mums have another important purpose. The "Thanks for Giving" Mum Sale brings in more than \$30,000 each year, which means that these beautiful little plants have raised more than \$600,000 to power Family Services' mission since the sale started in 1998.

Thanks to your support, the 20th Annual "Thanks for Giving" Mum Sale was a lot of fun and a big success. Together, we sold more than 3,400 plants!

We would like to thank our generous sponsor for all 20 years, the **Foundation for Medical Care** of Tulare and Kings Counties. **ServiceMaster by Benevento, Cal Bennetts**, and our wonderful crew of hardworking volunteers also helped make this year's sale a success.

Thanks for giving!



Then (Above):
Newspaper
clippings from
early mum sales.



Now (Below):
Volunteers deliver
plants on
November 14.



Purple Party Honors Domestic Violence Awareness Month



October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and on October 5, Family Services and supporters gathered at the Visalia Rawhide Hall of Fame Club to celebrate survivors and raise funds for our emergency domestic violence shelter, *Karen's House*.

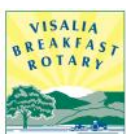
Attendees wore purple, the designated color for domestic violence awareness, while they bid on silent auction items, enjoyed a casual dinner from Café 225, participated in a Mystery Box fundraiser sponsored by Brown's Custom Jewelry, and listened to music thanks to donated DJ services from Bliss Events Group.

The event raised more than \$22,000, which will be used for shelter maintenance and upkeep, as well as special needs for clients and their children.

Throughout their lifetimes, one in four women and one in 10 men experience some form of intimate partner violence. It takes all of us to create safety in homes, in relationships, and for children. Thank you for your support!



The Law Office of
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Brown's Custom Jewelry



Family Services
815 West Oak, Visalia, CA 93291
Phone: (559) 732-1970
Fax: (559) 732-1987
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The mission of Family Services is to help children, adults, and families throughout Tulare County heal from violence and thrive in healthy relationships.

24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline
(559) 732-5941 or 1-(800) 448-2044

24-Hour Sexual Assault Hotline
(559) 732-7273 or (559) 784-7273

National Human Trafficking Resource Center
1-(888) 373-7888

Change a life. Donate today.
www.fstc.net

Help Us Spread Holiday Cheer by Stocking the Santa Store



The holidays can be an overwhelming time for the adults and children we serve at Family Services. For those staying at our domestic violence shelter *Karen's House*, many have left everything they know to begin a new life, free from violence.

Help us make the holidays a little less stressful for the adults and children we serve at Family Services. Each year, The Santa Store helps spread holiday cheer to our clients. The Santa Store offers a fun, stress-free shopping experience to pick out gifts. Our staff pre-screens families for eligibility, helps them determine needs and shopping lists, and brings them to our temporary store to pick out gifts for their children. For most participants, these are

the only gifts exchanged for Christmas. Toys are needed each year for children of all ages. The Santa Store is often low on gifts for older kids and teenagers. Teens tend to love gift cards, headphones, and bath and body sets. Children also select a present for their parents. Household items and gift cards are great ideas for adults.

How to Help: Drop off donations by Wednesday, December 12 at Family Services' Supportive Housing office at 307 W. Murray Ave. in Visalia on weekdays between 8:30a.m and 4:30p.m.

For more information about Santa Store, or to make a monetary donation that will be used toward the purchase of gifts, please visit our website at www.fstc.net/santa. Please contact Child Advocate Gisela Galvez for any questions at 559-732-5941 or e-mail her at gisela.galvez@fstc.net.