

# ANNUAL REPORT

## Year-Ending June 30, 2000

The past year has brought many changes to our agency. With the departure of the Founder and Executive Director, Brother Marcus Turcotte, in June 1999, Lou Gilbert returned to the agency after a one-year absence to become Executive Director of Y-US, Inc. about a week before the beginning of the scope of this Annual Report.

One of the first tasks of the beginning of this report year was to search for an adequate office and program site in which to locate our Hartford operations. For the previous two years, we operated from our Bloomfield retreat house. Though an excellent facility for the weekend respite care we offer, this proved difficult for weekday operations. With the approval of our Board of Directors, we took a lease on about 1700 square feet of first floor space at 2074 Park Street in the Parkville neighborhood of Hartford. After painting and other preparations, we moved in on a Saturday in the middle of September 1999. This space has worked out very well for our needs so far. An Open House was held on November 29, which saw the appearance of many friends of ours.

With the departure of Br. Marcus, we needed a Program Director to guide the programmatic components for the children. After a summer search, Kelly Regan, a former employee who had left about a year previously, returned and began work in early September. The week after she began, she attended a three-day youth conference in Buffalo, New York to gather information and supplement the skills she already had.

Over the summer, fall, and spring, some Board Members left and a number of new members accepted the invitation to join in the mission of directing Y-US: Alan Dornan, Georgina DeJesus, Barbara Bodnar-Linden, MiChelle Pereira Lopes and Maritza Velez. Carol Glider returned to the Board after a couple of years away. These people created a strong twelve people when added to continuing Board Members: Annie Kelleher, Charles Lowe, Don Goodman, Effie Economou, Egan Bovell and Elba Cruz-Schulman.

The year saw the first revision in four years of our Employment Manual. Significant changes include new pre-employment drug testing, as well as stricter background checks for potential employees. Vacation and sick-time policies were brought up to other similar organizations. Due to the demise last summer of our Kaiser Permanente medical insurance program for employees, we also had to shop for new medical insurance. We chose CBIA Health Connections, resulting in a choice of four different medical insurers for our employees. We also were able to add a starter dental insurance plan, as well as a small life insurance policy as part of our benefits package. Employee wages were also adjusted to become more competitive with other similar youth programs. This was done so that we could better attract and maintain good employees to work with our children.

Our annual Thanksgiving Dinner was held on the previous Tuesday at Saint Augustine Church. A long-time tradition continued thanks to the generosity of a couple of families who have sponsored this dinner for many years. About eighty-five children and adults were fed the works this year.

Some improvements were made to our Bloomfield retreat house during the course of the year. A building security alarm was added last August around the time of three break-ins. Last summer the upstairs bathroom was repainted and a new toilet and flooring installed. The old millennium went out with a bang; one of our two water heaters sprang a leak on New Year's Eve. With the help of a donation from The Home Depot, both water heaters were replaced, including a new anti-scald temperature-mixing valve to protect the children from hot water burns. This new set-up seems to have solved a long-time problem of running out of hot water during the children's shower time.

Last December, the older of our two 15 passenger vans, a 1994 Dodge began showing too many needed repairs for its value. Taking a chance, we asked one of our best friends of Y-US if they would be interested in helping finance the purchase of a new van. This was a new approach for us in buying vehicles. To our surprise, they and a number of other people came through with pledges over the next three years to purchase nearly the entire



amount for our new 2000 GMC van, for which we took delivery in March.

Also last December, with the help of the Connecticut Rivers Council of the Boy Scouts and Immaculate Conception Church, we transferred the organizational sponsorship charter of Hartford Boy Scout Troop 5 from Immaculate Conception Church (where Y-US was founded) to Y-US, Inc. We had been running this troop for Y-US children for a number of years and it seemed time to make it official. Y-US had already obtained organizational sponsorship of our Girl Scout Troop 57.

Trinity College students began tutoring one group of children one day per week on-campus, beginning the revival of an educational program we had done together two years ago. We hope to continue and expand this effort in the future.

In January, a “request for proposals” was issued by the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) for a community-based contractor to provide services to foster and adoptive children who are at risk of disrupting their placement and being moved to another home. If obtained, this contract would overnight double the size of Y-US, Inc. It would also mean increasing our service area from the southern half of Hartford, to the entire 37 town NorthCentral Region of DCF. After several weeks of program and budget development, we submitted our proposal. Our proposal included subcontracted collaborations with Hartford Behavioral Health for clinical support, and Family Life Education, Inc. for early childhood respite care. After a review process, Y-US was notified at the end of March that we had been selected for provision of this new service, named “Building Families FAST (Foster and Adoptive Support Team).” The final months of the year covered by this Annual Report saw a flurry of activity as we sought appropriate staff to hire and explained the program to current employees and other stakeholders.



With the year coming to a close, on June 3 we held our first “Celebration of Caring Hearts” fundraiser event at our Bloomfield retreat house. Many friends came and enjoyed a small jazz band, as well as a rented MoonWalk. Children also had face painting and there was all-you-can-eat food. Br. Marcus Turcotte, our Founder, was honored, as well as a number of organizations who have provided services to Y-US. Susan Campbell, from the Hartford Courant, was our Master of Ceremonies. Several thousand dollars was raised for the program.

Throughout the year, about forty-five children were in the original Y-US program, receiving services usually consisting of one afterschool meeting per week and one Friday-Sunday weekend retreat every four weeks at our Bloomfield retreat house. With the exception of three newly hired employees in June that each lasted from three to fifteen days, no staff left Y-US throughout the entire year. It was the hard work of dedicated staff and the children we serve that made the year a success. We look forward to beginning services to the foster and adoptive children to be served in the new Building Families FAST Program, beginning in the new fiscal year, after July 1, 2000.

Respectfully Submitted,

Louis Gilbert, Executive Director