



Child & Family Services

Third Level

Support in times of crisis, challenge, and life transition.



www.thirdlevel.org

update

SPRING 2018

Loss, Fishing, & Healing

by Jeremy Hawke

Some of my greatest memories are being with friends and family fishing. Fishing has the ability to bring people closer by slowing the world down and giving us the opportunity to be ourselves. It also allows others to see us for who we truly are.

Two memories pop into my mind when I think about fishing. [One] is the first time I took my son, Alex, fishing. He was probably three and a friend invited us out on his bass boat. We rigged Alex up with a worm and bobber and eventually he caught a small perch. He was absolutely ecstatic. His high pitched squeaks of joy echoed across the water. He desperately wanted to take that fish home to show his mom and then cook and eat it. So that's what we did. I think I needed a scalpel to fillet that fish.

The second is of my dad's 70th Birthday... We ended up on the Upper Manistee in a friend's cabin to celebrate. Both of my brothers flew in and the festivities were on. The guys from The Northern Angler in Traverse City tried to teach my dad and my two non-fly-fishing brothers how to cast... My son, who was home from college for the summer and working at The Northern Angler, came out after work and fished and hung out with us.

Fishing, and particularly fly fishing, has a way of being simultaneously solitary and communal. It is one of the things I most appreciate about the sport. You are meditating in a Zen-like state, watching your fly work down a stream, and building some of the best

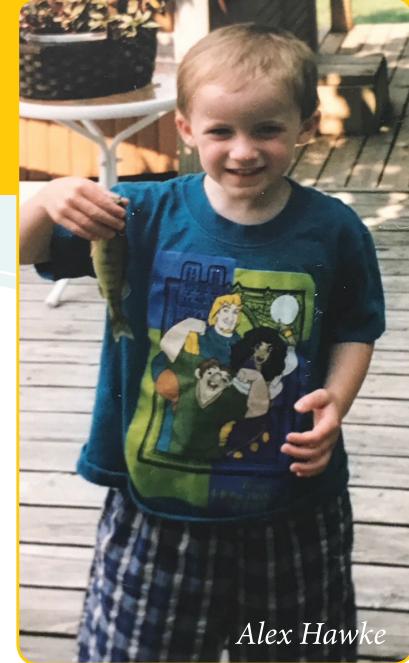
relationships you can have over stories around a fire at night.

That weekend with my Dad and brothers was also the first time that I told anyone, outside of

my wife, about Alex having troubles. I didn't have a clue what I was supposed to do, and nobody I interacted with talked about mental illness. I broke down and told my dad and brothers that Alex was struggling with depression... We encouraged him to see a counselor and he did... He continued to come home during breaks and work at the fly shop. We would fish together when we could and he would get out with some of the other guys from the shop or alone. Alex had always found comfort and peace outdoors. He could go and just sit in the woods and read for hours and be perfectly content. He was also one of those people who could just catch fish. I don't know what that gift is because I don't have it.

Alex graduated and moved back home, and [got] a job as a staff accountant with a local firm... He was enjoying work and the people he worked with. He was off and on with his counselor and we would continuously check in on him to see how he was doing. He and his sister moved into an apartment together that following summer. Around Thanksgiving that year we found out that he had been diagnosed as bi-polar and manic depressive. He had been working with his doctor to find a medication that worked... He had

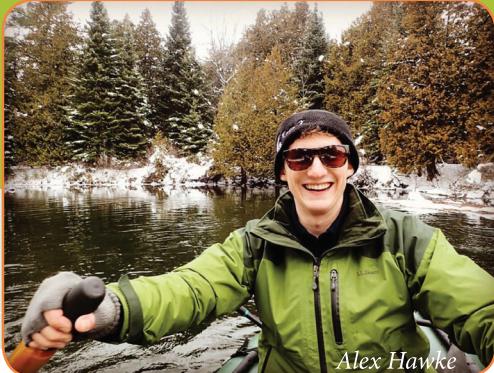
continued on page 2



Alex Hawke



Kids grow best in families! Be a foster parent. To learn how, call 231 946 8975.



Alex Hawke

continued from page 1

bought a plane ticket to see a good friend in Washington, DC and planned to take a long cross-country motorcycle trip.

On April 28, 2017 at 7:45 am my phone at work rang. My wife was hysterical, screaming for me to get to the kids' apartment. I sped there, running stoplights, arriving only to see police and emergency vehicles swarming the apartment complex. As I ran to the apartment, my poor daughter came around the corner, sheet-white, with tears pouring down her face. She had come downstairs from her room to find that Alex had hung himself in the night. We were not allowed into his room as it was a crime scene. We waited in our car in the parking lot for what seemed like an eternity for the chance to see our son before they took him for an autopsy.

“WHAT COULD I HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY? WHAT SHOULD I HAVE DONE?”

Our world and everything we had known was shattered. I read and re-read parts from *A River Runs Through It* that now strike a different chord for me as I tried to process what had just happened. What could I have done differently? What should I have done?

I kept thinking about a friend of mine from high school. He also died by suicide. The one vivid thing I remember is his father weeping over his body pleading for him to wake up so they could go fishing. At the time, I didn't fully understand the significance of that plea. I do now. It is not just for the loss of a son. It is also for the missed opportunities to be together and make memories.

Fishing continues to be a part of my life and a bigger part of my healing. Brian Pitser and the family at The Northern Angler have been a big part of this. They organized the First Annual “Cheese Cup” that second weekend in June. It is a warm water fly fishing tournament to raise money for Child and Family Services, which operates Third Level Crisis Center. Third Level is a 24-hour crisis line and call center for the National Suicide Prevention Hotline.

**“Grief is in two parts. The first is loss.
The second is the remaking of life.”**

– Anne Roiphe

The name “Cheese Cup” came from Alex's shop nickname, “Cheese.” The official story on the name was because he always had a cheesy smile on his face. I'm not sure that is the real story but we'll accept it. What I do know is that during his time working at the shop, I watched a young, quiet boy turn into an outgoing, confident young man, and for that I will always be grateful to Brian and all of the other influences he was exposed to.

The tournament was a huge success, there was a great turnout of folks, and money was raised for a great organization that helps the people of northern Michigan and beyond. If you find yourself in northern Michigan on June 9th this year, come out and join the tournament. If you don't want to fish, come by afterwards and enjoy some time with a great community of people. I expect Big Cheese and Momma Cheese will be manning the grills to make sure there are enough bratwursts for everyone.

Jeremy Hawke is a current CFS Board Trustee, volunteer, and friend.



2018 Cheese Cup a benefit for the Third Level Crisis Hotline

Saturday, June 9
9 am - 6 pm

Beginning at The Northern Angler
426 W. Front Street, Traverse City

Join us as anglers compete across northern Michigan's beautiful warm water fisheries in search of bluegill, bass, pike, and carp!

To register: www.thenorthernangler.com
(231) 922-4730

family



The Willingham Family

Perfect Match

Foster Care Specialist Amanda Fischer met Koltin and Kristopher in late 2015 when they came into care for the second time, Kris at 7 and Koltin at 4 (with their two sisters who have since been adopted). "My life began to revolve around the next crisis and next move for Kris and Koltin, and for the next two years I lost sleep on more nights than I can count, and had nightmares about where they would end up and how their lives would turn out."

After services and placements failed these two again and again, one being an adoptive placement, Kris and Koltin are in a home that seems to be meant for them.

The Willinghams, Christa and James, agreed to take a permanent placement of them within 36 hours of ever hearing their names or about their extreme traumatic behaviors. "You commit to the kid, and then you work through the behaviors," says Christa, reflecting a deep knowledge and understanding of trauma's effects on children. Christa and James provide a level of commitment and care to these boys that is all the more extraordinary given Amanda's worries about their future. The boys' adoption finalization hearing occurred in April. The Willinghams and the family that adopted the boys' sisters are friends who want to ensure the four children stay connected and grow up knowing each other as siblings, despite living in different homes.

"This job can be so tough," Amanda says. "But being able to witness the great things that happen for children makes it worth it. Kristopher and Koltin have fought hard and maintained a resiliency that is unparalleled, and their journey has just begun."

Want to learn more about different ways you can help children and families? Contact Gina Cameron at gcameron@cfsmail.org or (231) 946-8975.

Mark Your Calendar!

Join us to show your support ...

May

Mental Health Month & Foster Care Awareness Month

June 9

"Cheese Cup" Fly Fishing Tournament, hosted by The Northern Angler

(See page 2)

June 22

Third Level Golf Classic sponsored by Real Estate One, at Elmbrook Golf Course

Visit www.cfsnwmi.org/golfclassic for more information and to register.

July - August

Brown Bag Campaign

Visit www.cfsnwmi.org/brownbag for more information

September 10

Tee Up FORE Kids sponsored by Wells-Fargo Advisors & Peterson McGregor and Associates, at The Kingsley Club

Visit www.cfsnwmi.org/teeup for more



CFS Harbor Springs Site Supervisor Michelle Nichols (right) receives a grant from Dianne Litzenburger, president of the Petoskey Rotary Club, for recruitment and retention of area foster families. Many thanks to Petoskey Rotarians for their support!



Thank you Zonta Club of Petoskey and Zonta Club of Traverse City for supporting CFS staff development and training through a recent "Zonta Cares for Caring Women" grant.

thanks

The many ways that our volunteers offered their energy and support over the last year



Hosting a home on the TC Magazine Home Tour, Fall



Creating our successful silent auction at the Annual Appreciation Dinner, November



Helping on Paper Angels Drop Off Day – 366 wish list gifts delivered, December



Lisa Schulte and son, Spencer, painting our lobby with a new “wild” theme



Baking cookies for donors and community partners, December



Helping spread the word about the Third Level Crisis Hotline, May



Helping with our golf outings, June and September



Donating Easter meals for our foster families – thank you Family of Faith Church!

DID YOU KNOW?

688 volunteers contributed 7,430 hours to the work of CFS last year.

volunteers

Learning to Give



At 18 years old, Alexis Mathews and Savannah Stepke already have more passion for helping others than most people. Both are in the Allied Health program at the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District (TBAISD) Career-Tech Center and hope to become nurses. The girls are getting valuable work experience at Munson Medical Center, interning four hours each week in the Intensive Care Unit.

They are also both members of HOSA-Future Health Professionals, an international organization that helps students prepare for careers in health care. As a part of their involvement, the girls were tasked with completing a service project. They decided they'd like to help CFS' Foster Care program because of Savannah's personal connection with a CFS foster family.

Savannah's best friend, Abby, grew up with a family who opened their heart and home to children in need. Savannah is also close with Abby's biological mother, Kristin Harnish, who is a CFS foster mom. The Harnish family currently has seven children – three biological children including Abby, two adopted children, and two foster children – though they also consider Savannah part of their family.

Alexis and Savannah contacted CFS Volunteer Coordinator Teri Hedrich, who helped them create a list of items to collect for our foster care duffel bags. Each child who enters foster care is given an age-appropriate duffel bag, filled with things to make the transition to their foster home smoother – a blanket, a pillow, toiletries, a towel, an age-appropriate toy, stuffed animal, or another small gift, and more. The bags are a great comfort to children who often come to us quickly with few personal belongings and worry or fear for where they are headed.

"I loved the idea of the duffel bags so we decided to help with those," said Alexis. Teri suggested Alexis and Savannah collect items to fill three duffel bags.

The girls blew us away!

They not only collected the three bags and all of the items needed to stuff them, but they collected an extra seven full bags, gift cards, and food for our teen pantry! Their project won the "Community Awareness" award at the statewide Future Health Professionals conference.

Alexis and Savannah also created a "change war" in each class at the Career-Tech Center and students raised \$980 to support CFS. Their project gained attention from the Traverse City Record-Eagle. "The story in the newspaper created a snowball effect. The more we talked about it, the more people learned about it, and the more it grew," said Savannah. By the end, Alexis and Savannah, with the help of their classmates and community, had raised more than \$3,000!

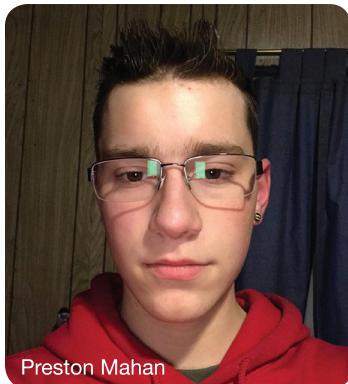
Their duffel bag project grew to help meet many other needs, including prizes for the CFS Art Contest and a foster family recruitment event. Savannah remains involved with CFS, signing up and recruiting other National Honor Society volunteers to help at events. She is also raising community awareness and speaking on behalf of foster children.

Thank you,
Alexis and Savannah!



learning + growing

Youth Find Success with Help from TLP



Preston Mahan

Our Youth Services counselors work with teens and young adults to help them learn important life skills like budgeting, resume building, finding and maintaining a job, cooking, navigating community resources, finding a safe place to live, and applying for college or financial aid. Through

the Transitional Living Program (TLP), our youth spend 18 months preparing to live successfully as adults. From providing basic needs items like clothing, school supplies, and food to building a trusting relationship with their clients in order to meet their goals, counselors work hard to assure that youth have the tools they need to support their own strengths and aptitudes – to thrive. All youth receive counseling which helps them overcome past struggles and prepare for their future.

“54 teens received counseling and support from caring Youth Services counselors last year.”

Preston Mahan, a senior at Benzie Central High School, has been working hard over the past 18 months to graduate high school. He has held a job at a small engine shop in Benzonia throughout the program, and is participating in the small engines program at TBAISD Career-Tech Center. Preston has been accepted to the University of Northwestern Ohio where he will pursue a degree in High Performance Motor Sports starting this fall.

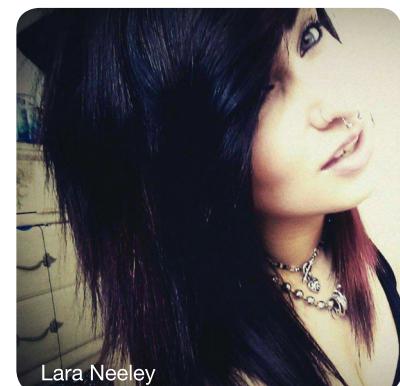
Preston has played the bass clarinet and alto saxophone since middle school and has a varsity letter in band. He is active with Benzie Central's drama program in the sound department, and has participated in Science Olympia and wrestling. In TLP, Preston worked on budgeting, finding housing, job search skills, and resume and cover letter writing. Youth Services Counselor Jamie VanDuinen says “Preston has been very attentive in TLP and has worked hard to get where he is. He is very motivated and juggles

many responsibilities at one time – staying involved at school and following his passion of motor sports. I’m so proud of him for graduating!”

Lara Neeley, 19, has also been working hard in TLP. She has worked at Crystal Mountain as a Snowboard Instructor and Ski Lift Operator for over a year. Lara is active in band at Frankfort High School and has performed many solos. This past winter she purchased a vehicle and is currently looking for housing of her own.

Lara enjoys working with animals and has many pets: a degu (similar to a guinea pig, though she has them too), cats, and dogs. Lara also enjoys cooking and regularly bakes banana bread, cakes, and three course meals. She has volunteered carving pumpkins for fall festivals and helps take care of her boyfriend’s nephews. Lara is a very talented artist and has placed in the Child & Family Service’s Art Contest. In TLP, Lara and her counselor Jamie worked on housing, budgeting, cooking, purchasing a car and auto insurance, and finding a job. “Lara is very talented, intelligent, and eccentric,” says Jamie, “I can’t wait to see where she goes from here.”

Congratulations to both Lara and Preston!



Lara Neeley

OUR MISSION

We strive to ensure the safety and well-being of children, youth, adults, and families in times of crisis, challenge, and life transition.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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“Potential is always greater than the problem. Problems are definitive. Potential is unlimited.”

– Raymell English, Behavioral Health Therapist at Child & Family Services

Third Level is your live, local resource for help with anything – anytime



- 24/7 access a local, highly trained crisis counselor
- Direct assistance and referral to community resources – food, shelter, mental health, and other basic needs
- Crisis intervention and suicide prevention help
- Free legal assistance by appointment

“There are four different levels of communication, each with its own context and ends. The Third Level is the level of trust, intimacy, vulnerability, and transparency. It is the emotional level where we discuss our wants, needs, fears, and joys.

The emotional level is the foundation upon which relationships, families, teams, and societies are built...”



**Call 231.922.4800
or 800.442.7315**

Hard working ~ Kind ~ Helpful ~ Compassionate...

These are just some of the words that our clients and partners have used to describe CFS staff in surveys. We also received very high marks in our recent child welfare audit, as well as our accreditation that we undergo on a volunteer basis every few years. It's that long-standing reputation for excellence in our community that makes CFS stand apart with our donors, volunteers, community partners, and those we serve.

We could use these same adjectives to describe our supporters! They are an equally important part of the equation in producing the results that we all want to see in our community. As Aristotle said, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” and that is our team motto at CFS. Without donor support of our work, we would not be here. Fortunately, our organization has survived some challenging years—thanks to the support of our donors, volunteers, partners, and staff.



We are planning for the next 80 years with an eye on fiscal responsibility, which includes a new social enterprise program that will help maintain our core programs that are never 100% funded by our contracts. This new program, called YouthWork, fits both our mission and balance sheet. We are excited to launch this program with our partners: Michigan



Rehabilitation Services, TBAISD, the National Park Service, and AmeriCorps. A handful of “Founding Investors” recognize the value of our pilot program and pledged their support for some of the upfront materials to build the number of work groups this summer to serve 36-40 youth. This work-learning experience will provide them with important skills and a sense of belonging through the many meaningful service projects they will complete. “This method of hands-on learning promotes civic engagement and improves self-esteem in its participants. We’re excited to get the program started, and look forward to helping our youth build their skills, job opportunities, and chances for success in life,” says YouthWork Director Bill Watson.

Budgeting is crucial in our world as well as yours, and by making a pledge, either monthly or yearly, you are helping CFS reach our goals and capacity to serve the needs in our community. If you would like to “budget” your philanthropic wishes in this way, please contact our Development Department at (231) 946-8975.

To learn more about donating to our good work, visit www.cfsnwmi.org/donate.



Third Level

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helping

Multi-generational leadership

These two women represent one of the major strengths of our CFS board. Galen Krupka (left) served on our board from 1980-1989 and was board president in 1988 when the publication they are holding in the photo was produced... 30 years later, Galen found this in her basement and brought it to our board meeting to share with Erica Walsh, our current board president!

Galen first learned about CFS when she and her husband Rich moved to Traverse City after meeting at Michigan State. Rich was Interlochen Public Radio's first employee and Galen became a teacher at Cherry Knoll. She began her volunteerism with Gretchen Votruba by helping put layettes together for foster parents adopting infants. Galen and her sister were both adopted at an early age and she had a natural appreciation for foster and adoptive parents.

Erica first learned about CFS when she read a newspaper

story about foster care through our annual Brown Bag Campaign. She quickly went from being a donor to a volunteer, helping with our Paper Angels Christmas gift effort. Within a year, she was ready to serve on the board and share her leadership skills as a former teacher and principal at a Detroit area school for at-risk youth. Erica and her husband Ed also met at MSU and wanted to raise their family (now 3 girls, with a brand-new baby) in northern Michigan.

Both Galen and Erica are active community volunteers and are particularly drawn to helping children. "We must be intentional to look beyond ourselves and our own lives," says Erica. "CFS serves our community's most vulnerable people, and that is why I support it." Galen says she "grew up with CFS" and adds she is willing to do "whatever needs to be done" to support the organization. Both of these women have an admirable commitment to children and families—and a vision for a safe, healthy community.



Thanks to
Bill Marsh
Automotive for their
sponsorship of the
newsletter