

Our History

1909 - The agency traces its beginnings to March 21, 1909, when a group of Charlotte religious leaders formed Associated Charities. Funds for Associated Charities came from one hundred business leaders who pledged \$25 a year to support its operation. The agency worked to help "the floating needy resident."

1920's - Over the years, Associated Charities took formal structure and by the 1920s had a board composed of Charlotte's business pioneers- names like J. B. Ivey, R. M. Pound, J. M. Harry and Thomas Glasgow.

The major issues of this period are how to distinguish professional "beggars" from the truly needy or the "worthy poor." Throughout the twenties, the agency expands to include women and children who had been deserted, and victims of tuberculosis, which leads to the formation of the Christmas Bureau program.

1930's - With the decade of the thirties comes the Depression, the beginnings of the first government agencies to handle relief, and the emergence of a concept called the Community Chest. In 1932 Associated Charities changes its name to Family Service Association and establishes the following statement of purpose: "To perform charity within the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, NC; to do family casework; to cooperate and assist families; to aid minors, aged and all other individuals; and in general to do any and all things such as family service associations, as organized in the United States now do."

1940's - In the early forties, the agency moves its offices to 121 E. Third Street where it will be for nearly 30 years. The most significant event of the forties is the merger of Family Service Association with the Children's Service Bureau to become Family and Children's Service. The Bureau, founded by the Junior League, provides adoptive foster care services.

1950's - The decade of the fifties sees continued growth for Family and Children's Service with the support of the United Fund. The agency's annual budget creeps toward \$100,000 and adoption becomes a major focus with 50 to 75 children placed with adoptive parents each year.

1960's - The use of federal funds to extend agency services into poverty areas of the community begins in the sixties. Through the auspices of the Charlotte Area Fund, federal money is obtained and the agency develops a three-year demonstration project, 'Project Outreach,' (not to be confused with the Project Outreach which serves those impacted by HIV/AIDS), whereby professionally trained staff members are housed within neighborhood centers. The agency continues its belief in the need for bringing services close to the people in poverty areas by participating in the Model Cities project and service to unmarried mothers through Teen Age Parents Services (TAPS). In December 1972 the responsibilities for this program as carried out by the agency are transferred to the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services. Later that decade, several business leaders work hard to develop a consumer credit counseling program to assist individuals experiencing budgeting and debt repayment difficulties. In 1969 Consumer Credit Counseling Service merges with Family and Childrens Service, becoming the first such merger nationally and the first credit counseling program to be funded by United Way.

The decade closes with the long-awaited opening of the United Way building on Brevard Street where the agency is housed for the next 30 years.

1970's - With the dwindling demand for adoption services in the seventies, the agency gives up its adoption program and addresses new community needs.

The decade begins with the launching of a Family Life Enrichment program to serve as the educational arm of the agency. An initial special project for this division is the development of family crisis intervention training for officers of the Charlotte Police Department and Mecklenburg County Police Department. Today, through Counseling & Education, family life enrichment counselors offer a variety of workshops to families and children.

On January 1, 1973 the agency begins an affiliate relationship with Family Counseling Service of Gaston County. While retaining local identity and a local board of directors, the Gaston agency purchases total staff, administrative and development services from our agency. In July 1979 this affiliate relationship is terminated and Family Counseling Service of Gaston County becomes an independent operation.

In 1975, responding to a request from the board of the Neighborhood Medical Clinic, the agency places a family counselor in this nonprofit medical service designed to serve low-income families in a target population area. The family counselor operates with the medical staff as part of a total family treatment team, and uses central office resources for support. Having demonstrated the validity of this approach, the agency ends the project in 1977 with the Neighborhood Medical Clinic, which assumes responsibility for this service.

On August 1, 1977 the agency opens its first satellite office in Union County. The agency continues to offer consumer credit counseling, employee assistance, family counseling and rape crisis and child abuse prevention services to the residents of Union County at the downtown Monroe location.

At the instigation of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee, the agency launches a pilot project to serve victims of violent crime. Successful beyond expectations, the project grows into the agency's Victim Assistance program.

A local Big Brothers Big Sisters program to serve the needs of children in single-parent families was started by interested citizens in 1972 and on December 1, 1978, Big Brothers Big Sisters becomes a program of the agency.

As the seventies come to a close, the agency joins the community's commitment to provide services to victims of family violence. In cooperation with the Salvation Army, the agency establishes a temporary emergency shelter and counseling service for battered women and their children. Upon recommendation by the Social Planning Council, the agency assumes full responsibility for The Shelter, a service for battered women and their children, on December 1, 1979.

1980's - The most recent decades see the agency continuing to respond to the challenge of meeting changing community needs with the following innovations:

1982 - The merger of Rape Crisis, an all-volunteer, 24 hour service, with Victim Assistance.

The development of the Family Therapy Training Institute by the Family Counseling program to train community professionals in structural family therapy, thus improving the quality of treatment available for families.

1983 - The board of directors votes to change the name of the agency to United Family Services, in order to give a better description of the variety of services the agency offers to individuals and families.

The formation of ADAM (Against Domestic Assaults by Men), a treatment program for men who abuse their intimate partners. In 1989 responsibility for this area of service is assumed by Mecklenburg County under its mental health program and the agency phased out its efforts, satisfied that the need for this service has been clearly demonstrated in our community.

1984 - The implementation of the Custody and Visitation Dispute Mediation Program offered through the Mecklenburg County District Court system to help divorced and separated parents develop parenting plans that are in the best interest of their children. In 1991 the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina approves legislation establishing the mediation of custody and visitation disputes as a program to be implemented statewide. In 1992 the agency assists with the transfer of its program to the auspices of the 26th Judicial District (Mecklenburg County District Court).

1985 - The addition of a communications director to develop and coordinate the agency's public information program.

1986 - The formation of a specialized Misdemeanor Unit of Victim Assistance, with primary focus on victims of domestic violence, in conjunction with The Shelter for Battered Women.

1991 - The implementation of a full service employee assistance program as an expansion of service to additional local businesses and organizations. This grows out of the agency's experience in providing such services for over 10 years through national contracts with Family Service America, now called the Alliance for Families & Children.

The merger of Rape Crisis/Child Abuse Prevention with our Union County services to expand the range of services available to Union County citizens.

1992 - The establishment of Cabarrus County services in February.

Project Outreach was formed through a collaboration of the agency with the Regional HIV/AIDS Consortium to provide in-home counseling services to those living with AIDS and to their caregivers (Project Outreach).

1994 - The collaboration of Big Brothers Big Sisters with Hospice of Charlotte, Inc. to provide adult volunteers as mentors for children in families where a parent is dying from complications related to AIDS.

The collaboration of Family Counseling and Charlotte area churches to offer The Hope Brigade, a program for children, teenagers and parents affected by HIV/AIDS.

1995 - The implementation of services for family and friends of homicide victims in the Victim Assistance division, made possible by a VOCA grant.

The implementation of Heart To Heart, a teenage theatre group which, through improvisational drama, educates others about the realities of dating violence.

1996 - The implementation of Healthy Transitions For Families, a program designed to help families, especially those with children, through transition, such as separation and divorce.

The implementation of the Family of the Year contest and award.

The collaboration of The Shelter for Battered Women with the Housing Authority to provide on-site counseling services and assistance to women in domestic violence/abusive situations.

The collaboration of The Shelter for Battered Women with the Mecklenburg County Bar Association to offer Project 100, a program where lawyers volunteer to assist domestic violence victims in court.

The implementation of a housing counseling program in Consumer Credit Counseling.

The implementation of outcome measures in all service areas.

1997 - The exploration of a fund development program is conducted with the aid of a consultant. The first board fund-raising campaign is held in November-December. The first holiday direct mail campaigns are conducted for Big Brothers Big Sisters and The Shelter for Battered Women.

1998 - The agency is awarded a contract from the city to provide housing counseling services.

A focus on a community-centered initiatives launches the Building Youth in Southside Communities project, the centerpiece of which is Families and Schools Together (FAST). Initial funding for the Southside Homes project is provided by the Foundation For The Carolinas. Other new efforts include placing a family counselor at the Johnston YMCA and the Ada Jenkins Center in Davidson, as well as both a family counselor and Big Brothers Big Sisters counselor at the Bethlehem Center.

In September, an official development office is established.

Community Education moves to the Great Aunt Stella Center.

Men for Change fund-raising and education campaign-the first ever of its kind in Charlotte-raises over \$60,000 for The Shelter for Battered Women.

1999 - Big Brothers Big Sisters moves to the Urban League Building.

The Cabarrus County office staffs a part-time Consumer Credit counselor and a Spanish-speaking family counselor at the Logan Center, thanks to grants from United Way and the Cabarrus County Foundation.

The agency celebrates 90 years of service with a reception at the Mint Museum of Craft + Design in uptown Charlotte.

Through the partnership of United Way of Central Carolinas, Inc., United Way of South Iredell and United Family Services, UFS opens a Consumer Credit Counseling & Housing Services office in Mooresville/South Iredell to serve residents there.

Heart To Heart teen theatre expands its reach into the community with the addition of a second troupe.

The Shelter for Battered Women celebrates its 20th anniversary with a reception and volunteer awards presentation at the Children's Theatre.

Jim Johnson retires from the organization in December after serving 27 years, 12 as executive director.

2000 - Mark J. Pierman joins United Family Services as president/chief executive officer.

November 2000 United Family Services opens an office in Huntersville, featuring Consumer Credit Counseling, Employee Assistance and Family Counseling.

December 22, 2000 United Family Services' administrative offices, its Consumer Credit Counseling, Employee Assistance and Family Counseling programs move from the United Way building to 200 N. Sharon Amity Road, Charlotte, NC 28211.

2001 - Meeting the changing needs of the community is a hallmark of United Family Services. In 2001 the tradition continues. Formerly two separate programs, Family Counseling and Community Education merge to form Counseling & Education. The new structure allows the expertise of staff to be more adept at serving clients.

Community Building & Neighborhood Development, a project in the works for several years under the Community Education service area, becomes its own program. The structure allows UFS staff to have increased focus and ability to support communities in the Charlotte area.

After more than two decades of serving area youth with United Family Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters becomes an independent agency at the end of the calendar year. The newly formed Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Charlotte will work to help Big Brothers Big Sisters of America reach its goal of serving 1,000,000 youth by 2004.

In an effort to better serve the needs of families and children in the community, United Family Services joins eight other human services agencies and community leaders in celebrating the success of a capital campaign to fund The Carol Grotnes Belk Children & Family Services Center. The campaign, led by Hugh McColl, raised more than \$9 million to finance construction of the facility which has been in planning stages for several years. Groundbreaking at the center's site at Fifth & Davidson, in Charlotte, occurs on January 7, with a completion target of spring 2003.

2002 - United Family Services partners with Carolinas Medical Center to offer the Domestic Violence Healthcare Project, on-site response and domestic violence counseling. In addition, the project educates and trains hospital professionals. The project met its annual goal within the first six months of operation

2003 - At the request of Cabarrus Victim Assistance Network, United Family Services assumes responsibility for Rape Crisis in Cabarrus County.

The Charlotte office moves to the new Children & Family Services Center at 601 E. Fifth Street, Suite 400.

United Family Services transitions its South Tryon Community Building & Neighborhood Development project to the residents of Brookhill Village and Southside Homes.