



**SOUTH SUBURBAN FAMILY SHELTER, INC.**

*Comprehensive Services to Victims of Domestic Violence*

*Celebrating 40 Years*

**From the Desk of Your Friendly Neighborhood Executive Director**



The holiday season is in full swing! My family has completely transformed our house into a wonderland and I love the constant glow of twinkling lights. With each ornament I unpack, a flood of memories come forth. I am reminded that this time of year can be joyous, yet also painful. This year, in particular, we have seen loss and tragedy at every turn. Many families are experiencing their first holiday

without a loved one. Their traditions are lifting up bittersweet memories that can be hard to cope with.

At SSFS, we see families that struggle to provide the anticipated gifts or meals, as well as families that grieve for a wholeness they have yet to reach. Many of you go to extraordinary lengths to help the families we serve find joy through your generosity.

I ask this holiday season that we all extend that spirit of generosity to others in our everyday actions. A kind word of thanks, a smile (from an unmasked safe distance) or a well-timed message to check in can be just the right dose of healing someone needs. I've always believed that we can all play a part in creating a world of compassion and peace--what better time to start than NOW.

Happy Holidays,  
Jennifer

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**Interview with Board Member, Cherilyn Parker**

As you read in last month's messenger, we had some recent changes to our board. In October, one of our newest members of the South Suburban Family Shelter's board, Cherilyn Parker, was appointed to the Secretary position. Read below to find out about her journey getting here, and where she wants to see us go.

**Brittany:** How did you first find out about SSFS?

**Cherilyn:** I found SSFS with the position that I hold with a local bank, as the Community Reinvestment Act Officer. One of my tasks is to find local non-profit organizations that serve communities with a specific purpose of improving quality of life, like domestic violence agencies or other social services. One of the branch managers in the Homewood office found South Suburban Family Shelter. In doing my due diligence, I went out to meet the Executive Director and learn more about the facility. It wasn't until that conversation that I recognized I was personally experiencing domestic violence. I didn't know what it was at the time, I just thought it was a normal course of life, that this is just the way things were supposed to be in a marriage. But deep down, I knew it wasn't right. So, then I asked, "can someone like me receive services?" and the Executive Director said "Absolutely! Get in touch with one of our counselors", and so I did. Not only did I do this for myself, but also for my two young children who received services as well.



**Brittany:** About how long ago was that first conversation with the Executive Director?

**Cherilyn:** The first conversation took place in 2014, so 6 years ago. My eldest son who is now 19 still remembers the tools he learned while he was in counseling. He has been able to apply the tools he gained to his relationships as he grew up. It was very impactful, and I am just honored to serve on the board now.

**Brittany:** Congratulations on your new appointed spot as the Secretary of our Board. Besides your personal story, why is the mission of SSFS so important to you?

**Cherilyn:** It is meaningful because your staff and services provide hope to people that might think and feel that their situation is hopeless and that there is no alternative. The fact that you can provide a wealth of encouragement and self-empowerment to those impacted by DV, and especially because you serve all demographics, not just low income, but also high income, and everyone in between. The fact that SSFS exists and has the services to offer makes me 'Team SSFS all day, everyday'.

**Brittany:** With what we do now as agency and for the last 40 years, where do you see SSFS going in the future especially with the role you play on our board?

**Cherilyn:** What I would like to see is a greater awareness of the services SSFS offers and even to expand on the services already in place. I know there is the new location on the Southside of Chicago, but the more people that are aware about domestic violence and that there is help available, the better.

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**Thank you for making the holidays a dream come true!**



As you know, SSFS hosts an annual Adopt-A-Family event for our clients and their children. These families would likely have somber holiday season, if not for the generous support of people like you. Being a staple event for many years, we were nervous about the response we might receive amid a pandemic and the financial challenges many are facing 2020.

Our community came through and there was no lack of support! The above photo shows just a small portion of the donations we received. All 34 families (80 individuals) were adopted and supplied with personalized gifts and holiday meals! We never take for granted your kindest and generosity, but we are always amazed at your eagerness to step in and offer a helping hand. On behalf of the staff and board of directors, we thank you for making this holiday season special for these families who have been impacted by domestic

We wish you and your families a wonderful Holiday Season and Happy New Year!



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