

formed by the merger of **theVillage** & **SILVER SPRINGS**
MARTIN LUTHER SCHOOL



gemma
SERVICES

where
hope
shines

THE LATEST NEWS
PUBLISHED FOR OUR
FRIENDS & FAMILIES

Fall 2020



A Time of Growth and Change

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friend,

You may have heard our recent news announcing a significant change to one of our programs. At the October 22nd meeting of Gemma's Board of Directors, the Board voted unanimously to close the Rosemont Residential Program, which includes the Gemma School.

This decision was not made lightly and follows years of hard work and analysis by many hands. When we merged and became Gemma, we were hopeful with our combined expertise we would be able to find ways to make the Rosemont Residential Program more viable after it had experienced many years of financial struggle. Unfortunately, over the last year it became apparent that would not be possible.

Gemma is committed to making sure the youth currently in our care have a smooth transition and we will not close the program until all have moved to an appropriate placement. We also are committed to helping our affected employees transition successfully to whatever is next for them.

Gemma Services remains committed to providing Residential Treatment Services. The Residential Program on the Plymouth Meeting campus will remain open. We also are exploring new ways to provide Psychiatric Residential Treatment Services to youth in more home-like community settings.

We look forward to discovering additional ways to serve children, youth, and families in our shared community. TheVillage was founded in Southwest Philadelphia in 1877. As you likely know, Gemma Services still provides Outpatient Mental Health, Foster Family Care, and Prevention Services out of our Preheim Center. We have formed an internal Task Force to look carefully at additional ways Gemma Services can support families in Southwest Philadelphia.

Martin Luther School is a K through 8th grade Pennsylvania Approved Private School. We are exploring expanding Martin Luther School to also include grades 9 through 12. We look forward to sharing information with you about all of these new program opportunities as they develop.

Despite this sad news, we believe the future for Gemma is bright. We remain steadfast in our commitment to provide high quality services to youth and families, just as we always have. On the pages that follow, you will read some recent highlights of Gemma's inspiring and dedicated work over these last challenging months. Gemma employees are truly heroes and have adapted in amazing ways to continue to carry forth our mission and to support children, youth, and families who need us greatly.

Through your generosity, you have made it possible for Gemma to make hope shine for children and families through the vital services we offer. You are part of a long legacy of supporters and your generosity will carry Gemma forward into its future. We could not do this work without you. Together, Gemma will continue to transform hope into action for children, youth, and families.

Sincerely,



Kristen E.M. Gay, Ph.D.
President and CEO



Congratulations to John Peterson!



Recently retired after more than 40 years as Records Manager, John Peterson held the important role of history keeper for Silver Springs – Martin Luther School, one of Gemma's legacy organizations. During his tenure, John was responsible for maintaining the agency's archives – including reviewing, organizing, and preserving documents spanning more than 160 years. "As with any old organization, there are a lot of records," Peterson said in an interview just before his retirement. "We have a record for virtually every child we've ever served, including the first child whose folder contains one sheet of paper," shared Peterson. "These records show the kind of work done over a 160-year period and how things have changed and evolved over that time." He also managed records for all programs and responded to requests for information from alumni and former clients. "John made each record request his priority.

He offered past residents a warm reception on the phone, through email, or a meeting on campus," said Neil Clark, Vice President of Operations. Clark continued, "He is patient and kind and provided each client as much time as they deserved. John was serious about the "records business" as evident by impeccable and complete files. He's a wonderful person too!"

Over the years, John shared that his role expanded. As an example, he answered an urgent request in the mid-1980's to fill in for the piano player at the annual Christmas party. His musical services have been a fixture at every special occasion since then until his retirement.

This past August, after 43 years, John retired. He will be greatly missed for his fascinating stories and deep knowledge of the history of Silver Springs – Martin Luther School and the children we have served over the last 160 years. We wish John all the best in his well-earned retirement!



Our Virtual "Taste of Chefs" Was a Success!

Close to 150 people participated in our virtual "Taste of Chefs" event from the comfort of their homes on Friday, November 6th. In addition to a program highlighting Gemma's mission, *Chefs* featured an online auction full of fun items for bidding. If you missed the livestream, you can watch the program any time on the Gemma Services YouTube channel. Thanks to our generous sponsors, those who purchased tickets, and everyone who participated in the auction, *Chefs* raised important support for our programs that provide vital support children and families. Please save the date for our next *Chefs* event on April 9, 2021 (virtual or in-person – to be determined). Thank you!



SAVE^{the} **DATE**

Faith in Action

Council

Virtual Meeting

Faith in Action at Gemma

Calling all congregational partners! Please join us for a virtual Faith in Action Council Meeting on Saturday, February 21st, from 9–10 AM. We will share updates about Gemma's continued work to serve at-risk youth and families. We will also outline ways you can stay connected with us and support our work during the ongoing pandemic. Please RSVP to info@gemmaservices.org by Wednesday, February 18th and we will send you the meeting link. We look forward to "seeing" you!

Gemma Programs Keep on Keepin' On!

Throughout the ongoing pandemic, the teams at Gemma remain steadfast in their commitment to helping youth and families. Calling upon creativity and resourcefulness, Gemma's frontline staff continues to ensure that Gemma is here to help those who need us now more than ever. **Some examples include:**



Staff in the **Residential Treatment Programs** took advantage of warm weather and the beautiful campuses this summer for activities with the youth. They planted and grew vegetables and flowers and explored the natural beauty of the grounds through nature walks. Residents engaged in creative expression through dance, outdoor painting, and even personalized their own yoga mats. Visits from food trucks and a day of water play brought lots of smiles to kids' faces as summer wound down and the children prepared for the new, albeit different, school year.

Martin Luther School educators kicked off the 2020–2021 school year virtually while simultaneously planning for when in-person classes would be able to resume. Classroom staff put together boxes of educational materials for families to pick up and teachers to deliver to students at home, who were thrilled to see their teachers even from a distance. Staff created their own "bitmojis" (shown right) to add a fun element to their virtual classrooms, and are engaging students in creative lessons, too. In one example, middle-schoolers had the chance to meet a jazz musician, online of course, to supplement their reading curriculum.



Our **Prevention Programs** continue to provide in-person services to at-risk families. The team in our **In-Home Protective Services Program** has adapted to the public health concerns too. For in-home visits with families, "We use masks, gloves, sanitizer, and disinfectant spray," one staff member shared. "I speak to the families about social distancing, using masks and gloves during these trying times. The most challenging is reiterating and reminding all that the pandemic is still amongst us." Gemma's **Family Empowerment Center** is facilitating weekly, virtual parenting groups covering topics such as: Parenting During the COVID-19 Pandemic, How Anger Impacts your Child(ren), Child Abuse and Neglect, and more.

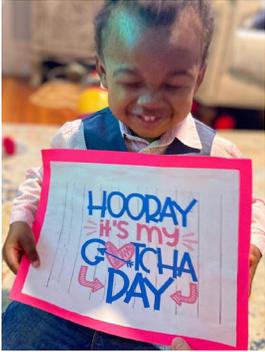
In our **Intensive Behavioral Health Services** program staff are supporting students from 27 new elementary, middle, and high schools in Philadelphia, and the program has seen more than 100 new families referred for services since August 31st. This change is the result of a re-design of the program by the City of Philadelphia. We are thrilled to be able to support these kids and their families to reach their goals.

Gemma's **Foster Care and Adoption** teams continue to deliver mission critical services, albeit differently, too. Training and support for foster parents is being provided virtually through online platforms, and we are thrilled that participation is high. In the last few months, adoptions have also been finalized for our kids via Zoom or telephone, a happy milestone to celebrate!



Finally, therapists providing **Outpatient Behavioral Health Services** are finding innovative ways to engage and support children and families throughout this pandemic. Some examples of their creativity include singing with clients, taking family pets for a virtual walk, sharing a virtual cooking lesson, and more.

♥ Finding Children Forever Homes



Gemma's Foster Family Care program provides temporary homes for children who need a loving and supportive environment. When that need becomes a permanent one, Gemma's Adoption and Permanency Services team steps in. "We find these children a new home or work with their foster parents towards legal custody or adoption," says Sam

Wojnilower, Supervisor in the program. "Either way, our goal is to find them a permanent, loving home."

Gemma's team has had to be creative during the COVID-19 pandemic to support children and families. Occasionally, staff have been able to meet outside of a family's house from a safe distance, Wojnilower

says, but most contact between children and families has been via online platforms. Other work continues as well. Recently, Gemma's staff attended an outdoor "matching event" for the Delaware Valley Adoption Council at which our team collaborated with other agencies to find matches between children and families. Like the ongoing needs of the children we serve, successes also continue. Recently, the team celebrated the adoption of a child who the organization has served for more than four years. "It was great!" exclaimed Wojnilower. "Over 30 family members and friends cheered on the adoption finalization via Zoom, and the child wore a shirt that said they were officially a member of the family."

Last year, 26 children found their forever homes through Gemma's Adoption and Permanency Services. Gemma is always honored to be able to help youth find hope and love with their new families.

Help Make Hope Shine for Children and Teens this Holiday Season!

This year has been full of challenges for everyone, but especially for children and youth in residential care who may feel isolated from their families, be without a family of their own, or be struggling with feelings of sadness and despair. Gemma Services strives to help children and youth experience joy and hope during the holiday season and all year round. The holiday season may look a bit different than usual this year, but Christmas will most certainly come to Gemma.

Here are the ways that you can help!

- **Make a generous financial gift** in the spirit of Christmas to support the youth and families.
- **Suggest friends or family members make a financial gift** in your honor.
- **Donate gift cards** to be used to help children and families we serve have a bright Christmas and to also provide what they need throughout the year. The most useful gift cards include: Target, Walmart, Amazon, Visa, Shoprite, Acme, Giant, Marshalls/TJ Maxx, Burlington Coat Factory, Footlocker, Five Below, and Best Buy. Please indicate the amount on the card. \$25 increments are ideal.
- **Provide a gift for a Gemma child or youth.** A wish list of gifts can be found on our website or our Amazon Wish List (<https://bit.ly/GemmaNeeds>). We ask that all gifts are new and unwrapped.



Our campuses continue to have restricted access. Please do not deliver any gifts without an appointment. Appointments are limited. To schedule your appointment please contact Amanda Bryant (Plymouth Meeting) at (610) 825-4440 x3307 or abryant@silver-springs.org or Betty Wu (Rosemont) at (610) 519-1615 or efwu@silver-springs.org.



We Have a New Website!

We are excited to unveil www.gemmaservices.org! Our new website combines the former Silver Springs – Martin Luther School and theVillage websites, and has a whole new look. On this website, you will find information about our history, the Vision and Mission that guide our work, our combined programs, and contact info, too. Please check it out at www.gemmaservices.org and learn more! Questions? Reach out to us at info@gemmaservices.org!

Thank You to Our Foundation Partners!

We are grateful to Foundation partners, along with many individuals and other organizations, who have supported Gemma Services during this challenging time. With this crucial support, Gemma is continuing to make hope shine for vulnerable children, teens, and families!

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|  Louis and Ann Abrons Foundation |  MontCoPA COVID-10 Response Fund/Montgomery County Fdn. |  The Scattergood Foundation |
|  BLBB Charitable |  PHL COVID-19 Response Fund/Philadelphia Fdn. |  The Scholler Foundation |
|  Caroline Sanders Trust#2 |  McCausland Foundation |  Stratton Foundation |
|  Child Development Foundation |  TD Charitable Foundation |  Timken Foundation of Canton |
|  Connelly Foundation |  The Joseph Kennard Skilling Trust |  Women's Club of Suburban Philadelphia |
|  CCRES |  The Pew Charitable Trusts |  WSFS Foundation |
|  Drueding Foundation | | |

Top Five Ways To Make Hope Shine for Children and Youth

1. Make an unrestricted financial gift to support Gemma's continued work to serve youth and families;
2. Purchase items from our Amazon Wish List to help those we serve. Visit <https://bit.ly/GemmaNeeds>;
3. Participate in employee giving in your workplace or submit a donation for a corporate matching gift to Gemma;
4. Design a Confirmation, Mitzvah, or School Project to support Gemma's mission and help youth and families, or
5. Like and share our social media posts or tell your friends about Gemma Services!

For more information contact us at info@gemmaservices.org or (610) 825-4440x3206.

Twenty Years of Supporting Children and Families!



Gemma's two prevention programs are led by Hetty Artis, whose tenure here began at the Village in 2000 and, this year, marks 20 years of service to our children and families. Both the In-Home Protective Services (IHPS) and Family Empowerment Center (FEC) programs share a goal of providing support and services to help families remain intact and decrease the likelihood that they will need further involvement in the child welfare system. To be able to best help the families, Artis makes a point of understanding each family's challenges so she can best match them with Gemma staff. Engaging families is not always an easy task. "Families are often hesitant at first due to fear or embarrassment," Artis explains. To set families up for success, Artis and her staff "continue to gently offer help, listen to what the family wants and needs, rather than dictating what they should be doing, ultimately winning their trust."

The IHPS program began in 2009 when the Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) launched the service and selected the then Presbyterian Children's Village as one of several providers. Today,

Gemma is the only remaining program; the Program serves approximately 25 families each year. In-Home Prevention Services are generally court ordered for families who have been determined to be at risk of having their children removed from their care. Case managers work with each family for a period that might last six months or stretch to a few years, depending upon the family's needs. According to Artis, "They ensure that the child's medical records, including immunizations, are up to date, children have appropriate seasonal clothing, monitor school attendance and progress, model good parenting behavior, and help connect the family with other services such as mental health and needed resources."

"...It's What We're Called to Do..."

-Gemma Team Member

The Family Empowerment Center is a newer program having begun at the Village in 2019, one of just two pilot programs in Philadelphia. The Center serves approximately 260 families each year who need support but are not under court supervision. Involvement is voluntary and short-term, with staff helping link families to appropriate services and community supports.

These supports might include social and mental health services, housing assistance, domestic violence counseling, primary care, education, and more. Families have access to support groups and parenting classes, play spaces for their children, and other family recreational and support activities. According to Artis, successful completion of this program generally prevents further involvement with DHS.

It's not always easy work, but the staff with Artis' guidance, are dedicated to serving the families of the Southwest Philadelphia region. One staff member recently described, "Simply put, it's what we're called to do." With many schools, health, and social services being offered virtually, there are fewer "eyes" available to identify when children might need support or might even be experiencing abuse. Gemma's prevention team members continue to make home visits, complying with all possible health precautions.

As Artis says, Gemma is thankful to friends and partners who help us serve these families who need us now more than ever. "Having the ability to provide needed items such as a new coat or a gift card for food can make all the difference for a family." Ever the champion of our kids and families, congratulations to Hetty Artis for 20 years of partnering with families in their journey!

For more information about the Prevention Programs, please visit www.gemmaservices.org or contact us at info@gemmaservices.org.



SILVER SPRINGS
MARTIN LUTHER SCHOOL

&

theVillage

Our Mission

Gemma Services changes lives by transforming hope into action for children, youth, and families facing emotional and behavioral challenges.

Gemma Services was formed in 2019 when Silver Springs – Martin Luther School and theVillage united to operate as one single organization serving children, families, and communities across the Philadelphia region. Representing a combined 300 years of service to vulnerable and at-risk children and families, Gemma Services is guided by the vision of a world in which children, youth, and families feel valued and have the tools to realize their highest potential.

Our Locations

Rosemont

- Administrative Office
- Outpatient Mental Health Services
- Residential Treatment, Adolescent Youth (ages 12–18)

452 South Roberts Rd
Rosemont, PA 19010
(610) 525-5400

Mt. Airy

- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Intensive Behavioral Health Services
- Outpatient Mental Health Services

7208 Germantown Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19119
Existing Clients & General Questions: (215) 247-1427
Intake & Referral: (215) 880-8823
IBHS: (215) 297-5170

Plymouth Meeting

- Foster Family Care
- Martin Luther School
- Residential Treatment, Children (ages 6–14)

512 West Township Line Rd
Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462
(610) 825-4440

Preheim Center

- Adoption Services
- Foster Family Care
- Outpatient Mental Health Services
- Prevention Programs

6517 Chester Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19142
(215) 730-2240



Learn More About Our Programs and Services at www.gemmaservices.org.