



gemma
SERVICES

because
you
matter

THE LATEST NEWS
PUBLISHED FOR OUR
FRIENDS & FAMILIES

Spring 2024



Board of Directors 2024

Officers

Nina V. Rogers
Chair

Polly M. Shaffer
Secretary

Clifford P. Haugen
Treasurer

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

Other Members

Christopher Holland

Yardly R. Jenkins

C. Andrew Krepps, Jr.

Aurora Kripa

Colleen M. Lelli, Ed.D.

Connie L. Murphy

Elisabeth S. Slate, Ph.D.

Robena Spangler

Nancy B. Wolcott

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear friends,

I am inspired every day when I hear of the many ways the Gemma team is living into our commitment to make a difference in the lives of youth and families – from educators to social workers and therapists to leadership and Board members – we are all dedicated to ensuring that those who participate in our programs, and those who work and volunteer at Gemma, know how much they matter.



Because You Matter is not just our tagline; it is Gemma's WHY. We live into these three words each day as we accompany youth and families through life's challenges.

On the enclosed pages, you will read examples of our impact, including how we are expanding Martin Luther School and growing behavioral health programs. I am excited to share that we have finished our ambitious strategic plan that identifies goals, including growing our programs so Gemma can accompany more youth and families in more ways; advancing the organization's commitment to being an employer of choice; supporting the expansion of Martin Luther School; enhancing our data-informed practices, and communicating the impact of our work to you. We will publish the plan on our website soon and share it with you in a future communication.

Thank you for accompanying Gemma along our journey. Together, we are working to create a world where every person knows they matter. With your support, we are helping more than 3,000 individuals and families as they navigate their life's challenges and making sure they know how much they are valued. With your friendship, they and Gemma are flourishing. **Because You Matter.**

With gratitude



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

Tune in to Learn How Gemma is
Improving Communities!

Recently, Gemma was invited as an industry expert to participate in a segment of *Viewpoint with Dennis Quaid* that spotlights improving communities through care and compassion – exactly what Gemma does each day. Highlighted in this video episode is Gemma's extraordinary Martin Luther School, where a focus on literacy is combined with high support to enable students to thrive. You can tune in to this conversation and watch the full segment at www.viewpointproject.com/features-gemma-services/.

Supporting Gemma: A Family Tradition



"Gemma's mission is important to me," shared Sabrina Aggarwal. "I am committed to supporting the organization for a lifetime."

"My family first became involved with Gemma Services when it was Silver Springs – Martin Luther School in the early 1990s," said Sabrina. She explained that one day, a Gemma

staff member came to her mother's store to ask about a poster in the window of a Christmas scene of kids peering into a shop. "It was uplifting and showed kids of all races and ages."

Sabrina's mother gifted the poster to the organization; it still hangs at Gemma today. Sabrina's mother began delivering cinnamon rolls and orange juice on Christmas Eve to create a special Christmas morning treat for the children in residence. "Something the family has now done for nearly 20 years," said Sabrina.

"I have taken on the tradition with my own son. It's very close to my heart."

The Aggarwal family's ties to Gemma continue to grow. "At my company last year, we did a community service project for Gemma, and it felt like coming full circle to bring the organization into my professional life," Sabrina said.



"Just as my parents helped me through challenges, I feel that all people need support and love in order to face life's challenges – we cannot do it alone." Finally, Sabrina shared, "I am in awe of Gemma Services and the support it provides to children and families."

To learn more about the ways you can join Gemma in accompanying youth and families through challenging times, please contact info@gemmservices.org.

Welcome to Julie Goodin, Chief Financial Officer



Gemma Services is pleased to welcome Julie Goodin as our new Chief Financial Officer! Julie comes to Gemma with more than 20 years of experience in finance across the behavioral health sector including roles in inpatient psychiatric care, detox/rehab, partial

hospitalization, children's residential treatment, therapeutic foster care, and children and adult outpatient programs. She has held a wide range of positions including Staff Accountant, Revenue Manager, Assistant Director of CBO, Director of Revenue Cycle Management, and Director of Finance. At Gemma, Julie provides leadership for the Finance team, which includes accounts receivable, accounts payable, budgeting and reporting, financial modeling to support Gemma's

vision, and more. Born in Scottsdale, Arizona, Julie earned her Bachelor of Science in Accounting and her MBA from Western International University. She is a Certified Professional Coder (CPC) affiliated with the American Association of Professional Coders, and is a Certified Healthcare Finance Professional (CHFP) associated with the Healthcare Finance Management Association.

"Gemma's mission is extremely close to my heart," said Julie. "I have witnessed the excitement and enthusiasm at Gemma and am excited to partner with the entire leadership team." Kristen Gay, President and CEO shared, "We are thrilled to welcome Julie. Her passion, leadership skills, financial acumen, and vision will be fantastic additions to the Gemma community. I look forward to partnering with Julie to fulfill our mission and realize an exciting future ahead for Gemma."

Growing a High School

"Martin Luther School wants to unlock the unlimited potential of our students and take their learning beyond the walls of the classroom," explains Declan French, Curriculum Supervisor at Martin Luther School, as he reflects on the school's recent growth. Since the 2021–2022 school year, Martin Luther School (MLS) has added a high school grade each year. Next school year, the first class of 12th graders will graduate from MLS! Every aspect of the School has had to expand to make this vision a reality – from lockers to curriculum to extracurriculars, and more.



Students prepare bananas for a recipe in the new Family and Consumer Science course.

After adding several successful areas to the curriculum last year, including Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) classes, this year the curriculum

grew even further. "Family and Consumer Science is new this year," French said. "It is applicable to the real world with hands-on experience for students," he explained of the newest elective available to middle and high school students. German was also added, with plans for additional language options in the future.

The high school operates on a semester-based schedule that incorporates interdisciplinary projects. "Semester-based courses allow our students to think across the curriculum and consider how their learning applies to their broader lives," says French. Each semester culminates with an end-of-semester presentation during which the MLS community has the chance to celebrate our high schoolers.

The school's Student Council provides leadership opportunities, too. "The students feel proud of the positions they hold," says Siobhan Canavan, Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services. At each meeting, the Student Council brings forth ideas for improving the student experience. "As their suggestions are implemented, they will certainly see how they are making a difference for the whole school."

At MLS, students have many opportunities to achieve their unlimited potential every day. As one student recently asked his peers during his end-of-semester presentation, "How are you going to change the world and make it better?" MLS is providing pathways for every student to do just that.

To learn more about Martin Luther School, please visit www.gemmaservices.org/mlschool.

Welcome Ivan Tate, Family Empowerment Center Director



Gemma Services is pleased to welcome Ivan Tate, Sr. as Director of the Family Empowerment Center (FEC). Ivan comes to Gemma with decades of experience in the child welfare field, particularly in residential settings. Previously, he served

as Director of Operations and Interim Program Director for PHMC (The Bridge). Ivan received his Master of Human Services at Springfield College of Human Services Administration.

Ivan will oversee a team of case manager supervisors and social workers in FEC, a voluntary program providing in-home support and skills-based training for families referred by Philadelphia DHS. This prevention program is designed to help strengthen and stabilize families and prevent children from being referred for out-of-home placement. Valerie Colquitt Wright, Senior Director of Prevention Services, shared, "Ivan brings more than 25 years of experience in the social service and non-profit sector. I'm grateful to have him as the Director of the FEC and look forward to working with him!"

Because Every Athlete Matters

Many evenings this winter, the gym on our Plymouth Meeting campus was filled with students, staff members, and families cheering on the basketball team during Martin Luther School's inaugural season of interscholastic sports.

Now a member of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA), this school year finds Martin Luther School (MLS) students competing against other local schools in flag football, basketball, and track, with a cheerleading squad this winter, too. "It was important to me to join the PIAA," explains Donte Golson-Goodman, the school's first Athletic Director. "Joining this league allows students to participate in sports on a broader scale. Being a member of a sports team helps teach life skills like handling adversity, good communication, and practicing respect while offering students opportunities for success and life-long sports involvement."

Expanding the athletics program is part of a broader vision of growing Martin Luther School's offerings for its students. "Our school's athletic program is about creating a fantastic high school experience," says Eva Morrison, Head of Martin Luther School and Vice President of Education. "We want our students to shine in the classroom and on the field. That's why we provide a variety of opportunities for them to represent our school in the PIAA."



Athletic Director Donte Golson-Goodman stands alongside student athletes.

Students who participate in sports at MLS must maintain their academic performance and meet behavioral expectations to be in good standing. "Through sports, we teach valuable sportsmanship, teamwork, and commitment lessons while fostering a sense of school pride," says Morrison. These values are evident at each game in the cheers of "You got this!" from teammates who give each other motivation and support.

Campership Fund Makes Summertime Fun Possible

"Camp creates a special place for youth in foster care," shared Melissa Harvey, Vice President of Gemma's Community Based Programs. "It offers a safe, stable, and fun environment for foster youth to thrive, engage with peers, and create special memories that will make a significant impact on their life," Harvey continued.

Gemma is able to help create joyful memories for children and teens, like those described to the right, thanks to the generous support of caring friends. Donations to Gemma's Campership Fund assisted more than ten youth who participate in our Foster Family Care Program in attending summer camps and accessing special recreation activities last year. Please consider a gift to help youth in foster care have a fun-filled summer this year! Visit www.gemmaservices.org to make a donation.

"I hope I can go to overnight camp again next year. We went kayaking, fishing, swimming, hiking, and even picked berries."
- Ahmad*, 10 years old

"I loved summer camp! I did so many fun things like drawing, painting, kickball, and trips to go skating, to a football game, and to the aquarium. We even had a water balloon fight that was kids against counselors!"
- William*, 8 years old

"I loved the swimming lessons. I was very scared at first but by the end I was floating on my back and feeling much more confident."
- Hope* 9 years old

"Kion* came home every day happy and excited about how much fun he had. He had so many new and exciting experiences and still talks about camp!"
- Gemma Foster Parent

*Names changed for privacy

Now Accompanying Delaware County Families



The Family Support Program, Gemma's newest, was added in 2022 to assist Philadelphia families with children aged two to five years old. Last year, our Family Support Partners accompanied more than 115 families through home visits, coaching, and support

to promote family members' well-being, enhance their skills, and strengthen their problem-solving.

"We are thrilled that our Family Support Program is expanding to Delaware County," shared Valerie

Colquitt Wright, Senior Director of Prevention Programs. "In the first year, we expect to accompany more than 50 families in Delco." Families can access the program through referrals from other providers such as Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Elwyn, or self-refer.

For more information about the Family Support Program, please call **(215) 730-2240** or email familysupport@gemmaservices.org.

This program is supported by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) of Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS) and Pennsylvania's Department of Education (PDE). For more information, please visit dhs.pa.gov and education.pa.gov.

Welcome Roxanne Beard, Family Support Program Director

Gemma Services is excited to welcome Roxanne Beard to the role of Director of Gemma's Family Support Program (FSP). Roxanne previously worked at the former theVillage and she is thrilled to return to Gemma Services, formed in 2019 by the merger of theVillage and Silver Springs – Martin Luther School. Roxanne brings to Gemma more than 20 years of experience in social services, including in roles with the Philadelphia School District, the Department of Human Services, and the Maternity Care Coalition. Roxanne has an MBA in Human Resources Management from the University of Phoenix.



"I have a heart for Gemma," Roxanne shared. "It is a great place to work. It's a family, very supportive, and they want you to succeed and thrive here." In her position, Roxanne will focus on expanding the Family Support Program, which assists families in Philadelphia and Delaware Counties with children between two and five years old to strengthen their parenting skills.

"Roxanne has been integral in the expansion process. I look forward to working together to assist families in Delaware County," said Valerie Colquitt Wright, Senior Director of Prevention Services.



Remembrance From an Alumnus

"I have so many great memories," said an alumnus of their time in residence at what was then Silver Springs – Martin Luther School, now Gemma. "I remember the aroma of the dining area, fishing trips, and trips to the mall." They added warmly, "So many staff members are still in my heart."

To learn more about our Residential Treatment Program, please visit www.gemmaservices.org.

An Interview with Chef Randy Rucker



Chefs for Gemma 2024 on April 5th will feature James Beard Award semifinalist for Best Chef, Mid-Atlantic, Chef Randy Rucker of *River Twice* in Philadelphia. The evening will include a delicious meal designed and presented by Chef Rucker, fun auctions, and an inspiring program about the youth and families of Gemma Services. We asked Chef Rucker about what inspires his culinary approach and shared his response below. We hope to see you at *Chefs*!

What is your favorite thing about cooking in Philadelphia? *Without a doubt it's the products that are available and the incredibly hard-working people who provide them. Being able to connect our guests to a specific farm or ranch is rewarding & really helps tell the story.*

What is your favorite thing to eat in Philadelphia? *Naturally the pizza & hoagie game is super strong here, but I really love water ice when it's in season.*

You have said you don't like to repeat menu items. Why? *River Twice is constantly evolving. The cuisine is based on what Mother Nature provides. She is in way more control of my menu than I am, and it's our #1 job not to mess it up. Much of our cuisine is also based on our larder, which is made of many different items that are constantly changing as they age and take on new flavors and roles.*

What location has had the biggest influence on your culinary style? *My heritage and growing up on the Gulf Coast is the easiest answer to that question. There is a certain boldness and warmth to my food that I feel is very southern.*

Do you have a favorite cooking or meal prep "hack" to share? *Learn the true capabilities of your microwave. It is truly an amazing tool!*

What is an underrated ingredient that you love to use? *I don't know if it's a certain ingredient, but I think most folks don't understand the importance of acid when cooking. Vinegar is a great place to start!*

What excites you about being the featured guest chef at *Chefs for Gemma 2024*? *It's an honor to be part of such an event for a couple of reasons. The first is knowing the lineage of great chefs who have participated in previous years, but what excites me the most is knowing it is supporting such an incredible cause. I'm grateful to be a part of something that touches so many people's lives.*



Thank You!

Your generous support helped create a magical holiday season for hundreds of youth and families this year!

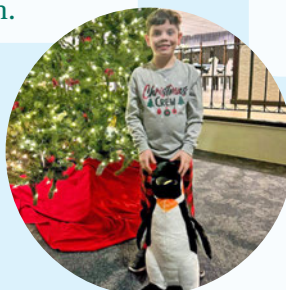


180+ friends supported Gemma's annual holiday program.

Volunteers wrapped **450+ gifts** and stuffed **60 stockings** for youth in residence.



500+ youth and families participating in Gemma's programs received presents and gift cards.



Families were given **\$17,000+ in gift cards** for presents or holiday essentials.

GRAB YOUR SEAT!



Friday, April 5, 2024



Featuring
Chef Randy Rucker

James Beard Award Semifinalist, Best Chef, Mid-Atlantic 2024

of
RIVER TWICE

Accompanying Youth & Families
Through Life's Challenges
Dinner & Auctions

Tickets and sponsorships at bidpal.net/chefs2024