

# LEADING THROUGH CRISIS

BIG BEND  
COMMUNITY  
BASED CARE



ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2019-2020

# FROM THE DESK OF MIKE WATKINS



Thank you to our board, staff, and service partners for your tireless service and unwavering dedication to those we serve.

## **Leading during the good times is far easier than leading through adversity.**

During the past year, the people we serve have been through more than their fair share of adversity. From recovering the ravages of Hurricane Michael to the impacts of a global pandemic in an already economically stressed region to an outbreak of addiction, the Florida panhandle and Big Bend regions have been challenged like never before.

## **That is why I am so proud of the BBCBC team!**

We led through adversity. We led by deploying new technologies and new approaches to solving ever-changing challenges. We brought in several dozen telehealth kiosks into schools so that children can receive the mental health counseling they need, where they are and when they need it. We installed telehealth portals in jails to get in-jail counseling for those impacted by drug addiction and we even expanded our in-home visitations by deploying a suite of technologies to ensure children are being properly cared for at home.

## **And to be clear, it wasn't easy.**

All of these new technologies presented different challenges whether cultural or technological, but we persevered and persisted. We overcame innumerable obstacles presented this year to ensure that those on the front lines had the tools and training they needed. Our people never gave up and more importantly, they never lost hope.

## **But that's what defines leadership; persistence and faith.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Watkins". The signature is written in a cursive style and is located in the bottom right corner of the page.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

From The Desk of Mike Watkins.....	2	Community Engagement.....	16
Board of Directors/Table of Contents.....	3	Reunifications.....	17
Financial Update.....	4	Partnerships with Law Enforcement.....	18
Get Help Campaign.....	5	Project HOPE.....	20
Tools of The Trade.....	6	SAMHSA Grants.....	21
Tactical Operations Center.....	8	Early Childhood Court.....	22
Telehealth in Schools.....	9	Community Sponsors.....	23
Foster Parent Recruitment Update.....	10	Thank You Pam.....	24
PPE Distribution.....	11	Letter from President of the Board.....	25
Bay County Case Management.....	12	Community Partners.....	26
2019 Christmas Adoption.....	13	Service Centers.....	27
Heart Gallery.....	14		
Exceeding Adoption Goals.....	15		
Guardian Assistance Program.....	16		

# FINANCIAL UPDATE

BBCBC operated the 2019/2020 fiscal year with a budget of approximately \$122 million, an increase of approximately \$7 million over 2018/2019. Once again, even with the continued impact of Hurricane Michael and the COVID-19 pandemic, BBCBC was able to maintain administrative service expenses at a rate less than 3%, while continuing to have many contractual program mandates without additional administrative dollars. BBCBC has been able to consistently maintain administrative expenses at a minimal level for over ten years.

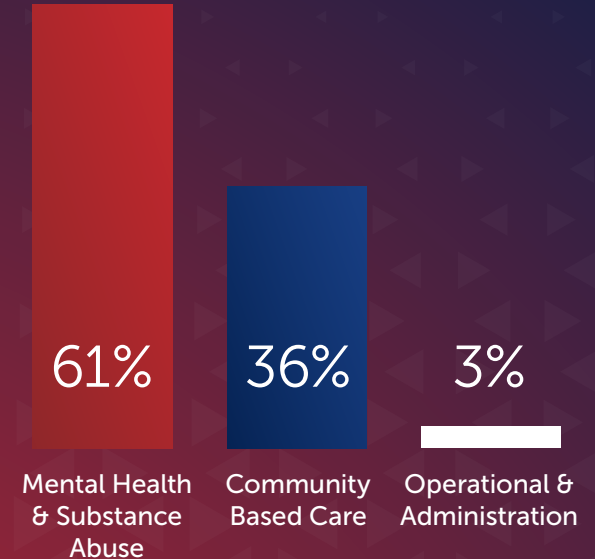
As a result of damages sustained in the 18-county service area from Hurricane Michael and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2019/2020 fiscal year posed many challenges from both a business and financial perspective. During 2019/2020 BBCBC continued major construction efforts on the real property assets damaged by Hurricane Michael. The Bay County Service Center had catastrophic damage from the storm, thus 2019/2020 included embarking on a reconstruction project of approximately \$9 million that is expected to be completed in December 2020.

In March 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary for BBCBC to transition many staff members to a telework environment. The pandemic presented an unexpected challenge driving an unprecedented need for changes to everyday work processes. Through utilization of a tactical operation center and many management team and partner meetings, BBCBC was able to address these needed changes successfully and seamlessly. Based on the IT telemedicine platform initially

designed to provide mental health counseling for children in the Bay Gulf, Calhoun, Liberty, Franklin, and Jackson County school system, BBCBC was able to expand the technology platform for use among both Managing Entity and CBC providers throughout the network. The platform has been used by staff to see and provide services for children, families and program participants throughout the pandemic. BBCBC invested approximately \$450,000 in this technology during fiscal year 2019/2010 to assure the continuation of these critical activities in serving children, adults, families and caregivers.

BBCBC heads into the 2020/2021 year continuing to navigate many changes to its system of care as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. BBCBC, like other CBC Lead Agencies and Managing Entities across the state, faces budget reductions over the next several years due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to a continued budget deficit, BBCBC anticipates applying for the risk pool during the 2020/2021 fiscal year.

## 2019 - 2020 EXPENSES



**BBCBC continues to provide fiscal accountability through presentation of bi-monthly financial statements to its Board of Directors.** Fiscal operating plans are reviewed by the finance committee and then forwarded to the full board for approval. An independent audit committee of the Board of Directors reviews the results of the Independent Auditors' Audit Report. James Moore & Co., P.L. serves as the independent auditor of BBCBC and issued an unmodified opinion on the most recent audited financial statements.



# GET HELP CAMPAIGN

When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged and prior to Governor DeSantis issuing his first COVID-19 Executive Order in early March, we were already developing action plans to assure our services were maintained. As the Community Based Care (CBC) Lead Agency, our plan focused on ensuring that the foster children and their families under our care were being protected and kept safe. As the Managing Entity (ME) Lead Agency in charge of behavioral health services, we were focused on ensuring that our behavioral health facilities were prepared and open to address client needs.

During the initial months of the pandemic, BBCBC experienced a decrease in calls for service while knowing that the need was steadily increasing as people faced financial, emotional, and mental hardships. In an effort to proactively reach out to residents, BBCBC launched the Get Help campaign to educate residents throughout our entire 18-county region about the services available to them.

This campaign included reaching out to residents via direct mail, social media, digital videos, and newspaper advertising in an effort to reach residents in a variety of ways. A hotline and webpage were established to provide people with direct access to local assistance through our partner agency, The Apalachee Center. Through this campaign, we were able to serve hundreds of local residents and connect them with mental or behavioral healthcare providers who could support them in their time of need.

COVID-19 impacted everyone, and everyone handled this unprecedented time differently. BBCBC is proud to have reached community members who weren't previously involved in our services and ensured that as many North Florida residents as possible received the care they needed.

**THIS CRISIS IMPACTS ALL OF US.**

**“AS YOUR NEIGHBOR, I KNOW YOU ARE DEALING WITH AN UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS. IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING, YOU'RE NOT ALONE.”**

MIKE WATKINS, CEO

We are committed to providing high-quality **mental health, substance abuse, and child protection** services for you or someone you love, whether or not you have health insurance.

**CONTACT US**

**(888) 95-GETHELP (954-3843)**

**BigBendCBCGetHelp.org**

**SAVE THE MAGNET**

We're here when you need us.

**CONTACT US**

**BigBendCBCGetHelp.org**

**(888) 95-GETHELP (954-3843)**

No matter the circumstances, we can help.

**SERVICES AVAILABLE**

<b>SUBSTANCE ABUSE</b>	<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>	<b>CHILD ABUSE</b>
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# TOOLS OF THE TRADE

## HOW A TECHNOLOGY COMPANY HELPED US LEAD ON TELE-SERVICES

A Q&A with Let's Talk Interactive CEO Art Cooksey

### **BBCBC:** How was Let's Talk Interactive (LTI) able to assist panhandle schools last year?

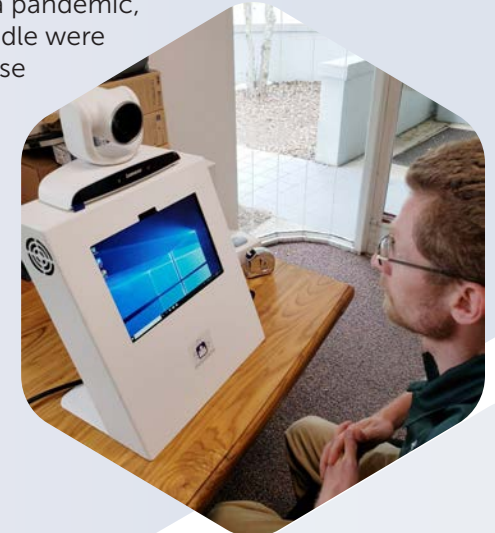
**LTI:** We worked with Mike Watkins' team at the inspiration of First Lady DeSantis to deliver several dozen telehealth kiosks to panhandle schools affected by Hurricane Michael. We had a short window to deliver over 60 kiosks but felt that helping these children in their schools was vital. We were able to offer much-needed in-school counseling for these children, keep them in their schools and bring the counselors to them. This not only saved time and money but expanded services to these kids who were suffering from the recovery.

### **BBCBC:** And then you took on an innovative in-jail strategy?

**LTI:** Again, at the behest of Mr. Watkins, we worked side-by-side with Franklin County Sheriff A.J. Smith to bring counseling to inmates with addiction-related mental health issues. Franklin county has been beset by a drug addiction crisis and this innovative approach puts the counseling in front of the inmates who need it while they are the most need of it. Using medical support and counseling is a proven way to combat addiction and by deploying telehealth portals into the jails we were able to bring counselors to this remote county.

### **BBCBC:** During the pandemic, BBCBC used telehealth in another innovation-leading way. Tell us about that...

**LTI:** We hear a lot about telehealth for the delivery of medical care and mental health counseling but very little about using telehealth to provide "home visits." We were able to assist with facilitating home visitations when in-person visitation was severely restricted. BBCBC was among the first in the state to not just realize the benefit of using technology this way but was a leader in getting it done. Stuningly, home "tele-visits" increased interactions with families and social service providers and resulted in some very touching and emotional stories for the families involved. It was very rewarding to know that even during a pandemic, social service agencies in the panhandle were able to use technology to keep in close contact with families in need.



## **BBCBC:** Where else has this technology been deployed and in what form?

**LTI:** Let's Talk Interactive has made it simple to integrate and deploy cutting-edge HIPAA compliant video conferencing software, live analytics, and telemedicine office suite with a host of equipment and peripheral options.

Our kiosks have been used in hospitals, assisted living facilities, prisons, rural community centers, and disaster relief zones.

We have solutions as simple as pre-configured tablets, to virtual medical carts and kiosks with the ability to integrate 42 attachments ranging from EKG, ultrasound, and blood pressure to Tele-Stroke and PulseOX. Analytics are pushed live through the virtual clinic interface to any provider, on any device, anywhere in the world. We believe these integrated technologies and the rapid deployment by BBCBC are exactly how and why they can call themselves industry leaders.

## **BBCBC:** What's next?

**LTI:** Well, it's hard to say. As technology improves and as more families become familiar with and comfortable with the use of tele-technologies, we look forward to a successful continued partnership with a true industry leader in BBCBC.



*"Using LTI's telehealth portals has allowed us to help inmates who are suffering from addiction and receive services they otherwise could not access in our small community."*

*–AJ Smith, Sheriff of Franklin County*

# TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER

Providing the highest quality child welfare, substance abuse and mental health services to children, adults and their families within their communities assumes an even more compelling nature when facing natural disasters and other emergencies and crises. Big Bend Community Based Care and our partners have been confronted with a number of such emergencies in recent years – from devastating hurricanes to the COVID-19 pandemic. Guiding and supporting child protection and behavioral health services for Northwest Florida in such times has required immediate, mission-focused, flexible actions to assure the continuity of mission-critical activities while addressing the safety of those we serve, our partners and our staff. As an agency, Big Bend Community Based Care adopted and has since adapted operational protocols that have served us well in the last three years.

## TOC DEPLOYMENT

The Tactical Operations Center (TOC) refers to the centralized hub through which information between Leadership and the field flows to assure the efficient continuity of operations. Big Bend Community Based Care's Administrative Office in Tallahassee serves as the physical location (or virtual host) of the TOC.

Big Bend Community Based Care's TOC Protocol is enacted in the event of an emergency or natural disaster affecting or with the potential to significantly affect BBCBC operations. The protocol is intended to exercise command and control of operations, deploy and manage personnel and resources, and manage other logistics. Hot Sheets have been developed to track critical metrics during crises.

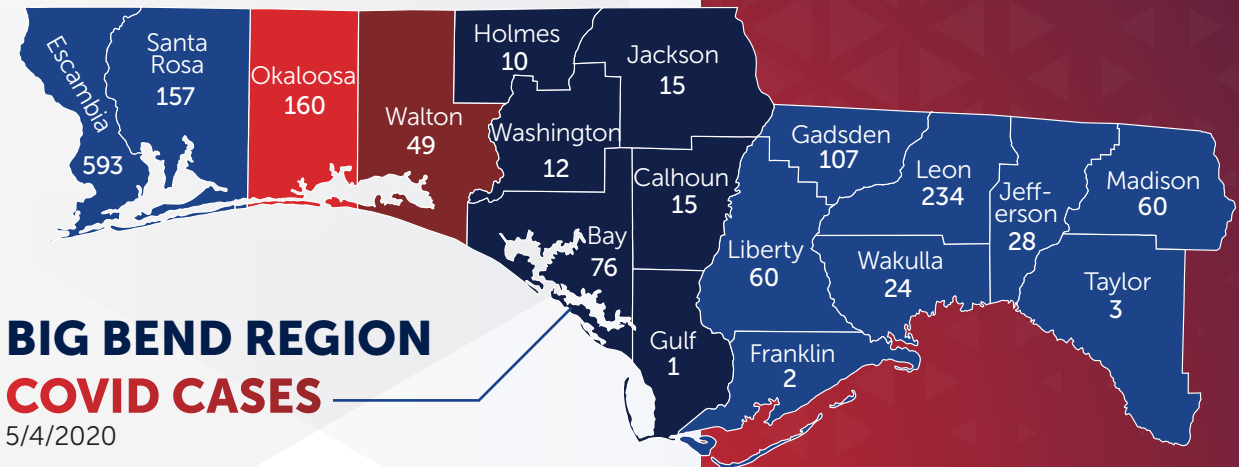
## STATEWIDE ADOPTION

Upon seeing the success of our TOC system following Hurricane Michael and COVID-19, Managing Entities across the state adopted similar or identical reporting systems for continuity of care during crises.

## THE PURPOSE OF BIG BEND COMMUNITY BASED CARE'S TOC PROTOCOL IS TO:

- Support Mission Critical Tasks
- Coordinate Efforts, Ensure Efficiency and Prevent Duplication of Effort
- Expedite Procurement of Mission-Critical Resources (Staffing, Goods & Supplies)

While the protocol was initially developed in response to a weather-related emergency, it was easily adapted to address COVID-19 and can be adapted to any other crisis situation.





# TELEHEALTH IN SCHOOLS

In the summer of 2019, First Lady Casey DeSantis announced that the Department of Children and Families, through Big Bend Community Based Care, would provide access to telehealth mental health services via a school-based kiosk to every student enrolled in publicly funded schools most impacted by the hurricane. The services would be accessible regardless of insurance or service provider.

BBCBC eagerly stepped up to the plate and acquired 63 telehealth kiosks (each including an additional tablet) for schools in Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gulf, Jackson, and Liberty counties before the next school year began in August.

## HOW IT WORKS

School-based telehealth uses computer and video technology to connect a child to an experienced behavioral health care provider in a HIPPA-friendly manner.

The region where these telehealth kiosks were initially launched are still reeling from the impacts of Hurricane Michael. Following Hurricane Michael, we saw an increase in demand for mental health services simultaneous to a decrease in access to that care. Telehealth allows us to bridge the gap between children in need and the providers ready and able to treat them.

BBCBC provided the kiosks, operational training, and ongoing technical services to each school free of charge. Further, no child is turned away based on their family's health insurance or ability to pay.

## EARLY RESULTS

The first child therapy session was delivered in October of 2019. As of the onset of COVID-19 and the end of the in-person school year, the kiosks had facilitated 232 virtual child therapy sessions greater than 15 minutes in duration.

When COVID-19 struck and in-person learning ended for the school year, we were able to transition the telehealth services children had been receiving to their homes. Connecting on a laptop or smartphone, children were able to continue connecting with their mental healthcare provider without having to leave their homes. Because of that, the number of child therapy sessions 15 minutes or greater for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 was 2532.

We look forward to continuing the use of telehealth in schools to provide quality mental healthcare services to the children we serve!



Increase in monthly child therapy sessions from January to April 2020

**36** January 2020

**219** April 2020

# FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE

**COVID-19 completed change the way BBCBC recruits and trains new foster families. In March we transitioned to teaching all of our foster and adoption preservice classes on an online platform.** Happily, we saw an increase in the number of participants for the preservice training class, which has resulted in more homes being licensed in 2020 than we saw at this time last year.

In 2019, Circuit 2 saw 251 attendees of the preservice class. In 2020, we have had 309 participants, and 47 people are already registered for the next class in 2020. We will likely finish out 2020 with over 350 preservice participants, an increase of nearly 40% over last year's participation.

In addition to increased attendance, moving classes online made it easier for our guest presenters to participate. Experts from the Tallahassee Police Department, the Heart Gallery, and Tallahassee Area Foster and Adoptive Parent Association were all able to Zoom into classes from the comfort of their homes and offices.

The feedback from class participants has been overwhelmingly positive and based on evaluations sent after class, the majority of participants say that they prefer taking the preservice class in an online format. It enabled many families with young children to participate that have otherwise struggled to find childcare during the evening hours.



# PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION

**Big Bend Community Based Care has coordinated the distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) among our Managing Entity and Child Welfare network providers and partners, as well as our offices and own team during the COVID-19 public health crisis to ensure sufficient PPE is available so service delivery is not compromised.**

More than 100,000 units of PPE has been made available by BBCBC. Weekly receipt and distribution of masks (N95s, KN95s, disposable, washable), gowns, hand sanitizer, and thermometers have been necessary to ensure continued operations.

The use of PPE will continue to be a necessity in our residential treatment centers, Crisis Stabilization and Detox units, clinical offices, group homes, visitation centers, direct service/client contact and BBCBC offices for the foreseeable future.





# BAY COUNTY CASE MANAGEMENT

In the fall of 2019, Big Bend Community Based Care brought case management services in Bay County in-house for the first time and began providing direct services to its clients there. In the year since that time, the team has been focused on hiring talented, qualified, and caring staff and stabilizing the workforce.

When BBCBC took over, five case managers were doing the work of 30 by themselves. Even while overworked, the staff put their hearts and souls into each case and each family they served, going above and beyond. We would like to highlight those 5 staffers here, to memorialize their hard work and thank them once again.

**Mekayla Matt** went above and beyond to help a father from out of state find housing so that he could be reunified with his child. Mekayla's work moved a case headed to termination of parental rights to a successful reunification and a pending case closure. Mekayla takes great pride in the success of this family and in seeing the child thrive.

**Megan Garcia** worked with a family that had been in the system for a long time and helped the mother despite the odds against her. Megan established herself as a support system for the mother so that she was better equipped to overcome adversity. Megan believes it is critical to meet parents where they are in order to help them and their children.

**Carla Wofford** has developed a trusted bond with numerous parents. She has been able to work with parents through relapses and has been instrumental in implementing new habits in their lives to prevent future relapse.

**Alexis Bell** is the epitome of helping families meet concrete needs. She assists clients with transportation, delivers food, and even helps them clean their homes. Alexis maintained a positive relationship with one mother while having to visit her every day to help keep her motivated and on track to overcome her barriers. Alexis says that this job has motivated her to pursue a second degree in social work.

**Tyrone Cleveland** has maintained upbeat, positive relationships despite working with numerous resistant parents. Tyrone worked closely with a father who had a history of aggressive behavior towards case workers and earned the father's trust. That father is now on track to reunification and has demonstrated significant behavioral change.





# 2019 CHRISTMAS ADOPTION

**Many children wake up on Christmas morning eager to find something special for them wrapped under the tree.** Christmas morning looked a little different for this family and their team. This 17-year old girl, T, had been in foster care for two years. T went through much grief during that time, coping with severe trauma from her childhood, being secluded from her family and little brother, and with a prior failed adoption placement.

On this morning, December 25th, 2019, T headed to the BBCBC office with her legal guardian to make them her forever family in front of Circuit 2's Judge Jonathan Sjostrom. Her guardian, the parent of one of her best friends from school, offered to take in T after her previous adoptive placement fell through. It was only a matter of time before she recognized that T belonged in her family. Christmas is all about family, and on this beautiful Christmas morning, T got the family she needed and deserved.

T told the judge during the finalization that she never thought she deserved or would find a family that could love her as much as this one does, and that she was finally ready for it to be official. Many happy tears were shed during the hearing, and T left that morning a part of a safe, loving, and permanent family, for the first time.



# HEART GALLERY





# EXCEEDING ADOPTION GOALS

BBCBC is proud to have achieved **179 adoptions during the 2019-2020 year.** Even through an ongoing recovery from Hurricane Michael and a global pandemic, our community has continued to step up to provide permanency for its children.

We have transitioned to Zoom, a video communication platform for video and audio conferencing, to complete home studies and adoption hearings in our local courts. While adoptions look a lot different than they used to, 83 children have had their adoptions finalized during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*No matter what circumstance arises, our goal remains the same: to find permanency for our children while keeping our families and staff safe.*



160

GOAL

179

TOTAL

# GUARDIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## Shortly after we launched the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) in July of 2019.

The family was comprised of a couple whose five grandchildren had been placed in relative care with them in March of 2019. The family had received no financial assistance since their placement and were struggling to keep up with the expenses of a large family of children ages 8-15.

We supported the Bonnie family in helping them become licensed caregivers and through the process of receiving Permanent Guardianship after the children were unable to be reunited with their parents. The GAP team helped the Bonnie family through the process of qualifying for monthly financial support to meet the children's needs until each of them reaches adulthood. The children will also all be eligible for tuition waivers to any Florida Bright Futures eligible collegiate institution.

We are happy to report that Mrs. Bonnie has shared that the financial assistance is a huge relief for her and her husband as they care for five teens and pre-teens.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year, our community engagement activities were centered on continuation of Hurricane Michael recovery, COVID-19 actions and assistance, child welfare and mental health support initiatives, and the use of opportunities to promote positive relationships within our communities.

Since Hurricane Michael's direct hit in Circuit 14 and impact to Circuit 2 on October 10, 2018, our staff has participated in a number of initiatives to help the people we serve in these communities. Although we are approaching a two-year anniversary of this catastrophic event, many of our children and adults most impacted in the communities we serve are still suffering from the loss and damage of their homes, places of worship, schools, businesses, etc. We partnered with Governor Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey Desantis, the Department of Children and Families, and our network providers, schools, associations, elected officials, etc. to provide increased mental services via telehealth to meet the needs of these communities.

Further, when COVID-19 struck we launched a dedicated campaign to inform residents of the services available to them. You can read more about that initiative on page 5 of this report.

We also continued to communicate our mission, vision and purpose to our communities through customary means. This year we also focused on increasing our presence on these community engagement activities have all contributed to our ability to continue to build positive relationships with the clients we serve, our provider network, community partners, and staff – all of which helped to ensure child welfare and behavioral health needs were being met in our 18-county coverage area.





# REUNIFICATIONS

## CIRCUIT 2:

**Trina's battle against substance abuse was a generational one. She was introduced to unsafe coping in her home and, after experiencing a string of traumas, Trina's addiction escalated to a polysubstance abuse disorder.** After the removal of her daughter, Melody, Trina knew she had to make a change and turn her life around.

Trina was enrolled into the Family Intensive Treatment (FIT) program. After experiencing some difficulty remaining sober in her natural environment, she entered residential treatment (rehabilitation). She was able to thrive at the program and take advantage of the counseling opportunities available to her. Trina displayed natural leadership skills, dedication, and compassion towards her "sisters" at the program.

Trina's relationship with her daughter also began to strengthen, she was able to increase her bond with Melody through counseling specific to increasing her attachment with her daughter. After graduating from the program, Trina transitioned into a safe and sober home with family and Melody. The journey to recovery didn't end there, as Trina still had obstacles to overcome. With the assistance of community resources, Trina was able to overcome the risk of relapse. She moved into her own apartment and found a better job, closer to her new home.

Trina continues to persevere. She has since purchased a new home and vehicle. Trina's commitment to sobriety has allowed her to maintain healthy relationships, reconnect with family and perform her number one job: being a mother.



Alexis Bell, Megan Garcia, Tyrone Cleveland, Makayla Matt, Carla Wofford

## CIRCUIT 14:

**Even as COVID-19 impacts our lives in countless ways, the Bay County Dependency Case Management team has been hard at work finding permanency for children in Bay County.**

In just one month, the team achieved 5 reunifications, all complete with a pizza party for each family. In one case, the three children that were reunified invited their case manager over to celebrate!

In spite of COVID-19, our case managers have continued to bravely work on the front lines for the children in our community as well as behind the scenes to move each case closer to a positive outcome.

# PARTNERSHIPS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

## SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS:

**Big Bend Community Based Care is extremely grateful for the School Resource Officers (SROs) that serve our community. Our SROs are always willing to go above and beyond for the children under their care.**

One case that stands out to me as I reflect on the past year was one day when I was called out to a school in Bay County to assess a child that I check on frequently. This child has been the victim of abuse and neglect throughout his life and deals with mental health repercussions from that trauma.

As I assessed him that day, his school's SRO stood by at a comfortable distance. We agreed that the child should be placed under a Baker Act for further evaluation, at which point the child began to display signs of frustration, resistance, and aggression. The SRO tactfully stepped in to ease the child's anxiety and diffuse the situation. The SRO comforted the child, assured him that he would be well taken care of, and even offered to let him pick the radio station they would listen to on the hour-long drive to Life Management Center's Panama City location.

As I reflect on this day, I'm grateful that the SRO heeded my recommendation to seek additional treatment for the child. The SRO demonstrated his skills in de-escalation and empathy while calming the child during what could have been an unpleasant interaction.

-Mike Kemp





## MOBILE RESPONSE TEAMS:

Our Mobile Response Teams (MRTs) work diligently to support our residents who are facing mental health crises. One evening, we received a call from a woman stating she was standing on a dock and planned to end her life. She reported that she had recently lost her housing, did not have any money, and had no place to go. She also did not know where the dock she was on was. A therapist got on the phone with her as police listened in. The MRT Team Leader worked with both the therapist and police to help the woman identify nearby landmarks so her location could be determined.

After more than an hour and a half, police were able to locate her and transport her to the nearest local hospital. The woman received inpatient treatment for ten days, during which time she was connected to outpatient services and targeted case management.

It was a team effort between Big Bend Community Based Care's MRT Team, local police, and BBCBC's inpatient treatment provider to save this woman's life.

We are happy to report that she is now safe, healthy, and has been connected with housing.

## CRISIS INTERVENTION TRAINING:

Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) is an innovative, community-based approach to improve outcomes when law enforcement officers are first responders to a situation where a person is in a mental health crisis. This 40 hour training is designed reduce arrests, increase the likelihood that a person in crisis will receive mental health services, and improve communication between law enforcement, mental health treatment providers, hospitals, and families.

BBCBC Managing Entity Network Coordinators participate and often lead CIT trainings. They provide lists of resources available to officers and connect them to community providers. They explain the behavioral health system of care and arrange for tours of the Baker Act Receiving Facilities. The connections made and information shared in these trainings are invaluable to the mission of better communication and reduced arrests.

## RURAL JAIL TELEHEALTH:

BBCBC worked with DISC Village to purchase telehealth kiosks for use in five rural county jails. These kiosks allow inmates to receive an assessment upon intake into the jail and continued treatment during their time in the jail as needed. Telehealth is particularly critical in rural jails because of the long distances that would be required for jail staff and inmates to travel for in-person treatment sessions.

Telehealth treatment also allows for a seamless continuation of care when an inmate is released from jail, as they can continue receiving care with only a smart phone or computer.



# PROJECT HOPE

**Just like Hurricane Michael in October of 2018, recovery follows its own path. Project HOPE was established to Help Our People in Emergencies and began its work the day after the storm.**

Project HOPE is a crisis counseling program provided through Big Bend Community Based Care and funded by FEMA. It was active in nine counties impacted by Hurricane Michael: Gadsden, Liberty, Franklin, Washington, Holmes, Jackson, Calhoun, Bay, and Gulf. There were 47 staff members between Life Management Center and Apalachee Center assigned to the program, and they made 109,229 contacts with people in need from October 11, 2018 through the program's end on May 29, 2020.

Project HOPE engaged survivors of Hurricane Michael by listening to their stories and helping them identify their inner strengths, lean on their existing support networks, and navigate community resources to support their recovery.

We were able to go directly to people and provide free, confidential crisis counseling services anywhere, including in homes, businesses, schools, houses of worship, shelters, and community centers to anyone affected by Hurricane Michael. We helped through individual outreach, informational and educational support, community support development, community networking, support resource linkage assessment, and referral.

We are pleased to report that Apalachee Center and Life Management Center performed their duties above expectations. As we neared the end of the program, we recognized that there are still many people in the process of recovery and were able to refer those individuals to the Disaster Case Management program or to other programs still operating in their community.





# SAMHSA GRANTS

In April 2020, BBCBC received two \$1 million grants from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for wraparound programs targeted to residents impacted by Hurricane Michael. The focus of one grant, Project THRIVE, is to connect children who have been in crisis with community services. The other, Project RISE is to connect parents involved in the child welfare system with behavioral health services. The wraparound model employs intensive, individualized care coordination and management focused on building a team of supports around a person. The core goals of wraparound services are to be family-driven, client-guided, culturally and linguistically competent, team-based, collaborative, individualized, and outcome-based.

**Project THRIVE** utilizes a High-Fidelity Wraparound model in four counties impacted by Hurricane Michael; Bay, Gulf, Calhoun, and Jackson. Over an 18-month period, Project THRIVE, in partnership with Life Management Center and its Mobile Response Team, will fill a significant post-disaster gap by serving 180 diverse school-aged youth. The project will help reduce the barriers that prevent families from accessing mental health and substance use disorder treatment, crisis counseling, and other supports central to long-term recovery.

**Project RISE** will employ a High-Fidelity Wraparound model to serve its target population of parents involved in the child welfare system. Partnering with Twin Oaks Juvenile Development and child welfare professionals in Bay County, the project will work to increase access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment, develop supports to prevent further crises, address storm related trauma, and speed reunification and permanency.

BBCBC is excited to get started on this new means of helping build stronger communities and resilient youth.

## MEET THE JANEK FAMILY



Andrea, Brian, Abigail, Graham, and Emily Janek have been licensed since 2016 and are an invaluable part of our fostering family! Primarily providing respite care, the Janeks have provided a safe home for many children and families over the last four years. When asked to share one thing about the fostering journey, Andrea notes the impact that the kids have had on her family.

“Sacrificially loving someone who can’t give anything to us in return is such an important lesson for anyone to learn, and it’s something that we want to learn as parents and to teach our children.” The Janek family also wants people to understand the need is great, and the time is now. There is never a perfect time to begin fostering, so don’t wait until there is.” We could not do this without the Janek Family, and we’re so grateful for their generous hearts that serve our community, for all the times they say “yes” and for not waiting for the “perfect time”!

# EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT

**Maria Avila became the Circuit 14 Early Childhood Court (ECC) Coordinator in 2015 at the inception of the program. In 2017, the program was transferred to BBCBC and Maria was brought under the BBCBC umbrella with the program.** Maria is trained in Circle of Security Parenting, Growing the Brain, and GIFT Parenting. She presented at the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Conference in 2016 and the Zero to Three National Cross Sites Conference in 2019.

Maria has developed fruitful relationships with the Circuit 14 Chief Judges and Magistrates, which allowed her to work with Magistrate Shannon Lord in expanding ECC to each county in Circuit 14—making it the first circuit in the state to have an active Early Childhood Court in each county.

Maria coordinates monthly family team meetings for each ECC case in Circuit 14 and is dedicated to BBCBC's goal of permanent placement for each child within 12 months. Since the inception of the ECC program in 2015, Maria has achieved permanent placement for all but one child in either reunification or adoption. All adoption cases were the result of the voluntary termination of parental rights.

Maria was recently named the Circuit 14 Court Liaison for all child welfare as a result of her hard work and commitment to the children of Circuit 14. Maria remains personally involved in every ECC case in the circuit and is an invaluable asset to BBCBC.



# COMMUNITY SPONSORS

Alexi Evans

Allie Wall

Amanda Comeau

Angie Hall

Anna Carmon

Ashlan Smith

Aveda

Bags of Hope

Beau's Meat

Bethel Church

Bill Cramer Chevrolet

Bill Hayes

Casey Lathem

Centene Corporation

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Courtney Dow

Danner Brooks

Dave and Busters of PCB

David Barrett

Department of Children &  
Families Hotline staff

Destiny Worship Center

Elizabeth Smith

Faith DeKanter

Glenna Stryker

Grace Clifton

Hanger 38

Heather Rich

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Foundation

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Jasmine Boswell

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Misty Curtis

Mr. Surf's Surf Shop

Newks

One Church One Child

One More Child

Panama City Beach  
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Panhandle Pediatric Dentistry

Patrick Sheffield

PetSmart

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Plum Delightful

Ragina Flenniken

Remember Me Project

Sandra Moore

Sandra Todd

Shawna Harmon

Shawna Hatcher

Sloane Money

Sorrenson & VanLeuvin

Stamps Family Dentistry

Suncoast Credit Union

Sweet Cases

Sweet Frog

Tallahassee Kickball  
Association

Tara Wilder

Teresa Dyer

The Beasley Family

The Brink Foundation

The Crow Family

The Growing Room

The Hale Family

The Hancock Family

The Hollis Family

The Leunberger Family

The Patrick Family

The Sleep Center

The Stewart Family

The Williams Family

Todd Gainey

Tommy and Jamie Hale

Toys for Tots

Vanessa Rivero

Vicki Harris

Walmart of Panama City

Walmart of Tallahassee

Warchant Charities

Will Galotti

Wonder Works of PCB

THANK  
YOU

# THANK YOU PAM

**Pam East concluded her long and storied career with over thirty years working in Child Welfare arena in March 2020.** Since 1988, Pam's main focus had been on Child Protective Investigations as an Investigator, Supervisor and Operational Program Administrator. In 2003, Pam left the ranks of state employment and joined Big Bend Community Based Care as one of three employees to start up the transition of service provision to community based care where she served as the Chief Operations Officer. Pam helped lead the transition of child welfare from a function of the state to a function of locally run private organizations. Pam East led this transition process and led her team with empathy, grace, and an uncanny knack for knowing exactly what her employees needed to boost morale. In addition to helping transition child welfare from the state, Pam also worked in the transition of Mental Health and Substance Abuse services to private organizations. Pam oversaw the growth of Big Bend Community Based Care's contract from a \$2 million dollar valuation to a \$100 million plus valuation. A hole was definitely left in this organization the day Pam East walked out the door for the last time, but she left an indelible imprint on so many employees here that her legacy and attitude will carry on.



*"Be well, be safe, and thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you do."*

– Pam East



# LETTER FROM PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

**On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is an honor to represent Big Bend Community Based Care, a stellar company with a staff of extraordinary quality. It takes our company's outstanding leadership to manage the many facets of child welfare, behavioral health services, and family support with the results of building quality into the lives and development of our children.**

As President of the Board of Directors, I would like to recognize the Board, led by our CEO, Mike Watkins. The Board is complete with the finest group of professionals I know. It is a true honor to represent this Board, Mike Watkins, our staff, our services, and the entire company. I have been touched and honored to work with this company for the past 6.5 years. The genesis of my life changing experience with this company started when former President, Reggie Johns, asked me to join the Board. I thank Reggie for generating this opportunity for me. The growth I have experienced with this company is due to the amazing people I have been fortunate to work with.

I will soon be passing the torch to the next President who will be graced with this position.

Another big change is coming to Big Bend Community Based Care—a name change to NWF Health Network. Over the years, our company has grown and changed to meet the needs of the people we serve. We have decided to change our name to NWF Health Network to better represent the role we serve in the community—we are no longer only a Community Based Care agency, but so much more.

We are officially transitioning to NWF Health Network at the end of October 2020, so this is the final Annual Report under the name Big Bend Community Based Care.

It has been an honor to be a part of this organization and I look forward to seeing where NWF Health Network goes.

– Denise Myers



**NWF** Health  
Network

# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- 211 Big Bend
- AMI-Kids
- Apalachee Center
- Bay County DSB
- Bay County Sheriff
- Bridgeway Center
- Center of Independent Living, dba Ability 1st
- Chemical Addictions Recovery Effort (CARE)
- CDAC Behavioral Healthcare
- Chautauqua
- CW Safety Solutions
- Disc Village
- Escambia Board of County Commissioners
- Florida DOH, Children's Medical Services
- Fort Walton Beach Medical Center
- Lakeview Center
- Leon County Felony Drug Court
- Life Management Center (LMC)
- Mental Health Assoc. of Okaloosa/Walton Counties (MHAOW)
- Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners
- Panhandle Behavioral Services
- Solutions of Substance
- Turn About
- Anchorage
- A Turning Point
- Boys Town
- Capital City Youth Services
- Children's Home Society
- Disc Village
- ECHO
- Habilitative Services
- Inspire Group
- Life Management Center
- Ounce of Prevention
- Twin Oaks
- Solutions of Substance
- Youth Law Center

## MEET TERRI CARTER



Terri is a kind person with a heart for children. After retiring from teaching in Alaska and moving to Florida as an empty nester, Terri was missing having children in her home. She took the Quality Parent Training class and became a licensed foster parent almost a year and a half ago.

Terri is one of the most patient people! Terri is an amazing advocate for the kids in her home as well as for their families of origin. She partners with everyone on the team. Terri is an excellent communicator and is always keeps all partners informed and up to date. Terri recently joined our foster parent mentor team and comes along side new foster parents to encourage them and share her knowledge and experience. We are lucky to have her on our team!

# SERVICE CENTERS

◆ **Big Bend Community Based Care Administrative Office**  
525 N. Martin Luther King Boulevard, Tallahassee, FL 32301  
(850) 410-1020

◆ **Holmes/Washington Human Services Center**  
1352 South Boulevard, Chipley, FL 32348  
(850) 415-5146

◆ **Leon Human Services Center**  
1000 W. Tharpe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32303  
(850) 488-0506

◆ **Gadsden/Liberty Human Services Center**  
305 W. Crawford Street, Quincy, FL 32351  
(850) 627-7009

◆ **Jackson Human Services Center**  
4120 Jireh Court, Marianna, FL 32448  
(850) 482-9568

◆ **Wakulla Human Services Center**  
69 High Drive, Crawfordville, FL 32327  
(850) 926-0021

We are proud to unveil our newest Service Center in Chipley, serving Holmes and Washington Counties! We are also excited about our new Bay County Service Center, which is currently under construction in Panama City. We can't wait to share that new facility in next year's report!





ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2019-2020



BIG BEND COMMUNITY BASED CARE



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525 N. Martin Luther King Blvd.

Tallahassee, FL 32301

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