

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

BESTSELF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

BestSelfWNY.org | info@bestselfwny.org | 716.884.0888



# A Special Message from Howard Hitzel

Looking back at my 24-year tenure at BestSelf, I am very proud of all we accomplished in working to meet the behavioral health needs of our Western New York community. When I first arrived as Clinical Director in 1996, we were a relatively small but passionate organization dedicated to serving people suffering from mental illnesses or substance use disorders. Our focus was primarily on those individuals or communities who were not receiving adequate care. This included people and families coping with serious mental illnesses and severe alcohol or drug use.

Over the course of the following two decades, the organization embarked on an ambitious journey to expand services by identifying critical needs in the communities we served and working relentlessly to meet them. Programs and initiatives such as the Lighthouse Women's Residence, Assertive Community Treatment, Homeless Services, Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS), Recovery Connections, the Opioid (Methadone) Treatment Program, On-Track, Family Connections, and the ClubWest support program were all developed and implemented in response to pressing community need.

The organization took a significant step forward in 2017 when BestSelf Behavioral Health was formed through the merger of Child & Adolescent Treatment Services and Lake Shore Behavioral Health. Both organizations served the community for a combined 120 years and were proven leaders in the delivery of behavioral health services. Our shared reputation for offering high quality, evidence-based care, led the visionary Boards of Directors of both organizations to create what is now BestSelf, the largest community-based behavioral health organization serving children and adults of all ages in Western New York.

Since the merger, efforts have continued to expand and improve services, most notably through the implementation of the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model. Clinics are now part of a new concept in outpatient care that is designed to improve overall health by caring for the whole person, better integrating behavioral health care with physical health care and increasing the use of high quality, evidence-based practices. In addition, as part of our commitment to the well being of children, BestSelf operates Erie County's Child Advocacy Center (CAC) a community-based, child friendly, multidisciplinary service for children and families affected by child sexual abuse or physical abuse.

None of this could have been accomplished without the dedicated staff and Board of Directors. Their contributions are immeasurable. This expertise coupled with sincere passion for the mission, have made BestSelf what it is today.

My decision to retire was driven by my belief that leadership is a privilege and that change is healthy. I loved my job and moreover, truly loved working with our incredible team. They are the best in business and in friendship - I will miss all of you very much. I am forever grateful for the opportunity I had to be part of this stellar organization. After 24 wonderful years, it was time for me to step aside and hand over the reigns to my long time colleague and former BestSelf COO, Liz Woike-Ganga. Over the years I watched Liz continue to grow and develop professionally. I was always impressed by her passion, intellect and leadership abilities.

Watching as she was named the new CEO, I could not help but remember when Liz and I first worked together when she was a social worker in one of our clinics. A Yale educated, fiercely smart, hungry young professional that wanted nothing more than to help those most in need, Liz worked her way up in the organization and learned nearly every facet of the business. Now, as the new CEO of BestSelf, she is surrounded by an enviable executive team. To say they are well-positioned to take BestSelf to the next level is an understatement. I went into retirement knowing my life's work and my team at BestSelf would be in the best hands – the hands of the premier providers of behavioral health services in Western New York.

Here's wishing the BestSelf team continued success. I'll be cheering you on from the sidelines!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'H' and a trailing flourish at the end.

# former President & CEO



# Greetings from Liz Woike-Ganga, President & CEO

Dear Friends,

It is not lost on me that as I write this letter, I do so on the heels of one of our community's most challenging and historic points in time, the COVID-19 pandemic. This unique moment has pushed each of us to come together in ways we never thought possible. And we did it.

As the new President and CEO of what is now the largest provider of community-based behavioral health services in Western New York, I am humbled and privileged to lead such a vibrant and innovative organization, built on the shoulders of my predecessor, Howard Hitzel. I distinctly remember when I made the choice to come to work at BestSelf in 2004 when we were still Lakes Shore Behavioral Health. I saw then how our incredible team made a difference in peoples' lives, how we truly changed lives for the better. I knew I was in the right place. This is the very same inspiration that continues to drive me today.

I want to thank Howard for his unwavering support and mentorship. It is true what they say about having a guiding light in your career. I wish him well in his retirement. Soak up that sun - you deserve it!

To the BestSelf staff and Board of Directors, your dedication is unmatched. Especially during such a difficult year, I sincerely thank you. While our staff may make it look easy, let me assure you that the strain on the team and our ability to provide services is real. Mental health needs are increasing exponentially due to the pandemic, and we have more folks coming in for services - both new to treatment and those who are experiencing an exacerbation of existing difficulties, at times leading to an increase in suicide attempts and overdoses. All of this impacts our staff as they also live their own lives within this COVID environment.

In spite of difficult economic times, we were fortunate to remain dedicated to meeting our patients and families where they are and to making services accessible. COVID has fostered expansion of telehealth while continuing services in brick and mortar locations and in the community through mobile options.

While we have seen great success, we are hungry to do more. BestSelf has more than doubled in size over the past



4 years and now has an annual budget of \$81 million, a workforce of 1,100+ employees, and serves more than 41,000 children and adults in 70+ locations in Western New York. This rapid growth has resulted in the need for additional administrative infrastructure, and we are excited about the recent announcement of our \$20 million project to transform 899 Main Street in downtown Buffalo into a new corporate headquarters and home for the Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf.

This expansion is coupled with our ongoing focus on racial equity and inclusion, along with a steadfast focus on the people we serve and their needs beyond mental health - physical health, social determinants of health and housing. Our valued collaborations and partnerships in the community will be critical to helping as many people as possible.

I invite each of you to visit our website, sign up for our monthly newsletter "BestSelf Buzz," or join us on social media to stay connected to our programs, services and staff. Share your knowledge about our organization with your colleagues, friends and family. BestSelf is always looking for talented individuals to join us and even more so at this critical time. Before year-end, I ask you to consider a donation to support our efforts to deliver premier mental and behavioral health services to those who need it most - whether a general donation or in support of our Capital Campaign to support the Child Advocacy Center.

Many organizations aspire to change lives. Very few have all the elements required: expert staff, resources, and passion. As the new CEO, I couldn't ask for anything more.

In partnership and health,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz".

# 2020 Grant Summary

*Despite countless challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was a successful year for securing grants! BestSelf was awarded more than **33 million dollars** to implement new programs, expand existing services, and sustain vital programs.*

BestSelf's school-based program, Building Brighter Futures, secured several grants including the Hollister Confidence Fund; the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, and Hope Buffalo.

The Primary Behavioral Health Care Integration Program secured additional funding from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation to sustain programming until a sustainable model can be developed. The BestSelf Primary and Behavioral Health Integration (PBHCI) Program is an interdisciplinary, collaborative, integrated clinic designed to engage individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) in care that is person-centered and addresses both medical and behavioral health care needs.

The Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf was awarded funding to provide child abuse prevention training to gymnastics studios in the WNY region. Additionally, the CAC received a generous grant from the Charles D. and Mary A. Bauer Foundation toward the capital campaign to relocate the CAC to a larger location in Downtown Buffalo, NY.

Supportive Housing Services at BestSelf continued to grow in 2020. The Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) awarded BestSelf 180 supportive housing units for individuals with serious mental illness or substance use disorders.

Thanks to the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County (UWBEC), several of BestSelf's programs are able to continue providing high-quality behavioral health care services. In 2020, UWBEC provided programmatic support to Building Brighter Futures, the Lighthouse Women's Residence, an in-patient substance use disorder recovery program for pregnant or parenting women and their children, the Child Advocacy Center, and two evidence based therapy programs: Dialectical Behavior Therapy and Parent Child Interaction Therapy.

Following a successful planning grant awarded in 2019, BestSelf was awarded the next phase of funding from the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York (HFWCNY) to implement a cross-systems response to the preventable public health issue of infant death due to unsafe sleeping practices.

Several funders provided support to cover costs associated with the pandemic including: the Celia Lipton Farris and Victor W. Farris Foundation, the WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund, the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, and the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

## The Celia Lipton Farris and Victor W. Farris Foundation

### **GRANTED \$20,000**

in COVID Emergency Funding for general operating support to use in response to the agency's most urgent needs. As a result, we were able to purchase 200 Zoom licenses, this enabling 200 of our direct care providers to continue to connect with their clients.

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## New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

### **GRANTED \$10,000**

under the *Athletes are Children First* pilot program to the Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf to provide child abuse prevention to gymnastics studios in the WNY region.

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## The Charles D. and Mary A. Bauer Foundation

### **GRANTED \$60,000**

toward the capital campaign to relocate the Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf. The Foundation is sponsoring Mission Control, which serves as the "brain" of the forensic interview suite and will house all of the equipment needed for each forensic interview conducted at the CAC.

## The NYS Office of Addictions Services and Supports (OASAS)

### **A. GRANTED \$209,414**

of State Opioid Response (SOR) funding to purchase a Mobile Treatment Vehicle to provide fully mobile substance use disorder treatment to individuals in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties, where there is an identified need and treatment gap.

### **B. GRANTED \$880,829**

of SOR Funding as part of WNY Regional SOR grant application. BestSelf was awarded \$552,369 to expand treatment services including rapid access to medication assisted treatment (MAT), expansion of mobile substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, coordination of a regional maternal SUD taskforce, and to fund three court counselors to work within Erie and Niagara Courts to expedite court referrals and improve outcomes for court-mandated patients. BestSelf was awarded \$328,460 to expand recovery services which includes the creation of the WNY Peer Workforce Development Center, which will be located at BestSelf's Recovery Center and serve as a training hub to recruit, train, certify, shadow, and support peers in their employment.

## The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

### A. GRANTED \$4,000,000

to continue and expand The Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Expansion Grant (CCBHC-E) program which includes opening a second clubhouse location in the Orchard Park – ClubSouth.

### B. GRANTED \$800,000

in Emergency Response for Suicide Prevention Funding to begin the Best Connections Program to provide enhanced services to adults at-risk for suicide and victims of domestic violence.

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## The WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund

### GRANTED \$125,000

to cover additional and/or unforeseen costs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## The US Department of Justice/Bureau of Justice Assistance

### AWARDED \$900,000

for BestSelf's Substance Use Disorder Reentry Initiative (SUDRI) to improve provision of services to offenders with substance use disorders when they leave incarceration to reenter the community, which in turn will help to reduce recidivism, promote public safety, and recovery.



## The US Department of Justice/Office for Victims of Crime

### AWARDED \$700,000

for BestSelf's Project SAYVE (Support and Advocacy for Youth Victims of the Epidemic), which will help to bridge the gap in identification, treatment, and victims services for children and youth who are victimized by addiction.

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## The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation

### A. GRANTED \$150,000

in Emergency COVID Funding to cover lost congregate care funding and hazard pay for the Lighthouse residential substance use disorder treatment program for parenting and pregnant women.

### B. GRANTED \$650,000

a.to sustain the BestSelf Primary and Behavioral Health Care Integration (PBHCI) program until a sustainable model is developed.

## The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

### A. GRANTED \$593,570

in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project funding to launch Safe Space at BestSelf, which is an overnight drop-in center for transition aged youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

### B. GRANTED \$602,532

in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project funding to start the BestSelf Family Engagement Team, which will provide case management for homeless or at-risk youth between the ages of 12-24.

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## Hope Buffalo

### GRANTED \$1,000

providing a mini-grant to the BestSelf Building Brighter Futures program to be used for inexpensive sports equipment to support and encourage virtual summer programming.

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## The City of Buffalo

### PROVIDED \$700,000

of Emergency Solutions Grant/COVID funding to prevent homelessness through rapid rehousing services.

## The Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation

*through the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo*

### A. GRANTED \$10,000

from the Youth Sports and Recreation COVID-19 Fund to cover materials, equipment, and staffing to support the sports component of the Building Brighter Futures virtual summer programming.

### B. GRANTED \$22,500

to fund phase 2 of Building Brighter Future's Doc Wayne Pilot to provide sports-based therapy to students in Buffalo Public Schools.

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## The Health Foundation for Western and Central New York (HFWCNY)

### PROVIDED \$200,000

for the CALL to Action Demonstration Project to implement the BestSelf Infant Safe Sleep Community Coordination project to reduce the rate of infant death related to unsafe sleep practices to zero.

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## The Hollister Confidence Fund

### GRANTED \$50,000

to Building Brighter Futures to provide teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) training to 300 students in Erie County in 2021.

# Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI)

## **A. GRANTED \$4,125,000**

to BestSelf's Manhattan Project to provide 66 affordable housing units including 33 supportive housing units. Of the supportive housing units, 20 will be dedicated to individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) and 13 will be dedicated to individuals with substance use disorders (SUD).

## **B. GRANTED \$2,000,000**

to a collaborative project with PUSH Buffalo which will provide 49 affordable housing units including 16 supportive housing units. Of the supportive housing units, 4 will be dedicated to individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) and 12 will be dedicated to individuals with substance use disorders (SUD).

## **C. GRANTED \$2,000,000**

to provide 52 affordable housing units including 16 supportive housing units. Of the supportive housing units, three will be dedicated to individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) and 13 will be dedicated to individuals with substance use disorders (SUD).

## **D. GRANTED \$9,375,000**

to provide 150 affordable housing units including 75 supportive housing units. Of the supportive housing units, 40 will be dedicated to individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) and 35 will be dedicated to individuals with substance use disorders (SUD).

## **E. GRANTED \$5,000,000**

to provide 80 affordable housing units including 40 supportive housing units. Of the supportive housing units, 15 will be dedicated to individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) and 25 will be dedicated to individuals with substance use disorders (SUD).



# Agency and Individual Awards



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## **Carmen Vargas**

SENIOR COUNSELOR AT FRANKLIN PROS

*Carmen was awarded the Business First 30 under 30 award.*

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## **Elizabeth Woike-Ganga, LCSW-R**

PRESIDENT/CEO

*Liz was awarded the Business First C-level Executive Award.*



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## **Kelly Dumas, LCSW**

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

*Kelly was awarded the Business First Women of Influence Award.*



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## Dr. Laurence Plumb

PHYSICIAN

*Dr. Plumb was awarded the WNYCDC Gold Key Award.*



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## BestSelf Behavioral Health

MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC

*BestSelf won the Buffalo Business First Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Awareness (IDEA) Award in recognition of the agency's commitment to racial equity and inclusion.*



# Child Advocacy Center Fundraising

## VIRTUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT RAISES OVER \$25,000 FOR CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

Instead of cancelling or postponing this year's annual golf tournament due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 72 virtual golfers "teed it up" June 2-4 in a randomized event at three top courses in the U.S. – Torrey Pines, Pebble Beach, and Bethpage Black. A special thank you to our sponsors Northwest, Buffalo Business First, Merrill Lynch, Parkview RX, Riverview RX, United Insurance Agency, Catapult, Eagle Systems, The Franklin Partnership, PCI, Savarino Companies, and Matthew Whitehead, and all of our golfers! We appreciate everyone's support and are pleased to announce the tournament raised over \$25,000! All proceeds from this event will be restricted to the Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf.

## 3,000 PINWHEELS PLANTED TO RECOGNIZE CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

In April 2020, BestSelf recognized National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Across the nation the blue pinwheel is seen as symbol of a happy and carefree childhood, and pinwheels popped up across the area to demonstrate the belief that we can prevent child abuse and neglect. At 768 Delaware Avenue, BestSelf volunteers planted 3,000 pinwheels on the front lawn to represent the 3,000 cases of child abuse reported annually in Erie County.

## WARM HEARTS PROMOTION RAISES FUNDS FOR CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

This holiday season, BestSelf partnered with Park Edge Sweet Shoppe for our first ever Warm Hearts promotion, raising more than \$6,000! The community was able to purchase hot chocolate snowballs from Park Edge with a portion of the proceeds to benefit the Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf.

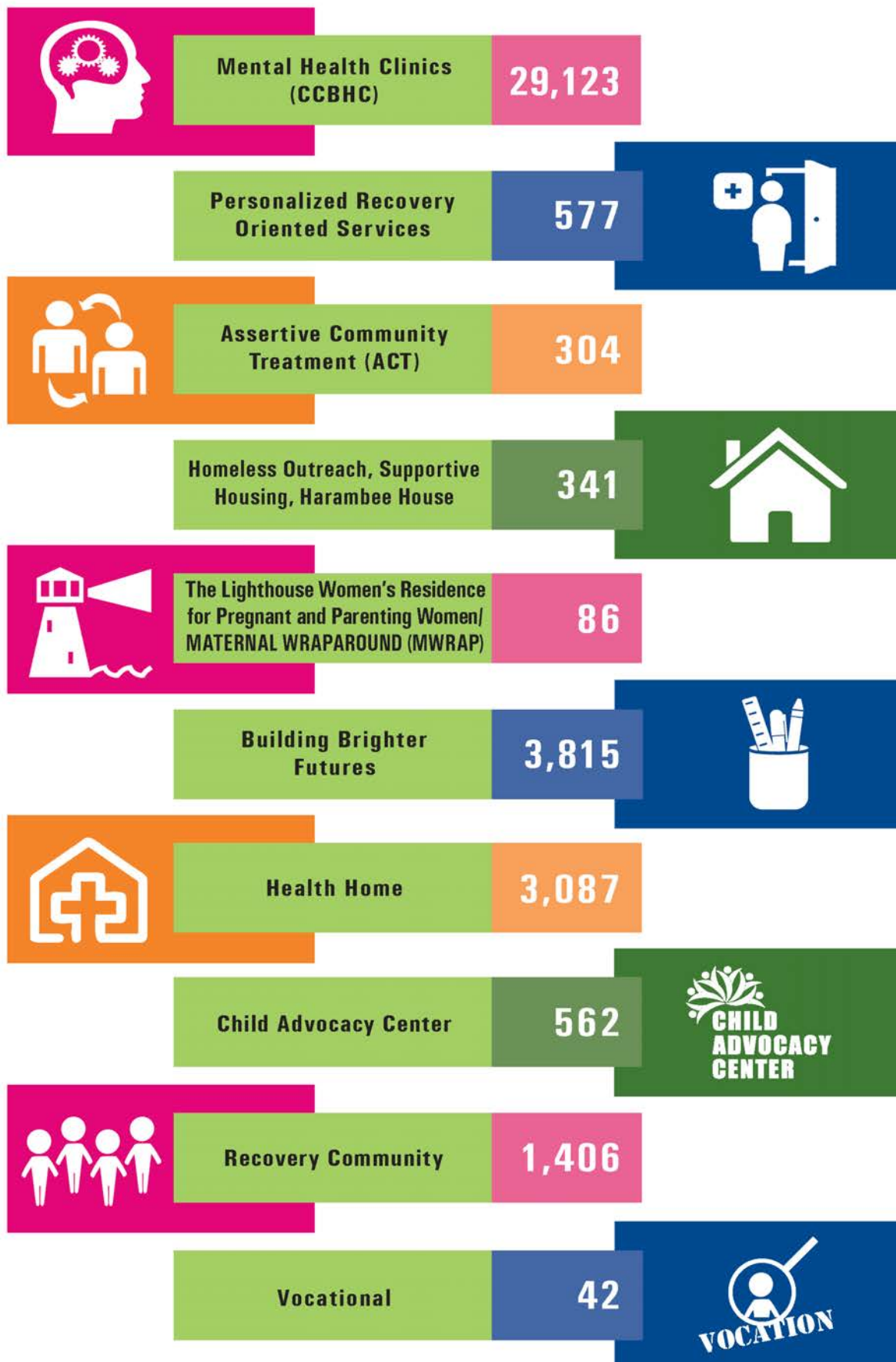
## BREAKFAST FOR BOLD VOICES

On February 26, 2020, individuals from the Western New York community joined us in the Mary Seaton Room at Kleinhan's for Breakfast for Bold Voices. This event featured a complimentary breakfast, networking, a presentation illustrating our vision for the new Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf, and an opportunity to give. We are excited to report, we not only shared the story of the Child Advocacy Center with more than 200 attendees, but we also raised over \$25,000!



# Proudly Serving Those that Need it Most.

PROGRAM BY PROGRAM NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED IN 2020:



# Together We Can Do More!



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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



