A Record-Breaking JFS Friends Campaign

By Karen Gustafson, JFS Executive Director

It's almost a must in every conversation nowadays, to mention a pre-covid and post-covid world. At Jewish Family Service, we had to mindfully stop and take a moment to look back at the year we've had before writing this article. It felt more like a decade of changes. In fact, even reviewing our normal operations guidelines as we reopen to the public makes us all chuckle… was it *that* simple?

The only constant in our crazy year of pivoting and striving to continue to serve our clients in need was YOU. Our community stepped up when the COVID-19 Relief Fund was set up by the Jewish Federation of Omaha and the JFO Foundation, making a good portion of those funds available to cover requests coming our way. With our budgeted Financial Assistance dollars available, we were still able to meet the needs of our regular clients. However, thanks to the COVID-19 Relief Fund, we were able to serve every one of the 180 requests from community members in need due to the impact of the pandemic.

Because of your generous support contributing to this fund, we decided to suspend our annual Friends Campaign in 2020 and focus on serving those emerging needs as they arose. In addition to this, our staff was hard at work transitioning all operations to work from home, while still keeping up with a high demand for therapy sessions. As 2021 began and we noticed COVID-19 Assistance requests were going down, we started to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Our Counseling, Adoption and Yachad programs are also returning to normal and we are finally able to start planning community programming for the fiscal year 2021-2022. There are some exciting new projects in the making, thoughtfully designed to meet the JFO's new strategic plan.

Resuming our fundraising efforts this year was a tough decision to make, especially since we are more than familiar with the hardships our city and our community has endured. However, with demand for our services on the rise and as we plan for various programs coming up, we were happy to see our supporters excited to contribute again this year. But nothing could have prepared us for how well this campaign was going to be received!

Running from April 6th to June 13th and helping us spread the word about Mental Health Awareness in the month of May, we can proudly say that our campaign was more than a success. Raising an unprecedented amount of **$42,974** from **165** donors, you have helped us break every record in a time where we least expected it. We are proud to serve every client and meet every need by seeing how supportive our community is of the work we do. We couldn't do it without you!

We would like to thank each and every donor who found it in their hearts to support us through the 2021 Friends campaign. We will be listing all of you on our annual Thank You add in the Jewish Press as usual, coming up sometime in August. Your contributions are crucial in the mental health and human services programs that we run each year. JFS is just the medium, as you lend a hand up and help other community members grow every day. Thank you, thank you, THANK YOU!