



THE LATEST NEWS FROM

# SILVER SPRINGS – MARTIN LUTHER SCHOOL

We love therefore we serve  
(AGAPOMEN DIAKONOMEN)

Spring 2019



## Helping Our Children Grow

*Artwork created by a Silver Springs child.*

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# President's Message



Dear Friend,

Since the 1800's, America has seen amazing advancements in so many sectors, including the advent of electricity, the telephone, the automobile, and the computer. Opportunities for children and families have expanded exponentially in these last two centuries as well. While the challenges faced by today's children and families certainly look different than they did in 1859 when Silver Springs – Martin Luther School was founded, they also bear striking similarities. Hunger, poverty, violence, and other complex societal struggles were paramount among those challenges 160 years ago and still persist today.

In 1859, Elizabeth Fry Ashmead Schaeffer, the wife of a Lutheran Pastor, felt called to respond to the needs she saw among Philadelphia's children. With one dollar and an unrelenting passion to care for destitute and hurting children, Elizabeth rallied those who shared her vision that all children deserve to believe they matter and can have a bright future. Modeled after an orphanage in Pittsburgh, the Germantown Orphans' Home was thus created as the manifestation of this abiding call to serve and build a place of comfort, refuge, healing, and hope for Philadelphia's most vulnerable children. When the program moved to Plymouth Meeting in 1972, it became Silver Springs – Martin Luther School.

What was once an orphanage is now a thriving multi-program organization that remains dedicated to helping children and their families to heal, learn, and move toward a promising future. I invite you to look through these pages to read more about recent happenings at Silver Springs, the many caring professionals and staff members, and the terrific friends and supporters who embody the work envisioned so many years ago that continues today. That work may look different from 1859, but it remains true to Elizabeth's core vision that all children matter and deserve to feel safe and have hope.

In 2019, Silver Springs is honored to be celebrating 160 years of helping children and families to prevail through the most difficult of circumstances. We are grateful to the countless caring individuals who have sustained our mission throughout these 160 years, making it possible for us to continue to serve the precious children entrusted to our care. We are honored to continue this work, and we thank you, members of our community, for sharing our vision. In June, we will gather for a celebration of our history and continued commitment to the work envisioned by Elizabeth so many years ago. **All friends are welcome to join us on Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, for our 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on our Plymouth Meeting campus beginning at 5:30 PM.\***

In gratitude,

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

**RSVPs are required for the June 6<sup>th</sup> Celebration. For more information, please contact us at [info@silver-springs.org](mailto:info@silver-springs.org) or 610-825-4440, ext. 209.**



## AGAPOMEN DIAKONOMEN: "WE LOVE THEREFORE WE SERVE"

Silver Springs - Martin Luther School is a Social Ministry Organization affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and its Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, a member of Lutheran Services in America, and accredited by The Joint Commission. Please direct inquiries about the newsletter to Lynn Unipan, Development Director, Silver Springs – Martin Luther School, 512 West Township Line Road, Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462-1001; Tel: (610) 825-4440, ext. 206; Fax: (610) 825-3839; e-mail: [Lunipan@silver-springs.org](mailto:Lunipan@silver-springs.org).

Visit us on the web at [www.silver-springs.org](http://www.silver-springs.org)

# Lots of Fun Mixed In

What do you get when you mix 65 energetic children, engaging activities, and opportunities to practice new skills? Of course, this describes the activities curriculum in the Residential Treatment Program at Silver Springs! From a color run around campus to weekly arts and crafts sessions to journaling workshops, there are many ways in which the children, who range from six to 14 years old, are learning new skills and having fun at the same time.

“It’s important to provide a wide range of activities for the kids,” explains Chris Riddell, Residential Program Director. “We want them to discover new talents, build on existing interests, and practice the important social and emotional skills they are learning with us.”

The curriculum includes opportunities for many therapeutic activities such as equine therapy. These weekly visits to Sebastian Riding Associates are geared to help children heal from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that many at Silver Springs experience due to their past trauma. Visits with therapy dogs and participating in coping skills and journaling groups are other opportunities to practice important calming techniques.

Some favorite fun activities currently include Zumba classes, roller skating trips, and taking in a sporting event. These recreational activities play an important role in the children’s healing and growth during their time at Silver Springs. Explains Amanda Duani, Therapeutic Activities Coordinator for the Residential Treatment Program, and a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, “The daily recreational activities give the boys and girls the chance to work on teamwork and good sportsmanship, interact with peers and others, and practice how to be polite and behave appropriately in public.”

New activities are rotated in regularly, such as the four-week nutrition group that will kick-off this spring. Planned in coordination with the nursing staff at Silver Springs, this group will focus on wellness and teach the children about making healthy food choices. Plans for adding lessons about other life skills, such as money management, are in the works.

Duani explains, “Our hope is for each child to develop their own toolbox with an array of skills from these activities that will help them be successful throughout their lives.”



# Caring for the Caregivers

The caring professionals at Silver Springs – Martin Luther School, like many in the helping professions, are at risk for compassion fatigue. “Helping people puts us in direct contact with their lives and with their joys and sorrows, their hopes and often hopelessness,” explains Barbara Trout, Ph.D., Clinical Services Director of the Silver Springs Residential Treatment Program. “It is our capacity for compassion and ability to stay beside others during their pain that can leave us vulnerable to ‘compassion fatigue.’” Trout continues, “Compassion fatigue is a set of symptoms experienced by caregivers who become so overwhelmed that they themselves begin to experience a host of negative feelings.”

Silver Springs is committed to supporting staff members in their work. Says Kristen Gay, Ph.D., President/CEO, “We are committed to finding ways to support our staff members so they can continue to do the hard but good work they do each day for the children we serve.” She continues, “It is essential that we help prevent burnout and compassion fatigue so that our staff members can be at their best and so that Silver Springs continues to be a place where children find hope and peace.” This commitment underscores the recent increase in self-care activities across Silver Springs’ programs.

In the Residential Treatment Program, staff members have been participating in fun, team-building activities, have spent some relaxing time with therapy dogs and rabbits, and have enjoyed catered lunches at staff meetings. More self-care activities are planned for the coming months.

Martin Luther School’s February in-service day was devoted to promoting self-care. Activities on the agenda included yoga, meditation, nutrition, and personal finance.



Explains Amy Grossman, Martin Luther School’s Director of Admissions, who helped organize the morning’s activities, “We learned to nourish our mind, body, and spirit.” Grossman states, “This was an opportunity for each of us to care for ourselves and devote some time to reducing stress and preventing burn out.”

Similarly, Silver Springs’ Foster Family Care Program has launched a series of activities to help build connections between staff members, promote self-care, and incorporate relaxation time into the work week. “Our staff are vital to providing our clients with the best care possible and to fulfilling Silver Springs’ mission,” states Shelley Spear, LCSW, Foster Family Care Program Director. Toward this end, the Program has presented workshops in healthy eating, time management, and mindfulness. Team bonding opportunities have included a trip to an Escape Room and a holiday “fun” sweater party. Says one staff member of the activities, “It has been really good to learn and incorporate self-care into my work day. I love it!”

## BEYOND ACADEMICS AT MARTIN LUTHER SCHOOL

At Martin Luther School, our holistic approach to teaching and learning extends beyond the classroom. The Counseling Department provides support for individual students as well as a full curriculum of guidance lessons for the more than 200 kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. “We provide a caring ear for students who need someone to talk to, and teach guidance lessons in each classroom,” explains Jessica Dalton, School Counselor.

Lessons are based on monthly themes like conflict resolution, cultural diversity, and teamwork, and focus on building character qualities such as respect, empathy, and fairness. In the month of February the Counseling Department emphasized the quality of caring which included a week of “Random Acts of Kindness” complete with a Kindness Tree highlighting the students’ kind acts toward others.



“Students loved seeing their names on the wall! Even after the week ended they were performing acts of kindness to have their names added,” shares Janay Reynolds, School Counselor. “They loved pointing out their names to staff members as they passed the Tree.”

The Counselors also hold small groups that meet regularly like the “Worry Not” group that focuses on ways to manage stress and anxiety. Another, “TGIF: Thank Goodness I’m Fabulous,” addresses self-esteem and self-worth. Says Christina Rogowski, School Counselor, of a Friendship Group she recently hosted,

“It’s been rewarding watching the students, many of whom are quiet and reserved, open up and become more engaged. They have really blossomed!”

# Helping Children Heal from Trauma

Silver Springs has long specialized in helping children to resolve and recover from the emotional after-effects of traumas such as abuse or the traumatic loss of a loved one. In both the Residential Treatment Program and our Community Based Programs, therapists who are specially trained and certified in providing Trauma Focused – Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT) are available to help children who are grappling with feelings or behaviors related to their past experiences. “TF-CBT is an evidence-based practice that is used to help children recover from traumas such as abuse, loss or death of a loved one, natural disasters, or community violence,” says Melissa Harvey, MSW, LSW, Senior Community Based Program Director.

Megan\*, a 12-year-old girl, recently completed this therapy to address the loss of her grandmother and mother, both of whom died within one year of each other. Megan’s aunt, who was now her guardian, brought her to see a therapist in the Silver Springs’ Outpatient Program because Megan was feeling angry a lot of the time. As she got to know her therapist, Megan told her that she felt guilty, was having trouble feeling close to people, tried to avoid thinking about her family, and was afraid that other bad things would happen in her life. Megan and her aunt both participated in TF-CBT with one of our specially trained therapists.

Through the course of her therapy, Megan learned how losing her mother and grandmother had affected her and developed skills to cope with how she was feeling. Megan’s aunt was also grieving the loss of her mother and sister, and the therapy helped her better understand what she was going through as well. Megan’s aunt began to recognize her own strengths and also improved her parenting skills. The therapist helped Megan’s aunt better understand what Megan was experiencing so she could lovingly support her.

With the help of her caring and skilled therapist, Megan’s feelings of guilt, anger, and grief improved, and she felt closer to her aunt as well. We are confident that both have bright futures ahead. “We are proud,” Harvey shares, “to have been named a TF-CBT designated provider by Community Behavioral Health (CBH), Philadelphia’s behavioral health managed care organization. This is recognition of our program’s expertise in providing an important evidence-based practice for children and youth. We are pleased to be able help children and families in this way.”

To make an appointment with a Silver Springs Outpatient therapist, please call 215-880-8823.

*\*Name changed to protect child’s privacy.*

## Welcome



We are excited to welcome **Eva Morrison** to Silver Springs – Martin Luther School as Director of Martin Luther School. Eva comes to us with more than 25 years of experience as an educator, both as a teacher and an educational leader. Most recently, she served as Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Professional Development for the Upper Dublin School District. “Eva is passionate about teaching and learning, and committed to facilitating a collegial, student-centered learning environment where both students and staff leave school each day feeling fulfilled,” stated Kristen Gay, Ph.D., President/CEO. “She is a life-long learner who is creative, authentic, and genuinely cares about the educators and students with whom she works. We are thrilled to have Eva join our team!”

## Upcoming Events

Save these dates for fun, upcoming events to support Silver Springs – Martin Luther School! For more information, or to buy tickets, visit: [www.silver-springs.org/news-events](http://www.silver-springs.org/news-events).



### 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Sarah’s Blessing Gathering

Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>

5:30 PM to 7:30 PM

\$65 per person

Philadelphia Aviation Country Club at Wings Field  
1399 Narcissa Rd., Blue Bell

The Sarah’s Blessing Fund at Silver Springs assists families who are facing unexpected financial hardships that can jeopardize a child’s well-being.



### 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup>

5:30 PM to 8 PM

Silver Springs – Martin Luther School  
512 W. Township Line Rd., Plymouth Meeting  
RSVP Required

Join us to celebrate 160 years of serving children and families!

## Chefs 2018 – Most Successful Ever!



Thank you to the wonderful sponsors, guests, auction donors, and volunteers who made the 11<sup>th</sup> annual **Chefs for Silver Springs** benefit dinner an incredibly fun and successful evening! More than 400 guests gathered on a rainy November evening to enjoy a delicious Italian meal designed by acclaimed chef, Joey Baldino. Attendees were treated to accordion music during the cocktail hour before former Comcast Sports Network reporter, Leslie Gudel, kicked off the evening. An inspiring program about the children served by Silver Springs including a speech by a Martin Luther School graduate that had guests on their feet and exciting silent and live auctions rounded out the night. Thank you to all who partnered with Silver Springs to raise important funds to help “our” children and families achieve their bright futures!



... and **Chefs 2019** will be on **November 8<sup>th</sup>**. **Save the Date!**





# Thank You to Our Chefs 2018 Sponsors!



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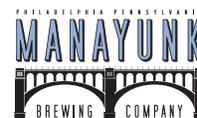
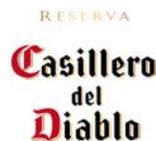
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Questions? Email [info@silver-springs.org](mailto:info@silver-springs.org)