

MISSION STATEMENT

Vision- that every youth caring for an ill, injured, elderly or disabled family member will achieve success in school and life.

Mission- to increase awareness and provide support services for youth caregivers and their families by connecting healthcare education and community resources.

MEET OUR NOMINEES

As you all know, there are enormous rewards in being a volunteer. But we also try to make sure our volunteers get the acknowledgement they deserve. Three of our volunteers have been nominated for their strong commitment to improving the lives of our caregiving youth: Kirsten Blazek, Women of Grace Award through Bethesda Hospital Foundation; Rosie Inguanzo-Martin, Soroptimist, Women of Distinction and Jan Dymtrow, Junior League of Boca Raton Woman Volunteer of the Year.

Dear Volunteers:

I hope you have been enjoying this quarterly newsletter, which features information about volunteer participation in our many activities for caregiving youth. You, as AACY volunteers, provide that additional dimension of personal attention to which most recipients respond. I welcome your input for future newsletters. If you have any questions about other ways in which you can help us with our vision for every youth to succeed in school and life, do not hesitate contacting me at marcy@aacym.org.

As the summer comes to an end, I would like to share some of the agency highlights with you:

It was eventful summer for our youth caregivers, starting with our annual Camp Treasure Reunion at FAU. A number of volunteers helped to transport the students to and from camp and several stayed on to assist with activities. Thanks to Sam's Club volunteers, everyone enjoyed a poolside lunch.

In early August, a CYP Back to School Brunch and Wellness Event was held at Edgewater at Boca Pointe. This was our second multi-generational brunch and was well-attended by our students and senior citizens who got to enjoy crafts, raffles, a photo booth and DJ as well as an omelet station!

Our M.A.C.Y. program now has 25 mentor matches. Plans are underway for more continuing education programs for our mentors as well as group activities for mentors and mentees to enjoy together. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a mentor, please email me at marcy@aacym.org.

And finally, we are now settled in at our new office located at 6401 Congress Avenue. Our agency telephone number remains the same.

Marcy Bezark
Volunteer Manager



Kirsten Blazek



Jan Dymtrow



Rosie Inguanzo-Martin

MORE ON MENTORING

"If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a life." *Author Unknown*

MORE ON THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

In a recent MOTHERBOARD Tech By Vice article entitled "Volunteering Is the Best Kept Secret for Mental Health", a number of studies have shown that helping others has tangible benefits, both mental and physical, from **lowering blood pressure** to **reducing feelings of depression**. It doesn't seem to matter what type of volunteering one is performing, just that a helpful act can create benefits.

Rodlescia Sneed, a public health research associate at Michigan State explains, "In my own work I've shown it's (volunteering) linked to improvements in factors like depressive symptoms, purpose in life and feelings of optimism."

Research has shown oxytocin (a neurotransmitter that regulates social

Joe Kraus

Joe Kraus connected with AACY after a chance meeting with Founder and President Connie Siskowski. "My office (Stratis Business Systems) was located on the FAU Campus and I would pass her office from time to time. I popped in one day and talked to Connie. I learned about caregiving youth and we discovered that our healthcare scheduling software could help with the Caregiving Youth Project."



Joe's journey to Florida began in Philadelphia, where he lived until college. He attended the University of Rhode Island and then worked for General Electric who transferred him to San Francisco. He later moved to Los Angeles to get his MBA at UCLA, knowing that a business degree would help with starting a business. Joe's sister Linda had a home health care business in Florida. She convinced Joe to move here to build software for her company. A few years later he started Stratis, hired his sister, and together they grew the software company for the next 15 years until selling it in 2014.

He explained, "I never really knew about caregiving kids. I know a lot of adults in the caring business and know how hard their work is. So, learning about this hidden population struck a chord with me. Over the next 10 years our employees adopted AACY as their favorite charity. We volunteered at the Holiday Parties, gift wrapped toys for the youth caregivers and some of our team became mentors."

Connie eventually asked Joe to join the Board of Directors and he continues to serve today. But once he decided to retire in 2018, Joe wanted to become a mentor to have a more direct impact on someone's life. "When you are working and running a business, you can make donations but you don't always have the time to help more directly."

Joe had been part of the Big Brother program back in 1994. He was matched with an 11-year-old boy and they were together for about three years. "He was

interaction) spikes in some people who regularly volunteer, helping them to better manage stressful events. In other words, helping others is a natural high our brains are wired for!

Ikigai is a Japanese word whose meaning translates roughly to realizing joy, a sense of purpose and meaning and a feeling of well-being. Find your **ikigai** through examining your responses to the four questions:

What do you love?

What are you good at?

What can you be paid for?

What does the world need?

In what way can you make a meaningful contribution? What brings you joy?

"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands - one for helping yourself, the other for helping others." - Audrey Hepburn

even an usher in my wedding." But the family moved to upstate New York and they lost contact. He is now matched with one of our boys and continues to transport students to various events when he is available. I asked Joe if the kids he drives open up to him. He answered, "It's a mix. Some of the kids are very shy and quiet, others want to push every button in the car, as well as control the music".

Joe is now working with Pam Perrin, AACY's COO, on setting up swim lessons at a local Y for our youth caregivers. "I have a soft spot for these kids, knowing they do the work that professional caregivers do - which is very hard work. AACY is the only organization in the country that focuses on youth caregivers. These kids don't complain and they give up so much. They do it out of love. And, when I hear about their accomplishments in school, and the colleges they have been accepted to, it makes me so proud of them and to be a part of such a great organization. Connie, her staff, our volunteers and board members have done an outstanding job!"

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are matched according to their skills, interests and abilities.

- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Community Outreach
- Clerical Assistance
- Fundraising
- Social Networking
- Video Experts
- Writers
- Public Relations
- Basic Computer Skills

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See what's happening on our social sites:

