

Spring 2020

# Directions

A newsletter for  
those inspired by  
Compass Mark

**Our Vision: To guide and empower all people toward healthy, fulfilling lives free from addiction**

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## Making a difference

# Kids Kamp: discovering leaders within

*New this year: see your donations at work! Join us for a 'welcome home campers' picnic!*

This summer, Compass Mark is helping kids take risks – the good kind. All students who participate in Compass Mark's Leaders of Future Generations throughout the year will be given the opportunity to head to Kids Kamp in June.

From sunup to sundown, campers enjoy an active schedule that keeps them engaged in leadership opportunities. They'll not only brave the elements of camping outside – some of them for the first time ever – but will experience activities like horseback riding, making new friends, and one of the biggest challenges ... being without technology for a full week!

These students have spent the year as part of Leaders of Future Generations (LFG), a school-based program for youth who exhibit leadership potential, where they learn how to become leaders in their schools and communities. They learn personal resiliency and how to take healthy

risks, which are skills that will take them far into their future. The week at Kids Kamp is another (fun) way for them to learn, be stretched, and form valuable relationships.

"Kids Kamp is a great opportunity for students to embrace their leadership potential and learn to work together as a team," says Compass Mark Youth Leadership Advocate Lauren Krebs.

Lauren and fellow Youth Leadership Advocate Vanessa Mendez coordinate agendas and facilitate the Leaders of Future Generations program after school at a few local intermediate and middle schools. This is the first Kids Kamp experience for both of them, and they are eager for the challenge and enthusiastic about what they can bring to the camper's experiences.

Vanessa says she's looking forward to the team building activities they'll do with the students. "The activities challenge the youth in showing their leadership skills, collaboration, and resiliency. The theme for this summer is the Olympics and I am very excited to see how the kids are going to work together to compete against each other, and they also do other fun activities to get to know everyone."

### Welcome home all-community picnic

When Kamp winds to a close on the last day, there will be an award ceremony for the students and the annual welcome



home picnic at Long's Park. The picnic is always open to all camper families, and this year, Compass Mark is inviting you. See your donations at work firsthand, as well as the positive effect that Kids Kamp has on both LFG youth and their communities. "It's the perfect closure to the week of Kamp," says Prevention Coordinator Matt Weaver.

### Kids Kamp will be held June 15-19.

You can find more details closer to the time, including information about the Welcome Home picnic, at **compassmark.org**. In the meantime, you can donate to this vital prevention program and help us continue to reach our next generation's leaders!



# Supporting children of incarcerated parents

## Kids serving 'the silent sentence' find help and hope

A few months ago, a 17-year-old high school senior and her nine-year-old brother came home from their Lancaster County school and their mom wasn't there. Kira (not her real name) and Michael had faced this circumstance before, so they went on with their day—snacks, homework, bedtime and getting up for school the following day. Another day passed, then another. After three days, Kira reached out to their grandmother. Together, they found out that their mother had been arrested three days earlier. No one told her children.

By the time they returned to their apartment for school books and clothes, the landlord had put a lockbox on their door because their mother was behind on rent. Big needs loomed: the siblings had no legal guardian to authorize medical care, they didn't have clothes or other necessities. Other questions weighed on their minds: How would classmates react? How would Kira pay for her cheer uniform?

Lindsey Ober calls this 'the silent sentence.' Lindsey is Compass Mark's Family Services Advocate (FSA) for Lancaster County. She, along with Denni Boger, Compass Mark's Lebanon County FSA, work to identify, support and advocate for the needs and rights of children who have incarcerated parents.

When Lindsey learned about Kira and Michael, she jumped into action. She called the landlord and was able to get their belongings. She obtained legal

guardianship for their grandmother. She found Michael a therapist to help him work through the trauma he experienced. She reached out to Ambassadors of Hope, a partnering organization who supports children of incarcerated parents, and they paid for Kira's cheer uniform.

With these critical needs met, Lindsey knew what was next. Of the 384 children she's worked with in the past year, there is always one need above all the others: children want to see their parent. Fortunately, Lindsey went through an intensive five-week training session (the same training as a corrections officer at Lancaster County Prison) so she could oversee supervised visits between incarcerated parents and their children.

On one of Lindsey's visits to the prison, she took in a Build-A-Bear with a voice recorder so Kira's and Michael's mom could record a message for them to play whenever they want; and they do, often.

### Identifying kids in need

When a parent is arrested, their children serve their own sentence. First, it's an emotional sentence: kids feel the stigma of having a parent in prison. The second sentence is physical. They can immediately lose their home, their legal guardian, their medical care, their school, and proximity to friends. And some, like Michael and Kira, have no idea where to turn for help.

That's where Lindsey and Denni come in. One of the ways that Lindsey identifies kids in need is by going into Lancaster County Prison three times a week and meeting with new intakes. Of the 2,500 men and women housed in Lancaster County Prison over a typical year, 80% are parents, and 40% have more than three children.

"My job is to fill in the missing pieces," Lindsey says. She finds out who has the kids, whether they need school clothes, have insurance, how they are getting to piano lessons. Then, she works through what kids need to get back on their feet. Once their physical needs have been met, she can arrange



*Percentage of prisoners at Lancaster County Prison who are parents*

for therapists and school counselors to help them heal and move forward.

Denni gets referrals from Lebanon County Correctional Facility as well as Lebanon County School Districts, along with other community-based nonprofits.

After identifying that the child's needs are met in regards to food, clothing, housing, school, etc, Denni moves on to solve issues like facilitating parent participation in meetings and providing help obtaining required documents for a caregiver to become a legal temporary guardian.

### Creating a community: Compass Mark's solutions

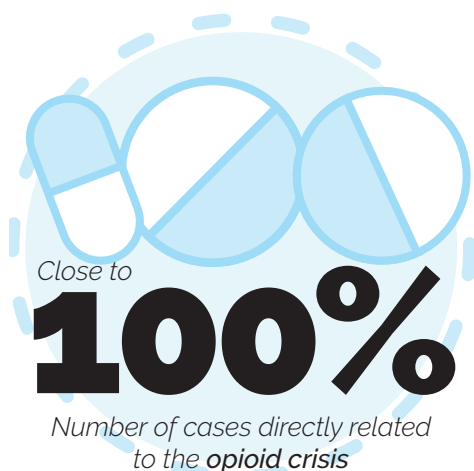
Working with local partners, Denni has implemented a project called *Read to Them*, which allows the child to receive a book and voice recording of their parent reading the book to them; just another way to keep the child connected to the parent and reducing the impact of incarceration.

In Lancaster County, private donations to Compass Mark helped Lindsey to start something new: support groups in three local schools. "These groups help kids realize they aren't alone," she says.

### "I want to be that person I needed in my childhood"

For Lindsey, this effort is personal. "I experienced parental incarceration in my own life, even though it was nothing like what these kids have gone

*Continued on page 3*



# Lebanon's school-based programs grow emotional and social skills

This school year, 1,525 kids in 89 classrooms throughout Lebanon County have been learning how to develop social skills, decision-making skills, and coping mechanisms, thanks to Compass Mark's addiction prevention school-based programs.

This early and consistent presence in students' lives is critical to their future, Prevention Specialist Regina Koppenhaver says. "The stronger a child's social and emotional skills are, the more confident they are in communicating with their peers. The more they understand about skills like healthy decision making and refusal, the better equipped they are to say no when they are approached about unhealthy choices."

Children are often at risk before they ever start engaging in risky behavior, so it's important to work with students in

prevention programs early and often. Regina says, "This is my second full year facilitating classes in the schools, but I already see the benefits of working with the same students over several years."

**"The stronger a child's social and emotional skills, the better they're equipped to say no to unhealthy choices."**

Programs have grown in Lebanon County in recent years. Today, Compass Mark is working inside many elementary classrooms in Annville-Cleona, Lebanon City, Cornwall-Lebanon and ELCO School Districts. These programs are mainly held in full classrooms for elementary-aged students, and in small groups for middle school and high school.

"Our curriculum works really well with full classrooms," Prevention Coordinator Michelle Sweitzer says. "It was designed to work well with many kids."

One of these programs is the popular Lions Quest® program, a life skills education program for students, starting in kindergarten. Ask any kid who has been through the program, and Michelle can guarantee what they'll say. "They'll tell

you about the bear!" she laughs, referring to the program's mascot, a furry teddy bear named Q-Bear. "They love Q-Bear!"

Q-Bear assists Michelle and Regina as they teach students about commitment

to their families, schools, peers, and communities, and how to live healthy, drug-free lives. The curriculum is easily adapted to any size group, and in some of the smaller groups, each child gets to take home their own Q-Bear at the end of the 10 sessions. "They are disappointed when there is only one class left!" Michelle says.

Michelle has been working in the schools in Lebanon County for 9 years, and she often sees former students in her daily life, at the grocery store, restaurants, and gas stations. "I've run into students who have remembered me and reported in. They are working, they look happy... way better than they were in high school. I'd like to think that Compass Mark had something to do with that," she says.



## Supporting children... *Continued from page 2*

through," she says.

"It's the trauma side of things that really draws me to it," she says. "Seeing a SWAT team at your door, losing everything, and still having to wake up and go about your normal life... it's absolutely baffling what these kids go through. I try to do everything I can to make them feel safe again. I want to be that person I needed in my childhood, but never had."

### How you can make a difference

Your donations to Compass Mark can

impact this program and help local children. In addition to the student support groups, your gift can fund immediate needs like diapers, or the Build-A-Bear with a recordable message for children to feel close to their incarcerated parent. Denni adds that the donation of books with themes of hope, optimism and healing are always appreciated for the *Read to Them* program.

Make a difference for a local child today by giving online at **[compassmark.org/donate](https://compassmark.org/donate)**.

**COVID-19 update:** Compass Mark is concerned about the current COVID – 19 pandemic as the schools and community facilities are closed. This can cause an increased level of stress on parents and children. We are committed to continuing to help them increase their protective factors through skill building and prevention lessons. Compass Mark is constantly looking for new and creative ways to continue to provide prevention programs to our students and the community. We will be offering online sessions through our Facebook page, as well as exploring other virtual platforms. If anyone should have any questions or is in need of help, please check out our website.

Support from donors helps Compass Mark enhance and expand prevention programs that stop addiction before it starts, here in our local communities. You can make an impact by sending your gift in the enclosed envelope. **THANK YOU!**



# New team members bring prevention experience and a passion for our mission

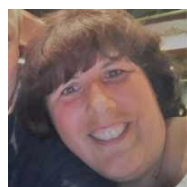
**Xavier Garcia-Molina**



**COMMUNITY  
PREVENTION  
MOBILIZER**

I provide support and technical assistance to grassroots coalitions throughout Lancaster County. I'm also a Lancaster City Council Member, and I'm committed to making our community strong.

**Regina Koppenhaver**



**PREVENTION  
SPECIALIST**

I facilitate school prevention programs predominantly

in elementary schools, which is a passion of mine. I love to see joy and excitement on students' faces when we come to teach a lesson!



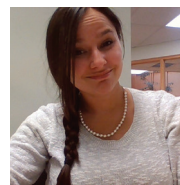
**Lauren Krebs**  
**YOUTH LEADERSHIP  
ADVOCATE**

I help run LFG programs and provide prevention classes in schools with small groups and full classrooms. I know that the work I do truly impacts those around me.

**Vanessa Mendez**

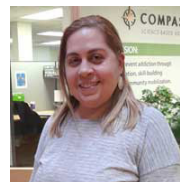
**YOUTH LEADERSHIP ADVOCATE**

I love working with the students at the LFG program. Nothing makes



me happier than watching how much a student grows while we are working with them.

**Liz Sanchez-Stanley**



**PROGRAM SUPPORT  
SPECIALIST**

I will greet you at the front desk when you stop by! I handle phones and all of the data at Compass Mark so that we can see the impact that our programs have.

## Equipping community prevention mobilization

One of the many ways in which Compass Mark has expanded reach and impact of high-quality prevention services is by supporting local coalitions doing prevention work in the community. We received funds from the Lancaster County Drug and Alcohol Commission to make several mini-grants to deserving projects, and after thorough review of applications,

have selected five Lancaster County coalitions. Their prevention projects will be implemented between November 2019 and June 30, 2020.

We are honored to partner with these groups to create change!

- Ephrata Cares / Ephrata Public Library: Character Matters Afterschool Program

- Lancaster County Recovery Alliance: Building Recovery Capital
- Bridges Community Partnership: Enhancement of Community Resources through Connection/ Collaboration
- Manheim Community Cares: Faces of Addiction
- Cocalico Cares: Initiation Movement

## Freedom Writers share stories from the heart

On October 7, Compass Mark hosted two original *Freedom Writers*, Tony Becerra, and Cynthia Ray, to share their stories with our community. Their Freedom Writers Foundation equips teachers with tools so they can help students overcome adversity through education.

Cynthia shared stories about her own recovery process and cited her support

network of educators, family, and friends as vital in her recovery. Tony's journey spoke to the need for support networks which motivate and support healthy decisions.

It was a night filled with messages of inspiration, empowerment, and resiliency, and we would like to thank our staff, board members, and all

sponsors for their assistance in making this event possible.

Thank you again to main sponsors Janney Montgomery Scott LLC, Lancaster County Community Foundation, and RBC Wealth Management!

