



NORTHEAST PARENT & CHILD SOCIETY

PROTECT
CHILDREN
PRESERVE
FAMILIES
STRENGTHEN
COMMUNITIES



Building Better Futures Since 1888

HEROES



Success Magazine: How do you define success?

James Johans: Success is the ability to apply perfect love and perfect wisdom to all life experiences. Accordingly, I believe true success can only be approximated, and never achieved. In seeking success, I strive to continuously engage in the process of improving my character and my community.

SM: How did your past work experience help to prepare you for your role as President of Northeast Parent & Child Society?

JJ: As the manager of a large laser manufacturing business for Hughes Aircraft Company, I learned how to apply sound business practices. As a restaurant owner in San Diego, I found my entrepreneurial spirit and realized the importance of exceptional customer service. As a government leader in human services for the state of West Virginia, I learned how to optimize systems of care, and influence the political process. As President of a large child welfare agency, I learned how to market a mission, and engage supporters to help thousands of families overcome poverty and ignorance.

SM: Why does this work motivate and inspire you?

JJ: I want to change the world – to move civilization forward at

least an inch in my lifetime. The greatest need presents the biggest opportunity for improvement. By helping those who have been failed by society, I can make a measurable difference.

SM: You are the President of one of the areas largest nonprofits. To what do you

attribute the success of Northeast Parent & Child Society?

JJ: Our agency has a unique culture of caring that has been nurtured throughout our history, demonstrated by true compassion for those in our care; a commitment to the well-being and efficacy of our dedicated staff and foster parents; sincere gratitude for the service of our volunteers and supporters; and accountability to our stakeholders and our community.

SM: NE Parent & Child Society was founded in 1888. Has the mission and purpose of the agency changed?

JJ: The agency was originally founded to care for the poor, abused, and neglected children of Schenectady, with a primary focus on providing food, clothing, and shelter. Today, protecting children is still core to our mission, but our focus has broadened to include the family and the community in assuring their health, safety, and well-being. In addition, we now provide a broad continuum of 30 programs in 16 locations to 5,000 children and families living in 22 counties in upstate New York.

SM: What services do you offer?

JJ: We provide a variety of family preservation and in-home counseling programs to assure that children can develop in safe and healthy families. We also operate an outpatient mental health clinic to help in this effort. For children who must be removed from their natural homes because of abuse or neglect, we provide an emergency shelter and diagnostic center to assess their needs and assist family courts in directing care

and placement. For those children who can thrive in surrogate families, we employ loving foster parents who open their hearts and homes to meet the need. For youth with more severe difficulties, we operate a residential treatment center to relieve their trauma and improve behaviors. These youth attend our special education school, along with 80 other students who reside in 21 school districts throughout the region. We also provide group homes and supervised apartments for our older youth, as well as a continuum of career development services, to prepare them to secure employment and succeed as adults.

SM: What is the most rewarding aspect of your position?

JJ: I am constantly inspired by the competence and compassion of our 500 staff, 300 foster parents, 4,000 volunteers, and thousands of community supporters who dedicate their efforts and resources to improving the lives of those we exist to serve.

SM: How does the economy affect children in the region?

JJ: The two greatest enemies we face in accomplishing our mission are poverty and ignorance. National data prove that the incidence of child abuse and neglect directly tracks economic trends. As more people slip into poverty, parental depression and anger increase, as well as fear, loss of hope, and substance abuse. All of these factors lead to increased child abuse and neglect.

SM: What are some of the best ways that people can help Northeast Parent & Child Society?

JJ: There are at least 100 ways people can join our mission. We are always seeking more foster parents, adoptive parents, mentors, tutors, volunteers, advocates, and donors. I encourage everyone to check

out our website and find the right opportunity to help our children and families.

SM: Please explain the role of foster and adoptive parents at Northeast.

JJ: We recruit, train, support, and pay foster parents to provide loving homes for our children, who are carefully matched to the best family to meet their needs. Many of these children eventually return home to their natural parents once they are better prepared by our staff to provide proper care. However, many natural parents are declared unfit by family courts, and their parental rights are terminated. Under these circumstances, many of our foster families permanently adopt the children in their care. I strongly recommend that parents seeking to adopt a child pursue family foster care as the best and least costly avenue to finding the right match for their home.

SM: What one thing would you like people to know about this organization?

JJ: Our mission is to protect children, preserve families, and strengthen our community. I personally guarantee that anyone who joins Northeast in this effort will be improved by the process and gratified by the experience – it is in giving that we receive.

SM: What is the most challenging aspect of your work in this field?

JJ: Northeast faces unlimited unmet need everyday. Our agency cannot meet the challenge alone. We need more resources to help our children and families improve. My primary focus is to continue to engage our community in this responsibility.

SM: What is your affiliation with local chambers of commerce, and why is this so important to you?

“ We have saved the lives of more than 100,000 children ... ”

JJ: Northeast belongs to 9 different chambers, and I personally serve on the Board of the Albany-Colonie Chamber, the Schenectady Chamber, and the Center for Economic Growth. My intention in this effort is twofold. First, by networking and informing business leaders regarding Northeast's mission, I have been able to attract major support for my agency – we now have more than 100 corporate sponsors. Second, by demonstrating the scope and impact of Northeast and other nonprofits on the local economy, I have been able to increase the appreciation of for-profit business leaders for the contributions of nonprofit businesses to the quality of life in our region. To this end, I was instrumental in founding the Tech Valley Nonprofit Business Council, which now has more than 450 members.

SM: What do you hope for the future of children and their families in the Capital Region?

JJ: My vision for our region is a community where every child is healthy, safe, and thriving; where all children develop to their potential, supported by family and community; where all children are nurtured, getting what they need to succeed; where all children grow into responsible adults who are able to make positive contributions to family and society.

SM: What is the best piece of advice you have ever received?

JJ: Love God; Love your neighbor; Love your self

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Become a **foster parent**

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www.neparentchild.org

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