

MENTOR

# LIVING



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MEET THE  
*Fraser Family!*  
ALWAYS BE GIVING



# Always Be Giving

## MEET THE FRASER FAMILY!

By Amber Chapman | Photos by Angelica Martinez and submitted by the family



Everyone has a story and a path. Sometimes it's not planned, but that's not always a bad thing. Such as in Kim Fraser's story, it's the best thing that could have happened to her. Kim originally wanted to be in theater. Her love for evoking emotions in people through performing was something she enjoyed so much so that she went to college for it. But, like many of us, life had other plans. As she ventured to Los Angeles, California, she began to realize that none of that was for her. So she began career testing. The results led her to the field of counseling. From her first class at John Carroll University while pursuing her masters, she knew it felt right. Then, while working on her post masters, some significant life events offered her even more insight into the field, and she never looked back.

In 1994, living in Cuyahoga County, she'd only known Lake County and Mentor because she would frequent the Mentor Headlands beach! One day she saw an ad for a position, at Pathways, in crisis counseling in Mentor. In that job, she'd be working with people in acute behavioral health crisis. There she found a deep passion for serving them. She was helping people during some of the lowest points in their lives; some facing depression, desperation and psychotic breakdowns. From working with those in crisis, then supporting those transitioning out of hospitals to regular everyday life, those six years were pivotal to Kim. Then, an opportunity opened up for Director of Quality & Clinical Operations at the Lake County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board. She was immediately drawn to the administrative side of things where she helped establish best practices and services for the next seven years. In 2007, she was offered the Executive Director position there, and that's where she has been for the past 25 years.

*"There are paths we are meant to follow and we find them by following our passions."*

An ADAMHS Board exists in every county in Ohio, ours was established in 1969. Its purpose is to identify what mental health needs and services are in each community across the county. The goal is to ensure that every single resident has access



to mental health and addiction support services regardless of age, race, gender, time of day, or ability to pay. It's done through planning, monetary funding, and evaluating behavioral and addiction services across 16 different non-profit agency providers, covering over 90 different program services.

The Lake County ADAMHS Board plans, funds, monitors, and evaluates these services in Lake County's network to meet the diverse needs of the community.

It's not just a job to Kim and the nine others at the ADAMHS board. They know residents are depending on them. *"The people that walk through the door trust we will help them...it is a gift to us that we can serve them, we are here to help improve the quality of their lives."*

What would a world look like without these types of systems in place? Well, there are 50 ADAMHS Boards across the state overseeing 88 counties. There are eight without local levies—and for those communities it takes months to find and see a mental health counselor, get into a peer recovery group, or be diagnosed and supported with the follow-up pieces. It could mean life or death for some. That's why they must exist. The demand for services are continuing to grow.

The Lake County ADAMHS Board can many times be hidden in the background of a counseling session, a program or even a local non-profit. If you have children in school you have been served by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), Crossroads Health and or Signature Health for school based services. On the other end of the spectrum, senior citizens can get support services through Family Pride, an agency that focuses on aging in your home. With in-home visits and counseling sessions to explore home safety, depression and isolation.

There is much to offer and even though it is good information, it can seem overwhelming. That's why the ADAMHS board has a guide just for you to tailor what works best. The Compass Line is a local resource where you can talk to someone in Lake County Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at (440) 350-2000. They know who takes new patients, who specializes in what, who takes what insurance, which one is on the bus routes, who offers day or night appointments. It might be that you or someone you know is struggling; be it medication issues, gambling addiction, bullying at school, or abnormal alcohol use, if you're not sure where to turn... the Compass Line can help you find the way.

"On behalf of the board, we'd like to thank the community. It is because of your support and belief in mental health services that we can make a difference."



While Kim was following her career passion, she met her husband, Neal, who shares the same passion for mental health. They married in 2002, and began their journey together, having a daughter, Carsen, just a couple of years later. They are similar to many other Mentorites; Carsen went through the Mentor Schools K-12, they have spent many days and nights at Garfield Park, at Carsen's soccer games, the civic pool, skating rink, and rec center. Neal retired after 39 years with First Energy, and enjoys golfing with the Blackbrook's Slovenian Golf League, playing pickleball, and taking road trips to see Carsen at college. Carsen is a junior at the University of South Florida, majoring in broadcasting with minors in Spanish and nutrition.

The family still lives in the same home they started out in, and have two cats and two ducks. Well the ducks adopted them, it's their fourth year of nesting in their backyard.

Work doesn't stop when Kim leaves the office or when Neal plays golf. Their door is always open; always listening and talking about how they can be of service to the next person in need. They believe that as a community, if we make it a habit to check in with each other, we can really make a difference.

Those in need are urged not to allow stigma, pride, fear, or shame keep them from asking for the support resources right here in their community. It's okay to need something. Both Kim and Neal Fraser ask their fellow neighbors to find the resources they need, because they know their lives will improve in so many ways. The heartbreak of suicide and overdose death are irreversible and preventable. Make the call today and take the first step towards a better life with Lake ADAMHS's support services. You are not alone and shouldn't feel like you are.



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