



## “Ability Does Not Define Our Family...”

### It's Down Syndrome Awareness Month!

My name is Bethany (Oliver) Hamersky, and my daughter's name is Lilly. This little girl made me a mother and changed my life forever – and for the better – in every possible way.

Lilly is hilarious! She is sassy. She likes to be independent but also loves days where we can just snuggle and share hot cocoa. She likes going to school (most of the time) to see her friends, and she loves talking about her day when she comes home. She loves gymnastics, playing outside, her favorite TV shows and movies that she can recite from memory, and her favorite songs that she can listen to on repeat for days.

Lillian is always very concerned for the people around her and just wants us all to be happy.

She is such a light in our lives; we can't help but be happy when she is with us.

**She is NOT a burden nor a regret.** Nobody needs to pity our family. We live our lives just as we would if all our children were “typical.”



Lilly with her friend, Maddy.

I think to really spread awareness, we need to recognize how alike our children are so they can all be afforded the same opportunities. We are all equal, regardless of ability. A diagnosis does not define anyone.

– *Bethany*

# October is **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH**

*Recognize the Signs and Impact of Domestic Violence*

In 1987, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence wanted to draw more societal attention to the realities and impact of domestic violence on men, women, and children. Working with Congress, the Coalition helped enact legislation designating October as a time to emphasize awareness, advocacy, and activism around the issue. As this month comes and goes, awareness must remain at the forefront of our minds to keep all kids, caregivers, and families safe.

**On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the U.S. This equates to more than 10 million women and men every year.**

In Pennsylvania, 122 victims died from domestic violence in 2018. With the aid of programs and supportive services across the commonwealth, 90,000 men, women, and children found safety as a direct result of advocacy and community-based resources.

Domestic violence can be called other things: battery, domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, dating violence, or relationship violence. A partner may demonstrate many behaviors that signal an abusive relationship, such as:

- ▶ Acting jealous of friends or activities that take time away from the relationship
- ▶ Using insulting, shaming, or demeaning language or treatment
- ▶ Controlling money or taking away access to money
- ▶ Conducting interactions in a way that intimidates or scares others
- ▶ Destroying property or damaging personal belongings
- ▶ Threatening injury, punishment, or life
- ▶ Threatening consequences to children or taking away children

When there is violence in the home, children are silent witnesses. They see and absorb what happens within their environment. Children are insightful and perceptive and often communicate their awareness in their behaviors and social interactions. Ways children react to violence may include:

- ▶ Withdrawing or acting as if the abuse is no big deal
- ▶ Having trouble sleeping, suffering from nightmares, or bed-wetting
- ▶ Experiencing a loss of appetite, stomachaches, or headaches
- ▶ Becoming anxious, fearful, moody, or concerned with safety of self or loved ones
- ▶ Demanding adult attention, and misbehaving or “acting out” when they do not receive attention
- ▶ Arguing, fighting, or instigating altercations with other children, playing violently, or bullying others
- ▶ Mistaking jealousy and controlling behavior (a form of dating violence) for love, especially by teens and young adults
- ▶ Using drugs or alcohol, running away from home, or getting into trouble with authorities

No individual should live in fear, shame, or unsafe conditions. We must educate ourselves about how to support friends, neighbors, and



loved ones subject to violence of any kind. We can begin to create safe spaces by giving a voice to those who would otherwise suffer in silence.

If you or someone you know is in an unsafe situation, we encourage you to seek or offer help. Contacting a domestic violence program before you act and/or before you are in a crisis or emergency can help with preparedness education, planning, resources, and ongoing community support.

**For anonymous, confidential help 24/7, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline by calling 800-799-SAFE (7233) or 800-787-3224 or visiting [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org).**

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence helps PA residents find domestic violence programs in their local communities. By visiting [pcadv.org](https://pcadv.org), you can locate these



programs, connect to a legal helpline, and learn more about how you can get involved in taking a stand against domestic violence.

PFSA is also a provider of domestic violence resources to agencies and community wellness organizations. Visit [pafsa.org](https://pafsa.org) for more information on these publications.

## Congratulations to our COO Kay Kressler *Becomes Master Trainer in ACT Raising Safe Kids*



PFSA Chief Operating Officer Kay Kressler has completed requirements to earn Master Trainer status through the American Psychological Association in Washington, D.C., in the ACT Raising Safe Kids evidence-based parenting curriculum.

The APA is the leading scientific and professional psychology organization in the United States, with membership of more than 118,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students.

Kay has been on the staff of PFSA since April 2018. She developed the *Families in Recovery*:

*Strengthening Connections One Day at a Time* program, a curriculum for caregivers in recovery from substance use disorder.

Kay will continue to spearhead the *Families in Recovery* program in a Train-the-Trainer model as well as the second phase of a statewide pilot program in partnership with the Department of Human Services, Office of Child Development and Early Learning.

Kay is also a proponent of Julia Silva's ACT Raising Safe Kids, an evidence-based parenting program for caregivers of children from birth to age 10. As director of the APA Violence Prevention Office, Silva developed a program that provides caregivers with a supportive social network and parenting guidelines to create safe communities for children. The program aims to



strengthen positive parenting skills by teaching child development, behavior management, tools for positive effective and safe discipline, conflict management, and media literacy.

“Master Trainer status has been a goal of mine since arriving at PFSA and first learning about the ACT curriculum,” say Kressler.

“The program is strong, with a professional learning community and supportive empirical foundation. Availing evidence-based education

and support to caregivers is key to prevention and healthy outcomes for kids. I am excited to continue our work with APA and grow the ACT program statewide here in Pennsylvania!”

Since 2017, PFSA has taken the lead in expanding the program in Pennsylvania. Between 2018 and 2019, PFSA trained over 70 parent educators in two-day facilitator training sessions. To learn more about ACT Raising Safe Kids or schedule a training, please reach out to us at 717-238-0937.

## Congratulations Part II: Bitsy McCann

*Our Graphic Designer Earns CPBJ Honor*



Each year, Central Penn Business Journal recognizes the area’s most accomplished business leaders ages 39 and younger with the Forty Under 40 awards.

CPBJ recently selected Bitsy McCann, owner of Bitsy Plus Design, as one of this year’s honorees. McCann provides design services for PFSA, and her contributions have helped us achieve a more cohesive, dynamic look across

our many platforms. We value her work and her outstanding eye for detail. Congratulations, Bitsy, on this well-deserved honor!



Jill (Executive Administrative Assistant), Bitsy, and Kay (COO)



# Safety Tips for a Fun and Healthy Halloween

*Consider these important tips to keep kids safe before heading out for a night on the town with your lions and tigers and bears, your ghosts and ghouls.*

– **Adam Smith** | Director of Prevention Programs

October is my favorite time of year! I was just shy of being a Halloween baby, born on October 29. This month brings cooler weather, piles of leaves, fun costumes, scary decorations, and loads of candy. Plus, you typically get to stay up late because of said candy.

So, who doesn't love trick-or-treat night!? The days leading up to the yearly event are often busy for caregivers, with kids' energy levels rising to an all-time high. Be mindful, and cover your safety bases a day or two beforehand by using these tips:

**1. Make sure those ball gowns, robes, slippers, flippers, and clown shoes fit to avoid slips and trips.** On fright night, you are bound to be startled. Kids run to houses with the best candy. Choosing the right size costume and footwear protects kids of all ages.

**2. Traveling on foot or by wagon or perhaps via a magic carriage is more fun with friends.** Consider teaming up with another parent in the neighborhood and chaperoning the kiddos together. Never let younger children trick-or-treat alone. For teens going by themselves, establish check-in points along the way and reinforce the importance of sticking to a familiar route cleared by all parents. Set a curfew so no one actually turns into a pumpkin!

**3. Shine those lights, and keep kids bright.** Be mindful of dark attire and costumes. Dark colors are harder to see at night. Encourage brighter costumes. For your ninjas, vampires, and shadow people, use reflective tape, flashlights, or a light-up candy bag.

**4. Know your neighbors and do your research.** Employ neighborhood apps and public listings. If you are new to a community or have new neighbors, find out who lives on your block. Kids and parents should know the route and skip unfamiliar houses.

**5. Consider yourself a Halloween investigator.** Grown-ups should check out all candy and prizes before kids call dibs on the peanut butter cups. Empty the sack of loot and check it out. Discard candy with ripped, torn, or questionable packaging. Read unfamiliar labels and doublecheck for peanuts for those with allergies.

**6. Stay in sight – and do not enter.** Children should never go in a stranger's house. If a dwelling has a homemade haunted house, a grown-up should always accompany a child inside, no matter how kid-friendly it appears.

**7. Follow the rules.** Remind kids of the importance of sticking with the rules of the road, including:

- ▶ Look three times before crossing the street
- ▶ Hold hands
- ▶ Wear seatbelts
- ▶ Never cross the street alone or between cars

Check in with your municipality the week before trick-or-treating to find out if police and crossing guards will be stationed in your neighborhood.

**8. Don't let fright night break a healthy routine.** Feed kids a balanced dinner on trick-or-treat evening. Don't let candy replace any of the food groups! If you are treating other kids, consider prizes like pens and pencils, coloring books, stickers, and fidget toys. Remember to set limits on daily candy consumption post-Halloween, and always encourage good dental hygiene and tooth brushing.

# UPCOMING TRAINING

## Mandated Reporter Training

For curriculum titled "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse"

This training is for individuals who are mandated by law to report suspected child abuse, as defined in the Child Protective Services Law. This training provides supportive information in the form of workbooks and reference documents. Curriculum is approved by the PA Departments of Human Services, Education, and State and meets all requirements for mandated reporters to receive training in recognizing and reporting child abuse (including ACT 126). Certificates are provided to the participants and (upon request) we will upload confirmation of your training to the Department of State or Education for CE fulfillments under ACT 31 and/or ACT 48.

### COST

FREE

### DATES

November 20, 2019 • 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Chester County Government Services Center • West Chester

### REGISTER

You must pre-register for this training by going to [pa-fsa.org/calendar](http://pa-fsa.org/calendar) and filling out the webform for the training you want to attend. You will receive a confirmation email once your registration has been processed, which will include the address for the training location.

## Mandated Reporter Train-the-Trainer Program

For curriculum titled "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse"

This is an opportunity for organizations to develop their own quality, cost-efficient, in-house training program for employees on child abuse recognition and reporting. With the three-year contract, PFSA provides two days of initial instruction for approved applicants, reporting of CEs directly to PA Departments of State and Education, and offers ongoing technical assistance.

### COST

**\$1,000 per trainer** entering into a 3-year contract with PFSA

*(Payment can be broken down by year: \$400/year one, \$300/years two & three)*

### DATES

November 6 & 7, 2019 • 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. both days with a one-hour lunch break

PFSA Office • Harrisburg

### REGISTER

You must pre-register for this training by going to [pa-fsa.org/calendar](http://pa-fsa.org/calendar) and filling out the webform for the training you want to attend. You will receive a confirmation email once your registration has been processed, which will include the address for the training location.



## On-Demand Online Mandated Reporter Training

For curriculum titled "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse"

Although the best way to receive training on recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect is through interactive, face-to-face training, PFSA offers a self-paced, online alternative for mandated reporters in both Spanish and English.

This 3-hour training is approved by the Departments of Human Services, Education, and State and meets all requirements for mandated reporters to receive training in recognizing and reporting child abuse (including ACT 126).

Certificates are available for download at the end of the training and (upon request) we will upload confirmation of your training to the Department of State (ACT 31) or Education (ACT 48) for CE fulfillment.

**Cost is \$30.** To get started today, go to [pa-fsa.org/Mandated-Reporters/Mandated-Reporters-Training/On-Demand-Online-Training](https://pa-fsa.org/Mandated-Reporters/Mandated-Reporters-Training/On-Demand-Online-Training) and click on "On-Demand Online Training Registration."





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Help us **#ProtectPAKids**  
Contact Legislators | Get Training | Donate  
Learn more at [pafsa.org](http://pafsa.org)

# #GIVING TUESDAY

12.3.19



On December 3rd, PFSA is proud to participate in #GivingTuesday. This global day of giving invites individuals to celebrate the holiday season by giving back and creating change in their communities.

Together, we can continue to make a difference by keeping PA safe for all children!

Your support on Giving Tuesday – and every day – allows us to fulfill our mission to #ProtectPAKids. Donations can be made by contacting Ann Moffitt, Development Director, at 717-238-0937 or through our website at [pafsa.org](http://pafsa.org).

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Email: [info@pa-fsa.org](mailto:info@pa-fsa.org) | Website: [www.pafsa.org](http://www.pafsa.org) | [f](#)ProtectPAKids | [t](#)PAFamilySupport

The official registration and financial information of Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization – contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law.