



Family Service

Enriching lives across the generations

Spring Newsletter 2011

*Celebrating a Century of Care
1911-2011*

Margaret Edgerton Tobin

A Tale of Two Families



Margaret Tobin's service and leadership from 1916-1958 strongly influenced the course of social services in Champaign County for 50 years

Imagine moving out of state and away from your family at age twenty-three to accept a temporary position as the only paid staff with an organization that was only four years old. When **Margaret Edgerton** was hired as the Executive Secretary of United Charities (original name of Family Service) in 1916, she **could not have understood that she was beginning a journey that would impact the rest of her life.** Nor could the Board of Directors have perceived that this young woman would eventually lead the agency as its Executive Director for twenty-five years.

When Margaret began her duties, United Charities was the only coordinated social relief in the area. Board records from her first two months show that she handled 172 cases with 176 home visits serving a total of 837 individuals. Their needs reflected the full circle of life—from maternity (and birth) to illness, accident, disability, unemployment, bad housing, divorce, and finally death. Her initial salary was \$1,000 a year.

In November that same year, Margaret married Louis Michael Tobin, a sports journalist and longtime Publicity Director for the University of Illinois athletics. Margaret

devoted her life to building two families; not surprisingly, the two became linked through her compassion. So when Margaret took a sixteen-year break from United Charities to raise their sons, L. M. Tobin began his sixteen-year service on the Board of Directors.

United Charities grew substantially during these years.

We added a full-time nurse in 1918 to serve those afflicted by the influenza pandemic, tuberculosis, or polio, and to coordinate an infant welfare station (well-baby clinic) to decrease infant mortality. We added an assistant caseworker to meet the growing demands of families as they adjusted to soldiers leaving and returning from World War I. In the late 1920's, we created a job counseling program to help unemployed workers and displaced farmers to secure a means of supporting themselves and their families. The board of directors assisted efforts to start a local chapter of Community Chest (original name of United Way) which eased the fundraising duties of staff and allowed them to serve more people.

In the midst of the Great Depression in 1932, Mrs. Tobin, who had stayed involved with the agency, returned as Executive Secretary with a paid staff of four. In 1934, the Family Welfare Society (as Family Service was named in 1924) moved to 303 S. Wright St. where we shared space with the Community Chest, American Red Cross, and other local services to facilitate coordination among service providers and streamline the process for the many people that needed assistance.

“Over the next 25 years Margaret Tobin provided a bulwark of strength, a deep and professional commitment to the community and an atmosphere of grace to the agency, supervising its staff, volunteers and students. She continued the emphasis on ‘preventing poverty’ through casework efforts and ‘improving the social welfare’ through efforts aimed at developing community services....” (*Family Service of Champaign County, The First 75 Years, An Historical Review*)

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Marian Ascoli

Era of Expansion



Marian Ascoli first joined and then led Family Service during its largest era of expansion from 1972-1986. She saw the addition of four new programs and sixty-five new staff positions resulting in a ten-fold budget increase and two moves to larger spaces including the purchase of our first and current building.

Marian joined Family Service in the wake of the greatest change in federal philosophy regarding social services since the depression era. A host of programs for the elderly grew out of the White House Conference on Aging in 1970.

Marian joined TeleCare (now the Senior Resource Center) in 1972 when Family Service took sponsorship of the program. In that year, this umbrella of senior services included an expanded Homemaker service, senior transportation, Meals on Wheels, reassurance calling and friendly visiting. Marian joined **as a social caseworker making home visits to assess needs**. She also started coffee groups to alleviate the loneliness afflicting so many seniors; there were fifteen active groups in the area by 1973.

That same year we added a chapter of the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to our programs.

We also sponsored the development of the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging (now one of our funders), and the Peace Meal Senior Nutrition Project. Agency staff and board members actively supported passing the 708 referendum creating the Champaign County Mental Health Board.

Marian was promoted to TeleCare Manager in 1974.

TeleCare was expanding rapidly due to a growing number of local retirees. The agency was rapidly outgrowing the space we had rented since 1924 (when we had 5 staff members). By 1976, the situation was unbearable, so the directors decided to rent a larger but pleasant house with a beautiful fireplace at 608 W. Green St., Urbana. Marian recently reflected back on her years serving people in that family-friendly home by exclaiming, "I loved that building!"

Two years later **in 1978 Marian became the agency Assistant Director** with responsibility for all the Family Service programs including TeleCare. **In 1980, she was promoted to serve as Executive Director.**

In 1967, just five years before Marian joined the agency, Family Service employed 7 people with an annual budget of \$40,000. When Marian took the helm thirteen years later, Family Service employed 60 full and part time staff with an annual budget of almost \$519,000. When Marian retired seven years later in 1987, the agency had 85 staff members with an annual budget of almost \$900,000, and we served 10,000 people a year. This is why **Marian's hallmark and legacy at Family Service was her wise leadership through rapid expansion.**

Her final years at Family Service were remarkable for both Marian and the agency. By 1985 Marian had collaborated with the University College of Law and the Illinois State Bar Association to host a series in honor of Margaret Tobin, who passed away in 1984, and with the Tobin family to establish the Tobin Memorial fund. Marian also organized a 52-member Citizen's Task Force on Hunger and Poverty. She reported, "some of the needy have been forced to choose between paying for their utilities or providing a proper diet for their families. Others have had their utilities terminated with sick children at home." The program worked with and encouraged neighbors to address each other's needs.

Family Service celebrated its Jubilee in 1986 with a year of activities (thanks to a fantastic 75th Anniversary Task Force) culminating in a formal dinner. Marian's remarks at that occasion ring just as true today. "It is time for the community to concern itself with realistic and strategic planning to meet the needs of the ever-growing number of the unfortunate. Community welfare is at stake since the helpless or hungry, and at times, homeless and ultimately helpless, have little energy left for constructive community citizenship."

Once again **Family Service was on the move** due to growing pains. Staff members were divided between two locations in 1986, so a committee of board, staff, and volunteers began a search for a building to **purchase—our first real home of our own**. They finally decided to purchase the former Public Health building at 405 S. State St., Champaign (our present location) and the move happened later that year. Concurrently, Marian and the board sponsored a **Tree Campaign** to raise funds towards the building purchase. A large wooden Family Tree was designed and donors' names were engraved on gold leaves. The Family Tree was unveiled at an open house to thank our donors who made the purchase possible. It still hangs here today.

As a fitting cap of her career, Marian was named **Social Worker of the Year** in 1986 by the Illini District of the National Association of Social Workers. Typical of Marian, she stated the honor belonged to the entire agency whose efforts she represented to the community.

Sheryl Bautch

Secure the agency, provide relevant service, and prepare for future demands



Sheryl Bautch leads Family Service with steadiness amid certain change into our next century of care.

Sheryl took the road less traveled to agency leadership by first serving on the Board of Directors from 1987 to 1995 before becoming executive director. In 1991, despite the demands of a busy legal career, Sheryl agreed to serve as Family Service board president during a season of transition. In fact, we had three people in the executive position in eight years. After yet another national search for a replacement, Sheryl surprised the board by extending herself for consideration. Her willingness to prioritize community impact above her personal pursuits has certainly proven characteristic of Sheryl's leadership style.

Sheryl Bautch is a planner. Under her direction, board and staff have developed strategic plans every three years. These goals led to other plans including: annual development plans, a capital improvements plan, a technology plan, a cultural competency plan, a three-year communications plan and a centennial plan. **Under Sheryl's leadership with strong board and management support, the following goals were developed and strategies implemented.**

Develop a diverse and stable funding base

- Increased our cash reserves three-fold after receiving bequest (this has proven critical with state funding delays)
- Created an endowment fund with Community Foundation of East Central Illinois (after receiving a bequest) which provides annual income
- Built a diverse funding base of local, state, federal, & private grants
- Cultivated relationships with local funding organizations and corporate partners
- Added a development director to promote a greater reliance on private donor support

Project a clear and positive image of Family Service

- Joined cyberspace with our first website in 1998; the site was renovated in 2001 and 2010
- Sheryl has been a local expert on WCIA-TV, "Your Family" every Thursday for nine years
- Created a cultural competency plan that includes regular staff training
- Worked with a volunteer graphic designer to update branding on website & all printed materials

Improve the physical environment of the building

- Originally built in the 1940's with additions made in phases; purchased in 1986
- Grants and donations allowed us to add a handicapped accessible ramp & doors and remodel all four restrooms to be accessible
- Grants allowed us to replace leaky roof and add energy efficient windows to lower utility costs
- Replaced 30+ year old carpet; the many taped tears & wrinkles posed tripping hazards
- Grants allowed us to add new servers and purchase software to meet changing technology needs

Help shape the development of public policy that impacts those we serve

- Agency staff participated in Big, Small, & All to develop vision for Champaign
- Family Service co-sponsors Senior Task Force which educates about and advocates for senior needs
- Ongoing advocacy efforts include: advocacy trainings, hosting press conferences, writing and visiting with legislators, passing advocacy alerts via listserv, letters to the editor
- Staff service on local planning councils helps shape policy as it pertains to those we serve

Sheryl's unique blend of qualifications prepared her to provide excellent leadership into the 21st century. Her Master's degree and early experience in social work allow her to understand the needs of her staff and the people they serve. Her family law background developed strong advocacy and communication skills as well as a sound understanding of the laws and issues that impact families. Her years on the board make her very effective working with board members and providing them with meaningful roles. Sheryl surrounds herself with great people, then plans and perseveres to success with them.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



*Supporting people across the generations
by providing quality human services:*

- Meals on Wheels**
- RSVP**
- Senior Transportation**
- Self-Help Center**
- First Call for Help**
- Senior HomeCare**
- Counseling**
- Children First**
- Senior Counseling & Advocacy**

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
Call us at (217) 352-0099
Our Website: www.familysevice.org



Her oldest son, James Tobin, became interested in economics as a means of alleviating poverty. He became a renowned economics professor at Yale University and eventually was awarded a Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics in 1981. In his Nobel biography, **he paid tribute to the effect of his mother's work on his own endeavors:**

"My mother and father had paved the way. Margaret Edgerton Tobin was a social worker who, after a sixteen-year interruption for marriage and family, resumed her career in the relief emergency of 1932 and directed the Family Service agency of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, for the next quarter century. **From her first-hand accounts I learned of the human suffering of unemployment and poverty."**

*Margaret Edgerton Tobin
continued from front cover*