

# **First Choice of Saginaw 15 Year Report 2005-2019**

**June 2020**



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Saginaw, MI 48602  
Phone: 989-799-6451**

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*Back in 2005, a seed was beginning to grow. It was an idea of a few people associated with the Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority (SCCMHA) who were concerned with the quality of life of adults with disabilities. So many adults served by SCCMHA live at or under the poverty level. For those who reside in adult foster care settings, after paying to have their personal care and community living support needs met, their remaining personal income is nearly nothing. At best it may be \$44 per month, which has not been adjusted in many years. And even then, the cost of medications or other necessities that are not covered by insurance may take most or all of those limited discretionary funds. Very little is left for their personal necessities, let alone individual pleasures of life. Going out to lunch. Purchasing a new coat. Going to a movie. Selecting a gift for a family member. These experiences often were simply not available financially to these adults whose disabilities have made it nearly impossible for them to have such choices in their personal lives. Their clothes may be used, not fit well, or not even be of the person's own selection. Personal outings or preferences that many people take for granted were just not an option for these adults. How would you live if you had \$10 a week or less to spend on your life choices? How would you feel? What would be your quality of life? These were the questions that motivated the creation of a new organization to address these unmet needs.*

*And so, in 2005 **First Choice of Saginaw** was born. It began as a volunteer program of SCCMHA, and officially became a separate tax-exempt, non-profit organization in 2007. A group of volunteers work every year on their own time to support this little non-profit. All funds raised are used, except for a few supplies as needed, exclusively for the purchase of annual gift cards. Very few charitable organizations can boast such a robust percentage of funds raised going directly to the intended cause recipients. And every year in December, now for 10 years in a row, adults with disabilities living in an Adult Foster Care home who are identified with financial need, receive gift cards to spend on whatever they wish. Even though the card amounts might be considered nominal, they are graciously and deeply appreciated and are used by such adults every year, who now have a choice on how to spend some added personal funds as they so deem desirable. First Choice is still affiliated with SCCMHA, which supports the organization in many in-kind ways during each year.*

*Since 2005, First Choice of Saginaw has raised **\$223,158.64**, and disseminated these funds through a total of **4,521** gift cards to adults with serious disabilities in Saginaw County. The faces and voices of these card recipients are noted in this publication, along with the supporters and volunteers who have made First Choice of Saginaw what it is today, a unique organization that meets a special but critical need for some of Saginaw's most challenged citizens. You will learn more about the persons' whose lives have been impacted by First Choice of Saginaw in this first decade report. If you are moved by their stories as so many of us have been, please join us in supporting this unique need in any manner in which you are able. Recipients of First Choice of Saginaw are our fellow Saginaw citizens, who may have been given more challenges in life than most, but who have much to contribute to our community and deserve as we all do, a decent quality of life.*

First Choice of Saginaw has raised over **\$223,158** and distributed over **4,521** gift cards to consumers residing in Adult Foster Care homes!



## **First Choice of Saginaw Board of Directors—Current**

**Ginny Reed**  
President

**Tim Ninemire**  
Secretary

**Jan Histed**  
Treasurer

**Jennifer Keilitz**  
Board Member

## **First Choice of Saginaw Board of Directors—Former**

**Diane Steirs**  
**Paula Ott**  
**Ted Rapson**

## **First Choice Committee Members— Past & Present**

**Adrienne Jambor**  
**Amy Kramer**  
**Amy Murawski**  
**Angie Irish**  
**Annie Midcalf**  
**Connie ??**

**Jamie Smith**  
**Janet Zimmerman**  
**Jennifer Tomaszewski**  
**Kristie Wolbert**  
**Melinda McGovern**  
**Mia Kulick**

**Pam Hales**  
**Vaia Economou-**  
**Clifford**  
**Valerie Toney**

Bank of America Employee Giving Campaign  
Blessed Trinity Catholic Church  
Daughters of Penelope  
Denise & Rodney Francis  
Douglas Iles Charitable Trust  
Genoa Healthcare  
Holy Spirit Catholic Parish  
Jolt Credit Union  
Joseph & Joy Ebig  
Peter Chang Enterprises, Inc.

Saginaw Community Foundation—Nexteer  
Steering the Future Fund  
Saginaw Community Foundation—Saginaw  
Leadership Cares  
Saginaw Society for Crippled Children  
SCCMHA Committee Stipends  
St. Charles Haunted House Association  
The Genoa Foundation  
Tri County NAMI  
William F. McNally Family Foundation

**Special Appreciation Donors  
2015-2019  
SCCMHA Employee Payroll Donations**

Rollin Archangeli  
Laura Argyle  
Michael Bauer  
Mary Baukus  
Barbara Beardslee  
Keva Clark  
Patricia Colpean-Decker  
Christine Fortier  
Dawn Garcia  
Pamela Harris  
Robin Heise-Kukulski  
Nora Hollis  
Angie Irish  
Jennifer Keilitz  
Marie Koviak  
Karen Leichner

Susanna McCrea  
Sandra Lindsey  
Julianne McCulloch  
Janet Miller  
Cynthia Myrick  
Tim Ninemire  
Morgan Notestine  
Linda Schneider  
Jamie Smith  
Sue Stinnett  
Wardene Talley  
Linda Tilot  
Jennifer Tomaszewski  
Brenda Willoughby  
Kristie Wolbert  
Brion Younk



*The First Choice of Saginaw Board of Directors*

*as well as the*

*Friends of First Choice Committee*

*would like to express deep appreciation to*

*Sandra M. Lindsey, CEO*

*as well as the*

*Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority*

*for 15 years of significant support and collaboration to*

*our non-profit organization*

*from 2005-2019*



## Angie Irish

First Choice Committee Member  
Volunteer

I started my position at Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority in June of 2002 right after graduating with my bachelor's degree in social work. My first position in the agency was as a support coordinator, where I assisted individuals with disabilities to strengthen their independence by linking and coordinating supports and advocating for whatever dreams and desires they had for their lives.

Many of the individuals that I worked with at that time had little or no family support and were living in adult foster care homes with paid care givers. While the Adult Foster Care homes always did their best to provide the basic needs for the people they worked with, the individuals would still have needs and wants that couldn't be met with the very little money they had left after paying their rent to the foster care home. We would all work together as a team trying to provide what we could and filling in the gaps sometimes with donated items from churches and local charitable agencies. However, it was usually items that were hand me downs from others and never something new and just theirs. I know how important it is to me when I am able to go to the store and buy myself a new set of towels or sheets and how something so simple can feel so great. I wanted this for the people that I supported as well. Helping people is truly my passion, so naturally when I heard about the initial First Choice project within the agency that in 2007 became a non-profit organization, I wanted to be involved any way I could.

I have been volunteering with First Choice for at least 13 years now and I certainly don't mind giving up my lunch hour every once in a while, to attend a planning meeting or to volunteer in any number of ways for a fundraising event. I am one of many who have scooped ice cream, grilled hot dogs, made candy grams, bagged cookies, collected money, and donated supplies and money to make it all possible. I believe in the vision of First Choice of Saginaw and I am always so excited to read after the yearly gift card giveaway event what people have chosen to use their gift card on and what it meant to them. I will continue to volunteer for as long as I am able and I hope to see many of you readers at future events, maybe scooping ice cream next to me. Every bit of help counts, thanks

*Angie Irish*

*SCCMHA Self Determination Coordinator*



# Thank You

**First Choice of Saginaw would like to take a moment to thank everyone who has contributed in some way over the last 15 years to help us achieve the distribution of over 4,521 gift cards totaling over \$181,000.**



## First Choice of Saginaw Celebrates 15 Years of Supporting Persons With Disabilities

At the December 2019 First Choice of Saginaw event, gift cards were distributed for the 15<sup>th</sup> year. At this annual holiday celebratory event, card recipients as well as other residential consumers and home staff members in attendance were asked to comment on the value of the efforts of First Choice of Saginaw over the years. Their comments serve to emphasize the core purpose and intended role of First Choice of Saginaw since the 2005 initiation: provide for residential consumer personal funds and ensure choice of the use of such funds.

Staff and consumers from **Conquest AFC Home** spoke of the event itself, saying “we love it here.” “We go shopping, go right after the event to let recipients choose whatever they want. It is great.” Items that have been purchased included “coffee, cookies, pop, hats, gloves, music, clothes, and even Christmas gifts for family members.” “The event, as well as the cards, also serve to “increase socialization for consumers.”

**Southport Home** representatives also had positive comments, including that the event was “cool”, “real nice” and “thoughtful.” “If it wasn’t for this program, one young lady from the home would have nothing. Since she has no other personal money, she is always excited to go shopping.”

At the **Weiss AFC Home**, staff commented “They [home residents] like it and are anxious to go shopping; First Choice helps them pursue their own goals.”

“The event and cards helps you get out during the Christmas season” **Williamson Road Home** members stated. “One resident bought her sister a turkey. Another bought turtles to keep as pets.” “It makes me believe that there is a Santa Claus.” “I am going to buy some needed clothes,” remarked one consumer, while another noted, “I am going to buy some socks.”

**ResCare Premier Clinton Home** staff and consumers pointed out that “it means a lot and is a big help on such a limited income.” An **Amari’s Home** staff member added that “the cards are often used to meet the cost of otherwise unmet personal needs.”

“It means so much. Card recipients often buy clothing and CDs” was the observation of **Beacon Harbor Home** staff. “Some of them [home residents] get very little money and the gift cards help to buy what they need.” “The annual get together is also very nice, and is also a chance for residents to see others whom they don’t get to see much.” “People who cannot afford very much are lucky to get these gift cards.”

At the **Krasinski AFC Home**, card recipients “will go Christmas shopping, and are grateful that First Choice of Saginaw helps out.”

**Hornstra AFC Home** residents and staff said “Keep it going!” “They [home residents] always get so excited and receiving the gift cards really helps out a lot of people since they have no extra money. They are excited to go shopping and sometimes even buy presents for their family members.”

**Whitley Adult Foster Care Home** attendees felt the location of the event was “a good setting and very nice.” One person had been coming to the event for five years, and another for ten years. One consumer planned to “buy blue jeans” and a staff member added “some people have nobody.”

A staff member from **Saginaw Valley AFC Home** summarized: “The best part is that everyone is very thankful. At this event we all see people who we used to know and residents often see others with whom they lived from previous home settings and can get reconnected again. Some people have nothing. First Choice of Saginaw is important as it supports the dignity of being able to buy something for yourself.”



Cynthia is looking forward to shopping for new clothes with her gift card.

Gwendolyn will be using her gift card for clothes.



Bonnie doesn't know what she will buy yet, but can't wait to go shopping with her gift card!



Calvin will be putting his gift card to use to purchase books!

# 2015

## First Choice of Saginaw





Nancy is going to buy clothes and yarn with her gift card!



Antoinette plans to purchase hygiene products with her gift card.



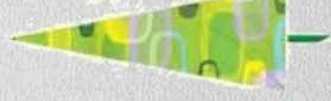
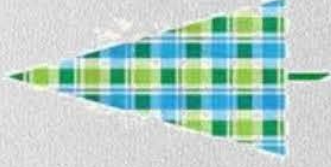
Sherri plans to use her gift card for clothes!



Alisha will be using her gift card to shop for some new clothes!



Mary will be purchasing clothes & shoes with her card.





Rick is shopping for an MP3 player & charger

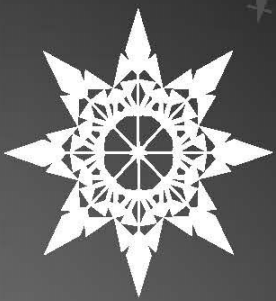


Cynthia will be shopping for makeup & candy!

2016  
**First Choice**  
of Saginaw



Danny is interested in picking out some new hair products & lotion



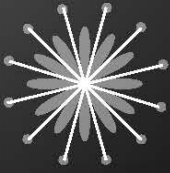
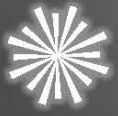


Nancy will be purchasing boots with her gift card



Don & Mabel plan to purchase Christmas gifts & boots

Kristen can't wait to pick out some new jewelry!



**Glorious plans to purchase personal items with her gift card.**



**Theresa will be using her gift card to purchase gifts for her family.**



**2017**

**Lionel is planning to purchase a coat & hat with his gift card.**



**Jasé is using her gift card to purchase a new coat.**

**Janice wants to use her gift card to shop for gifts for her friends.**



**Caleb will be shopping for personal items with his gift card.**



**Gary isn't sure what he's going to purchase with his gift card yet.**



**Jennifer is planning to use her gift card for personal items & Patti will be shopping for gifts for her family.**





**2018**



**Jessica is still deciding what to pick out with her gift card**



**Calvin is planning to get some chocolate cake and something else with his card**

**James is hoping to find some Nike shoes to use his gift card on**





**Anna can't wait to use her gift card to buy a radio and headphones**



**Edward would like to buy either a tablet or something for his staff with his gift card**



**2019**



**Gloria is so  
delighted to  
receive a gift  
card**



**Marvin is very  
excited to  
shop with his  
gift card!**



**Anna can't wait  
to use her gift  
card to buy  
something special**



**Gary is not sure  
what he will use  
his gift card for  
yet but he is  
looking forward  
to shopping**



**Rebecca is planning to buy some of her favorite snacks with her gift card**



**Mike is looking forward to shopping!**

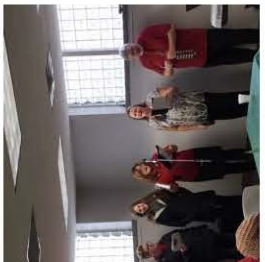


**Katherine plans to shop for a fan and shoes with her gift card**



**Megan is very thankful for the gift card & wishes everyone a happy holiday**

# First Choice of Saginaw Volunteers



2015 First Choice Committee







## **FIRST CHOICE OF SAGINAW CONTINUES TO NEED YOU!!!**

First Choice of Saginaw is a small, non-profit organization affiliated with SCCMHA that raises funds annually to provide holiday gift cards for adults being served by SCCMHA who have limited discretionary funds and reside in licensed residential settings. This is a serious hidden need in Saginaw County for these adults with disabilities who are often impoverished and have not had the opportunity to have even a small amount of discretionary funds to spend as they wish. In FY2019, First Choice again raised funds to provide gift cards to 325 consumers of SCCMHA services. 2020 fundraising is underway now, the 15<sup>th</sup> year of this program. Gift cards are annually disseminated in December. The First Choice of Saginaw website address is: [www.saginawfc.org](http://www.saginawfc.org).

Any interested person can support First Choice fundraising efforts in a variety of ways, whether you have an hour or two to donate your time, can offer some in-kind resources, cash donation or want to get more involved in the annual fundraising efforts. All SCCMHA staff and providers are invited to participate.

### **VOLUNTER YOUR TIME**

The Friends of First Choice Committee sponsors various fundraising efforts. Watch for these notices, and offer your time to help with an event. Even a brief amount of volunteer time is meaningful for the long range success of First Choice. You can also join the planning committee. We always welcome new planning committee members as well as new and ongoing volunteers.

### **PROVIDE IN-KIND SUPPORT**

Are you too busy to volunteer your time? Most fundraising events invite donations of food or items to sell. Watch for these notices and offer a small in-kind donation to support a planned event when you are able. Used books for book sales, or good condition costume jewelry for jewelry sales, and unused greeting cards of any type are just several examples of the periodic events where you can donate items to help the annual campaign. You can donate jewelry and cards year round. From time to time some staff members have donated event tickets that they have and cannot use for First Choice to offer in a silent auction, with all proceeds going to First Choice. We are also always looking for donations of napkins, paper products and plastic silverware for the various events throughout the year. You can also help promote and participate in fundraising events at any time.

### **OFFER YOUR RESOURCES**

Every increment of support helps the organization. For example, did you know that there is a pop can collection in the lower level break rooms at the Hancock and A&W buildings for First Choice? Some staff donate small amounts of money throughout the year, at various events, at various times or through payroll deductions. Donations from individuals and companies are always welcomed year round. You can also designate First Choice of Saginaw to routinely receive support through [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) for any purchases you order online. This is Amazon's charitable organization site & is just like their regular site only a portion of your purchase goes to the non-profit that you select at no additional cost to you!

### **GET MORE INVOLVED**

New members for the monthly noontime meetings of Friends of First Choice Committee are always welcome. Typically, meetings are the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month at 12:00 Noon in Room 222 conference room at the Hancock Building. Contact First Choice of Saginaw at [info@saginawfc.org](mailto:info@saginawfc.org) to be added to the meeting notices for First Choice meetings. Or if you have an idea for an event that you would like to lead or suggest, great! Contact First Choice of Saginaw ([info@saginawfc.org](mailto:info@saginawfc.org)) if you would like more information at any time. We would love to have you involved in this important endeavor.

*First Choice of Saginaw is a 501c3 organization.  
Donations are tax deductible.*



## First Choice of Saginaw participates in AmazonSmile!

### **What is AmazonSmile?**

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. You can choose from nearly one million organizations to support.

### **How do I shop at AmazonSmile?**

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to AmazonSmile to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.

### **Which products on AmazonSmile are eligible for charitable donations?**

Tens of millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. Recurring Subscribe-and-Save purchases and subscription renewals are not currently eligible.

### **Can I use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?**

Yes, you use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

### **How much of my purchase does Amazon donate?**

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. The purchase price is the amount paid for the item minus any rebates and excluding shipping & handling, gift-wrapping fees, taxes, or service charges. From time to time, we may offer special, limited time promotions that increase the donation amount on one or more products or services or provide for additional donations to charitable organizations. Special terms and restrictions may apply. Please see the relevant promotion for complete details.

### **Can I receive a tax deduction for amounts donated from my purchases on AmazonSmile?**

Donations are made by the AmazonSmile Foundation and are not tax deductible by you.





## **Donation Information**

Donations can be made through our website:

[www.sccmha.org](http://www.sccmha.org), page :

“How You Can Help”

Donations can also be mailed to:

First Choice of Saginaw, 500 Hancock, Saginaw, MI 48602  
at any time for

**ANY** dollar amount!

**Every donation makes a difference!**

Checks should be made out to “**First Choice of Saginaw**”

