

Firefly Children & Family Alliance

Providing Purpose, Hope

By **Symone C. Skrzycki**

It's a noble purpose to illuminate a path forward for individuals living with trauma.

Based in Indianapolis, Firefly Children & Family Alliance connects clients with resources (most are home based) such as child abuse prevention, family preservation, mental health and survivor services.

"One of the things we talk about a lot in the agency is that Firefly is special because it brings light to people when they're walking through dark moments," reflects CEO Tina Cloer. "It really frames our work well – whether you're working with teams that go out and do crisis response at the hospital when people have been raped or whether they're dealing with kids in the child welfare system that have been removed (from their parents' care). That whole concept of being able to bring light to darkness is what we try to do in the community. It's also something we try to do with our staff."

The nonprofit has more than 400 employees across 14 Indiana locations. It originated in the mid-1800s and was perhaps best known as the Children's Bureau until it merged with Families First in 2020 to form Firefly Children & Family Alliance.

Finding fulfillment

Case manager Austin Andry enjoys autonomy but values knowing his supervisors are available to guide him.

"With a lot of people on our team, it's, 'We want to handle this (the projects) ourselves. We want to independently get everything under control that we can and get everything situated for our clients.' But sometimes, you need to have input from your bosses. At this agency, I've felt support from superiors the likes of which I've not felt at any other job."

Andry asserts that open communication starts day one during a conversation with human resources.

"One of the first things that they mentioned is, 'We're so glad you're a part of the team but let us know if (you realize that) this is not a good fit. We're helping people that are sometimes at the worst points in their lives. There's a lot of strenuous,

emotionally taxing involvement that comes with that. If going into the home-based (realm) would be too much, come join the HR team or the adoption team (for instance).' Firefly cares about finding a place where you still remain in the company. ...

"They're big on that familial bonding aspect – the group culture. And that's massive to me as an employee: feeling that I'm wanted and that my efforts are actually appreciated."

Self-improvement, self-care

Professional development is offered via tuition assistance, student loan reimbursement, bachelor's and master's degree bridge programs and more.

"With tuition reimbursement, we support people whether it's in the field we do or not," Cloer emphasizes. "I have staff who go back to school and get a biology degree or a degree in nursing. Even if I don't have (those positions available), we still fund that. We want them to develop as people – not just as our workers."

Sydney Porter is based out of Anderson and joined the team as a case manager in 2024. She was promoted later that year to director of home-based services for region 11.

"When I came to Firefly, they saw my capability and gave me the opportunity to continue growing and flourishing," she stresses. "This is a company where I've never felt judged or that my age (25) was put against me. I've always been given opportunities based on my work and how I show up every day."

Self-care also is prioritized.

"It's awesome," Porter declares. "One of our trainings when you start working at Firefly is based around identifying burnout and understanding how you can add self-care within the workplace and while you're at home," she explains. "We have motivational interviewing, which allows our staff to understand how to use an evidence-based practice with the people they're working with."

Leading with compassion, transparency

Robert Gray relishes his role at Firefly, which he joined 11 years ago. The senior director of corporate relations works out of an Indianapolis office and calls its on-site 24/7 children's shelter "dear to his heart."

"I purposely try and go downstairs at



Providing gifts – and hope – for a family in need.

least twice a week just to interact with the kids,” Gray comments.

He adds affectionately, “We’ve got relationships with the Colts, the Pacers and all these other places where they will let the kids go to events for free. So, the kids kind of know that when they see me, they can ask, ‘Where are we going to get to go to next?’ ”

Gray notes that Cloer understands the emotional impact of working at Firefly and sets the tone in creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

“She’s really passionate about taking care of her employees. We’ve gone several years without our health plans increasing. At the end of the year, she tries to figure out ways (to give) extra bonuses.”

Porter also cites leadership’s accessibility.

“Tina has meetings where she updates everyone on everything she’s been working on and what’s going on with the company. She sits there (with us) and answers questions, which is amazing. That’s such a personal touch I haven’t experienced anywhere else.”

Andry shares his take on what makes



Enhancing kids’ lives is at the heart of Firefly’s mission.

Firefly a unique workplace.

“I’m actually getting a little choked up,” he remarks. “What (working there) gives me is peace, passion, everything. That sets me up

for going into what is sometimes – admittedly – a very difficult field. But those are the reasons we do it. The good that you can see from it. The interactions you have with people.”

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