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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kinship Families Receive Local Preference for Affordable Municipal Housing in Yonkers

Family Service Society of Yonkers to Facilitate Placement

Family Service Society of Yonkers (FSSY) is partnering with Municipal Housing Authority for the City of Yonkers (MHACY) in a joint mission to assist kinship families seeking affordable housing. In this cooperative effort, kinship families (headed by grandparents raising children in the absence of their biological parents) who are seeking affordable housing in Yonkers will receive local preference alongside other groups such as the disabled, veterans and the homeless, making them eligible for priority placement in affordable housing and the receipt of Section 8 vouchers. FSSY Kinship Support Program will facilitate placement of kinship families in affordable housing by performing community outreach and assisting kinship caregivers in completing MHACY's intake forms to determine their eligibility for both municipal housing and section 8 vouchers.

There are over 1,450 grandparents in Yonkers raising grandchildren because their parents are unable to do so. The FSSY Kinship Support Program assists 50 of these families. Over 90% of them fall in the low and extremely low income categories, and 96% are women, most of whom are single grandmothers.

Helen Frankel, Executive Director of FSSY states "Kinship caregivers take the responsibility for raising children when many can barely afford to make ends meet and have inadequate housing. Most are single grandmothers with very low incomes who have taken over caring for traumatized children because their parents are unable to care for them. We are very pleased to partner with MHACY in affording kinship caregivers the assistance they need and hope that other municipalities will also consider taking similar measures to provide adequate and safe housing for kinship families."

Wilson Kimball, President & CEO, Municipal Housing of the City of Yonkers said, "MHACY's past and current relationship with FSSY and its resident coordinators has been very rewarding for our tenants and our staff. We look forward to partnering with FSSY on this new and much-needed service to an incredibly important population."

FSSY GrandPower Advocates identified the critical need for more affordable housing for kinship families and have advocated for expanding affordable housing options for them. According to Sylvia Gaynor, a kinship caregiver and member of FSSY's GrandPower Advocacy Project, "Kinship caregivers face many unique challenges in finding safe, affordable housing in which to raise our children. Many of us are

senior citizens with very little financial resources, and some of us live in senior housing. After we take responsibility for our grandchildren we no longer qualify for that senior housing and have to relocate, which we cannot afford. We are very happy that our situation is finally being addressed in Yonkers."

Housing is the most challenging issue the Kinship Support Program staff deals with because of the limited affordable housing – subsidized or on the open market – available to kinship caregivers. Many of these families remain in over-crowded housing in poor condition because they cannot afford to move. The COVID-19 outbreak has presented even greater challenges to these kinship families.

Housing preference for kinship families headed by grandparents will allow some of these families to obtain municipal housing placement or section 8 vouchers. While this will not solve every problem kinship families face, having adequate and safe housing will go a long way toward creating stable, nurturing families in which to raise kinship children.

About the GrandPower Advocacy Project

FSSY sponsors advocacy programs for grandparents and other relative caregivers who are raising children. Advocates receive leadership training and then work with local, regional and state legislators, and county and state government agencies to improve financial and social service benefits for kinship caregivers. The GrandPower Advocacy Project is funded by Westchester Community Foundation and Field Hall Foundation.

About Family Service Society of Yonkers (FSSY)

Founded in 1883, Family Service Society of Yonkers' mission is to be the premier provider of comprehensive services which improve the quality of lives of individuals and families of diverse backgrounds. FSSY, a 501(c)(3) Not-for-Profit, provides services for elderly and disabled individuals, including: Home Health Care, Guardianship, Housing Support, Case Management, Kinship Support, Academic Support and a range of intergenerational literacy programs. FSSY was the first agency in Yonkers to recognize the large number of kinship caregivers in Westchester County and to begin developing supportive services for this underserved and high-need group. In 2015, the FSSY Kinship Support Program was named as the first "Outstanding Organization" recipient of The Cura Award, the New York State Kincare Coalition's Award for Outstanding Service. In 2020, Kinship Support Program Director, Carolyn Fluckinger was the recipient of The Cura Award for "Outstanding Professional" and GrandPower Advocate, Sharon Johnson, received The Cura Award for Outstanding Caregiver. In 2021, Faino and Kathleen Coleman received The Cura Award for Outstanding Caregivers.