



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 18, 2012

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## **The Garman Family Foundation Awards \$125,000 Grant to the Mental Health Association of Erie County, Inc. to Expand its Educational Program**

BUFFALO, N.Y. – The Garman Family Foundation has awarded a \$125,000 grant to the Mental Health Association of Erie County, Inc. (MHA). The grant covers a five-year period, 2012-2017, and will provide \$25,000 a year to solidify and expand the MHA's Basic Emotional Skills Training (B.E.S.T.) education program.

The B.E.S.T. program helps children develop the social and emotional skills they need to interact with peers, teachers and family members in a respectful, age-appropriate manner. The program is independently evaluated by Buffalo State College's Center for Health and Social Research, which has concluded that results support the program's ability to positively impact behavior at a young age. B.E.S.T. is a Pre-K through grade 2 classroom-based program, which has served more than 140,000 children since its inception in 1977.

"Helping children develop healthy relationship skills at an early age increases the likelihood of success later in life," said Missy Garman Baumgart, a Director of the Garman Family Foundation. "For more than 30 years, the MHA's educational programs have worked with tens of thousands of students, at dozens of schools in numerous city and suburban districts, producing positive behavioral changes. In a time when these skills are needed more than ever, our investment will allow the MHA to bring its proven programs to more students at more schools."

"Once again, the Garman family has demonstrated their commitment to advancing the mental health of all Western New Yorkers, especially our children," said Ken Houseknecht, the MHA's Executive Director. "We are honored to partner with them and look forward to making our B.E.S.T. program even better!"

For nearly 50 years, the Mental Health Association of Erie County has promoted the mental health and well-being of the community through education, public information, prevention programs and training while supporting individuals and families living with mental illness through advocacy, treatment linkage and outreach services.

The Mental Health Association of Erie County, Inc. provides numerous programs and services for children, adults and families throughout Erie County. Please call the Mental Health Association at (716) 886 – 1242 for more information or visit [www.eriemha.org](http://www.eriemha.org).

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