

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Center for Family Life and Recovery, Inc.
Sania Randolph, Marketing Coordinator

CEO for CFLR Induction for Healthcare Excellence Award

Utica, New York (March 2025) – Center for Family Life and Recovery, Inc. is excited to announce that Jessica Perusse, Director of The Camden Life Center was the recipient of the School of Social Work's prestigious Social Justice Award at last week's School of Social Work's annual Dan and Mary Lou Rubenstein Social Justice Award program on March 27th where Perusse was also the keynote speaker.

Presented for more than 30 years during [National Social Work Month](#) in March, the Rubenstein Social Justice Award is given in honor of the late professor Dan Rubenstein, a former faculty member in the School of Social Work, and his late wife, Mary Lou, a former school social worker. Recipients of this award are role models whose courage and strength inspire others to stand up—and step up—to advocate and be a voice in their local community. The values of social justice are integral to honorees' daily lives, and their work represents the true spirit of the Rubenstein Social Justice Award.

The theme of this year's program was "United for Change: Honoring Collective Impact and Collaboration in Rural Communities," and Perusse's impact in Camden and collaboration with Syracuse University is second-to-none in Central New York.

"Building trust and creating meaningful change in a rural community takes time, consistency, and a deep commitment to walking alongside people in both their struggles and successes. I am incredibly honored to receive the [Dan and Mary Lou] Rubenstein Social Justice Award and to share this recognition with so many who have supported and believed in the Camden Life Center's mission. This award is not just about me—it's about the power of partnerships, the resilience of rural communities, and the ongoing fight for equity and access to services where they are needed most," said Jessica Perusse, Director of The Camden Life Center.

[The Camden Life Center](#), a partnership between the [Come to the Table Counseling](#) and [Center for Family Life and Recovery](#)(CFLR), is a center for multiple agencies to come together and act in their areas of strength for the maximum impact and overall benefit of their community. The primary goal is to inspire hope, provide help, promote wellness, and transform lives with a focus of being "in Camden, of Camden, for Camden." Camden is located less than an hour's drive northeast of Syracuse.

Perusse regularly supervises [Master of Social Work](#) (M.S.W.) students as interns at The Camden Life Center and plays an integral role in connecting students to research and practice. Perusse and [Ken Marfilius](#), Assistant Dean

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of Online Education in Falk College and Associate Teaching Professor of Social Work, were colleagues on the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans team in the Syracuse VA Medical Center and that work helped inform ongoing collaborations between Perusse and Syracuse University.

Marfilus and Assistant Professor of Social Work [Xiafei Wang](#) worked on one grant project with The Camden Life Center and recently started a second one. The first project in 2023-24 involved a \$350,000 grant from the CFLR/Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties. That project utilized the lens of social determinants of health and trauma-informed behavioral health approaches to identify and address the unmet service needs of rural residents in Camden, aiming to enhance the quality of care provided by The Camden Life Center.

For the current project, which received an \$839,000 grant from the [Mother Cabrini Health Foundation](#), Marfilus and Wang are serving as the research team for the Camden Life Center's launch of the [Community Café Initiative](#). This partnership between CFLR and The Camden Life Center is designed to foster connection, resilience, and well-being for families and individuals in Camden and its surrounding communities.

The School of Social Work was founded in 1955 and opened in 1956 after Syracuse University received a major grant from the Rosamond Gifford Charitable Corporation. In 2024, the School of Social Work was ranked by U.S. News and World Report as among the "[Best Schools of Social Work](#)" in the country, and its national profile will continue to rise with the start of the prestigious [Genovese Scholars Program](#) that was created recently through a \$300,000 gift to the school.

The School of Social Work is known for its long history of community impact and outreach, including [annual donation drives](#) organized by the Social Workers United student group. On July 1, the School of Social Work will move to Syracuse University's [School of Education](#) to enhance the academic and community impact of the program, grow enrollment, drive research excellence, and strengthen the University's long-standing commitment to preparing professionals to thrive in human, health and social services.

Center for Family Life and Recovery, Inc. is proud to be the area's leading expert in advocacy, prevention, counseling, and employee assistance programs. Along with supporting individuals and families struggling with addiction and recovery, mental health, and behavioral issues, CFLR's goal is to inspire hope, provide help, promote wellness, and transform lives. To learn more, visit www.whenthereshelpthereshope.com

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