Andrus

We Are Andrus

Fall 2025

OUR MISSION Andrus is dedicated to transforming lives through innovative, coordinated social and emotional support for all.

OUR VISION Our vision for the community we serve is for children and families to discover a place of safety and healing.

A Message from Our President & CEO, Corine E. Lurry-Mabin, PhD Candidate

Dear Andrus Community,

At Andrus, our focus remains on advancing excellence in trauma-responsive care. Every day, our staff and partners dedicate themselves to creating safe and supportive environments where children and families can heal and flourish. This shared commitment – strengthened by your partnership, service, generosity, and trust – has positioned Andrus as a recognized leader in the field, a distinction we honor with both pride and deep responsibility.

You may notice a change in this newsletter's format. It is designed to offer greater detail and highlight the important work happening across our programs. This edition showcases the depth of expertise within Andrus and the remarkable talent of our entire team. From Orchard School to Healthy Families New York, from our mental health services to the Sanctuary Institute, Andrus's reach continues to grow. The impact is visible in the stories of graduate Pison Bellamy and Adrienne Sanders, a family member of a current Orchard School student – stories made possible because of the support we receive from our community.

In the months ahead, we will share stories that reflect the creativity of our therapeutic programs, the dedication of our clinical teams, and the innovative approaches that define our work. Each initiative contributes to the larger mission of building trauma-responsive communities and strengthening the resilience of those we serve.

This newsletter also reflects the essential role of our supporters and partners. Whether through your professional services, volunteer hours, or financial contributions, your engagement sustains our progress and expands our reach. Together, we ensure that every child and family has access to the resources and opportunities necessary for growth and healing.

Thank you for walking alongside us and for your continued commitment to Andrus. I look forward to sharing our progress with you and to celebrating the achievements of our community in the year ahead.

Corine E. Lurry-Mabin
President and Chief Executive Officer

Events at Andrus

September 2	**Orchard School Staff Development Day**
September 3	**Back to School Parade**
September 15	**Community Team Apple Picking**
September 17	**Parent Back to School Night & Parent Advisory BBQ**
October 22	**Regeneron Volunteers**
October 29	**Halloween Parade and Haunted Hike**
November 12	**Wellness Fair / Open Enrollment**
November 27	**Thanksgiving Dinner (President's House)**
December 3	**Tree Lighting**
December 17	**Holiday Dinner (date tentative)**
December 25	**Christmas Breakfast (President's House)**

Guiding Students Through the Back-to-School Transition

An Interview with Ashna Vohra, Clinical Director of the Orchard School at Andrus

As September approaches, the shift from the relaxed pace of summer to the demands of the academic year loom. For many students, that shift can be fraught with emotional, behavioral, and academic challenges.

Ashna Vohra, Clinical Director of the Orchard School at Andrus, has spent more than three decades working with children in a variety of settings including child welfare, foster and kinship care, juvenile justice and adoptions. Since joining Andrus in 2013 as a school social worker and assuming her current role in 2019, she has remained committed to supporting children who have experienced trauma and who are struggling with mental health challenges.

"Children are one of the most vulnerable populations because they cannot advocate for themselves," Vohra says. She goes on to say that when the innocence of childhood is impacted by trauma, caring and nurturing relationships are essential to heal. She emphasizes the need to intervene early and is guided by the words of Frederick Douglass: "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." Having witnessed first-hand the healing and growth possible with children who have experienced even the most challenging of circumstance has kept her passionate about the work.

A Year-Round Model with Unique Challenges

Orchard School operates on a 12-month schedule, with a two-week break before and after a six-week summer session. The abbreviated summer minimizes the adjustment hurdles of a long recess, but for a population that often struggles with transitions, even a change in routine for two weeks is significant. In addition, the transition from a more relaxed summer session with weekly field trips and more unstructured time to the academic rigor of September is a significant shift.

"Our students thrive with structure, but that doesn't mean they welcome it," Vohra notes. For residential students, returning from time at home can be especially difficult as they leave family life behind to rejoin the campus community.

Strategies for a Smooth Transition

Vohra's approach to easing these changes centers on prevention. "Schools often mobilize only in response to situations after the fact," she states, "versus planning and implementing prevention strategies that would set a child up for success." This includes proactive communication and collaboration among teachers, social workers, and families, increased flexibility to help with transitions, a focus on regularly reviewing and practicing coping skills and addressing smaller issues early in the year before they escalate to become bigger concerns.

When asked to talk more about the importance of collaboration, Ashna recalled a situation of a student who was removed from his class due to a violent incident with a peer. There was understandably a great deal of concern

about future safety by the victim, their parent, peers and the teaching staff. The treatment team was able to come together and develop a very thoughtful and titrated reintegration plan that addressed the safety of victim and the needs of the child who was the aggressor. This included a week-by-week integration back into classes, weekly calls to review progress and decide on next steps, intensive work with the child who was the aggressor and restorative meetings with peers and staff.

Restorative circles are structured, facilitated conversations that bring together those affected by a conflict or harm to share perspectives, build understanding, and work toward repairing relationships. They emphasize active listening, mutual respect, and collaborative problem-solving to strengthen community and prevent future issues. The parents of the child who was the aggressor were involved and reinforced the work being done with their child.

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They were able to transition from upset and shame to

Guiding Students Through the Back-to-School Transition cont'd

pride. The parents of the victim were provided support and clear communication about the plan and safety measures being implemented to protect their child. It was a beautiful example of trauma responsive work by the Andrus community. By the end of the process, both children were in class confident, equipped with coping skills, and supported by a unified school-and-family network.

Advice for Parents and Caregivers

Vohra encourages families to begin school-year routines well before the first day:

Establish consistent schedules: Set alarm clocks together, maintain a reasonable bedtime, and limit electronic use in general and especially before bedtime.

Prioritize healthy habits: Provide regular, balanced meals and morning routines that become second nature.

Normalize emotions: Have open one-on-one conversations about the mix of excitement and anxiety that often comes with a new school year. Validate and normalize what the child is experiencing. Have regular, uninterrupted time to talk with children. She recommends "garbage and flowers" bedtime talks—asking children and sharing themselves about the hardest ("garbage") and best ("flowers") parts of their day—to encourage and model honest reflection. Rituals such as this are important to keep the lines of communication open.

Equip children with coping tools: Review coping skills. Identify tools that help with emotional and behavioral regulation. These can include sensory items, fidget toys, noise-canceling headphones, a designated quiet space, or identifying trusted adults they can approach when feeling overwhelmed.

Stay engaged with school: "Research consistently shows that parent involvement in schools is a strong predictor of a child's success," Vohra emphasizes. Parents should share with the school significant changes at home or information about what is going on with their child. They should see the school as a partner and ally in supporting their child's well-being. Collaboration and consistency between home and school is key to a child's success.

The Takeaway

Vohra's philosophy is simple yet powerful: with preparation, open communication, and strong teamwork between families and schools, every child can approach the school year ready to learn, grow, and succeed.

Andrus Awarded Youth Climate Action Fund Grant

We are proud to share that Andrus has been selected as part of the Hastings-on-Hudson Youth Climate Action Fund (HoH-YCAF) Round II, powered by Bloomberg Philanthropies in partnership with United Cities and Local Governments and the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University.

This year, Hastings-on-Hudson has been awarded $100,000 to empower local youth ages 15–24 to design and lead innovative climate solutions. These microgrants, ranging from $1,000 to $5,000, support projects that align with the Village's Climate Action Plan priority areas, Buildings & Energy, Transportation, Waste & Water, and Adaptation.

Andrus was awarded $10,000 grant in the last quarter from the Hastings-on-Hudson Youth Climate Action Fund. The money will be spent on two student-led projects: **$5,000 is for Hope Grows – Greening the Grounds for Climate Resilience** and **$5,000 is for Hope Grows - Youth Voices in Environmental Education and Action**. We look forward to sharing the students' innovation with you. Stay tuned!

Back-to-school tips from the team:

Liticia McKnight

Program Manager, 2 months

Engage the youth in the program. Rally help with making their bed and provide caring gestures during the process, for example, saying, "your bed looks nice!"

Samuel B. Mensah

Manager, 2 years, Andrus employee, 13 years

Inform kids of a fun activity the night before, and then reminding them about it in the morning. Also playing some of their favorite music while getting them ready for school.

Ziel Thompson

Program Manager, 1.5 months

One quick tip for getting kids up and out in the morning is having a routine and sticking to it. That way the kid knows what to expect on a daily basis, meal time, ADL time. Most kids respond to routine and for most change is difficult.

Residential Recreational Therapy Highlights

Andrus Welcomes New DirtBike Instructors

Andrus has expanded its award-winning therapeutic dirt bike program by training six staff members as certified Motorcycle Safety Foundation DirtBike Instructors. **D'Andre Tilford, Rene Hernandez, Cora Torres, Lauren Prendergast, Laurel D'Agenais,** and **Patricia O'Connell** completed four days of intensive training with MSF Instructor Marc Gatto.

This investment supports the continued growth of our R.I.D.E. (Realizing Improvement Through Dirtbike Education) program, a cornerstone of the Recreation Therapy Department.

Part of Andrus's Residential Program, the R.I.D.E. program serves 80 children ages 5 to 16 from across New York State. On our 110-acre Yonkers campus, it combines evidence-based therapeutic care with recreational activities that help children heal, build confidence, and develop life skills.

Special thanks to Instructor Marc Gatto for leading the training with expertise, energy, and enthusiasm. Congratulations to our new instructor team—your dedication keeps riders safe while fueling their love for adventure!

POP Tennis Strengthens Recreation Therapy

Three years after opening its POP Tennis courts, Andrus continues to see the benefits of this campus recreation therapy activity for children in its Residential Program. Played with shorter racquets, lower-density balls, and a modified net, POP Tennis offers a slower pace that allows players to achieve success quickly, boosting confidence and peer connections.

Located on Andrus's 110-acre Yonkers campus, the program teaches teamwork, accountability, and resilience while breaking down cultural barriers.

This year, Andrus welcomed back Mitch Kutner, President of the International POP Tennis Association, and Wally Green, celebrity pro athlete and TEDx speaker, to celebrate the program's ongoing success.

Bulldogs Football Season Underway

Pre-season training for the Andrus Bulldogs flag football team is in full swing.

The team includes youth from both the Residential Program and Orchard School, providing structured athletics that build fitness, teamwork, and leadership.

Practices began this month, with players working hard in the summer heat to run drills, sharpen skills, and prepare for the upcoming CCAAA season. Through training and shared goals, the Bulldogs develop resilience, accountability, and camaraderie—values that extend far beyond the field.

Upcoming Sanctuary Events

Andrus sanctuary INSTITUTE®

Check future newsletters for Sanctuary events and updates. We invite you to join us for these important upcoming events. Questions or interested in participating? Contact, Alicia Peak at siadmin@jdam.org with your interests.

October 7	**Community Conversation**
October 13 & November 17	**Social Learning Sessions**
October 20–24	**Sanctuary Institute Five-Day Training**
December 2–4	**Train-the-Trainer Program**
April 15–17, 2026	**Network Days 2026: Stronger Together – Building Trauma-Responsive Communities**

Keeping Up with the Family

A Fifth-Generation Voice at Graduation

This year's commencement carried a special meaning as Jennifer Pakradooni, a fifth-generation member of the Andrus family, delivered the graduation address. Her presence connected the legacy of Andrus to the achievements of today's students.

Ms. Pakradooni, whose grandmother was born and raised in Dyckman Hall on the Andrus campus, encouraged graduates to see their futures as journeys at sea.

She likened their years at Andrus to the careful building of a boat, piece by piece, through lessons in reading, math, problem solving, and relationships. Now, she told them, they are prepared to leave the harbor and navigate open waters.

She reminded students that the voyage ahead will not always follow a map. There will be storms, and sails will need adjusting. Yet every wave is an opportunity to grow stronger. Most importantly, she said, is the crew they choose: friends, family, and mentors who make the journey meaningful.

Her message was clear. Success is not only about charting the course, but also about being someone who makes the ride better for others. As the graduates set sail, they carry with them both resilience and the enduring support of the Andrus community.

Full-Circle Moments Shine at the 2025 Andrus Graduation

Andrus came alive with celebration as the Orchard School honored its graduating class of 2025. More than a milestone for 21 students, the ceremony reflected Andrus's mission to nurture healing, learning, and leadership, brought to life through the stories shared on stage.

The highlight was the return of alumnus Pison Bellamy as keynote speaker. Though he noted it was his first time addressing an audience, he spoke with the poise of a seasoned presenter. A recent graduate of Archbishop Stepinac High School in White Plains, Pison will attend Buffalo State University this fall on scholarship, pursuing mechanical engineering.

His return was deeply meaningful. Pison attended and lived at Andrus from ages 10 to 13, arriving during a difficult time in his life. "Andrus gave me safety and freedom from the problems I experienced at home," he said. He recalled enjoying programs like the ropes course and dirt bikes, but said the true impact came from staff who taught him to manage anger and navigate emotions. "They taught me I can either grow in the situation I was in, or let it hold me back," he told graduates.

Facing the class, Pison urged them to reflect on who they are and to envision "a clear and stable life, with a calm heart and sound mind." His confident, compassionate presence was a powerful affirmation for staff who had once supported him.

President and CEO Corine E. Lurry-Mabin reinforced the theme of resilience, telling graduates, "You are not defined by the challenges you encounter but by how you rise above them."

"Andrus gave me safety and freedom from the problems I experienced at home"

From honoring its history to celebrating the promise of its students, the 2025 Andrus Graduation was more than a ceremony. As Pison Bellamy's journey shows, the seeds planted at Andrus can grow strong, take root, and reach for the sky.

Past Events

Levitt-Fuirst Volunteers Cultivate Healing at the Hope Space Farm

On July 17, Andrus was thrilled to welcome back over 40 volunteers from Levitt-Fuirst Associates for a Day of Giving on our Yonkers campus. The team revitalized the Hope Space Farm, a core part of our animal-assisted therapy program supporting children in trauma-responsive care. Home to alpacas, goats, sheep, chickens, and a therapy dog play area, the farm provides a calming environment where children build trust, ease anxiety, and experience the healing power of animals.

Thanks to the volunteers, the farm received fresh plantings, vibrant paint, and thoughtful enhancements that will keep it safe and welcoming for all who visit. Levitt-Fuirst, a Yonkers-based independent insurance agency founded in 1969, has long been a committed Andrus partner, regularly stepping up to support our mission.

Volunteer Melissa Cruz captured the day perfectly: "The saying 'what a difference a day makes' explains yesterday for us. The day brought so much joy and feelings of accomplishment. Everyone worked hard and got so much done!"

Andrus CEO Corine E. Lurry-Mabin added, "It was such a joy to see so many familiar faces back on campus. I'm deeply grateful for the longstanding relationship we've built with Levitt-Fuirst.

Their dedication to our mission and their consistent presence over the years means so much to the children and staff at Andrus."

This Day of Giving shows how partnerships like this help create brighter futures for the children we serve. We are grateful for Levitt-Fuirst's ongoing support and look forward to many more days of giving together.

Thank You, Aisling Irish Community Center

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Aisling Center, a vital community organization that provides social, educational, and cultural programs for Irish and Irish-American residents in Yonkers and the Bronx. The Aisling center are very generous supporters of Andrus and our programs.

Their generosity knows no bounds and the generosity of their community have outdone themselves again with this year's school supply drive, filling box after box with donations of school supplies, even backpacks to help local students start the school year prepared and confident. We are deeply grateful for their ongoing partnership and commitment to our community.

Learn more about the Aisling Center at www.aislingcenter.org.

Organized Chaos: An Exhibition of Art, Expression, and Support for Andrus

Andrus was proud to celebrate the creative talents of Vice President and CFO Richard Thompson, whose exhibition, **Organized Chaos**, ran August 2–September 15, 2025, at the Greenburgh Public Library.

This collection blended personal reflection, vibrant expression, and community connection, featuring several Andrus student artists alongside Richard's own work.

With themes rooted in transformation and the beauty of everyday life, **Organized Chaos** invited visitors to see how creativity can emerge from disorder, and how even the most random dot finds its place. Richard pledged a percentage of all sales to Andrus, supporting therapeutic and educational programs that empower children to thrive.

More than an art show, this exhibition was a testament to leadership rooted in heart and imagination. By spotlighting our young artists, Richard reflected the Andrus spirit—where healing and hope are nurtured through connection, courage, and creativity.

You can find Richard Thompson's artwork at **rtuk57studio.com**.

Richard Thompson, "Python's Nest," 2022

A Grandmother's Fight, a Granddaughter's Transformation

"I want others to hear me speaking out and not be ashamed," says Adrienne Sanders, grandmother to Summer, a student at the Orchard School at Andrus.

For Adrienne, courage meant relentless advocacy—first for herself, then for her granddaughter. She gained custody of Summer at five months old, born exposed to drugs, battling withdrawal, and diagnosed with sickle cell disease. By her first birthday, every day was a fight to keep her safe. "She would throw herself against the crib bars at just 10 months old," Adrienne recalls.

The challenges deepened. Summer was later diagnosed with autism and ADHD, and a traumatic incident revealed another diagnosis—Osteogenesis Imperfecta, brittle bone disease. Adrienne worried constantly about her education and safety.

By fourth grade, Summer's reading level was still kindergarten standard. Meanwhile, Adrienne faced her own health crisis—losing a leg and adapting to life in a wheelchair—while raising Summer and her two siblings. "I was struggling to keep it together," she says. "On top of worrying about her learning, I was terrified she'd fall and not tell anyone."

"She's growing. This never would have happened without Andrus."

Adrienne called therapists and caseworkers. She pushed for evaluations and refused to be brushed aside. Then, a new path opened: Summer was referred to Andrus, a trauma-responsive educational and therapeutic environment in Yonkers.

The change was immediate. Summer began self-advocating—telling teachers when she was in pain, asking for breaks, reaching out to make friends. Her confidence grew with her academics.

Recently, Adrienne got a call she never expected: Summer had been named Student of the Month. "I cried," she says. "Every weekend she comes home, and I see it in her eyes. She's growing. This never would have happened without Andrus."

Founded on the principle that no child is beyond hope, Andrus provides integrated clinical services, specialized education, and family support to help children heal from trauma.

The organization works with both students and their caregivers. "I want to scream it from the mountaintops," Adrienne says. "You are not the only one. There are so many of us afraid and ashamed. But our children deserve the help, and it's our job to get it for them."

For Summer, that help came through a community built on empathy and healing. For Adrienne, it came with the knowledge she was no longer fighting alone.

#MissionInMotion

Working together to create brighter futures

Andrus continues to strengthen our community partnerships by welcoming several esteemed judges from Westchester County Family Court to our Yonkers campus. As part of their ongoing responsibility, these visits ensure judges remain familiar with the programs and environments they recommend for placement—making firsthand knowledge of our services essential.

It's an honor to show visitors our the thoughtful, trauma-responsive care. Every part of our environment is built to foster healing, hope, and growth. These visits not only give insight into our comprehensive services, but they also shine a light on the heart of Andrus: our staff. Their dedication, professionalism, and compassion are evident in every interaction and every space.

Interested in touring or know someone who should? Please reach out to Elizabeth Mullen, Communications Coordinator, at emullen@jdam.org.

Understanding the Youth Mental Health Crisis:

Post-Pandemic Challenges in Today's Technological World

As we head into another school year, we continue to face the challenge of how technology shapes children's lives. Especially for those still recovering from the pandemic, it is worth taking time to listen to a recent panel discussion featuring Andrus President and CEO Corine E. Lurry-Mabin.

In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, Ms. Lurry-Mabin joined the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's LinkedIn Live panel, "The Mental Health Crisis in Children and Teens." The panel was moderated by AAMFT Board President Dr. Adrian Blow.

Held on May 8, 2025, the discussion brought together experts Paul L. Hokemeyer, J.D., Ph.D., LMFT; Octavia Neal, LMFT; and authors Ashley Graber and Maria Evans.

The panel examined the sharp rise in anxiety, depression, and stress among youth, a crisis magnified by COVID-19. Prolonged isolation left children socially, emotionally, and academically behind, while systems that once offered stability fractured, leaving both youth and adults without reliable guidance.

Ms. Lurry-Mabin emphasized that at Andrus, healing begins with the Sanctuary SELF model, which centers safety, emotions, loss, and future. "Connection is essential," she said. "Recovery must extend beyond therapy rooms to schools, churches, and neighborhoods. Communities that heal together strengthen individuals." She also stressed the importance of outdoor experiences and human relationships as antidotes to technology-driven isolation.

The full conversation is available on the AAMFT LinkedIn page and offers practical strategies for families, educators, and communities committed to youth mental health.

A Vision Recognized for Andrus President & CEO Corine E. Lurry-Mabin

Here at Andrus, we've long known that Corine E. Lurry-Mabin leads with both heart and strategy—now the broader community does too. Our President and CEO who was recently recognized by two prestigious publications for her visionary leadership in the nonprofit and human services sector.

In June 2025, Crain's New York Business named her one of its Notable Leaders in Philanthropy, and 914INC. selected her as one of Westchester's CEOs and Business Leaders of the Year.

These honors reflect Corine's bold, mission-driven leadership while shining a light on the incredible work happening across Andrus every day. Since becoming President and CEO in January 2025, she has built on her 28-year tenure at Andrus, holding roles from direct care to executive leadership.

A longtime champion of the Sanctuary Model, she brings deep institutional knowledge, a fierce commitment to equity, and a powerful vision for sustainable impact. Her leadership is rooted in collaboration and compassion—hallmarks of the Andrus approach—and she remains steadfast in her belief that systems of care must be trauma-responsive, inclusive, and forward-thinking.

"These recognitions are not just about me, they are about a movement," said Ms. Lurry-Mabin. "A movement grounded in the belief that every child and family deserves the opportunity to heal, thrive, and live lives filled with possibility. At Andrus, we're not just responding to trauma, we're reimagining care with equity, empathy, and bold systemic change. I'm honored to lead this work alongside such a committed and inspiring community."

The awards come at a pivotal time for Andrus, as we expand our role in trauma-responsive care and support more children and families. Corine's recognition by Crain's highlights leaders whose careers and equity-centered impact drive meaningful change. 914INC.'s award reminds us that when vision meets heart, transformative change is possible. We are grateful to have Corine at the helm—and even more grateful to be part of the mission she so passionately leads.