

Childlink

Building strong links for children in need.



CHILDREN'S NETWORK
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA, LLC

January-March 2010



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

There is an often quoted curse; "May you live in interesting times". That certainly describes the last year for the Children's Network of Southwest Florida.

The communities in the five counties we serve have been hard hit economically. Welfare and food stamp rolls are up, unemployment has reached double digits and we have the dubious distinction of leading the country in foreclosures.

Local government and the State are struggling with how to maintain services with reduced revenues. Traditional benefactors are also feeling the pinch and have less available funds to donate to worthy causes. Amid this backdrop are children. They bear an unequal brunt of difficult times. Their right to be healthy and secure protected by a loving and nurturing family, does not diminish no matter the state of the economy.

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida is proud of our unwavering commitment to these children and their families. We have accomplished much in the last fiscal year.

- 104 children were adopted
- A Diversion Program that has a 99.1% success rate
- We have placed 104 children with their relatives or non-relatives instead of in foster care
- The number of missing children was reduced dramatically
- Children in out of home care have been reduced

The Children's Network is but one partner in the effort to protect and care for children. We will continue to stay true to our mission and to work with families, and our communities in making sure that the curse of "interesting times" is turned into a blessing for our children. I would like to thank the community for their support and look forward to our continued partnership.

Sincerely,
Mark Geisler, Chairman
Board of Directors
Children's Network of Southwest Florida



CHILDREN'S NETWORK WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR HOLIDAY DONORS!!

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida would like to thank and show appreciation to the people who helped to make this a joyous time for our kids. Each of the donors and volunteers listed below gave their time and hearts and made more than 1,000 children very happy this holiday season. For more information on how to help please contact us at **239-226-1524** or www.childnetswfl.org.

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Von Grant

A Big Thank You to the Calusa Golf Course Superintendents Association for donating \$2,000 to our children living in shelters and group homes during the holiday season. Thanks to you, these vulnerable children had an amazing Christmas morning!!

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YOUNG LAWYERS ASSOCIATIONS PROVIDE A MEANINGFUL HOLIDAY TO CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



The **Young Lawyer's Association of the Lee County Bar Association** held the 8th Annual "Holidays in January" event this year with a fun filled day at the Imaginarium in Ft. Myers on January 9, 2010. Over 50 foster children and their families attended and enjoyed the food, the gifts and the friends.

On March 20, 2010, the **Young Lawyers Association of the Collier County Bar Association** will treat over 100 Collier County foster children and their families to a day at the Naples Zoo, where they will enjoy zoo activities, gifts and lunch. This is their 8th Annual "Holidays in March" Event for foster children.

These events make such a difference in the lives of the children we serve. We would like to thank them for their years of continued service. We look forward to many years to come!

THE HEART GALLERY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA VISITS THE CAPITOL



The Heart Gallery of Southwest Florida is a traveling photo exhibit of children who are available of adoption. Since the Heart Gallery's inception in New Mexico in 2001, the Heart Gallery has grown to include 48 states, almost 100 galleries with over 1000 children finding families.

With the help of sponsors, volunteers, and photographers the Heart Gallery captures the essence of children who are waiting to find that special place called "home". Biographies of the children accompany each photograph to give viewers a glimpse of their inner spirit. The Heart Gallery travels throughout all five counties to malls, churches, galleries and other venues. The Heart Gallery is currently being featured at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School in N. Ft. Myers.

On March 1st, the Gallery will be traveling to Tallahassee to be featured in the offices of Rep. Matt Hudson, Rep. Nick Thompson, Rep. Ken Roberson, and Rep. Gary Aubuchon. We would like to thank our local politicians for their dedication to these vulnerable children. If you are interested in finding out more about adoption or the Heart Gallery, please call us 239-226-1524.

MEET THE BOARD....



The Board of Director's primary function is to oversee the administrative and community development aspects of the Children's Network of Southwest Florida. Each future edition of Childlink will feature a short biography on a Board Member.

Our local Board of Directors includes: Mark M. Geisler, ACSW, Chairman of the Board, Betty A. Busbee, Vice Chair, Paul Morrissette, Treasurer, Stan Appelbaum, Victor Arias, Esq., Stacey Deffenbaugh, Penny A. Deutsch, Richard A. Hinson, Esq., Dr. John Ritrosky Jr., M.D., F.A.A.P., and Ann D. Westerfield.

Stacey Deffenbaugh anchors the ABC7 News at 5:30 am and 6:00pm. Before joining ABC7, Stacey worked at KVLV in Fargo, North Dakota. She was the co-anchor of the top rated morning newscast for more than four years. Prior to that, Stacey was a one man band (shooting video and reporting solo) in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and an assignment editor at WDTN in Dayton, Ohio.

Stacey enjoys being involved in the community. She devotes a lot of her free time to the American Cancer Society - helping with Making Strides against Breast Cancer and Relay for Life. She also helps the Children's Network of Southwest Florida with their Annual Adoption Event, Annual Walk and Wednesday's Child.

HOW WE'RE DOING:

COUNTIES	Charlotte	Collier	Glades	Hendry	Lee	Totals
Total Children Served	162	494	33	70	795	1554
Total Children In Relative Or Non-Relative Care	59	144	13	43	220	479
Total Children In Foster Care	32	135	6	10	272	455
Total Children In Home Care:	71	215	14	17	303	620
New To Care This Month (Estimated)	12	35	1	1	39	88
Children Exiting Care This Month	12	22	1	17	54	106
Children Available For Adoption						169
Children Reunified This Month	0	5	1	0	5	11
Reports Of Abuse Or Neglect In January	150	243	inc in Hendry	128	656	1177

Thank you to our Case Management Organizations, Lutheran Services Florida and Family Preservation Services of Florida for their dedication and hard work!!

DIVERSION: THE KEY TO SUCCESS



Circuit 20 Diversion Program was established to prevent children from entering the foster care system unnecessarily. This program COLLABORATES WITH THE Department of Children and Families to connect moderate to low-risk families to up-front services while keeping children safe in their own homes. Children's Network has dedicated two staff to this very important initiative.

The Diversion Program began in Lee County in May 2008. Collier County followed in July 2008. From December 2008 - December 2009, 2,004 children were referred through the Diversion program. During subsequent reports, only 19 of the 2004 were removed and entered care. The Diversion Program has a 99.1 % success rate. We are excited to continue working with these families and

offer a huge thank you to the hard work of our Diversion Specialists!

SAVE THE DATE!! THIRD ANNUAL PROTECT OUR CHILDREN FAIR

In recognition of National Child Abuse Prevention Month, The Children's Network of Southwest Florida, together with The News-Press will host the Third Annual Protect our Children Fair. With this family fun event, we will come together as a community to remember the victims of child abuse while we celebrate life and promote safe practices in the daily lives of our children.

The fair will take place on Saturday, April 3, 2009, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM in Centennial Park, downtown Ft. Myers. There will be displays, activities, food and giveaways for the whole family to enjoy. The event is FREE and we invite everyone to come, enjoy and help us spread awareness of child abuse prevention.



Many local public service and safety agencies will be in attendance. Children and family service providers and licensed food vendors, as well as other support organizations, are invited to reserve a space to spotlight their agencies, businesses or services. If you are interested in reserving a booth at the fair, please contact us 239-226-1524 or at info@childnetwfl.org.

APRIL 3, 2010

MEET THE CHILD: CORDELL



Cordell is a wonderful twelve year old boy who is full of life, energy and curiosity. He is not the in-doors type who likes to sit around. He much prefers activities that involve motion and speed, like his favorite, riding go-carts. He also loves riding his bike, karate, cooking, gardening, and playing video games. Since his personal appearance is of great importance as well, he strives to always be well-groomed.

With little effort, Cordell will open up and reveal a child who is searching around to find a good reason why he does not have a family to call his own. He is energetic and constantly on the go. He is extremely insightful and does very well in school. He obtains good grades even when he finds it hard to focus. Cordell also enjoys electronics and seeing how things work. When it comes to programming something, he is the right man for the job!

Cordell persistently asks if a family has been found. He would prefer one with two parents and no other children. His desired parents would be willing to work through the tough times, and will remain motivated in helping a child who earnestly wants to do what is right. This one-of-a-kind family should also be willing to have him maintain contact with his older brother. If this family sounds like you, please call our Adoption Specialist at 239-226-1524. To find other children in our area that are available for adoption please visit us at www.childnetswfl.org.



The Children's Network of Southwest Florida is sponsored in part by the State of Florida,
Department of Children and Families

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida is committed to working with the community in building and maintaining a child protection system that promotes safety and stability for children and families.

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For more information of the Children's Network of Southwest Florida please visit our website at:
www.childnetswfl.org.