

Childlink

Building strong links for children in need.



October-November 2006



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BENEFIT FROM RENEWED COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY-BASED CARE

Recent turmoil within local child welfare system comes to a close.

Chris Card
Interim CEO
Children's Network of Southwest Florida

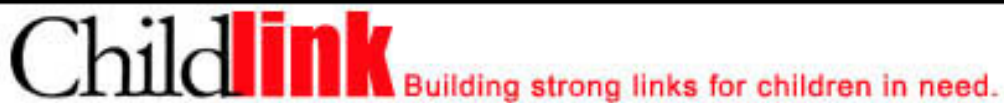
The past few months have been challenging for those involved with, and those working in, the child welfare system here in Southwest Florida. Fortunately, today, we are at a point where we can put the past firmly behind us and move forward with a renewed dedication and commitment to serving our most vulnerable children and families.

A reaffirmed contract between the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Children's Network of Southwest Florida, LLC as the lead agency providing child welfare services in Charlotte, Collier, Lee, Hendry and Glades counties, will ultimately result in a stronger system of community-based care in our area.

We look forward to the future and the opportunity to continue working with our case managers, foster parents, Guardian ad Litem, judges, the staff of Children's Network of Southwest Florida, LLC, our many community providers, as well as the other concerned citizens within our community who always keep children and families at the forefront and ensure they receive compassionate and professional assistance, regardless of the turmoil surrounding them.

Privatization of child welfare services in Southwest Florida under this collaborative model has been working extremely well. Adoptions are on the rise, the number of new foster homes has increased significantly, fewer children are entering the system, and those that do are spending less time within the system. In June of this year, Children's Network of Southwest Florida was rated one of top privatized child welfare agencies in the state.

Over the past few weeks we have worked collaboratively with DCF to reaffirm the contract with Children's Network. We have been heavily supported in our efforts by community providers, both local and statewide, who believe in



community based care; the result: a stronger contract with DCF and a reaffirmation of community based care in Southwest Florida.

It is not unusual with new organizations, whether for-profit businesses or non-profit service organizations, to experience a few bumps in the road within the first few years of operations. We have experienced such a bump in the road at Children's Network and are now a stronger organization, better equipped and positioned to fulfill the mission bestowed upon us.

Children's Network: Moving Forward

At the Children's Network, we are moving forward to bring the community back to the table to assist us in achieving our goals. A few changes have already occurred or are in the works to strengthen community ties, provide additional support to our employees and provide enhanced services to children and families. These include:

- **Local Board of Directors** – Aligned with the Children's Network of Southwest Florida becoming a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) earlier this year, we have established a local, volunteer board of directors to provide direction and input.
- **Case Management** - Two case management providers: Lutheran Services Florida and Family Preservation Services of Florida will now provide comprehensive case management services, with Lutheran Services operating in Lee and Charlotte counties and Family Preservation Services coordinating case management in Collier, Glades and Hendry counties. Lee Mental Health (Ruth Cooper Center) will no longer provide case management services, but will continue to provide mental and behavioral health services to children and families in our care.
- **New Programs** – Our goal of enhancing services and programs for children includes a new prevention program provided by the Quality of Life Center that targets families who are at risk and puts supports in the home to prevent children from going into foster care. In addition, a new residential facility for children with behavioral problems, called the Chariot House, will be up and running in the month of November. Plans are underway for Lutheran Services Florida to work with Lee Mental Health on a new residential facility for children in foster care.
- **Recognition Incentives** - Children's Network is enhancing our commitment to our employees through recognition incentives for their dedication to our organization.

We recognize that we live in a society which is constantly changing, with more and more families experiencing increased pressure and stress. Our children are frequently the unwilling and innocent victims of the fast-paced society we all face. At Children's Network of Southwest Florida, we never forget that our children and families come first and we are here to serve them. Leadership, collaboration and a community-wide effort are required to achieve safety and permanency for the most vulnerable in our community.

All of us at the Children's Network of Southwest Florida, LLC are excited about the future and look forward to the months ahead as we build the best child protective network in the state.



SEASON OF LIGHT CAMPAIGN RAISES FUNDS FOR CHILD ABUSE

“There are two ways of spreading light....to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.” Edith Wharton

During this festive Holiday Season, the Children's Network of Southwest Florida is launching its second fundraising initiative to benefit our Annual Fund. Many of you are aware of the plight of our children. Many other community members are not as familiar with the reason children come into foster care. As we are going into a new year, the Children's Network is helping over 1,500 children whose lives have been disrupted by abuse and neglect. Our goal, once again, is to provide safe, loving and supportive environments for our children, where they can grow and be just like other kids. We know that without support, these children will experience low self-esteem, a lack of self-confidence and behavior problems. Without help, many will end up in the juvenile and eventually the adult justice system. If you would like to contribute to help prevent child abuse in our community and provide support to its innocent victims, please call the Children's Network of Southwest Florida, (239)-226-1524 and ask for Debbie Webb or Aimee McLaughlin.

DSI AND FOSTER CARE ADVISORY SERVICES BRING THANKSGIVING TO FAMILIES IN NEED

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida would like to thank DSI Laboratories and Foster Care Advisory Services for once again providing Thanksgiving dinners to needy families in the child welfare system. This year, DSI Laboratories will be providing 30 dinners to families in Lee and Collier Counties and Foster Care Advisory Services is providing 31 dinners to families in Lee and Charlotte Counties.

The dinners contain all of the trimmings for a Thanksgiving dinner, complete with a turkey. Each family will have their dinner delivered to their home by their case manager. Some of these families have over 8 people in their household, making this donation very important. Our families are very grateful for the help they receive over the Thanksgiving Holiday. Once again, we would like to thank DSI Laboratories and Foster Care Advisory Services for their generous support of families in need.

CHILDREN'S NETWORK OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA LAUNCHES HOLIDAY GIFT GIVING CAMPAIGN

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida has launched the holiday gift giving campaign for children in foster care. Many community organizations have stepped forward to offer their help, buying gifts for children and families in need. Wish lists were sent out to all of the foster families living in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry and Glades counties. Relative and non-relative families in need were also identified and will be receiving help for the holidays.

These families take in children that have been abused and neglected and care for them as if they were their own. They appreciate all of the help and support that they receive during the holiday season. If you would like to adopt a child or family for the holidays, or need more information, please call Aimee McLaughlin at (239)-226-1524.



CHILDREN'S NETWORK FIRST ANNUAL WALK TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE A HUGE SUCCESS



Photo taken by Children's Network employee, Ann Wierengo during warm up exercises at the beginning of the day.

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida hosted its First Annual Walk to Prevent Child Abuse at Pelican Preserve on September 30, 2006. This walk was designed to raise funds to create child abuse prevention programs as well as to fulfill the needs of some 1500 children currently under our care who have suffered from abuse or neglect. In July, there were a total of 870 calls to the abuse hotline. In Lee County alone, 521 people reported suspected abuse or neglect to the abuse hotline. These numbers reflect the urgent need to increase child abuse prevention. Over 550 walkers came out to support this cause.

The First Annual Walk to Prevent Child Abuse raised over \$42,000 for child abuse prevention. These funds will be used to create new child abuse prevention programs, create awareness in our community, and to support the needs of over 1500 children that have suffered from abuse and neglect.

With the help of these committed walkers, we can begin to fulfill the vision of a community free from abuse and neglect. The Children's Network of Southwest Florida



Over 550 walkers hit the streets in support of child abuse prevention.



Chico's Charities created their own team shirts for the event as well as had the largest corporate turn out that day.

would like to thank our four main sponsors: Chico's Charities, Publix Supermarket Charities, WCI Communities, Inc., and the News Press for their major contribution. We would also like to thank Pelican Preserve for hosting the event and lending numerous volunteers to the cause. With the help of many other local community organizations sponsoring the event, the First Annual Walk to Prevent Child Abuse was a huge success. Thank you to all of the walkers and volunteers that helped make the day so special!

MARK MOTORS PRESENTS HARLEY FOR THE HOLIDAYS AND TOYS FOR ALL KIDS



The Children's Network of Southwest Florida is pairing up with Classic Rock 94.5FM and Mark Motors to sponsor a toy drive for children living in foster care. They will be giving away a new 2006 Harley for the Holidays starting Nov 20th! Listen to 94.5FM or stop by Mark Motors to register to win this new Harley Davidson Sportser XL-883. Through this promotion, 94.5FM, Mark Motors and The Children's Network of SW Florida are encouraging all listeners to drop off any unwrapped gift for a child from newborn to 18 years old at Mark Motors at 3680 Fowler St through Dec. 16th. No child without a family or a home will go without opening a present this Christmas. 94.5FM, Mark Motors and the Children's Network of Southwest Florida's goal is for every child to open a present this year. For more information about this promotion and toy drop location, please call (239)-277-0040 or go to www.classicrock945.com or www.childnetswfl.org.

FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES OF FLORIDA ANNOUNCES NEW PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida and Family Preservation Services of Florida would like to congratulate Maryanne Savage on her promotion as the new Program Director, overseeing foster care and adoption services for Collier, Hendry and Glades Counties. Maryanne Savage brings with her eight years experience, three years as a child welfare case manager, and four and a half years as a supervisor.

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida is very excited to have Ms. Savage aboard the management team for Family Preservation Services. "I am really looking forward to the challenges and the new opportunities that this promotion brings," expressed Savage. We would like to wish Maryanne the best of luck in her new position.

A WAITING CHILD

Every issue of Child Link will feature a child that is waiting for a family to call their own.



MEET JASON AND JOSH

Jason is a nine year old child who is healthy, bright and vibrant. He is vocal, yet polite and respectful. He is creative and his demeanor is positive and reflective. He is open and honest with his feelings and about his views on things.

One of his dreams is to share a home with his brother who is a little over a year older than him. They have been reunited recently after being raised apart for some time. Jason's participation in school activities has received notice and appreciation from the staff. He has received numerous awards for his performance in all classes including his prized Independent Reader Award. Jason enjoys attending church with his brother and foster mother. When asked what is his favorite meal is, he says "anything that is cooked at home."

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Joshua, a ten year old, preferably known as Josh, presents as a shy and quiet child. Once he opens up, he is very playful, humorous, affectionate, sweet and respectful. Josh's interests include riding his bike, swimming, playing football and basketball. He plays well with his brother and other children. On the academic side, Josh loves school. He does do better with parental involvement and monitoring, especially since he wants to please and loves to receive attention.

Jason and Josh need parents who have the time to devote to them, have realistic expectations, and are committed to their best interests. Can you picture yourself in this photo as the proud parent of these handsome boys?



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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