

Parenting

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

Fall '07

State Of Community Based Care



Dear Foster and Adoptive Families,

In April of 2003, when foster care and adoption services were privatized, the goal was to find a community solution for a community problem. The problem: child abuse and how to prevent it. The solution: put the responsibility of our children into the hands of the communities where they live.

Now, almost four years later, here is how your lead agency is performing:

- Our adoption goal for last year was 86 finalized adoptions. We have exceeded that goal by 20 with 106 children adopted!

- Recently, the state performed its stringent monitoring of its lead agency's review process. The state requires a score of 80% compliance and the Children's Network is the only lead agency in the state that not only met that number, but scored an amazing 95%.

- We have continued to see 100% of the children we serve every month, even with a 30% increase of children coming into the system.

Improvements made:

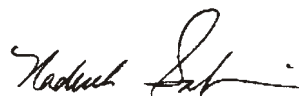
- **Relative Search Unit:** Due to the increasing number of children coming into the system, this unit's only focus is to find relatives for new children entering the system, children residing in shelters, and older children that have difficult behaviors. It is our belief that this system will reduce the number of children coming into licensed foster homes.

- **Missing Children:** In an effort to reduce the number of children that run away, one staff member at the lead agency has been designated to work with these youth to develop and implement solutions to prevent this from happening.

- **Prevention Program:** Targets the communities with the highest number of abuse calls. If the abuse is prevented on the front end, fewer kids enter the system providing relief for foster homes.

We will continue to work with the community to provide the best quality care for these vulnerable children in Southwest Florida.

Thank you,


Nadereh Salim, CEO

Welcome New Foster Parents

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida would like to extend our sincerest appreciation to the 22 families who were newly licensed between June and September 2007. In addition, we would like to continue to recognize Lutheran Services Florida, Family Preservation Services of Florida, Florida Mentor, Devereux Florida Family Care Program, and Florida Baptist Children's Home who worked hard to complete this challenging task. Great job everyone. We look forward to continued success!

Lutheran Services Florida

Peter and Candi Pellerito/Carmany
Kenneth and Sherian Benson
Debra Garrigus
Kathy and Charlotte Harshman/Fennell
Leon and Myrna Young
John and Linda McNamara
Jaime Crawford
Juanita Arsenec
Justin and Sara Egan
Paula Entwistle
John and Marie Leiss
Taunya Blue
Judy Lee
Stirling and Ruther Mcphaul
Stanley and Stephanie Hayes

Florida Mentor

Everett and Rebecca Eliassen

Florida Baptist Children's Home

Ronald James
Donald and Deborah Jones

Family Preservation Services of FL, Inc.

Tom and Kristen May
Scot Andre
Bret and Margaret Howard
Mark and Lisa Milligan
Deborah Gullucci
Cannon and Lisa Eley
William and Diana Diamond
Dario and Heather Mobini
Laverne Scott
Bob and Wanda Chirila
Robert and Jane Levine/Andrews
Wendell and Cathy Burley

Devereux Florida Family Care

Janice Boney

FCC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

November is National Adoption Month and time again for the annual conference hosted by the Florida Coalition for Children. This year the conference will be held in Jacksonville, November 14-16, and the theme is "Empowering Children, Families and Communities." This is an opportunity for child welfare professionals to come together, learn and share so that they can take away from it the most innovative methods for protecting and serving our children.

One of the highlights of the conference each year is the Awards Luncheon, which recognizes the outstanding accomplishments of individuals who have enriched the lives of children in the foster care system in Florida. The Coalition names winners in thirteen categories, including Foster Parent of the Year, "Child Care Worker of the Year," and "Social Worker of the Year," to mention a few. The Children's Network of SWFL submitted nominations for Shirley Williams, LSF, in the Social Worker category, and Michelle and Joseph Spellman, in the Foster Parents category.

The Conference should prove to be informative and rewarding and we encourage anyone interested in attending to call 850-656-0025 for details. From all of us at The Network, good luck to our nominees!

Foster Parent Safety Reminders!

- Always dead-bolt lock doors leading to your pool or water
- Complete a fire drill every 6 months AND with each new Placement
- Change the batteries in your smoke detectors every six months
- Administer all medications as each is prescribed and document each dosage given. Keep medication locked and inaccessible to children
- Provide a mechanism to secure all large, or potentially dangerous, animals
- Lock alcoholic beverages in a secure location
- Update your evacuation plan for the hurricane season
- Post your evacuation floor plan so it is visible to every family member
- Always utilize seatbelts and appropriate car seats according to the age and size of each passenger

OVERWEIGHT TODDLERS AND THOSE NOT IN DAY CARE AT RISK FOR: IRON DEFICIENCY

Below is a news release and brief on statements appearing in the September issue of Pediatrics, the peer-reviewed, scientific journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Childhood iron-deficiency anemia, which affects 490,000 U.S. children, is associated with behavioral and cognitive delays. Analysis of national data from 1,641 toddlers in the study, "Iron Deficiency in Early Childhood in the United States: Risk Factors and Racial/Ethnic Disparities," found iron deficiency prevalence was 12 percent among Hispanics versus 6 percent in both whites and blacks. It was found that toddlers who are overweight are at high risk for iron deficiency. In contrast, day care/preschool attendance was found to be protective against iron deficiency. The study data showed that Hispanic toddlers are more likely than white and black toddlers to be overweight and not in day care, which may account for their increased risk of iron deficiency. If you feel that your child might be experiencing this issue, please contact your health care provider.

Parent Planner

October 2007

See scheduled trainings within newsletter.

November 2007

9th-
Joys of Adoption
Conference

December 2007

Holiday Gift Giving
Campaign

MEET THE CHILD: JASMINE & JASPER



Dates of Birth: Jasmine-November 1996, Jasper-June 1995
We are Jasmine and Jasper, a brother and sister, who want to be part of a family that will help us become part of theirs. We have many dreams which only a strong, loving family can help us realize. To reach that family, each of us will tell you a little about the other. Jasmine is smart; she aspires to be a lawyer. She is very good at doing her own homework and helping me to do mine. Though she enjoys reading and "other book stuff," she also enjoys playing games, visiting fun parks, since she always likes to be involved in play, and lots of hands on activities, which make her giggly with happiness and keeps a bright smile on her face.

My brother Jasper is quieter than me, but he is clear about what he wants and thinks. For example, he knows that he wants to be a doctor. He is my hero especially since he has made some great decisions to make sure we are safe and free from harm. Jasper likes story telling, and at times, does tell some tall ones. He holds back sometimes though, especially

when he is not sure how the other person will react to him and what he is saying. If Jasper is sure that he will not be harmed, he will tell the truth, even about stuff he'd made up before. Jasper likes to think a lot. He likes smiling, but is embarrassed about the braces he has on. He likes typical "boy things".

We need a family that can see the joys of raising two children with our special type of experiences; a family that will nurture our dreams and will help us do fun things and not miss out on things that other kids do, or have; where we won't get hurt, and where people say kind things to us. If you desire to be that family, we are here waiting.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2007 DEPENDENCY COURT IMPROVEMENT SUMMIT

At the 2007 Dependency Court Improvement Summit in Orlando last month, Secretary Bob Butterworth stated:

“Today we are here to speak for those with the smallest voices, the biggest eyes, and the most grateful hearts. We are here to speak for the children. Every one of you are holding a corner of the safety net that can mean life or death – a future of hope and promise, or one that is tragically shattered. Thank you for being there to hold that safety net – the net that so many children so desperately need. To continue to do so – our backs must be strong, our will must be solid, and our resolve must never waiver.”

At the Children’s Network of Southwest Florida, our resolve does not waiver. Because of this, our agency was asked to present two innovative areas that we developed to the Summit attendees:

- **Dental Network:** As a response to the lack of Medicaid dentists in the area, we have spearheaded a Dental Network of pro-bono dentists that will see our foster children either at the Medicaid rate or at no charge.
- **Faith Based Recruitment of Foster Homes:** We contract with Florida Baptist Children’s Home to recruit and license foster families that are faith based. This allows us to match children with the homes that they are most comfortable in.

The Children’s Network of Southwest Florida prides itself on providing strong leadership and expert guidance in the field of child welfare. As a testament to this, our CEO, Nadereh Salim, was awarded the 2007 Dependency Summit Judicial Circuit Leadership Award. She has devoted her life to helping children and families as an abuse investigator, a case manager, program office administrator, chief operating officer and now CEO.

Great leadership in a lead agency cannot exist without foster and adoptive parents, advocates and case managers who care for our vulnerable children. Let’s all continue to advocate for these children and provide them with the safety net they need.

GETTING GIRLS INVOLVED

Girls Get It! is an initiative in Florida that works with middle and high school students, teachers, and parents to increase female participation and graduation rates in science, technology, engineering, math (STEM), and information technology (IT). Girls Get It! is a collaboration between Cisco Systems, Inc., the Florida Distance Learning Consortium, and the Community College and University System.

Recently Girls Get It! was selected as the Florida representative for the National Girls Collaborative Project (NGCP) which is funded by the National Science Foundation. The NGCP is an effort to strengthen the capacity, impact, and sustainability of existing girl-serving STEM and IT programs through collaboration among organizations, and businesses that are committed to expanding the participation of women in such programs. Through this grant, we are able to offer mini grants to girl-serving organizations across the state. To find out more information, please [click here](#).

For more information on how you can get involved, please visit our website and join the Girls Get It! team at www.GirlsGetIT.org or contact Leah Cook at 850.922.9025.

ASK THE EXPERT

Many parents are clear on the fact that after adoption finalization, their child will be eligible for Medicaid benefits until he/she is eighteen years old. Many are still uncertain as to how benefits are accessed post-adoption.

Do I need to do anything to initiate benefits?

Once the adoption placement is approved, the Medicaid Liaison at the Department of Children and Families is notified. At that time, the child’s updated information, including any name change, is inputted in the system. The new card should arrive within two to three weeks.

Is there an annual renewal?

Parents are not required to do anything.

What if I move?

Most states are part of ICAMA (Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medicaid Assistance). Notify Ms. Hofer and she will fax paperwork to the Zone in Tampa. The information will ultimately transmit to Tallahassee, and then on to the capital of your new state of residence. A copy will also be sent to the adoptive parents.

Ms. Hofer is willing to answer your questions and may be reached at 239-338-1518. For billing issues or concerns, please contact your plan directly.

ADOPTING ACROSS RACIAL LINES

Trans-racial adoption is a sensitive topic, which when broached, elicits feelings that may range from discomfort or avoidance to outrage. So, if you have decided to commit to a child who obviously does not look like you, know that the general populace will react. Know that you cannot control how other people react, but you can be prepared. For this reason, Adoptions Case Managers and staff have an obligation to explore how crossing racial lines in adoption, will affect not only your present family, but the child who will become a permanent member of your family.

HOW CAN YOU PREPARE?

Know that this is a conversation that must take place at some time in your child's life. If not, you would have done your adopted child a great disservice, as he/she would not have been prepared for life as an adult.

Understand how a child's identity is created and how it impacts his/her self-esteem, self-worth, confidence and expectations. Research and compare how identities develop in children of different races.

Also, ask yourself these questions:

- What do I know about the race of the child I am interested in parenting?
- What have I done to learn about other races/cultures?
- What do I know about positive role models for that ethnic group?
- How does my extended family feel about this child becoming a part of my family?

Once your child is placed with you, do the following:

- Expose him/her to the culture of his/her racial group; teach him/her about historic and present-day figures and their impact on society.
- Acquaint your child with members of that ethnic group outside of your environment, and their accomplishments.
- Interact routinely with members of that racial group on a personal basis.
- **ABOVE ALL, BE OPEN.**

COOK'S CORNER

Submitted by foster mom,
Debbie Phillips

Rice Casserole

- 1 can of beef broth
- 1 can of French onion soup
- 1 cup of instant rice
- 1 can (8 oz.) of mushrooms
- 1 stick of margarine

Mix all ingredients together and place in a casserole dish. Heat oven to 380°F and bake for 30 to 40 minutes.

CHILDREN CONTINUE TO FIND PERMANENCY

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida would like to extend a heartfelt "Thank you," and "Congratulations" to our families who adopted between June and August of 2007. These families have made the extraordinary commitment of providing a "forever home" for children who may never have had one otherwise. We would also like to take the opportunity to recognize the Adoptions Case Managers who work the long hours to make it happen. "Thank you" for all the hard work that you do!

Below, is the list of our newest families:

- Tracy & Kenneth Hoffman
- Joseph & Heather Cassese
- Dean & Carmen Williams
- Donald & Carolyn Joel
- Todd & Melissa Stowe
- Barry & Judy Pitt
- Benjamin & Lisa Chapin
- Herald & Olive Pryce
- Andrew & Mira Chestney
- Robert & Christina Holsten
- William & Julie Alexandrou
- Edward & Cheryl Shaffer
- Patrick & Kelly Smith
- William & Jennifer Lindsey

Become A Foster or Adoptive Parent
Call - 1-800-89 FAMILY
Visit our Website at www.childnetswfl.org

“The Children’s Network of Southwest Florida is
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Department of Children & Families”



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