

Childlink

Building strong links for children in need.

August-September 2006



Children's Network Continues to Strengthen Support for Children and Families in Southwest Florida

By: George Dearborn
Chairman, Children's Network of Southwest Florida, LLC

As many of you might already know by reading the newspapers, a few weeks ago the new local Children's Network of Southwest Florida Board of Directors made the decision to significantly change the system of care model by terminating contracts with the three case management agencies and bring case management services in-house. This decision caused significant concern among both local and state providers who believe this to be a step backward from a collaborative, community-based model that is clearly working.

Regrettably, the Camelot Community Care Board of Directors, the parent company, and Children's Network Board of Directors were not able to come to an agreement on the method of delivering child welfare services in our area. We clearly had a divergence of opinions, from both philosophical and operational perspectives. Stability is critical in the child welfare system and to get the organization past this impasse the Camelot Community Care Board has decided to keep the existing model in place. In addition, the existing model is working in Southwest Florida, making the Children's Network of Southwest Florida one of the best projects statewide that embraces the spirit of the Legislature's intent to build a collaborative, community based care system.

As a result of the decision by the Camelot Board of Directors, the local Children's Network of Southwest Florida Board has been replaced with temporary board members. In addition, Chris Card has been appointed interim CEO.

Chris brings extensive child welfare and privatization experience with him to Southwest Florida. Formerly, he served as the CEO for the first pilot privatization project in Florida, the Sarasota YMCA. He also has served as the CEO for Hillsborough Kids, Inc. in Tampa. In addition to serving as interim CEO he will be facilitating the process to hire a permanent replacement.

I would like to thank the efforts of the local board members who have served the past few months, as well as those of Harry Propper, the previous CEO who ushered privatization in Southwest Florida.

It is now time to move forward and focus our energy and resources on serving our children and their families. We are committed to the success of Children's Network of Southwest Florida and look forward to an exciting future ahead – building a new local board of directors, enhancing services with our community providers and caring for the children in Southwest Florida.

BACK TO SCHOOL DISTRIBUTION A HUGE SUCCESS FOR FAMILIES



Foster parent Jessica Lewis helps two of her four foster children pick out backpacks and school supplies at the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Ft. Myers.

Back to school was a huge success this year, with over 800 children in Hendry, Glades, Charlotte, Collier and Lee Counties receiving backpacks, school supplies and discount coupon books with discounts on clothing, shoes and free haircuts.

Back to school distribution started on Monday, July 17th in Collier County. For the second year, St. Monica's Episcopal Church in Naples invited the children and families of Collier County to visit their beautiful to pick up their school supplies and backpacks.

Families living in Hendry and Glades Counties were fortunate to have their backpacks, school supplies and discount coupon books with free hair cuts dropped off at their front doors by their dedicated child welfare case

managers. This tight knit community really supported one another during this year's back to school time.

Ruth Cooper Center for Behavioral Healthcare had two locations to distribute school supplies. On Tuesday, July 18th the First Christian Church in Cape Coral once again invited our families and children from Cape Coral and North Ft. Myers to visit their church and pick up their school necessities. On Thursday, July 20th the Edgewater United Methodist Church welcomed families from Charlotte County to receive backpacks and school supplies. As an added bonus, Edgewater United Methodist Church also had free bicycles and children's clothing on hand for the families to take home.

On Wednesday, July 19th, St. Francis Catholic Church donated their facility to distribute back to school supplies to children living in Lee County. Chapel by the Sea, the Sew and Sews, also donated many school supplies and pre-filled backpacks to our shelter and families.

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida would like to offer thanks to the following staff who gave their time and commitment to make back to school successful:

Thank you to the staff that helped to make this possible:

Lutheran Services Florida: Shellie Brady, Barbara Atkins, Jan Widmer, Christie Dowsett, Terrin Streets, Pete Crane, and Kristine Ollarak.

Ruth Cooper Center for Behavioral Healthcare: Janet Bartos, Bonny Wolbach, Shirley Williams, Christine Antoine, Ted Nafziger and Naomi Johnson.

Family Preservation Services of Florida: Yves Benoit, Lara Becraft and Geneva Andrews.

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida looks forward to working with all of our community organizations and case management staff in the future. Great job everyone!

CAPE CORAL JAYCEES PROVIDED SHOPPING SPREE TO CHILDREN IN CAPE CORAL



Jolene and Scott Jacobs of the Greater Cape Coral Jaycees.

Children living in foster care in Cape Coral also enjoyed a special treat at back to school time. For the sixth consecutive year, The Cape Coral Jaycees treated 15 children to a back to school shopping spree at the Cape Coral Wal-Mart. Each child was provided with a \$30 gift card and was allowed to shop for any school related item, including clothing and shoes. The children had a great time picking out shoes, clothing and supplies. The families are always excited to receive help at this busy time of year. The Greater Cape Coral Jaycees have also sponsored the Children's Network of Southwest Florida Holiday Gift Giving Campaign since 1997. We would like to offer a huge thank you to the Jaycee's for their continued partnership.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR BACK TO SCHOOL DONORS:

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida would like to give special thanks to the Foster Care Council of Southwest Florida, Foster Care Advisory Services, and Voices for Kids for their partnership during the Third Annual Back to School Campaign for children living in foster care! We would like to thank and recognize the following churches, businesses and organizations that made this possible for our children:



- A Sharper Image
- About Hair Studio V
- Anne Michael's
- Beall's
- Beller's Salon & Spa
- Bonita Springs School Inc.
- Greater Cape Coral Jaycees
- Chapel By The Sea, The Sew and Sews
- Chic-Fil-A
- Covenant Presbyterian Church, Ruth Circle
- Denny's Restaurants
- Edgewater United Methodist Church
- First Choice Haircutters
- First Christian Church of Cape Coral
- Greg Norman Outlet Stores
- Hair It Is
- Lisa Tolbert, Hair Designer
- Marc Anthony, Hair Designer
- Options Hair and Nail Salon
- Reebok Outlet Stores
- Ricky Tolbert, Hair Designer
- Rockport Outlet Stores
- School Kidz
- Snyderman Shoes
- St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church
- St. Monica's Episcopal Church of Naples
- Studio RK
- Top It Off Salon & Spa

THE FIRST ANNUAL WALK TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE KICKS OFF WITH TEAM CAPTAIN BREAKFAST AT PELICAN PRESERVE IN AUGUST



Left to right: Scott Jacobs, Greater Cape Coral Jaycees, Janet Bartos, Ruth Cooper Center for Behavioral Healthcare and Joy Gregory, Ruth Cooper Center for Behavioral Healthcare.

Pelican Preserve hosted a breakfast to kick off the Children's Network of Southwest Florida First Annual Walk to Prevent Child Abuse, taking place on September 30th at Pelican Preserve. The Children's Network of Southwest Florida would like to thank our four main sponsors for the walk-a-thon: **Chico's Charities, Publix Supermarket Charities, WCI Communities, Inc., and News-Press.**

Approximately fifty team captains were invited to attend this beautiful buffet breakfast where they were given the information necessary to build their team of walkers.

During the breakfast, Children's Network of Southwest Florida and Pelican Preserve presented the team captains with information regarding sponsors, raffle items, teams and logistics of the walk-a-thon. Team captains were able to

interact with other agencies to compare strategies on recruiting as many people possible to walk to prevent child abuse.

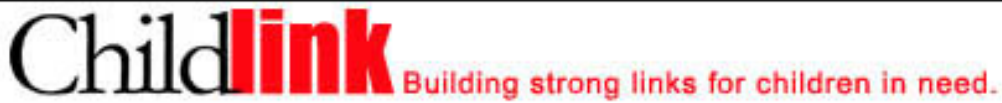
The Children's Network of Southwest Florida currently has over 550 committed walkers. One of our main sponsors, Chico's Charities has committed to 100 walkers and as of this week are very close to their goal!

Thanks to the all of the team captains for giving their time and hearts to our First Annual Walk to Prevent Child Abuse.

We would also like to express gratitude to our other sponsors for contributing to the event:

**The Bagel Factory
Allstar Marketing
April Perkins
Asylum Fitness Club
Banks Engineering Inc.
Bateman Contracting
Bower & Liles, P.A.
Children's Home Society of Florida
Family Preservation Services of Florida Inc.
First Home Builders of Florida
Florida Baptist Children's Homes
Florida Gulf Bank
Florida Mentor
Foster Care Council of Southwest Florida**

**Greater Cape Coral Jaycees Inc.
Law Offices of William G. Morris
Lee County Emergency Medical Services
Lutheran Services Florida
Patricia Sundy
Pelican Preserve
Pulte Homes
Roger Deakin
Ruth Cooper Center for Behavioral Healthcare
Sun Harvest Citrus
Taylor Carpet One, Inc.
The Omni Club
VanBuskirk Opticians, Inc.
Wolfer Produce Company Inc.**



SAVE THE DATE

3RD ANNUAL JOYS OF ADOPTION BREAKFAST AND CONFERENCE



On November 17th, The Children's Network of Southwest Florida and American Pride Builders will be hosting the 3rd Annual Joys of Adoption Conference and Breakfast at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa in Bonita Springs. As of July 1st, 124 children are waiting to be adopted, 72 children have identified placements and 52 have no identified families of their own.

Join us for the Breakfast Celebration and/or for an all day premier seminar to hear national child welfare experts discuss topics such as overcoming adversity, the impact adoption and foster care has on a child's identity and how to minimize the trauma of foster care adoptive placements.

You will also gain valuable insight from a panel of youth speakers who will share their diverse perspectives on growing up in foster care.

This dynamic one day seminar is geared toward child welfare case managers, educators, social workers, mental health counselors, psychologists, adoptive parents, foster parents, those interested in adopting other providers and community leaders that are dedicated to helping children who have been abused or neglected find nurturing adoptive homes.

Presenters include:

- **Wayne Duehn, Ph.D.**, Professor, School of Social Work, the University of Texas at Arlington; maintains a private practice in individual marital, and family therapy. He is currently engaged in clinical research on sexually abusive parents and juvenile sexual offenders. As a national lecturer and trainer, Dr. Duehn is also a consultant to many institutions including National Association of Social Work, Big Brothers/Big Sisters Association, National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, and has conducted training for law enforcement personnel, school CASA staff/volunteers, and social service/mental health agencies throughout the United States.
- **Barbie K. Reed**, Chief Visionary Officer of B.K.R UNLIMITED, a National Training Company focused on helping people to discover their unlimited potential, and President of B & C Empowerment Services, Inc., a not for profit organization focused on community programs that looks at breaking the cycle of dependency and poverty by enhancing self esteem, job skills and new found attitudes about themselves and life as a whole.
- **Susan Badeau**, A child welfare professional for twenty-six years. Currently a policy consultant, Ms. Badeau has served as the Deputy Director of the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care. She has also worked in indirect services at both the casework and supervisory levels in adoption and foster care in both public and private agencies. Sue and her husband, Hector, are the parents of twenty-two children, two by birth and twenty adopted. They have also served as foster parents for more than 50 children in three states, and as a host family for refugee youth from Sudan, Kosovo and Guatemala.

Childlink

Building strong links for children in need.

The cost of attending the morning session, including Breakfast, is \$30.00 and the all day session, including Breakfast and Lunch is \$55.00. Seating is limited, so if you want to attend, please email Aimee McLaughlin at amclaughlin@childnetswfl.org or call the Children's Network of Southwest Florida at 239-226-1524.

THANK YOU TO THE FLORIDA FIRECATS AND APPLEBEE'S RESTAURANTS



The Children's Network of Southwest Florida would like to thank the Florida Firecats for providing over 50 children living in foster care with free season tickets to their home games at Germain Arena. The children enjoyed the games from their seats in the Firecats Kids Club section at Germain Arena.

This year, Florida Firecats paired up with Applebee's Restaurants and created the "Applebee's Teammates of the Game". Two children were chosen each game to return kicks on the field with the team during practice. When the game started, they were then named "honorary team captains" and were able to participate in the coin toss.

Our children and families were excited to attend these games. "We really appreciate these tickets. Going to the game made these children feel so special, especially during the pre-game activities," expressed Richard Sapp, Executive Director of Source of Light and Hope, our emergency shelter facility for children in foster care.



CHILDREN'S NETWORK LEADS THE WAY IN QUALITY MANAGEMENT

As explained in last edition of ChildLink, the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) selected the Children's Network of Southwest Florida as one of three pilot sites to measure and validate the quality of services delivered to the children and families in Southwest Florida.

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida gladly accepted the challenge. The process created by the Quality Management Unit was so successful that no modifications were required after the state reviewers came in May 2006 to evaluate the process and validate the results. The Quality Management Unit worked diligently to create an exceptional plan which satisfied the state and federal requirements.

The QM staff reviewed 74 cases in a two week period. Revenue Maximization also reviewed a sample of the Quality Management cases. "I want to take this opportunity to recognize the exceptional leadership demonstrated by your Quality Assurance Director, Peter Ledecy and Operations Manager, Dan England. They and their staff worked closely with department staff members for two weeks leading up to the review," said Tom Rankin, Director of DCF's office of quality management

Thank you to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) for giving quality management autonomy to the Community Based Care Organizations allowing them to create their own regionally

tailored quality management plans. Once again, the Children's Network of Southwest Florida showed that this new system will work and result in safety and faster permanency for our children and families in Southwest Florida.

THE CHILDREN'S NETWORK OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WELCOMES NEW STAFF



Julio Gonzalez

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida would like to welcome three new employees to the team.

Julio Gonzalez has joined the Children's Network of Southwest Florida as a Quality Management Specialist. Previously, Gonzalez worked for Lutheran Services Florida as a Foster Care Licensing Counselor. His current duties in the Quality Management Unit include reviewing files and tracking the re-licensing of foster homes, foster home waivers, assisting with closure and re-licensing surveys of foster homes and completing monthly monitoring of case files for our Case Management Organizations.

Michelle Greer-Philp also comes to the Children's Network of Southwest Florida as a Quality Management Specialist. Until recently,

Greer-Philp was an Adoption Specialist for Lutheran Services Florida, managing the cases of numerous children waiting for adoptive homes. Her current responsibilities are to complete monthly monitoring of case files at the case management organizations, review and follow up on incident reports, tracking missing children within our district and reviewing potential adoption files submitted for approval.



Michelle Greer-Philp



Jan Widmer

Jan Widmer has joined the Children's Network of

Southwest Florida as the Enhanced Placement Specialist, a new position recently added to the Utilization Management Unit. Previously, she had worked for Lutheran Services Florida as their Placement Coordinator and prior to that, the Residential Services Manager. As the Enhanced Placement Specialist, Widmer will be responsible for tracking and managing the enhanced placements of children in foster care that need a higher level of care than children living in regular foster care. She will also be responsible for monitoring and arranging placements within residential group care facilities.

A WAITING CHILD

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



MEET PETERSON:

Peterson was born in September 1997. Pete, as he prefers to be called, is a charming young man whose grin goes from ear to ear. Peterson is shy at first but after warming up, he is pleasant and fun to be around. Peterson is soft spoken at times but has the energy level of the Energizer Bunny! He likes to have books read to him and is fascinated by cartoon characters. Peterson has an interesting fascination with stones and archaeology. He even knows his own birthstone: Sapphire!! Peterson enjoys playing with other children especially when they are outdoors. He would be a great older sibling as he is caring and loving towards children younger than him.

Peterson has been revered as a helper around the house and takes great pride in his accomplishments. He is full of life and will not be limited by his circumstances. He is a happy; "smiley" child and you will be able to tell when he feels safe with you. Peterson is inquisitive and curious about the environment around him; he asks appropriate and probing questions. Peterson openly displays affection and never shies away from a hug! Peterson participates in class and does well in a setting where he is provided an individualized plan. His teacher reports he really shines when he grasps what is taught.

Peterson would like to be part of a family who sees him as an extension of themselves. He needs a family who is capable of handling medical needs and values everyday that he is with them. Peterson knows his forever family is out there searching for him.

For more information of the Children's Network of Southwest Florida please visit our website 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.

Produced by The Children's Network of Southwest Florida, the community based care division of Camelot Community Care, Inc., copyright 2003, all rights reserved. For more information, contact Debra Webb, Chief Development/Communications Officer or Aimee McLaughlin PR/Development Assistant at (239) 226-1524.