

CONNECTS

CASEY

SUMMER 2001
A REPORT FROM THE
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

IN THIS ISSUE: *Chronicling the Legacy of One Family's Transformation; Alert for Community Organizations; Strategic Consulting Group Offers Hands-On Help; A Note of Recognition; INSITES*

INITIATIVE AIMS TO EASE THE PAIN OF TRANSITION FROM FOSTER CARE

Alfred G. Perez, 24, believes it's a myth that foster kids can't make it. But he also knows they can't do it alone. Perez lived in 11 different foster homes in as many years before he left the California foster care system.

"When I turned 18, I had to do everything on my own," he said. With the assistance of an independent living program and the support of a mentor, Perez went on to earn a bachelor's degree in social work from San Jose State and a master's degree from the University of Michigan. He now works as a research analyst at Westat, Inc., a prestigious research and evaluation firm in Rockville, Maryland.



Alfred G. Perez made the transition from foster care with a mentor's help.

Transition for foster youth **HAS NEVER BEEN APPROACHED** as **COMPREHENSIVELY** and ambitiously as in this new joint undertaking.

Myeshia Grice, a 24-year-old senior at California State at Hayward and the first in her family to attend college, is another success story. Grice met her mentor, Arlene, when she was 15 and in foster care, and she said Arlene's steadfast belief in her is what persuaded her to go to college.

Perez and Grice made the transition from foster care to adulthood with the help of caring individuals. But studies show many young people like them face overwhelming obstacles completing their education, getting good jobs, and finding safe, affordable places to live. Too often, foster care "graduates" end up unemployed, homeless, or in jail. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 gave states some new funds to support transition programs, but too often these teenagers are not a state or local priority.

To reverse that trend, in May the Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs launched the Jim Casey Youth

Opportunities Initiative, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of the more than 100,000 young people in the United States between the ages of 16 and 21 who are about to leave or have already left the foster care system. The Foundation has committed \$18 million over the next three years to address the educational, employment, health, and housing needs of this group of young adults. The initiative grew out of studies and collaboration between the two founding partners dating back to 1997. "Transition for foster youth has never been approached as comprehensively and ambitiously as this new joint undertaking," said Douglas W. Nelson, president of the Casey Foundation. "We expect to be a change agent, a facilitator, and promoter of successful programs that can be duplicated throughout the country."

Gary Stangler, former head of the Missouri Department of Social Services, will direct the initiative from headquarter offices in St. Louis. Part of his job will be to act as a convener,

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BLACK PEOPLE LOOK BAD. It shows the truth about
what we really do and go through.

CASEY CONNECTS

Summer 2001

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The Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.

SHARING THE LEGACY OF ONE FAMILY'S TRANSFORMATION

When a promising young man was shot down two blocks from his home at the Henry Horner Housing Project in Chicago, he left a powerful legacy for his family and his community.

Terrell Collins, 14, was a straight-A student with a scholarship to a private high school. Everyone believed he would make it out of the projects and become successful. His death transformed the lives of family members, fueling their struggle to circumvent the cycle of poverty, welfare, violence, and substance abuse that robbed so many in their community of their hopes, dreams, and dignity.

Tod Lending, an award-winning producer who was filming a documentary in Terrell's neighborhood, interviewed his

grandmother, Dorothy Jackson, just a few hours before Terrell's death. He decided, with their permission, to continue filming the family for an extended time to see how Terrell's death would affect their lives. The result of their five-year collaboration is *Legacy*, a powerful chronicle of the family's transformation and the social factors that both impeded and aided them in their ultimately triumphant path. So compelling is this depiction that the film earned an Oscar nomination this year. *Legacy* aired on HBO July 25, and is scheduled to debut on PBS stations in 2002.

The story is told through the voice of Nickole, Terrell's cousin and best friend, who went on to become the first member of the family to graduate from high school and attend college. But it also



TERKOWITZ PHOTOGRAPHY

details the trials and triumphs of Terrell's grandmother, who eventually realizes her dream to leave the projects and buy a home; of his mother, a long-time substance abuser who finally enters rehab and enjoys the fruits of recovery; and of his aunt, Nickole's mother, a single mother of five who eventually gets off welfare and finds steady employment and educational opportunities. Jack, Terrell's surviving brother, is shown still struggling to move his life in a positive direction.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, along with the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and other grant makers, supported the filming as well as a wide range of outreach activities to help share the legacy of this family with a broader audience. The Foundation has supported a number of events and educational materials designed to help people in the education, faith, civic, and nonprofit sectors translate the film into a tool to help families and communities connect to sources of help, hope, and opportunity. *Legacy* has been screened in nearly 1,000 community settings to more than a half million people since it was completed in 1999.

Last fall, the Laurence G. Paquin Secondary School in Baltimore, an alternative school for expectant and parenting teenagers, aired the film for its 300-member student body. "I told them we're going to see a family just like them, and that they need to learn that no matter how bad your circumstances, you can survive," said the school's director, Dr. Rosetta Stith.

What she didn't tell her students was that members of the Collins family were behind the curtain, waiting to greet students after the screening. "When I pulled that screen up, it was almost like they stopped breathing—it was like they had seen a miracle," Stith said.



Bottom left photo, from left to right, Terrell Collins' aunt, Alaissa; mother, Wanda; cousin, Nickole; brother, Jack; and filmmaker Tod Lending. The family spoke with students at the Paquin school, above, after a *Legacy* screening.

"They stood up and gave a standing ovation."

Students asked questions, spoke one-on-one with the family, and wrote notes to the various family members.

"It's nice to finally see a movie that doesn't make black people look bad," one student wrote. "It shows the truth

about what we really do and go through. It's also nice to see a black family stick together through thick and thin."

Stacy Copes, a 15-year-old with an 8-month-old daughter, said the movie inspired her to try harder to achieve her goals. What is the most forceful lesson she took from *Legacy*? "Don't let anything hold you down—just keep trying."

HELP SOUGHT FROM COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Community organizations can be a lifeline for families living in challenging neighborhoods. Besides providing services people depend on, they are part of the social fabric of neighborhoods and lend stability to isolated communities. Their own stability, however, is too often threatened by high turnover rates in leadership.

The Casey Foundation has committed funding to explore the impact and opportunities presented by leadership transitions in community-based organizations. The ultimate goals of this work are to help organizations prepare for and manage changes in leadership and to improve the preparation, recruitment, support, and retention of effective leaders.

The Foundation has commissioned a survey of community-based organization grantees to learn more about their experiences and needs in the area of leadership transitions. Selected grantees will receive letters and postcards explaining the survey, which can be completed by visiting a special website, www.managance.com/casey-survey, between July 30 and August 20. Organizations that do not have Internet access should contact Melody Thomas-Scott of Tom Adams and Associates at 410.439.6635 to schedule a telephone interview. The Foundation will publish its findings in mid-September.

STRATEGIC CONSULTING GROUP PROVIDES HANDS-ON HELP TO PUBLIC AGENCIES

Fixing broken human-service agencies is one of the most vexing challenges facing cities and states, but that has never stopped the Casey Foundation from venturing into the fray. The principles on which the Foundation bases much of its work on behalf of children mandate that public systems be responsive, efficient, and customer driven.

For better or worse, one of the most promising opportunities for change presents itself in the wake of a crisis. Building on a long legacy of work to help change the way public systems operate in order to improve outcomes for children, the Casey Foundation has launched a new enterprise to provide immediate intensive, strategic help when these moments of opportunity arise.

The Casey Strategic Consulting Group will respond to public agencies seeking outside intervention that is experienced, neutral, analytically oriented, and hands-on.

“Real change in public agencies requires them to value families and encourage family ties, to identify and use community resources, and to involve parents and children in planning for the future,” said Kathleen Feely, managing director of the group. “These agencies must build community partnerships that encourage local participation, decentralized decision-making, and flexible funding to address communities’ unique needs. That is what Casey Strategic Consulting hopes to bring to agencies in distress.”

Entry points for this process may include systems in crisis in the aftermath of a highly visible tragedy, such as the death of a child. Public sector agencies facing the threat of class-action litigation or having recently come under new political leadership may offer another window of opportunity for reform efforts.

The Casey Strategic Consulting Group will build on the Foundation’s recent involvement with the Special Child Welfare Advisory Panel in New York City, which stemmed from efforts to mediate a class-action lawsuit against the Administration for Children’s Services, known as *Marisol v. Scoppetta*. The group has modeled itself after such private-sector consultants as McKinsey & Company and seeks out opportunities within states or localities that show great

promise for reform and willingness to commit to intensive intervention to meet their goals.

Feely, a former deputy commissioner of New York City’s Department of Juvenile Justice, has assembled a multi-faceted team. Gary Weeks, former director of Oregon’s Department of Human Services, has been named manager of human services reform. The staff also includes Jim Dimas, Kathleen Noonan, Joy Behrens, and John Musewicz, who offer a distinct mix of public sector, research, legal, and private sector consulting experience.

Currently, Casey Strategic Consulting is active in one start-up site and reviewing the possibility of new work in a few other sites. In Georgia, the involvement was triggered in late 1999 by publicity surrounding deaths of children in the foster care system in Atlanta and subsequent dialog between Foundation officials and the governor’s office. The group is working with the Foundation’s Technical Assistance Resource Center to assist in data collection and other reform tasks to increase the momentum of the change effort.

The Casey Strategic Consulting Group is working with the governor’s cross-agency partnership to improve state child welfare outcomes by developing a comprehensive community-based system to connect children and families with critical services and supports in their communities.

The group is also building a network of key resource people at national organizations and institutions.

From left to right, Jim Dimas, a member of the Casey Strategic Consulting team, meeting with Becky Winslow, Eddie Gordon, and Wilfred Hamm of the Georgia Division of Family and Children’s Services.



SHEILA TURNER

Books Not Bars and the Youth Force Coalition were also planning a July 28 concert and rally, including community leaders, poets, dancers, and Hip Hop artists, to speak out against the county's plans to borrow money to finance the facility without a public vote.

REBUILDING
COMMUNITIES'
NOTABLE WINS
FELLOWSHIP

Maggie DeSantis, executive director of the Warren/Conner Development Coalition in Detroit, has been selected as a Fellow in the Rockefeller Foundation's Next Generation Leadership program. Warren/Conner is the lead organization in the Casey Foundation's Rebuilding Communities Initiative (RCI) in Detroit.

DeSantis is one of 24 candidates selected from more than 100 applicants nominated by national leaders. The two-year program is designed to build a network of leaders who can identify solutions to social, economic, and technological disparities that threaten democracy. In the first year, Fellows will travel extensively to study challenges to democracy relating to race, economics, immigration, globalization, and communication. In the second year, they will work on community projects that put theories of democracy into action.

DeSantis wants to study a topic near and dear to her RCI work—the role of community development in revitalizing “the most devastated large city in the United States.”

A NOTE OF RECOGNITION

YOUTH-LED MOVEMENT CAMPAIGNS FOR 'BOOKS NOT BARS'

A well-organized youth-led movement in California has been gaining momentum in an impassioned struggle to promote alternatives to juvenile detention.

Two groups that the Casey Foundation supports—the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in San Francisco and the Oakland-based Youth Empowerment Center, an umbrella group that sponsors several youth organizations—have been working to challenge Alameda County’s plans to construct the largest juvenile hall in the country.

Books Not Bars, a project of the Ella Baker Center, and the Youth Force Coalition, one of the organizations sponsored by the Youth Empowerment Center, have been lead partners in a wide range of groups joining forces to “Stop the Super Jail.”

Young people and their allies showed up in force at a Board of Corrections meeting in San Diego last May and convinced the Board not to provide \$2.3 million in requested state funding for a major expansion of the county's juvenile hall. "We told them that the state



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LEFT: CONNECTICUT POST PHOTO BY PHIL NOEL



NOTE OF RECOGNITION
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“Over the last 20 years, Maggie has demonstrated significant leadership in strengthening Detroit’s local community development practice,” said Garland Yates, manager of RCI. “Under her guidance the Warren/Conner Development Coalition is recognized across the country for its innovative work.”

BRIDGEPORT ACTIVISTS HAILED FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN’S INTERESTS

Two grassroots community activists have won “Liberty Bell Awards”—an honor bestowed every year by the Bridgeport Bar Association.

The awards were presented to mark “Law Day”—a day set aside May 1 for Americans to reflect on how laws make possible the freedoms we enjoy. This year, the theme for Law Day was protecting the best interests of children.

Margie Powell and Marta Calderon both hold leadership positions in Parent Education and Resident Leadership (PEARL), a parent-run nonprofit group that collaborates with others to provide

parent education and training in advocacy and community organizing. PEARL is a spin-off from work done in Bridgeport under the Casey Foundation’s New Futures Initiative.

Calderon says her activism began when she got involved with Bridgeport Futures in 1992, which propelled her onto many boards and councils focused on child advocacy. “It is important to be out there to fight for children,” said Calderon, who doesn’t own a car and takes public transportation to work and community meetings.

Powell has worked hard to advocate for more funding for school readiness and continued support for at-risk children in the early grades. PEARL’s emphasis is “informing parents of what’s out there and how they can get involved and not be intimidated,” said Powell, who has two grown sons and four grandchildren, has adopted three foster children, and is in the process of adopting a fourth.

“These two women are being recognized for their persistence in helping to keep policymakers’ hearts and minds stay where they should be with regard to children,” said Carmen Lopez, a Connecticut Superior Court Judge.

Left, Maggie DeSantis was named a Fellow in the Next Generation Leadership program; Margie Powell receives a Liberty Bell Award and is congratulated by Judge Carmen Lopez.

TRANSITION
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

innovator, and gatherer of critical data that can be used to help shape public policy at the local, state, and national levels. “We want to transform the way communities view their responsibility to youth who have been removed from their families and placed in foster care,” he said.

The initiative will support statewide and community-based efforts through grants, technical assistance, and coalition building. It will also help child welfare agencies and private organizations share best practices.

The Jim Casey Initiative has pilot initiatives for foster care teens in St. Louis, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Nashville, and Atlanta. Stangler expects the initiative to make grants in 15–20 states over the next three years and to operate in every state within five years.

Ruth Massinga, president and chief executive officer of Casey Family Programs, believes young people who have been in foster care should have a voice in everything from program design and evaluation to the allocation of resources. “As with any enterprise, you need to understand your customers and what their needs are,” she said.

For more information, go to www.jimcaseyyouth.org.

INSITES

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HELPING KIDS LEAVE FOSTER CARE SUCCESSFULLY

Young people aging out of foster care often leave poorly prepared for the adult world, and many fall victim to homelessness and other snares. When the Casey Foundation was looking for ways to help more foster kids gain work and academic experience, it turned to United Parcel

Service which had hired over 250 young people in one year under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. Casey began planning with UPS about how they could join forces.

Talmira Hill, a Foundation point person with expertise in youth workforce

Ali Brown, with case manager Michael Lee, at the UPS hub in Burtonsville, Md.

development, wanted to build on UPS' proven success. "Casey's approach has been to try to figure out what's already succeeding with young people and then get more vulnerable young people

connected to that,” said Hill, who believed the UPS School-to-Work Initiative could be expanded to meet the needs of young people in the foster care system.

A cross-disciplinary team of Casey staff members met with local UPS executive Kevin Garvey, Maryland Department of Human Resources officials, and local Department of Social Services representatives interested in securing jobs for young people in foster care. When the partners began scouting for an organization to convene meetings and help the team manage the initiative, Hill recommended the Living Classrooms Foundation, a community-based Casey grantee, headquartered in Baltimore, that later took on an added role providing case management services. Living Classrooms, UPS, and child welfare agencies became the leaders of a larger community collaboration called the School-to-Career Partnership. Vince Griffith was hired by Living Classrooms to manage the Partnership and later spearheaded the case management component. Casey Family Services’ Baltimore Division also became involved in the Partnership and has played a key role in referring young parents.

There is true collective management—not just on paper but in practice, said Hill. “All of the partners, including a private-sector organization, a community-based youth organization, and the public sector, sit at the table monthly to do our decision-making and planning.” Borrowing from the experience of Casey and UPS, the team adapted tools to permit the partners to measure progress in hiring, retention, cost, and career development.

The initiative began at UPS’ Burtonsville, Maryland hub three years ago. To date, more than 100 carefully prepared young men and women, most in foster care, have been hired as part-time package handlers. These strenuous, high-turnover jobs pay \$8.50–\$9.50 an hour and offer full benefits, including tuition reimbursement. But doing well requires mastering basic work skills and demonstrating a strong work ethic. The Partnership requires each young person to sign a contract agreeing to attendance and other professional standards and to study or be tutored at least

Talmira Hill, an expert in youth workforce development, is working with Kevin Garvey and Vince Griffith to expand and adapt the School-to-Career Partnership for other locations. She recently founded an independent consulting firm.



ALL OF THE PARTNERS, including a private-sector organization, a community-based youth organization, and the public sector, SIT AT THE TABLE MONTHLY to do our decision-making and planning.

four hours a week. If they adhere to the contract, they are given free transport to and from work.

Each has a case manager to assist with work and personal issues—such as problems on the job, obtaining a GED or starting higher education, finding housing, and improving family relations—and help them make long-term employment plans. Besides talking frequently with their charges, case managers use computerized case notes and a database to track their progress and refer them to services they need.

The results have been impressive. Last year, Partnership youth stayed, on average, twice as long at UPS as other employees, had a much lower turnover rate, and a 92 percent attendance rate. At the same time, the Partnership spent only \$4,000–\$5,000 per employee, about one-third the cost of other national school-to-work efforts.

The Partnership has spread to two other UPS facilities in the Baltimore area and started working with the Marriott Hotels in Baltimore. UPS facilities in seven other cities—New York City, Oakland, San Diego, San Antonio, Hartford, Providence, and Portland, Maine—are being considered for expansion this fall, and other sites may follow.

THE CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE

Garvey said his involvement with the project has been one of the most rewarding experiences in his career at UPS.

“I’ve never had a higher level of satisfaction. I know that by using our businesslike ways and practices that have proven successful for so long, we can help improve opportunities for young folks in this country.”

“Workforce development systems in this country are broken,” said Garvey, a UPS community relations manager now on loan to the Casey Foundation. Most lag far behind actual market needs, he said.

“Workforce development in the past has always focused more on life skills training, like how to balance your checkbook, how to do a resume,” Garvey said. These are valuable skills, he noted, but what about getting to work on time? Learning to take criticism? Or to interact with your boss? Such things, he said, cannot be taught in a classroom; they have to be learned on the job or simulated. The Partnership strives to develop these attributes in young people through training sessions before hiring and the efforts of case managers. Furthermore, it treats the business needs of the employer, UPS, as equal to the employment needs of young people.

The TWO BIG THINGS

that have been missing from

workforce development are

QUALITY CONTROLS

and ACCOUNTABILITY.

No one’s held accountable

for a quality result.

The two big things that have been missing from many workforce development projects, said Garvey, are quality controls and accountability. In public programs, “no one’s held accountable for a quality result,” he maintained. By contrast, Garvey said, the Partnership’s workforce preparation is now such that “for every one and a half young folks we interview, one gets hired.” If a young person is not prepared to work, he or she is not referred for an interview.

By focusing on both career and character, the Partnership strives to set vulnerable young people “on a successful path toward a career of their choice,” Garvey noted.

ALI BROWN’S EXPERIENCE

Some new hires at UPS’ Burtonsville, Maryland hub quit in a day or two, others when the pace gets grueling. But Partnership hire Ali Brown of Baltimore, now 18, soldiered on, even when his crew was short-handed and he was “doing the job of two or three people.” Brown’s efforts were recognized, and he hoped to rise from hourly employee to supervisor.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Last spring, he grew discouraged at UPS, in part because of a difficult supervisor, and was ready to quit. He did not—mostly, he said, because of UPS case manager, LeeAnn Hernandez. She let him talk to his union representative and the hub manager. She also got him placed on two management-hourly committees that worked on employee retention and safety, where Brown demonstrated his leadership.

Brown said Hernandez continually told him, “Don’t give up. You’re going to be promoted. I know you are.”

His Living Classrooms case manager, Michael Lee, also bucked up his spirits. “Mike was always the one saying, ‘Just hang in there. Good things come in time,’” Brown recalled.

All the encouragement paid off. Brown was promoted to training supervisor, only the second individual in the Partnership to make it. He earns \$1,400 a month for 25 hours work a week. He gives \$200 a month to his grandmother, who has raised him since he entered foster care at age 8.



LeeAnn Hernandez

help others, he also had to learn that managers have to keep some distance from “hourlies.”

Nearly everyone he trains is older, some by 20 years. Some older people give him a hard time, but he loves his work. “I like to see people that I train be successful,” Brown said.

Lee said Brown’s promotion lit a fire under his peers at UPS and accelerated the efforts of several others to become supervisors. One was recently promoted.

Brown said training new hires has taught him patience and how to communicate with people. “I know you can talk to a person *this* way, but he won’t hear it *that* way,” he said. Inclined to

A CASE MANAGER’S VIEW



Michael K. Lee, 37, a Living Classrooms Foundation case manager in the Partnership, keeps in close touch with the nine young adults he oversees in the Partnership. He visits their workplaces and checks in with them and their supervisors. He meets them in his office. He goes to their homes and talks to them and their relatives.

“It takes six months just to get to know a young person,” Lee said.

Lee calls himself “a job and life coach.” As his clients work toward self-sufficiency,

there are few issues in their lives that do not involve him. He talks to them about the need to be on time to work and to communicate with caseworkers and supervisors. He accompanies them to agencies to obtain Social Security cards and drivers’ licenses. He helps them make career and academic plans. He guides them through the paperwork maze of applying to college and seeking financial aid. He even drives them to work if necessary.

Lee does not have to worry about some workplace issues, those handled by LeeAnn Hernandez, UPS’ experimental on-site case manager. The two talk regularly. “We’re sort of a tag team,” he said.

Lee also advises his charges on dealing with their foster parents and siblings. “A lot of times, we’re out there putting out little fires in young people’s lives,” he said, referring to age-old adolescent

conflicts with siblings and disputes with parents over limits and rules. Most are still teenagers, who are learning to master their impulses, delay gratification, save money, and plan ahead.

Lee does almost no paperwork. He uses a computer to record his case notes and the time he spends with clients. He said the system both keeps him updated on where a young person stands on various matters and keeps him accountable for spending his time wisely. He carries a laptop and cell phone, meant to keep him in the field rather than at his desk.

“I’m a teacher, a coach, brother, parent,” Lee observed. As such, he walks the fine line between assisting a young person and keeping him dependent. “We try to nurture them a little bit and also kick them a little bit,” he said, laughing. “It’s three steps forward, two steps back.”