

A publication sharing ideas and insights



Voice

Fall 2003 Volume Four Issue Two

A photograph of a man with a beard and a grey cap, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and work gloves. He is smiling and looking out a window while working on a wooden frame. The background shows a view of water and hills.

Building Life Skills

*Sharing the
Dream on National
Adoption Day*

*Building
Our World*

Learning Life Skills

*Computer
College Bound*



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Voice

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disadvantaged children in the United States. Started in 1976, Casey Family Services offers quality long-term and treatment foster care, post-adoption services, family reunification, family preservation, family advocacy and support, family resource centers, and assistance to young families and families affected by HIV/AIDS. The mission of Casey Family Services is to improve the lives of at-risk children and strengthen families and communities by providing high-quality, cost-effective services that advance both positive practice and sound public policy.

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From the Executive Director's Desk

Voice



Throughout this year, we have been giving a great deal of thought to the importance of helping to foster meaningful and lasting connections... between children and caring adults... adults and community resources... institutions and service agencies.

We know that children thrive in settings where they are surrounded by adults who nurture and care for them. We know that even the most fragile families do well when they can reach out and find services and resources. And we know that every young man or young woman who reaches the age of independence faces a future filled with promise, if there is some continuity of relationships, some connection with someone.

Everyone, whether in foster care or not, needs someone to care and a place to belong.

This summer, my wife, Aristi, and I had the honor of attending a wedding ceremony. It was a beautiful occasion, both poignant and significant because the bride was a young lady who had grown up in foster care with Casey Family Services.

Not only did she overcome challenges in her young life to successfully graduate from high school and college, but she also went on to graduate school. She is presently working in a child welfare agency in Massachusetts as a social worker.

As she said her wedding vows, she was surrounded by the many caring individuals who shared joy and pride in her accomplishments and her happiness. Present that day were two sets of foster parents, several birth relatives including her mom, and many, many friends including her social worker, Ginny O'Connell, and staff from the Department of Social Services.

That lovely and elegant celebration was a powerful testament to hope and possibility, and to the strength of supportive relationships.

We are all very proud of Michelle and very pleased to have watched her grow into such a wonderful and beautiful young adult.

Every child deserves the opportunity to dream of a future filled with happiness and hope.

It's up to all of us to do what we can to help make it happen.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Raymond L. Torres". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Raymond L. Torres

Casey Family Services Begins New Era of Community Engagement in New Haven

New Haven

After months of anticipation, Casey Family Services has completed the relocation of its administrative headquarters from Shelton, Connecticut, to 127 Church Street, New Haven. The 40,000-square-foot historic Exchange Building at the southwest corner of the City Green now houses the agency's executive offices as well as the new Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice and departments of field operations, finance, policy and planning, communications, human resources and IT. More than 40 administrative personnel are assigned to the new hub. In addition, the Foundation will be operating its small grants program from the location.

Through a careful and rigorous process, which benefited from the assistance of the mayor's office and other key New Haven officials, Casey considered several locations before choosing the venerable building at the corner of Church and Chapel streets as the ideal location.

The land bordering the southwest corner of the Green has been a prestigious location since 1638, when the founders of the New Haven Colony divided the town into nine squares. This particular parcel was given to Matthew Gilbert, deacon of the First Church (now Center Church) and the first deputy governor of the Colony.

Following the War of 1812 until the beginning of the Civil War, New Haven experienced unprecedented industrial and commercial growth. The Exchange Building became the first multi-story structure designed for commercial use in the city. It was built in 1832 as a four-story Greek Revival structure with identical facades on

Church and Chapel streets, two of the city's main thoroughfares.

Topping the building was a simple molded cornice, with a large, domed cupola rising from the roof at the center of the Church Street facade. In years to come, the Exchange Building remained the cornerstone of New Haven's business district.

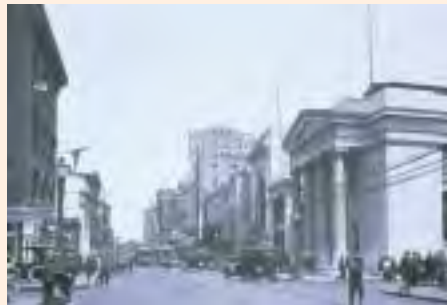


Photo taken between 1920 and 1939 captures businesses, including Connecticut Savings Bank (right), lining Church Street in downtown New Haven.

Several of the city's most prominent lawyers established offices in the building. Perhaps the occupant whose achievements are remembered best with great civic pride was Roger Sherman Baldwin, defender of the Amistad captives. The distinguished New Haven lawyer won their freedom in 1842 by proving that the Africans aboard the Amistad slave ship had been illegally brought to this country.

The building and the city changed. From a period of economic strength, it entered a period of decline, as did most other Eastern centers of commerce and manufacturing. But in the 21st century, the city finds itself in the midst of a revival which some have called a renaissance.

For Casey Family Services, the relocation to the Exchange Building and to the heart of the city represents a welcome and unprecedented opportunity to play a role in the city's growth. And while the proud edifice retains its original architectural grace, it also has been updated on the inside to accommodate the dynamic developing work of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, including Casey Family Services. A hallmark of the new interior is a magnificent semicircular staircase linking the three upper floors and accentuating the beauty of the cupola.

"We are eager to begin this new era of collaboration and partnership with the City of New Haven," Casey Family Services Executive Director Raymond Torres stated. "We are proud to become a part of a community served by civic-minded business and nonprofit institutions, a strong mayor, a police force committed to supporting the city's downtown, and a fully engaged university of the highest caliber," he continued. "Casey already has strong relationships with Connecticut Voice for Children, the Yale Child Study Center and Yale-New Haven Hospital's Children's Psychiatric Services," he noted, "and we look forward to expanding our network."

The mayor's office has been welcoming and supportive of Casey's arrival. At his invitation, Casey Family Services has co-sponsored the city's signature event, the New Haven Jazz Festival, for the past two years. The event attracts an audience of more than 30,000 Connecticut residents for each performance. Casey's participation also has included co-presenting a series of free neighborhood summer concerts and scholarships for inner city children to attend a summer jazz camp (see story on page 17).

National Adoption Day



Children celebrate National Adoption Day 2002 in Hartford, Connecticut.

National Adoption Day – November 22, 2003 – promises not only to mark a record number of adoptions of foster children, but also a growing national recognition that adoptions of these too-frequently-forgotten children should be easier and more frequent occurrences. Much has happened in the past year to bring this laudable goal closer to reality: Congress increased federal tax credits for adoptive parents to \$10,000; more than 3,000 foster child adoptions are expected by the end of the year in New York because of the efforts of a joint city-state task force to speed up the adoption process; and other states are encouraging low- and moderate-income families to adopt foster children by covering nonrecurring adoption expenses, medical assistance and social services. The business community also is joining the effort by offering their employees adoption assistance, medical and paternity leave and financial incentives.

“The National Adoption Day partners share a dream for foster children,” says Casey Family Services Executive Director Raymond Torres. “We want to help them find permanency and build long-term connections. Adoption can be a wonderful solution for many of these children.”

Casey joins its fellow National Adoption Day founding partners – The Alliance for Children’s Rights, Children’s Action Network, Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Freddie Mac Foundation and Target Corporation – to ensure this year’s celebration of foster child adoptions is the best yet.

Probate and family court judges in cities across the country will open their court-

houses November 22, to hundreds of children, parents, judges, volunteer lawyers, adoption professionals and child advocates. This special Saturday session will mark the completion of adoptions of more than 2,000 foster children.

Since 1987, the number of children in foster care has nearly doubled to more than 540,000 today. Of these children, one-fifth – 126,000 – are eligible for adoption. But if past history is any guide, fewer than 25 percent of these children will find an adoptive family before they turn 18.

The National Adoption Day Coalition, working as a powerful, unified voice on behalf of children who need permanent, loving families, has made this annual celebration the centerpiece of a yearlong information campaign highlighting the joys of adoption and encouraging individuals to form families through adoption.

Ultimately, the Coalition hopes its efforts will help develop a national culture in which:

- men and women considering parenthood give adoption, particularly adoption from foster care, the same consideration they give to the biological birth process;
- society joyfully anticipates and celebrates the forming of families through adoption in the same way it celebrates families formed biologically;

- adoptive families receive the attention and support they need before, during and after the adoption process;
- adopted children receive the same benefits and experience the same opportunities as other children;
- cooperation among the legal system, legislative system, social services system, private businesses, foundations, community organizations and individuals results in the best possible environment for children; and
- all children in the United States have safe and permanent families or home situations in which they are loved, nurtured and given every opportunity to succeed.

“We have set high goals for the National Adoption Day Coalition, but we know they are within our reach,” says Torres.

Angels in Adoption Celebration Honors Connecticut Family

The 2003 Congressional Angels in Adoption Awards Celebration, held in Washington, D.C., on September 30, recognized adoptive parents from 50 states for their work in improving the lives of children through adoption. Among those honored were Anthony and Jacqueline Barrows of Coventry, Connecticut. Nominated by U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.), the Barrows adopted their Casey foster son Coady, now age 12, when he was 7. The Barrows, who take part in Casey’s Post-Adoption Services Program in Hartford, Connecticut, have continued as Casey foster parents as well. The Angels event is an annual celebration sponsored by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

'Building Our World' Conference Exposes Youth to Real World Situations

The academic halls of Bentley College, nestled in the mountains of Massachusetts, were the ideal setting for Casey Family Services to host its second agencywide youth conference, which carried the theme "Youth Building Our World" and focused on the challenges today's young adults face as they transition out of foster care and into independent living.

Nearly 100 Casey teens between the ages of 15 and 19 gathered for the two-day event. University of Oklahoma's National Resource Center for Youth Services served as consultant, providing a program format, which included a "fictitious" city to give participants a glimpse of the costs and complexities of moving out on their own, as well as life skills exercises and workshops.

A youth steering committee consisting of 18 youth representing all Casey divisions was also extensively involved, handling everything from selecting the keynote speaker and developing workshop titles to creating storefront names and choosing menu items. During the event, committee members manned registration tables, served as workshop monitors and introduced speakers.

Casey Executive Director Raymond Torres opened the event with an encouraging speech to the foster youth. "There is no way to prepare completely for the adventures you'll encounter in the future, but the intent of this conference is to be able to offer some opportunities to look at what happens in the real world and ways of addressing them."



THE CONFERENCE FOCUSED ON THE CHALLENGES TODAY'S YOUNG ADULTS FACE AS THEY TRANSITION OUT OF FOSTER CARE AND INTO INDEPENDENT LIVING.

A panel of Casey alumni then shared their experiences, insights and suggestions. "As alumni we have seen difficult times, but most importantly we have overcome them," said Tammy, panel moderator.

Lori, a young single mother, who has been with Casey since the age of 9, talked about her struggles raising a child, going to college part time and holding a part-time job.

Meanwhile, Derek, who also was placed in a Casey foster home at the age of 9, today attends college, speaks two languages and is learning a third. "Stay focused," he

advised the youth, "and always be proud of where you're from and who you are."

Later in the day, youth began their journey through "Success City," a simulated downtown complete with storefront stations that represented utility companies with creative names like *Plug It In*, to insurance agencies like *Rest Easy Insurance*, to financial institutions such as *Casey Family Savings* and *Cash & Carry*. The city also included rental centers, child care providers, and real estate agents, as well as department stores.

Each participant was provided information on their job, salary and savings and given a passport to be used for identification when visiting different businesses. Youth then had to visit either *Mug Shots* or *Picture This* to obtain a Polaroid photo of themselves, which was affixed to the passport. Participants competed for the highest number of stamps, collected from "proprietors" at each storefront.

Success City challenged the youth in making decisions about how they might live on their own, with questions arising such as: "Should I obtain insurance before renting an apartment?" "How do I obtain a checking account?" "Can I afford cable television along with the electric and water bills?" Together, roommates learned how to find an affordable apartment, budget their money, negotiate with each other and communicate with adults in the community. Wherever possible, actual employees from local businesses served as proprietors,

LIFE

'Youth Building Our World'

teaching the teens, while also learning about the needs of foster youth.

Sixteen-year-old Dan, from Hartford, Connecticut, who was recently adopted by his foster parents, found he has a new appreciation for what they go through every day. "I give credit to my parents because it's a lot harder than people think ... like me and my roommate, even our



Volunteer "insurance agents" helped Casey youth Marta purchase insurance coverage.

At *Cozy Casas* a youth asked a potential landlord if he could apply for an apartment if he didn't have a checking account yet. At *Rest Easy Insurance*, two youth learned they had to buy separate rental insurance policies, since they were not married and had different last names. Meanwhile, two female roommates discovered that water and electricity were included in their rent after they had already signed up and paid for both. With receipts in hand, they returned to the utility company requesting a full refund.

"They're taking this so seriously," laughed Donna Reulbach, a Casey consultant. "They really want that refund."

Meanwhile, a crowd of a dozen youth waited patiently at *Cash Connection*, where bank representatives, including Anna Williams, Baltimore division director, guided them in setting up checking and savings accounts and with balancing a checkbook.

In addition to learning life skills and meeting new friends, the conference provided some youth with time to themselves.

Nikita, a 20-year-old single mother, said, "I feel like a kid again. I can be myself."

The evening closed on a lively note with Efraim Silva and Ginga Brasileira Dance Company performing and recruiting youth to the stage to practice Capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art dance. The group also performed Maculele, a dance involving the use of sticks.

A talent show followed with several youth reading poems they had written, performing dances, and singing. Former foster youth George Duval served as motivational speaker and comedian during breaks.

"I'm learning that life is hard, really hard, especially if you're not making much money."

The second day provided youth the opportunity to attend workshops, including "Don't Believe the Hype, Success is in Your Hands," which taught youth different ways to build their self-esteem, along with how to make good decisions, how to define their values and identify simple ways to

Signing up for water service was part of the "journey" toward independent living.



Casey Youth Conference participants got a taste of a campus setting at Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts.

combined income wasn't enough to pay for an apartment."

The conference was an eye-opening experience for Kelly, a 17-year-old youth from Hartford. "I'm learning that life is hard, really hard, especially if you're not making much money."

The afternoon event was filled with lighter moments, as well. "Why are we going to get cable?" one roommate asked the other. "We don't have water or electricity yet."

SKILLS

The conference's program format included a "fictitious" city to give participants a glimpse of the costs and complexities of moving out on their own, as well as life skills exercises and workshops.

take responsibility and increase their earning potential by increasing their value. In "Career Choices," youth had the opportunity to identify a career they'd like to pursue, understand its benefits and educational requirements, and figure out how to get started toward their goal and overcome potential barriers.

Youth were able to share their personal experiences in foster care and receive feedback from other foster youth as well as Casey alumni during the workshop "Telling Your Story."

"To the social workers at Casey you're not just a case, you're a person ... they don't judge you, they just try to help you out," said one youth from Vermont.

"I refuse to go on social services," said another youth. "I have a lot of dreams ... it's just going to take me a longer time to get there. A lot of my friends don't see my visions, they don't understand." After describing the young single mother's struggles to pay for everyday necessities like groceries and diapers, another foster youth tried to lighten the mood and asked, "You were eating Spam?" Responding with a tissue in hand and wiping away tears, the mother laughed and said, "No, it was worse than that."

A 17-year-old youth described what Casey has meant to him. "When my grandmother died, my life just went downhill," he said, his head hanging low, his eyes on his sneakers. "I started drinking, getting into



The hard work of navigating through the simulated city was offset by hours of relaxed interaction and entertainment, here provided by the rousing Efraim Silva and Ginga Brasileira Dance Company.

trouble. ... Casey is like my father. I never had a father. Casey has been with me every step of the way and I know that if Casey believes in me ... then I can go anywhere in this world." He paused and added, "I want to be the second person in my family to go to college."

The conference wrapped up with an impassioned speech by the keynote speaker, Shane Salter, a former foster child, who today is Chief of Staff in the Executive Office of the Deputy Mayor in Washington, D.C. After sharing his journey living in multiple foster homes and residential facilities, separated from his

younger brother, Salter talked about the importance of acknowledging one's pain but also "turning that pain into triumph."

After all, he said, his life was the perfect example. "Who would have ever expected that this abused, abandoned, repeatedly rejected child would end up being a chief of staff in the office of the Mayor of D.C.?"

His life changed, he said, when he realized he needed to make the effort. At 16 years old and living in yet another foster home, he decided that he had only two years left to turn around his life before he'd be living independently. For the remaining two years of high school he studied hard, he said, and graduated as valedictorian. He went on to college, joined the Navy, later married and today is the father of seven children, four of whom he adopted out of foster care.

Salter ended his speech to a tearful crowd of youth, who seemed to look more empowered with every word he spoke. "There's no telling what you're going to be able to contribute ... I have no doubt that anyone of you could be the next president of the United States or that one of you might find the cure for AIDS. ... There's no telling the greatness you will achieve ... hold onto hope and know that within you lies the power to rise above all that you've been through."

BRINGING THE ‘YOUTH BUILDING OUR WORLD’ CONFERENCE TO FRUITION

The University of Oklahoma’s National Resource Center for Youth Services played a key role in bringing the “Youth Building Our World” conference to fruition.

Voice recently took the opportunity to speak with the Center’s Director, Peter Correia III. Correia is known nationally for his work in the area of youth transitioning from care.

VOICE: *What sparked your interest in working with children?*

CORREIA: I credit my parents for my interest in working with kids in foster care. They opened their home to a succession of foster children. My first job in the child welfare field was at the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Then I earned a masters degree



Taking time out for creative fun at the Casey Youth Conference.



Peter Correia III, director of the University of Oklahoma’s National Resource Center for Youth Services.

in social work from Boston University and was awarded a fellowship to work at the National Urban League in New York. I became very involved in policy, programs, advocacy issues.

VOICE: *When did you become involved in transitioning youth issues?*

CORREIA: In the early 1980s I returned to Boston to work at the Judge Baker Children’s Center. We provided training and technical assistance to programs for runaways. We knew youth were leaving shelters and foster care unprepared for life on their own. But at the time we didn’t know what to call it or how to help. We borrowed the Independent Living (IL) concept from programs for disabled youth and formed a network of foster care professionals who recognized the importance of teaching life skills. Before long, they were running an annual conference in

New England to share ideas with other service providers. In 1986, I brought the independent living initiative to the University of Oklahoma. The University had received a federal grant to form the first National Resource Center for Youth Services. Also, new federal legislation was requiring states to provide IL services to older foster children.

VOICE: *What services does the Center provide?*

CORREIA: We have a staff of about 70 people. This was the first Center in the country to receive funding to focus solely on dealing with youth issues in the child welfare system. We offer training and technical assistance to the states. We offer certification trainings. We work with staff in residential child care programs offering them certification courses. We provide independent living skills training, and in Oklahoma we actually train all the foster parents, all the kinship care parents and all the child welfare workers. Conferences are really only a snapshot of what we do.

VOICE: *What is a “hot” topic right now?*

CORREIA: One of the big issues we’re dealing with now is regarding the whole concept of permanency. We got so excited that we had independent living, but even when

“One of the big issues we’re dealing with now is regarding the whole concept of permanency... even when young people are independent they still need permanency.”

young people are independent they still need permanency. So we’ve been working with agencies to look at how we can keep kids connected. These connections could be to foster parents, to people in the community, to their biological parents. ... Sibling relationships are a big piece of it.

VOICE: “Building Our World” was based on a life skills simulation model. Why was this type of format chosen for Casey’s youth conference?

CORREIA: Using this model goes back to the philosophy in this organization that people learn better by doing. ... I’d like to see these conferences on a regional level, where local merchants and businesses can actually come in and staff the stations, so that the community can be exposed to these young people and hopefully that will

help foster a relationship down the road. The Center is also trying to do more partnerships with young people we’ve identified all over the country, contracting with them to help us with these teen conferences. We’d like to involve them more in a leadership capacity at the conferences as they are excellent role models for the other youth conference participants.

Knowledge

by Gene Cheatham, Casey youth

(Recited at the Casey Youth Conference talent show)

*If I can say the words of knowledge and know that they are true,
would you stand beside me or fall like you have no clue?*

*If I can read the words of knowledge would you hear what I have to say
or pleasantly cover your ears and walk away?*

*If I could taste the words of knowledge would I hunger for more
or run quickly out an open door?*

*If I could feel the words of knowledge would it be as warm as love
or as cold as ICE?*

*And I close by saying if knowledge is to show and if knowledge is to know and I have something to show,
then there’s no telling how far I can go.*

Remember “knowledge is power.”

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Casey Family Services Adopts a New Leadership Training Program

Supporting... Coaching... Delegating... Directing... D-1... D-4... these are increasingly familiar words heard, thought and acted upon in offices and meeting rooms throughout the Casey Family Services organization. They are the essence of the new Situational Leadership Training Program adopted during the past year, designed to develop, nurture and sustain the capabilities and talents of Casey management and staff.

The goal of this appropriately people-centered leadership training program is, quite simply, to enable both management and staff to reach their highest level of performance – and, in turn, assist the entire Casey organization to better achieve its mission: improving the lives of at-risk children and strengthening families and communities through high-quality, cost-effective services that advance positive practice and sound public policy.

“As the agency has grown over the years and people were promoted to supervisory positions, we realized we needed to more consistently promote sound leadership skills,” says Mary Ann Judge, manager of staff development and training at Casey headquarters.

The agency selected a world-renown program developed by The Ken Blanchard Companies to focus on “situational leader-



“As the agency has grown ... we realized we needed to more consistently promote sound leadership skills.”

ship” modalities – giving leaders the flexibility to select management techniques that are most appropriate to a particular task and a staff member’s experience level. “We often assume that people have a certain skill level – that if they are good at one thing, they will be good in all tasks. But an excellent caseworker may not have any experience presenting to the community or providing technical assistance. We need to recognize these differences and

The Situational Leadership grid helps managers determine the style of supervision that best matches the individual employee’s capabilities and needs.

manage accordingly,” explains Ann Sullivan, Casey deputy executive director of field operations.

Sullivan, who was instrumental in Casey’s adoption of the Blanchard leadership training system, learned firsthand in the 1980s how the program could help someone trained in the supportive culture of social work to accept the more directive responsibilities of management. “I thought it would be a helpful model and benefit the Casey organization,” she says.

The Blanchard program was implemented initially among Casey’s top-level administrators, and was then offered to divisional team leaders and administrative services coordinators. Judge says the training also will be integrated into the agency’s new employee orientation program. So far, more than 300 Casey employees have completed the two-day program, according to Sullivan.

In addition to offering a model for leading and developing people, the program promotes an atmosphere of full partnership as individuals – both supervisors and employees – learn to take responsibility for their own decision making and problem solving. Leaders come to recognize that they must provide their staff with clear goals, direction, support, training, feedback and recognition for their accomplishments. At

The goal of this appropriately people-centered leadership program is, quite simply, to enable both management and staff to reach their highest level of performance ...

Leadership

the same time, staff must recognize that their own behavior and approach to work will impact the style of leadership that is negotiated between supervisor and employee.

The end goal of the Situational Leadership Program is to help people become more self-directed, self-motivated and self-reliant – and in the process ensure that the most talented people remain with the organization. The program also is proving very useful in encouraging the highest performance among team members and in focusing and inspiring behavioral changes at the organizational level.

Response to the training has been largely positive, says Judge. “People tell me the techniques are practical and have sharpened their supervisory skills. The training concepts also help make their staff more responsible. They know that if they don’t speak up, we can’t help them.”

The program recognizes that supervisors naturally have a “preferred” style of management and gives them the tools to recognize when a different style is needed to maximize performance. Depending upon the task or job responsibility, all individuals – supervisors as well as staff – operate on a development scale ranging from low competence/high commitment (D-1) to high competence/high commitment (D-4).

Each employee’s developmental level requires a different style of supervision, ranging from S-1 (directing) to S-2 (coaching), S-3 (supporting) and S-4 (delegating). Effective leadership is usually a blend of these supervisory techniques, applied according to an employee’s developmental level at specific tasks.

The end goal of the Situational Leadership Program is to help people become more self-directed, self-motivated and self-reliant.

The intensive training sessions, coordinated by Blanchard trainer Calla Crafts, concentrate on learning how to identify different competency and motivation levels and then how to adapt supervisory styles to ensure optimum performance. Judge recalls that when she assumed her present position, she had no experience supervising others. A member of her staff also was new to her job. “We were both anxious. We were both D-1s. We learned together,” she says.

Sullivan recounts that when her supervisor gave her a special research project she was nervous. “I was an experienced social worker and administrator, but I hadn’t done any research since graduate school. I really needed step-by-step direction,” she says.

The Blanchard program teaches that rather than “boss,” supervisors must learn to “partner” with their staff, shifting easily

among supporting, coaching and even cheerleading roles to ensure accountability. This method opens communication, builds understanding and commitment for both the supervisor and staff member, and encourages taking responsibility for decision making and problem solving, Sullivan says, adding that Casey is fully committed to the program and plans to reinforce its lessons in future quarterly meetings with team leaders, and integrate it into performance evaluations.

“One of the most important tasks of any organization is effective communication. This task becomes even more complex in an agency like Casey that has grown so rapidly over the past 10 years,” says Sullivan. “We have 16 sites with a large number of new staff and team leaders. We know that one of the most important factors in retaining people is the relationship they have with their supervisor. This program gives us a common language and approach to building effective communication, identifying developmental needs and creating supportive leaders.”

An Artist in Progress

by Jim Dwyer

Over the past two years, I've had the opportunity to work with a remarkable young artist. Ratna Pappert, who grew up in foster care in New Hampshire and Vermont, and now lives in California, where she is molding her future as a professional artist and teacher, has what I've come to recognize as characteristic courage and resolve. Our relationship has grown over the miles as she and I have worked together to produce Casey Family Services' annual holiday card. Her work also appears each year to open the month of December in the Casey Calendar.

And I have seen amazing growth in her work during this time. In a long distance telephone conversation recently, when we were taking the first steps toward planning our next project, I took the opportunity to find out more about Ratna Pappert, an "artist in progress," as she calls herself.

I ask Ratna about her earliest memories of being an artist. "I remember doing drawings and paintings when I was five and six years old, not just in school but also at home," she explains. "My grandmother gave me an artist's kit for Christmas. My mom kept one of my early paintings for a long time. I think she may still have it," she pauses to think. "It had these odd-shaped horses and a guy who was in charge of them. I had fun doing things like that, things that I made up."

That fun soon turned into a vision of her destiny. In the fifth grade, she didn't miss a beat when asked what she wanted to be when she grew up: "An artist, an actor and a singer!" she responded emphatically.

For Ratna, art in one form or another was a familiar part of life in those young years. Her mother majored in music when she

Ratna's art has taken many directions. She is a skilled puppet maker, writer, actor and fine artist, in addition to her favored medium at this time: comics.

was in school, she explains, but for some reason, Ratna recalls, her mother stayed away from doing art herself.

"I always remember calling her an artist," Ratna tells me. "So she must have done more than she remembered."

Like many children who end up in foster care, Ratna's childhood was not an easy one. "We were very poor," she remembers. "We didn't have a camera, so sometimes when there was a school play my mom would go and draw pictures of the kids in different scenes. She would give them to the teacher who made copies for people.

"One time our class was doing some fundraising for some project, and my mom did some drawings of plants, which were made into cards for us to sell," she says. "Art and music were always part of my life.

I grew up in an Eastern religion with a lot of yoga, meditation and singing involved.

"But there was also singing at potluck dinners with family and friends. Music was always a way to connect to people. My interest in acting started because I found it easy to memorize lines. But now the idea of acting as storytelling relates to my present artwork," she continues but then stops. "I don't think I realized that until I just said it," she says with a hint of delighted surprise.

Ratna's art has taken many directions. She is a skilled puppet maker, writer, musician, actor and fine artist, in addition to her favored medium at this time: comics. I am curious to know if there were encouraging mentors who helped her find and explore these different dimensions of her talent. "I think I had a number of mentors," she replies quickly. "As a person or as an artist?" I ask.

She replies that her first mentoring was as a person. "I was raised by a single mom who had post-traumatic stress disorder among other things," she explains. Despite her affliction, she was a strong influence whenever she could be, Ratna says. "And I felt like I made a family out of people in my environment – a patchwork of parents.

"My mom didn't always have the same vision of reality as everyone else, but in her there is also a strong determination. I think that sometimes shows up in my behavior too," she says. "But sometimes I'm nervous

Ratna's Hansel and Gretel "self-help" comic illustrates the idea that sometimes the child takes care of the parent.



about doing work for other people, because I'm afraid that I might lose part of myself, even though I need the money to live on."

Her words remind me of my own career in the arts. Ideally, all creative people are trying to get to where, occasionally, although we may give away more than we get, we also get more and learn more than we expected. Ratna agrees, but acknowledges that for her the journey has not been easy.

"One of my memories is that when I was growing up we were on welfare," she says. "My mother was a volunteer coordinator of a food bank. We saw people coming in who had a lot more money than we did but were temporarily on hard times. I saw my mother



Ratna Pappert is a musician and an artist.

“I think that my journal writing along with the drawings that I added to it are the root of the comics I do today ... I think I’m looking for truth and meaning in whatever I do now.”

An Artist in Progress

giving and giving and not getting what she needed. I became afraid that I might be like that and not realize it was happening to me.”

I wonder how such a young person had been able to acquire this much awareness of herself and the ability to express herself as well. “I think that my journal writing along with the drawings that I added to it are the root of the comics I do today,” she comments. “I also saw that I could show these private things to other people – even to those who the writings and drawings were about – and that no one turned on me. I discovered that writing was a safe place to put my feelings, and even if I couldn’t tell others the personal truth in the moment, they could probably handle it in writing.”

It occurs to me that she is in a process of a continuing transition, and I ask her about that. She replies that sometimes she pictures herself swimming out beyond familiar water with some companions. “One by one they say, ‘This is as far as I’m comfortable going,’ and they turn back. But, something compels me to go farther,” she adds. “There’s something out there that I need. So even though it’s scary, I go on alone.”

Perhaps one of the most difficult things any artist faces is the rejection of his or her work, in whatever form that rejection comes. Yet, in order to support oneself, especially in this economy, you have to sell what you create. “Is that especially difficult to do now?” I ask Ratna.

“This is a new experience for me, really putting myself out there,” she admits. “You know that Casey Family Services has been my main source of published work. Until now, other clients have just happened to come upon my artwork. But I’m doing more research now about how to get more exposure in the art market. In the beginning, I felt that if I worked hard enough and loved the work, eventually, the money for it would come. Now I think that loving the work gives you the energy to do it, but it’s another process to find the money to do it. So now I feel that I need to support my art when, perhaps, it can’t support me.”

I remind her that all great artists over time have had patrons. “Talk about patrons,” she jumps in. “When I first moved out West – to Portland, Oregon – Casey Family Services helped me with financial and transitional support. I lived with my foster family after college. Talk about people being supportive.

“My foster mother and father really encouraged my art,” she continues. “I remember singing with my foster father in the church choir. When some adults asked me, ‘So have you gotten a job yet?’ I shamefacedly answered, ‘No.’ My foster father interrupted and said, ‘Yes, she just isn’t being paid yet.’ That’s been a real touchstone for me, giving me confidence when mine gets low.”

Whether it’s tarot cards, which she does beautifully, or comics, this artist is very concerned about the meaning of her art beyond what it initially appears to be.

“There’s something very appealing to me about the idea that who you may think is the adult is the kid, and who you may think is the kid is really the adult,” she reveals.

“Maybe that’s a concept that foster kids have in common – the parent isn’t always fully adult enough to care for the kid, so the kid has to care for the parent.”

For her, comics have become a form of self-help. “In my mind, I call them self-help comics,” she says. “I was reading a book called *Growing Up Again*. It’s about the issues of adoption. A lot of the issues are true of foster children as well. One of the ideas discussed was that the child will take care of the parent so that the parent can take care of the child. This concept is included in the Hansel and Gretel comics I did. I think I’m looking for truth and meaning in whatever I do now.”

What does the future hold? This fall, Ratna begins a new career as an art adviser and instructor at a new charter school in the San Francisco area. She also is dedicating herself to developing stories about foster care that are based on fairy tales. And she’s exploring film animation. “Storytelling has always been my driving force,” she shares. You can hear the smile in her voice.

Jim Dwyer has been a creative director/designer to numerous national corporations and institutions for more than 25 years. He has been a university professor and has worked on a curriculum for younger artists. This is his second year serving as creative director and designer of Casey Family Services’ calendar.



Connections

Art Workshops Bring New Meaning to “Connections”

This year, children from the Bridgeport, Baltimore and Maine divisions participated in several art workshops, in part, to help produce Casey Family Services' 2004 calendar, which carries the theme of "Connections." Jim Dwyer, who designed the calendar, guided groups of children into developing colorful, creative artwork that has been incorporated into the calendar. Children's artwork from other Casey divisions also was included. The Casey Calendar is now in its 10th year of production and continues to be a favorite among families and professionals alike.

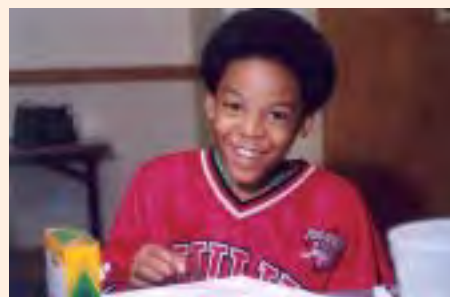
Dwyer led three six-hour art workshops for the children in each division. In addition to children enrolled in Casey programs, participants included children from the community.

"The art lessons I thought would be most beneficial concerned observation skills: looking at something and seeing its essence, its special being. 'Now, draw what you see, not what you think is there.' I believe that this essential awareness training is basic to all art and also to all sensitive appreciation of this bio-diverse planet. The kids looked, drew, and looked again," explains Dwyer.

The children produced art depicting different seasons, different plants and animals, and different landscapes, as well as different views of the world in various sizes, shapes and colors. "These drawings represent their broader definition of 'connections,'" says Dwyer. "In following lessons I wanted to move from observation to imagination. We experimented with brainstorming ideas and details. As they moved beyond the obvious, I saw their confidence grow and their imaginations

engage. We discussed being different and thought about the essence of things. I brought in illustration manuals that showed samples of hundreds of professional illustrators.

"During the workshops, we talked about being aware of things that were similar and of things that were unique and decided that our unique views are what make us special." The result? Wonderful, thought-provoking art pieces that make viewers think of "connections" in a different light.



Clockwise from top: Art Instructor Jim Dwyer shares a creative approach to expressing the essence of "connections" with a student in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Other young artists proudly display the results of three days of concentrated effort.



FOSTERING OPPORTUNITY

Capitol Hill

by Bree Hocking

Excerpted and adapted from an article published earlier this year in Roll Call.

Despite her perfectly coiffed appearance and confident mien, University of Maryland senior Shalita Savoy hardly fits the profile of the typical Capitol Hill intern.

The 20-year-old Savoy, one of eight former foster children taking part in the inaugural Congressional Foster Youth Internship Program, endured more than her share of heartache and abuse from her earliest days in the Baltimore projects. ...

For eight years, Savoy remembers unending physical, mental and emotional abuse. ... When she was 13, she went to live with a cousin, then bounced from foster care to a group home before enrolling at the University of Maryland at College Park.

"Everyone expected me to do just like my cousins: go to jail, [be involved in] prostitution, have babies," said Savoy, a criminology major who plans for a career as a forensics technician.

"Looking at the surroundings and seeing what was around me – I used that as fuel to do better, because I knew I could do better," added Savoy, [who spent her summer as an intern] for Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.).



The 2003 Congressional Foster Youth Internship program participants gathered outside of Hart Senate Office Building during their first day of orientation in June. Clockwise: Jackie Hammers, Jason Tollestrup, Jelani Freeman, Luis Carmody, Lee Klejnot, Thomas Woodfin, Lisa Foehner, seated: Shalita Savoy.

Helping Kids in Need

Co-sponsored by the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) and the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCIA), the Congressional Foster Youth Internship Program traces its provenance to OFA's OLIVER Project, which since 1994 has brought foster youths to Washington annually for 10-day stints to discuss foster care issues with members and policymakers.

"It was born out of frustration. There were all these wonderful kids and nobody ever talked about them," recalled Eileen McCaffrey, executive director of OFA, a group dedicated to easing the transition to adulthood for foster children.

"I naively thought if I brought them to Washington, people would take notice, and that turned out to be true," she added.

Last year, OFA, which facilitates a number of scholarships for foster youths, teamed up with CCIA to bring two interns to Congressional offices, a move which proved particularly auspicious in furthering the goals of both organizations.

"Their role is to make the issue real for Congress and our role is to give kids a voice, so it's the perfect marriage," McCaffrey said of the OFA-CCAI partnership.

This year, the program got its official kick-off when eight former foster youths, all in their early 20s, were selected from a national pool of nearly 40 applicants.

"Our real goal is next year to grow it to three kids from every state," McCaffrey said.

The cost of the program, which averages \$12,000 per intern, is partially financed by the Dave Thomas Foundation, which underwrote 50 percent of the total cost this year, or \$50,000.

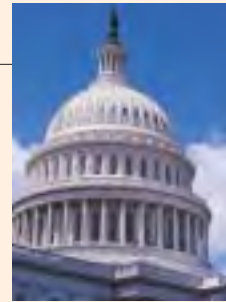
An additional pledge by a major corporate sponsor is in the process of finalization, according to McCaffrey.

Prior to the start of the internship, the students toured Senate and House offices and received pointers on everything from workplace etiquette to punctuality and partisanship during a day-long Capitol Hill orientation.

The interns, housed at Catholic University for the duration of the six-week program, also participated in a variety of activities – ranging from a day at Camden Yards to more substantive offerings, such as Congressional briefings on adoption issues and a meeting with the White House's national spokesperson for children in foster care, actor Bruce Willis.

“Nothing is going to give [Congress] the education that they need to have [more] than these kids who have the experiential knowledge.”

Interns



First-Day Jitters

Luis Carmody huddled around a table in a makeshift byway of Rep. Jim Cooper’s (D-Tenn.) fifth-floor Longworth House Office Building space, pouring over procedural papers on the state congressman’s volunteer constituent-mail operation.

It was his first day on the job, and already the 23-year-old intern had gotten a taste for the seat of powers’ bureaucratic inefficiencies.

“It took us about a half-hour for them to tell me to come back tomorrow,” Carmody said of his attempt to get a Congressional photo ID that morning.

Carmody is no stranger to the vagaries of federal bureaucracy, however. In his five years in the foster care system, he was in six different foster homes and one hospital, before his eventual adoption by an assistant U.S. attorney in Boston.

He has harsh words for a system so out of touch with its clients it once assigned him a Spanish-speaking social worker because he is half Puerto Rican (Carmody does not speak Spanish). “Severely abusive homes,” where malnourishment and physical violence predominated, were *de rigueur*, he said. By the time he was 11, Carmody weighed just 49 pounds.

Today with his future looking increasingly bright, Carmody nervously anticipated a summer spent learning the ways of the corridors of power.

“The biggest thing I’m worried about is meeting the Congressman,” admitted Carmody, a double major in psychology and communications at Massachusetts’

Curry College. “He’s a Rhodes Scholar ... [and] I don’t want to sound like an idiot.”

When he finally crossed paths with Cooper a few days later, Carmody said he felt immediately at ease.

“He was a nice guy,” said Carmody. “I just shook his hand [as] he was running out to a vote.”

Congressional Allies

“They really get it,” McCaffrey said of the lawmakers chosen to participate in the internship program. In March, CCAI and OFA sent notices to all Congressional offices; the first eight to respond were selected for the program. Most who answered the call are already part of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, a bipartisan group of members affiliated with CCAI who aim to improve adoption policy and practice.

“Nothing is going to give them the education that they need to have [more] than these kids who have the experiential knowledge,” observed CCAI Executive Director Kerry Marks Hasenbalg.

“I think it’s a vitally important way to increase the awareness of lawmakers not only [of] these people as individuals but also the system as a whole,” agreed participating Rep. Cooper, a member of the Democratic Task Force on Children, who said he just recently became aware of the state of the nation’s more than half a million youths in foster care after discovering a friend had been a former foster child.

“Both political parties are brain dead when it comes to good solutions to these problems,” asserted Cooper, referring to reports of chronic mismanagement and neglect in the foster care system.

While most members were randomly matched with students, where possible, assignments were made based on state affiliation.

Twenty-two-year-old New Yorker Jelani Freeman said when he got word he would be working for Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) it was “a dream come true.”

“I love her. I’ve always loved her,” the Georgia State University graduate student gushed, noting that he just missed shaking his political heroine’s hand at a University of Buffalo town hall meeting during his undergraduate days.

“I guess this kinda makes up for it,” he grinned.

In addition to those already mentioned, the 2003 Congressional foster youth interns and their assigned offices included: Jason Tollestrup, Sen. Larry Craig (R-Idaho); Lisa Foehner, Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.); Jackie Hammers, Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa); Thomas Woodfin, Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mich.); and Lee Klejnot, Deborah Pryce (R-Ohio).

SPECIAL DELIVERY



by Susan J. Siersma

Amber Lynn loved to read and sing to her younger sister, Crystal, and she also enjoyed watching NASCAR racing with her dad. Because United Parcel Service (UPS) sponsors driver Dale Jarrett, Amber's favorite commercial for the "big brown truck" would frequently appear during the races. Whenever she spotted the brown delivery truck in her neighborhood, Amber Lynn would squeal, "Mommy, Mommy, look – the big brown truck!" and a wide smile would cross her face. For Amber, watching for the delivery truck had become a daily routine. When the precious 4-year-old died from complications of Byler's disease (a rare liver ailment), her family and friends were distraught. Her grandmother contacted UPS and related to them Amber's story.

Tim, a UPS employee, responded to the call. On the day of her burial, Tim parked his big brown delivery truck directly in front of the funeral parlor. He quietly walked toward Amber's casket and rever-

A model big brown truck arrived for Crystal. It was a surprise gift from Sue, a driver for UPS.

ently placed inside it a UPS teddy bear and a model of the big brown truck that Amber Lynn had loved so dearly. Then he said, "These are for Crystal," as he presented to Amber's parents a company pen and stuffed doggie. As he walked back down the aisle, Amber's parents watched tears slowly roll down Tim's face. He drove the big brown truck in the funeral procession to the cemetery. Upon Amber's grave, Tim placed a small box with a rose on top and Crystal was told, "This special box is for you. It is filled with hugs, kisses and love from your big sister Amber."

A few days after the funeral, Sue, another UPS driver, delivered a model big brown truck to Amber's family for Crystal. Sue would accept no payment for this special delivery but instead she simply replied, "I can afford it; this is something I want to do." Now Crystal would have a model big brown truck to play with just like the one her big sister Amber would be playing with in heaven.

Dale Jarrett heard about Amber's story, and he sent a beautiful bereavement message to her family. But he did more than

that. Dale pinned Amber's picture to the dashboard of his car, and as he drove laps around the track during a fall NASCAR race, the national audience saw Amber's sweet face flash across the television screen. They listened as the NASCAR announcer told how Amber Lynn's kidneys were donated to two different children. And they learned of another precious child (somewhere in Ohio) who sings and reads with the heart of Amber Lynn beating inside her. Amber Lynn became an organ donor so that others might live; now all would know.

To Amber's family, Dale Jarrett had delivered more than a winning performance. And Tim and Sue had delivered more than packages. They delivered love.

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Casey Supports Young Musicians In New Haven

Jazz Camp

As Casey Family Services settled into its new headquarters in New Haven this fall, the echo of summer music marked the new beginning as part of the growing city.

In addition to its annual sponsorship of the New Haven Jazz Festival and concerts in the parks, Casey also has made a significant contribution to the community by supporting the Neighborhood Music School's summer Jazz Camp.

Through a grant matched by Yale University, Casey helped make it possible for a number of young musicians with limited means to attend the camp, which offers beginning, advanced and master classes and workshops. The four-day program embraces all kinds of jazz styles, and students can play in everything from small ensembles to big bands with experienced jazz teachers as well as fellow students. The total number of camp attendees this year was about 60.

Neighborhood Music School (NMS) is among the 10 largest community arts schools in the United States, and the largest in the state of Connecticut. A not-for-profit institution founded in 1911, the school offers high-quality instruction in music, dance and theater. Its mission is to make its programs accessible to people of all ethnic backgrounds and economic circumstances. Supported by financial aid and community outreach programs, NMS serves more than 3,000 individuals of all ages and levels of experience.

Casey and NMS connected through the New Haven Office of Cultural Affairs, says Jane Christie, the school's director of advancement, "because of our common interest in young people, effective community outreach programs and cultural expression."



Together with Yale University, Casey Family Services supports scholarships for city children attending jazz camp.

Over the years, the camp's focus has expanded to include younger kids, as well as teens and adults who've never played jazz before, Christie explains. "It's a real intergenerational mix that includes everyone from seventh graders to seniors in their 80s."

An important community partnership

"Our partnership with Casey means a lot, since many kids wouldn't otherwise be able to take advantage of the camp," says Jesse Hameen, the school's coordinator of jazz studies. Hameen, who not only has taught music for years but also has recorded and performed with many of jazz's greatest musicians, says it's all part of supporting the community through music.

"This camp is unique because it's so hands-on," Hameen says. It's not just about theory, we play and listen a lot; whatever level, we make students comfortable so we can maximize skills and the pleasures of music," he adds. "All ensembles perform on the last night to demonstrate new skills, and we keep in touch with players after camp to see how they have retained and applied what they learned."

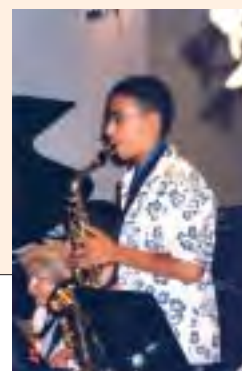
For Bryan Applegate, a high school student who plays guitar, bass and banjo, the financial assistance he has received has enabled

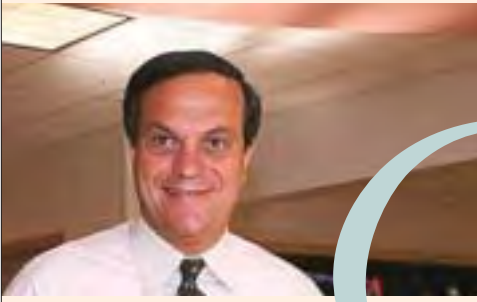
him to attend the school and the camp for the last few years. "I learned that I've got a lot to learn," he says with a chuckle. "I'm learning to be a good musician, and the camp lets me play and experiment."

Xavier Evans, a 17-year-old drummer who will major in music at Gateway College in New Haven this fall, started with the music school 13 years ago. "It's given me a chance to meet new people, learn about different kinds of jazz – hip-hop, Latin, swing, you name it – and play music I've never played before. It's really awesome." The school and camp, he adds, "has given me a whole new outlook on music and life."

Evans, who began taking percussion lessons to help him deal with attention deficit issues that prevented him from attending regular school as a youngster, is also part of the camp's new mentor program. As a mentor, he and Bryan Applegate will be among a handful of veteran campers helping younger participants.

The city of New Haven, NMS and Casey are seeing how jazz programs can help New Haven not only build on its formidable reputation as a music hub, but also support under-served youth, says Christie. In addition to the camp, there are Saturday jazz concerts on the city's main green and summer lunch-time concerts (known as "Blues, Berries and Jam") at which some camp participants have played.





JOHN DESTEFANO

Close-Up

*John DeStefano
Mayor, City of New Haven
President, National League of Cities*

VOICE: How do the issues that New Haven is addressing reflect the challenges of other cities in the United States today?

MAYOR DESTEEFANO: New Haven is a gateway community. It is a port of entry, made up of people who have newly arrived in America and who may feel isolated. There is a constant mix of people who have different issues in their lives.

The economy in New Haven has moved toward becoming a service economy, as is the case in many other cities. In a service economy the jobs are primarily in the service sector, and are often low in pay. People who work in this group often struggle to



*The Green in New Haven.
(Photo by Bill O'Brien)*

make ends meet and have only happenstance access to health benefits. We often see them through different programs that address their issues in a variety of ways – not always connected. We need to look at all these programs and see how we can be more effective.

VOICE: What makes New Haven similar or different from other cities you have come to know through your work on a national level?

MAYOR DESTEEFANO: There are cities that are newer in America and are characterized by an excess of resources, especially land. Filling their available space becomes a question of identity: Who does that city want to be?

New Haven is an example of another kind of city: one that has been fully built, in this case for the past 100 years. We're defined by the character and history of both the state and city. There are decisions that have been in place for a long time that govern where people can live and what they can do within the city.

I look at it as a matrix. Those cities that have experienced a wave of new immigrants who serve the economy and provide energy and new ideas have done very well. Those communities that have room to grow have done well.

Certainly, New Haven is challenged because of its age. But economic growth and wealth accumulation will be created. We have a comparative advantage in that our largest employer is a research institution – Yale University. It is one that grows ideas and knowledge.

VOICE: How have you addressed the particular challenges in New Haven?

MAYOR DESTEEFANO: For us, it is about choice and tolerance, founded on a philosophical value of investment in each other over time.

In a place like New Haven it's a constant continuing movement together in how to leverage the greatest impact of our work on behalf of individuals and families. We can't save everybody nor is it the city's job to do so.

A lot of my focus is on how to leverage children's issues. For example, in New Haven, the city government works very closely with the School Board. We see a great deal of impact and potential in this area. Working with children, through the schools, is the nexus of our work. Today we have 20 school-based health clinics that provide either direct services or access to services.

VOICE: Does your vision for the city include Early Childhood Development?

MAYOR DESTEEFANO: I am focusing on the early childhood program. In the past 10 years we have seen the numbers of children prepared to enter kindergarten go from 50 percent to 82 percent. It's a value judgment we have made. We must continue to seek to reach kids earlier. The evidence is clear that if kids enter kindergarten behind, then they'll still be behind when they reach high school.

In September 2003, Casey Family Services relocated its administrative offices to the city of New Haven, Connecticut, an urban center enjoying what many have called a renaissance as a cultural and economic center, even while continuing to face some of the region's most challenging issues of poverty and economic isolation among its low-income and increasingly diverse population.

Recently Voice had the opportunity of speaking with John DeStefano, the Mayor of New Haven for the past 10 years. Mayor DeStefano also serves as the current president of the National League of Cities.

VOICE: According to a recent census report, there are stark contrasts in the economic and social well-being among white, African American and Latino children in the state of Connecticut, especially its cities. What are your plans for reaching out to these communities?

MAYOR DESTEFANO: Issues of poverty now go hand in hand with single family head of households and minorities. My vision for the city includes, at its core, a focus on increasing the access of all families to opportunities and skills they need to build assets and accumulate wealth.

Through the Community Grants Program we've initiated, we hope to support our city neighborhoods by providing a wide range of help for programs, projects and events that deliver benefits to all families. The goal is to encourage and strengthen neighborhood programs and collaborations, bolster the economic viability of our neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for our citizens, while celebrating cultural awareness and diversity.

And through our work with Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC), we are finding a lot of families who are at the lower end of the financial ladder. This is a working pop-

ulation, but they lack access to banking. They are households who live day to day. They are people who have stable jobs, but low-level salaries.

VOICE: What are your goals for EITC and for helping families achieve economic success?

MAYOR DESTEFANO: We intend to increase the wealth of families, and in order to do that we need to accomplish one of the two great steps in the process: education and home ownership. In New Haven we want to super-size EITC, but that is only one tactic in an overall strategy. IDAs (Individual Development Accounts) and financial literacy, I think, will help to empower families.

EITC is good tax policy ... it rewards working. And in that it is similar to the middle class tax policy that rewards home ownership through tax deductions on mortgage interest and allows tax credits for education.

VOICE: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, including Casey Family Services, is part of a national campaign addressing the need for low-income families across the nation to participate in EITC, acquire financial literacy, and build assets through IDAs. From your perspective as head of the League of Cities, what are your thoughts about the importance of participating in such efforts?

MAYOR DESTEFANO: On a national level, people are being negatively impacted by huge federal deficits and tax cuts. In cities like New Haven, families are directly impacted by budget gaps and state deficits.

We're focused on the concepts of investment, and in order to have healthy investments, we need to make investments where there is infrastructure and people.



Mayor John DeStefano poses with local children at the 2002 Annual Mayor's Halloween Parade in New Haven.

And the great debate is around long-term social and economic investment vs. immediate gratification – through tax cuts, for example.

VOICE: Why did you choose to become head of the National League of Cities, and how has it affected your thinking about the needs of your own city?

MAYOR DESTEFANO: I view the League of Cities as the most effective advocate organization on behalf of cities and towns in America. And the need for this advocacy is greater than ever. We have to compete with many others to help show the vision and direction we have for America's cities and influence federal and state funding.

“My vision for the city includes, at its core, a focus on increasing the access of all families to opportunities and skills they need to build assets and accumulate wealth.”

FOCUSING ON EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

What it takes to accomplish this is very different from what it was five years ago. Today money is the overwhelming issue for the federal government, and today it seems that the political camps are more entrenched in their views.

VOICE: In an increasingly competitive environment, how can the interests of cities hope to be heard?



Mayor John DeStefano has taken a special interest in issues concerning children and education. New Haven, he says, now has 20 school-based health clinics providing either direct services or access to services.

MAYOR DESTEEFANO: This is a challenging environment, and we must build strategic partnerships with each other, with organizations, and with policymakers. Fortunately, through the League we're able to influence policy.

When you take a seemingly simple agenda, homeland security, for instance, and look closely, you see that the burden is placed on cities and towns at the very same time that funding and federal block grants for law enforcement are shrinking. If we are to see

cities and towns thrive, we must recognize the full impact of federal policies such as tax cuts.

VOICE: What role do you see for nonprofit organizations that serve families and children?

MAYOR DESTEEFANO: To get any job done it's better to work as a team, whether it's with research institutions, public policymakers, or other institutions capable of impacting public policies.

We are a community of folks who believe in smart investments. We each bring certain strengths and perspectives and should collaborate.

VOICE: What are the next steps for you in this mission as it pertains to New Haven?

MAYOR DESTEEFANO: My particular interest is in the area of early childhood and family wealth ... EITC, and that's where I see Casey becoming a strategic partner.

We are currently partnering with the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven and others in the EITC work, and we plan to reach 100 families over the next two years. We are intending to help to leverage assists of \$.5 million to \$2 million in order to help families invest those dollars in home ownership and higher education.

VOICE: Will it make a difference for Casey Family Services to be located in the heart of the city?

MAYOR DESTEEFANO: Proximity contributes to interaction, and proximity still does matter even today. It creates a fabric of people who care about the same thing. Casey is

now in the middle of a community where there is a wealth of talent, energy, ideas ... and opportunity to think about families.

VOICE: What do you see in the future for you as Mayor, and for cities like New Haven?

MAYOR DESTEEFANO: I spent 10 years in city government before becoming mayor. It is an office that I've held now for a decade. I expect to continue to work on behalf of the city and to contribute to building a foundation for those cities that are collections of great diverse mixes of people.

These are the best times in America. People are more tolerant and understanding of the worth of the individual. We understand that everyone counts and that everyone contributes something to the fabric of our cities and nation. We are growing stronger and stronger.

America and its cities stand as a bright light in the world. Sometimes we forget what we can be.

Casey Family Services operates divisions throughout the Northeast and in Baltimore, Maryland, offering support services and programs for vulnerable children and families.

News

Staff Updates

PROMOTIONS

Casey Family Services congratulates the following individuals on their promotions:

Donna Alston has been promoted to Division Administrator in the Baltimore division. Donna has served for the past year as the division's Administrative Assistant.

Marion Costa has assumed the position of Senior Accountant in New Haven, CT. Marion has been with Casey Family Services since 1987 working in Accounts Payable and has been Accounts Payable Coordinator for the past eight years.

Bronson de Stadler has been promoted to Division Deputy Director in the Massachusetts division. Bronson served for the past three years as Team Leader of the Foster Care Program.

Stephanie Gosteli has been appointed to Senior Program Associate in New Haven, CT. Stephanie previously served as Team Leader in the Hartford, CT, division.

NEW HIRES

Casey Family Services welcomes the following new staff members:

Kurt Arsenault, Family Support Specialist, Hartford, CT; Roye Bourke, Public Affairs Manager, New Haven; Raquel Cirino, Administrative Assistant, Rhode Island; Jennifer DiMaio, Social Worker, Hartford, CT; Lauren Frey, Project Manager, New Haven, CT; Lynn Geoffrion, Administrative Assistant, New Hampshire; Henry Harris, III, Family Support Specialist, New Hampshire; Jennifer Kastick-Summer, Family Support Specialist, New Hampshire; Marie Keeton, Director of Human Resources, New Haven, CT; Dawn Levasseur, Social Worker, Maine; Marisol Mejia, Social Worker, Bridgeport, CT;

Cynthia Metcalf, Administrative Assistant, Vermont; Gail Miller, Human Resources Representative, New Haven, CT; Sayida Rivers Farmer, Social Worker, Massachusetts; Greeta Soderholm, Social Worker, Vermont; Milton Soriano, Social Worker, Bridgeport, CT; Robyn Wainner, Community Liaison, Vermont; Kristin Young, Resource Coordinator, Hartford, CT.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bernadette Pelczar has been elected to the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) New Hampshire Chapter Board of Directors. Bernadette was elected by all the members of the NASW around the state.

Anna Williams, Baltimore division director, has been selected by the Baltimore Rotary Club as one of the city's Outstanding People of the Year and will be honored at a dinner in November.

Camper Corps Outing Highlights Diversity

More than 30 youth participated in the Bridgeport Division's 11th Annual Teen Outing, held this past winter at Camp Jewell in Colebrook, Connecticut. Youth from Hartford, Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island joined in the event, which provided an opportunity for teens to explore the issue of diversity, celebrating both the similarities and differences the

youth share. Angie Bailey's theatrical crew presented real-life scenarios and challenges the youth face in addressing issues of diversity. Other weekend highlights included a dance and a closing session presented by Casey Camper Corps alumni.



Bridgeport youth enjoy an outing at Camp Jewell in Connecticut.



Youth Learn *Life Skills*

Building Boats

A group of foster youth from the Hartford, Connecticut Division kicked off this past summer christening, then launching, two 21-foot skiffs they had built as part of a project aimed at developing life skills.

The 13-week project was a collaborative between Casey and Our Piece of the Pie, a Connecticut-based organization offering life skills training programs and activities.



Learning to use tools, including a drill, was part of the curriculum in the 13-week training project.

About one dozen youth, between the ages of 11 and 13, participated in the boat building project, learning everything from how to operate different tools to properly securing oars to working effectively as a team.

“I learned how to use a drill and what you need to do to make sure a boat won’t sink or tip over,” says Latoya, who was one of the first youth to don a lifejacket and test whether the skiff would truly float during the initial launching.



“Oftentimes when kids are engaging in an activity like this with other kids, personal issues arise revolving around trust, self-esteem, conflict resolution and interpersonal relationships,” says T.J. Michalski, a Casey life skills specialist. “The project allowed us to address and resolve these issues.”

Sisters Kiara and Taki say they had to work as a team. “When one of us was working with a tool building the boat, the other had to be supportive and get the next tool or nails ready.” Both agree the most enjoyable part of the project was painting the boats.

In order to complete the boats, the group had to learn to collaborate with one another, make decisions and solve problems as they arose, he points out. “This activity provided the perfect opportunity for the kids to learn how to overcome these types of obstacles.”

RHODE ISLAND PROGRAM HELPS YOUTH PREPARE FOR



LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

Safe to say, most young adults enthusiastically await the day when they'll be living on their own. But with such excitement, undoubtedly comes numerous fears. Many youth have families and stable homes to which they can turn for guidance and support during such transitional periods. But for foster youth aging out of the system and no longer under state care, the transition can be particularly frightening. With no one to lean on, with no home to return to, these youth face an uncertain future alone.

Every year, nearly 20,000 youth age out of foster care in the United States. While some have supportive foster families providing assistance as they adjust to living independently, many other foster youth must embark on the journey alone and, at times, unprepared.

The need to help foster youth, as well as at-risk community youth, prepare for living independently has become increasingly important to state agencies and child welfare organizations, with transitional life skills training becoming its own field of expertise.

Through various programs youth are learning skills such as opening a bank account, balancing a checkbook, applying for an apartment, managing finances, preparing for an interview, or planning education and career goals.

In the economically struggling neighborhoods of Providence, Rhode Island, a group of youth work diligently under the hot sun to renovate old homes and apartment buildings, taking care to maintain the facade's historic architecture. The foster and community youth are participating in the School-to-Career Partnership program. Since its launch



School-to-Career Partnership is helping youth in Rhode Island learn skills that could lead to a career.

in 1998 by United Parcel Service in collaboration with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Living Classrooms Foundation in Baltimore, Maryland, the School-to-Career Partnership program has expanded to serve youth in communities throughout the country.

In addition to Rhode Island, the program operates in Baltimore, Maryland; Hartford, Connecticut; Portland, Maine; Oakland and San Diego, California; New York, New York; and in San Antonio, Texas.

The School-to-Career Partnership in Rhode Island is a collaboration between Casey Family Services' Rhode Island Division and public and private businesses in the community assisting youth in securing and maintaining employment, while they also

pursue education and career goals. Partners, including Stand Corporation and Home Depot, represent numerous fields, thus enabling youth to be exposed to a range of industries.

Youth are given guidance in developing a resume and interviewing skills and are monitored once a job is obtained. They also learn other life skills that may be applicable off the job site.

"The kids learn to listen, to follow instructions, to be patient and work within a team," says Bob Ehrhardt, Casey's facilitator for the School-to-Career Partnership program.

"We've had the opportunity to work with the young folks and watch them achieve more than they thought they were capable of achieving."

Youth participating in the School-to-Career program must meet several criteria including being between the ages of 16 and 21; participating in at least four hours of classroom education per week; and committing to a minimum of six months to a Partnership-facilitated job.

In addition to learning lifelong skills, the employers on-site often serve as mentors to the youth. "We try to embrace them with all their issues and show them how to process information and help them make better decisions," says Ron Caniglia, president of Stand Corporation, a construction company and highly active partner in the program.

Since the program began, a high percentage of youth who are enrolled in high school are choosing to go on to post-secondary schools, says Ehrhardt.

In 1987, Gay Palazzo and her husband, Tony, attended foster parent pre-service training led by the division's then-resource coordinator. Today, 16 years later, Gay is the resource coordinator.

Both Sides Now

*by Gregory M. Simpson, ACSW
Deputy Director, Hartford Division*

The Vermont Division's Gay Palazzo has been on both sides now. In 1987, she and her husband, Tony, attended foster parent pre-service training led by the division's then-resource coordinator. Today, 16 years later, Gay is the resource coordinator.

During the training process, "we were as naïve as could be," Gay begins. Initially, she and her husband provided lots of respite until Daniel, age 8, was placed with them in 1989. "Waiting was difficult, but respite was harder. Providing respite means you have to be entertainment chairmen," she jokes.

The 8-year-old boy whom the Palazzo family added in 1989 is now a 22-year-old ex-Marine. Gay shares that the experience of foster parenting means "... your whole life is changed. The rewards are so many, and the little steps are really important, too. It's been rewarding for everyone in our family. Our kids' essays for college – in terms of major life event – were when Dan came to our family." Now, Dan lives in an apartment attached to their home and attends Vermont Technical College where he intends to major in computer science. He also clerks at the Veterans Administration Hospital in White River Junction. The Palazzo's other son, Andy, 27, is married, with one son (Gay became a grandparent in February), and lives in New Hampshire. Daughter, Gina, 24, resides in Salt Lake City.

Asked to reflect on the challenges of foster parenting, Gay smiles and says, "You just can't sign them up for Little League and leave them there – you have to be more playful." Having parented two birth children, she contrasts that "everything takes

much more attention to parenting skills – you need to be more specific about everything you do." This leads her to advise new foster parents that "as you listen to orientation, workshops, the home study – talk to your partner. You need to discuss along the

"I'm trying to help the foster parents know what is going on at Casey so when the tough times come along, they won't feel so alone."



Tony and Gay Palazzo at the Iwo Jima Memorial with their former foster son, Daniel, now a 22-year-old ex-Marine and college student.

way so little things don't build up. If you're single, you'll need to develop support among family and friends to help you.

"As a foster parent, I would say I interacted well with the social workers," Gay remembers, "but I felt they knew everything – that they had all the answers, and now (she pauses, smiling)... I have even more respect for them. I realize they don't have all the answers, but they never stop learning, adapting and trying to help parents in all kinds of situations. I really respect the way

Casey has encouraged the family to bring the child into their home and feel accepted as part of the family."

Gay has attended every Casey foster parent conference since 1987. "It's a wonderful way to interact with other foster parents – it's really an asset. I'm amazed at how such diverse people can be good foster parents." She feels that one important quality is "the ability to slow down and parent a child – accepting that a large portion of your time is in repetition and teaching."

In 2001, Gay successfully interviewed for the position of division administrator. When Vermont's resource coordinator left, Gay began performing some of those responsibilities. She liked it so much she assumed the job full time in January 2002. In both roles, she has made use of her undergraduate degree in journalism and economics from the University of Rhode Island.

As resource coordinator, "I try to be the parents' advocate and bring out their perspective on things. I'm trying to help the foster parents know what is going on at Casey so when the tough times come along, they won't feel so alone." She encourages foster parents to support each other. To facilitate this, she publishes a monthly newsletter and serves as staff liaison to the Casey Foster Parent Leadership Team. This forum was developed to share information and discuss topics such as respite or transitioning from foster care.

When asked what makes a good Casey employee, she uses one word: flexibility. "You don't have to know the social welfare system, but you have to be able to learn, care, and listen."

COMPUTER COLLEGE HELPS SPUR NEEDED SKILLS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

To help children and families who may be at risk of falling on the "left out" side of the digital divide, Casey Family Services launched its first "Computer College" at the University of Connecticut's main campus in Storrs. Eleven families from Bridgeport's Family Connections program participated in the two-day session offered earlier this year.

The college weekend included an array of practical sessions – computer set-up and maintenance, an introduction to Windows software and computer graphic design and lessons on Internet safety. Breaks from the curriculum included team building and family bonding activities such as sports, games, arts and crafts, movies and even a tour of the university's working dairy farm. All participants received a certificate at the end of the weekend, following the college graduation model.

"We want to help parents and children achieve basic skill levels so they can continue to develop them on their own," says Juliette LeCornec, Casey's family technology support liaison, who was instrumental in coordinating the program. "For parents, completing the course could be helpful with jobs and job searches where basic computer skills are required. And for kids, increased skills should help them improve academic performance, self-expression and research capabilities."

To be eligible for the Computer College, parents were required to attend four orientation classes that covered computer basics, Internet awareness, parental involvement and educational technology. UConn was chosen, LeCornec says, because the rural campus would be an interesting change for the city-based families and "maybe some of the kids, by living on a real campus, would



Eleven families attended a two-day "Computer College" session at the University of Connecticut in Storrs.

realize that college can be a realistic goal for them."

"I didn't know anything about computers, so the training was great," says Gwen Washington. "I learned the basics, and now I can use programs and get information for my boys and me. I'll be able to create a resume and hopefully use my computer skills in a future job.

"We want to help parents and children achieve basic skill levels so they can continue to develop them on their own."

"The graduation ceremony was also nice," she adds. "It let me know that I accomplished something."

Iris Matias knew she needed the help the program offered. "My kids were way too advanced with computers," she explains. "I needed to catch up, but I was intimidated by it.

"The program was interesting and not too hard," she adds. "Now I'm comfortable with the computer and can help my kids with their educational needs. I'm hoping to look

for a job where I can use the computer. I'm putting what I learned into practice."

After the program, Casey delivered computers to each family, so they can continue to develop their skills and explore new opportunities at home. LeCornec will conduct case reviews to provide help if needed and to make sure participants are achieving their goals. For those families who are, Casey will also help them gain Internet access.

"We will study the progress of each family for the next two years," LeCornec explains. "We want to be sure the program succeeds in helping to bridge the digital divide and find out if we need to make adjustments to assure success in the future."



Youth learn valuable computer skills that can help improve their academic performance as well as self-expression.

Congratulations to our 2003 Graduates!

We are pleased to announce that 27 Casey Family Services young men and women have graduated this year.

Each graduate received a certificate of achievement and a letter of congratulations from Executive Director Raymond Torres.

We wish you all the best in your future endeavors!

CONNECTICUT:

Dozreene, Heidi, James, Lauren, Marta, Michelle, Quashaun, Sam

- Dozreene is attending Briarwood College.
- Heidi has received her certification as a Certified Nurse's Aide from Educational Training of Wethersfield and is continuing her education at Sawyer Business School.
- James is attending New England Technical College in Rhode Island.
- Lauren is in the process of applying to a community college.
- Marta is attending Livingstone College to pursue a degree in human services or in criminal justice.
- Michelle is in the process of applying to Turxis Community College to pursue a degree in criminal justice.
- Quashaun is attending Manchester Community College.
- Sam has graduated from North Carolina A&T University and is attending Oxford University in England to study architecture in a one-year graduate program.

MAINE:

Irving, Kevin

- Irving continues to work for United Parcel Service. He received recognition for his numerous times on the honor roll.
- Kevin has received his GED.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND:

Akua, Devon, Ebony, Gene

- Akua is attending Baltimore City Community College.
- Devon is attending Baltimore City Community College.
- Ebony wants to join the workforce.
- Gene is attending Capital College. He received two scholarships from Capital and is focusing on becoming an electrical engineer.

MASSACHUSETTS:

Albert, Matthew, Robert

- Albert is attending Fitchburg State College.
- Matthew is attending LABBB Vocational Program.
- Robert is attending the Middlesex Community College Transition Program.

NEW HAMPSHIRE:

Darik, Jessica

- Darik currently is working on becoming a Certified Nurse's Aide.
- Jessica is attending Gordon College. She was awarded the President's Education Award for Educational Excellence. Selected as a member of the Tuck-Robinson National Honor Society of Secondary Schools, she also was a member of the Spanish Honor Society.

VERMONT:

Amanda, Dean, James, Jason, Jessica, Joseph, Justin, Peter

- Amanda is attending community college part time.
- Dean has received a certificate of achievement from Green Mountain Technology and Career Center. He is looking for employment in the construction field.
- James has entered JobCorps and is studying Culinary Arts.
- Jason plans to work full time and pursue a part-time technical education.
- Jessica continues to work full time.
- Joseph has joined the Armed Forces, Marine Corps.
- Justin is working full time and will attend college part time in 2004. He graduated from high school with high honors.
- Peter has graduated from the University of Southern Maine.

“The state of Connecticut is the parent to these kids... we need to do everything we can to prepare them for the future and the competitive world we live in.”

GOVERNOR RECOGNIZES COLLEGE BOUND FOSTER YOUTH



Governor John Rowland congratulates Casey foster youth starting college. (From left to right) Robert Thomas, Jamaal Whitehead, Marta Acevedo, Melissa Harris, Lauren Pettine, Michelle Germain.

Foster youth, from the Hartford and Bridgeport divisions, heading off to college this year were honored by Connecticut Governor John G. Rowland and Department of Children and Families (DCF) Commissioner Darlene Dunbar at a ceremony held at the State Capitol in July.

Nearly 50 foster youth in state care who are attending college this year or who have graduated college attended the ceremony.

Their names and the colleges they represent were announced as Governor Rowland and Commissioner Dunbar presented each with a framed certificate.

“I know some of you have been dealt a losing set of cards and have had to overcome a lot of challenges ... but I know you will be successful in college and do whatever it takes to reach your goals whether they’re small or large,” said the Governor. “The real test is when you can overcome diversity and when you do, I guarantee you’ll be a better adult, a more caring adult. ... You’re a great inspiration to all of us.”

“I know you will be successful in college and do whatever it takes to reach your goals, whether they’re small or large.”

“I am honored and proud of our youth’s accomplishments and their motivation and desire to continue their education,” said Linda Goldenberg, Casey’s Bridgeport division director. “We all have the responsibility to continue to collaborate to ensure that our children in foster care are afforded the opportunities that will assist them in achieving self-sufficiency.”

Foster youth Tinikia Cooke served as program speaker. “I believe strongly in advocating for youth like myself ... and believe we have to take care of the younger kids as well,” she said. Then, half joking, stated

that her goal is to one day replace Commissioner Dunbar and land a position as DCF Commissioner herself.

This was the first time foster youth, specifically, in Connecticut were recognized for pursuing post-secondary educations. The event was part of DCF’s Independent Living college program, which provides financial assistance to students unable to gain support through grants or scholarships, if they meet several criteria including attending a two- or four-year college, maintaining good grades, and contributing \$500 of their own earnings to the cost of school. In addition, incoming college freshman receive free computers.

This fall, more than 200 students began college. Last year, 228 Connecticut foster youth pursued a higher education.

“The state of Connecticut is the parent to these kids,” said Commissioner Dunbar. “Just like we would for our own children, we need to do everything we can to prepare them for the future and the competitive world we live in.”

DIVERSITY ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATES IMPROVEMENT



Three years ago, Casey Family Services embarked on a broad Diversity Initiative keyed to the vision that promoting “respect for the unique culture, language, history, and experience of each individual, family, and community” would lead to greater staff competence, healthy growth and development of children, and strengthened families and communities.

The ongoing effectiveness of this diversity program was driven home by a recent analysis of an agencywide survey conducted last spring. The survey showed positive results in improved staff perceptions, according to consultants Empowerment Workshops, Inc., who presented their findings to the Casey Diversity Council in August. The group also found substantial evidence that the Casey organization has become even more diverse.

“Our primary conclusion is that, while certain important issues remain, there have been a number of improvements and virtually no declines in employees’ perceptions and experiences regarding workforce diversity at Casey,” stated the consultants’ report.

In essence, the Diversity Initiative asserts that differences – in the organization, in families served and in the broader community – are vital assets that should be embraced and encouraged. Casey believes capitalizing on the broad contributions of a diverse workforce will help the entire organization meet its goals of achieving good family and child outcomes and delivering high-quality, cost-effective, family-centered services in New England and Baltimore.

Diversity is defined as everything that makes the individual, family and community unique: from race and ethnicity to language, nationality, socioeconomic status, age, gender, and physical and mental ability.

The consultants compared the survey results to baseline data gathered three years ago. Nearly 90 percent of the staff (454 people) responded to the surveys.

Key findings:

- Staff members gave higher ratings to performance management and to Casey’s ability to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.
- There was no significant difference in overall ratings among all major racial and ethnic employee groups.
- Workplace perceptions by African-American employees improved substantially, while overall perceptions of upper management and staff also improved.
- The staff acknowledges the importance of diversity issues.
- A greater number of staff members are providing services to Hispanic, bilingual,

limited English and GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender) clients.

- Most staff members have higher levels of comfort, knowledge, skills and preparedness for serving diverse clients.

The consultants found little change in the length of employment or age among Casey staff during the past three years. And while women represent a greater portion of the staff (74.2 percent compared with 68.6 percent in 2003), fewer Casey employees are white (69.5 percent, down from 73.7 percent in 2000). All other racial groups showed significant increases: African Americans, 14.7 percent, up from 11.4 percent; Hispanics, 9.7 percent, up from 6.9 percent; Asians, 2.9 percent, up from 1.7 percent; and Native Americans, 0.4 percent (none listed in 2000).

Diversity in external services offered by Casey received favorable ratings in both surveys, according to the consultants. At least 40 percent of respondents in 2003 reported serving members of nearly every category of client diversity, with increases in service to Hispanics (65 percent, up from 53 percent), bilingual households (57 percent, up from 48 percent), non- or limited-English speaking households (40 percent, up from 22 percent), and GLBT (44 percent, up from 33 percent).

Respondents reported a significant increase in the use of interpreters and significant improvement in the ability to communicate with individuals with limited English and to reach out to community, business or religious leaders for assistance with cultural groups. Division-specific results will follow.

Maine Division Relocates

New office in Portland

by Rana O'Connor, Resource Coordinator

Casey's Maine division kicked off the summer by settling into new offices in the Munjoy Hill neighborhood of Portland. Located at 75 Washington Avenue in the former J.J. Nissen Bakery, the office, comprising 28,500 square feet, is spacious and family-friendly, with high ceilings and a welcoming green, blue and yellow color palette. Approximately 45 staff members work out of the new location, which features a multi-purpose room for arts, crafts and family visits, comfortable family meeting rooms, and dedicated spaces for therapy. The former grain elevator has been transformed into a conference room with a capacity for 100 people. And space once occupied by bread ovens, with a 20-foot-high ceiling, is now filled with the voices of children and adults playing table tennis and foosball, says Mark Millar, division director.

"Our new location enables Casey to provide not only clinical services to the children and families we serve, but also a meeting place where community-based organizations and groups can come together," says Millar.



Michael Brennan, Board of Managers, Executive Director Raymond Torres and Maine's Division Director Mark Millar (left to right) officially open Casey's new building.

"Transforming this building is also a prime example of how investing in neighborhoods by renovating buildings can help maintain the vitality of a community," he adds.

Casey staff members have been excited and pleased with the move to this open, airy space. Team Leader Bert Meek points out the picturesque view from several offices that overlook the city and Back Bay area. "You can't beat the view," says Meek.

"Transforming this building [shows] how investing in neighborhoods by renovating buildings can help maintain the vitality of a community."

Casey Social Worker Kate Stawarz is particularly excited about the building's new play therapy room, which was developed specifically to meet guidelines for this type of therapy.

"I love everything about this space, but especially the play therapy room," she says. "It's been designed to accommodate activities that we engage in all the time."

The room has a sink, cabinets, tile floor for messy projects, and an area rug for kids to play on. And an observation window is built into one wall, allowing professionals to observe and learn from the therapy sessions.

Sonny Prescott, family support worker, is optimistic about ways the new location will enable Casey staff to interact with neighborhood residents, such as sharing their space with other nonprofit groups and organizations in the area, or collaborating on group work.



Top: The former J.J. Nissen Bakery is the new home of Casey's Maine Division in Portland.

Bottom: A member of the Salvation Rythm prepares for a day of open house festivities.

Some of Casey's new neighbors include The Root Cellar, a faith-based organization across the street providing programs for at-risk youth, and East End Children's Workshop, a well-established agency offering a variety of programs for children and families. East End is also home to Kids Katering, a business Casey has used often over the past 17 years. Profits from the catering business provide lunches to needy children during the summer months when school lunch is not an option. Meanwhile, a number of restaurants dot the sidewalk across the street, with offerings ranging from breakfast any time of day at DeVito's to tamales and quesadillas at Tu Casa, owned by a couple from El Salvador.

A New Beginning



From left: Mr. and Mrs. Raymond L. Torres, bride Michelle Moffett Jones, groom Kris Jones, Social Worker Ginny O'Connell and maid of honor Holly Moffett.

Both biological as well as foster family members gathered recently for the wedding of former Casey foster youth Michelle Moffett. The wedding was held at an aunt's home in New Hampshire. "It was a very

special day because it not only marked a new beginning for Michelle as Mrs. Kris Jones, but she was able to watch all these people who have been instrumental in her life at different stages interconnect with one another," said Ginny O'Connell, Casey social worker, who has known Michelle for more than 10 years.

"Over the years Michelle has maintained a connection with all the people who have supported her throughout the different stages of life. I think all those efforts have made a difference for her and despite many obstacles along the way, she's been resilient in reaching her goals," Ginny added.

Michelle Jones is currently working as a social worker for a child welfare agency, assisting other foster youth in finding permanent loving homes.

Strong Turnout for Business After Hours Event

In collaboration with the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, the New Hampshire Division welcomed more than 170 people to its Business After Hours event, held in May.

The gathering enabled Casey staff to educate the Concord business community about the services Casey Family Services provides to children and families, as well as to identify potential mentoring or internship opportunities for the youth in Casey's foster care and post-adoption programs. The importance of Casey's commitment to helping families achieve economic success through programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit also was discussed.



New Hampshire Division Director Ed Rennells chats with Concord Chamber of Commerce members.

ACF and The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice

*Form Collaboration with New England Adoption Program Managers to
Promote Learning Opportunities that Enhance Systems Improvements*

by Sarah B. Greenblatt and Barbara Dobbyn

Reprinted with permission from Common Ground, a publication of the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors.

With an increasing number of special needs children across New England reaching permanency through adoption, there is an urgent need for state, private and federal agencies to creatively address the array of family and systems' needs which have emerged from this rapid growth. Additionally, as states are engaging in the federal Child and Family Service Reviews and developing their Program Improvement Plans, there is an even greater need for state sharing about practices that can support improvements in the quality and timeliness of permanency planning with families and children.

Recognizing the benefits of learning from peers, the Administration for Children and Families in Region I and the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice invited the New England Adoption Program Managers to participate in periodic networking and learning opportunities with colleagues from their respective states, the federal government and, over time, others as appropriate. Since June 2002, representatives from New England's state adoption programs have met three times in the Lowell division of Casey Family Services. Connections are rekindled each time colleagues come together to informally address common issues and unique challenges.

Each state adoption program manager is invited to bring two or three staff members from their adoption programs – staff who

have an adoption policy and/or practice focus. The initial goals for the collaborative included the following:

- To revive regional networking and learning meetings as a strategy to address emerging trends, issues and challenges in adoption policy and practice in New England;
- To share resources and explore solutions related to the increasingly complex special needs of New England's adopted children and families, as well as children awaiting adoption;

CONNECTIONS ARE REKINDLED EACH TIME COLLEAGUES COME TOGETHER TO INFORMALLY ADDRESS COMMON ISSUES AND UNIQUE CHALLENGES.

- To identify and strengthen relationships among New England state contacts for inter-jurisdictional issues; and
- To determine interest in ongoing meetings and the desired results of those meetings.

The adoption program managers expressed interest in meeting three or four times a year to address group-identified issues for discussion and learning and to hear from their colleagues about state strategies and federal updates related to innovative permanency and adoption-related practices or policy initiatives.

Several themes have emerged for discussion and sharing including: opportunities to sup-

port children's and families' transition from foster care to adoption; systemic implications of the growing population of children receiving adoption subsidies; funding of post-adoption services; and an initial exploration of state interest/support for a New England Post-Adoption Services Institute to share lessons learned from Maine's IV-E Waiver as well as other approaches to these much-needed services. Adoption program managers also have used these meetings to share creative strategies for recruitment of resource families and the adoptive placements of challenging children and youth in need of permanent families.

State sharing of resources, ideas and mutual support has deepened as relationships among the participants have grown. A unique aspect of this developing networking and learning group is a focus on possible solutions to common challenges. For example, adoption program staff members have been engaged in ongoing discussions about workable, individualized strategies for negotiating adoption subsidies that address adoptive children's and families' complex and often changing needs throughout the childhood of the adopted child. Discussions have included ways to strengthen the adoption competence of community mental health providers through training partnerships and lessons on crafting informative messages to increase public awareness of the benefits of adoption and post-adoption assistance. Managers have found that they come to these meetings, which offer innovative programs and experiences, and leave

Future meetings will explore funding and sustaining adoption-competent services and supports at the community level.

PERSPECTIVES

with new ideas and inspirations gleaned from their colleagues. And even more so, the meetings have provided a platform for specialized professionals to reach across states in the New England region to engage their counterparts in strategies for solving both case-level and systemic problems they face each day.

Future meetings will explore funding and sustaining adoption-competent services and supports at the community level. The Casey Center has been working on two post-adoption services white papers, one exploring creative funding strategies for post-adoption

services and the other describing promising practices in adoption-competent mental health services. Adoption program managers have suggested expanding one of their meetings to include child welfare directors and revenue enhancement staff to discuss how these creative funding and service strategies could advance the post-adoption services agenda within their states.

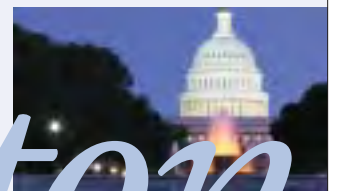
Believing that more can be accomplished with the resources of many than any one entity can accomplish alone, Region I and Casey Family Services are pleased to be able to support this networking and learning opportunity to advance more meaningful permanency planning and adoption practices for children in foster care.

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View from *Washington*

A LOOK AT AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR FOSTER YOUTH



by Robin Nixon

This is the first of a regular column to be featured in Voice.

Robin Nixon, head of the National Foster Care Coalition, is a leading authority on issues and policies affecting foster children, youth and families.

All About Chafee

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (FCIA) represented a big change in both the funding of independent living services for foster youth and in the ways we, as child welfare services providers, design and deliver those services. The Chafee Foster Care Independence program (established by the FCIA) recognizes a number of important concepts and principles that have not traditionally been associated with what we know as independent living. One of the most important of these is the need for consistent assessment of

state performance, as well as evaluation of promising practices, to ensure that we know what works and that federal dollars are well spent.

In this column, I would like to highlight the implementation of the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), which is the federal plan for state performance assessment of the Chafee program.

A set of recommended policy directions underscored the urgency of working on behalf of adolescents in care.

THE CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

In a nutshell, the NYTD will collect demographic information about young people in care who receive Chafee-funded services, about the types and quantities of services provided, and about any financial assistance provided to youth. Outcome data will be collected at time of discharge for all youth leaving care at age 14 or older who received Chafee-funded services. Additionally, a group (research cohort) of 17-year-olds will be selected every three years, and outcome data will be collected regarding this group (regardless of discharge, aftercare or Chafee participation status) through their 21st birthday. (See sidebar for the outcomes the federal government is proposing be used to implement NYTD).

At the time of writing this column, the federal government is in the process of developing regulations for the implementation of NYTD. While this is a good thing, in the sense that regulations will help ensure that states implement the process consistently, it also means that it may be some time before the NYTD is up and running. States should start collecting data about their programs and youth served in 2005. In the meantime, states can and should be developing data collection strategies that are consistent with the proposed federal process.

So, what does the National Youth in Transition Database mean to all of us who care what happens to young people leaving foster care?

It means that for the first time ever, states will be reporting consistent information about the kinds of services they are providing, how many youth are being served, and what kinds of outcomes young people are experiencing at the time they leave care. We also will have some information about what happens to foster youth when they leave care, though this information will be limited to a small group selected once

POLICYMAKERS AND CHILD WELFARE ADMINISTRATORS WILL HAVE DATA AND REPORTS ON WHICH TO BASE POLICY AND FUNDING DECISIONS.

every three years. Advocates and service providers will be getting a clear sense of what state programs look like and who is (and isn't) being served by the Chafee Program. Policymakers and child welfare administrators will have data and reports on which to base policy and funding decisions. Overall, for the first time since federal dollars became available for independent living services in 1986, we will have clear information about what the impact of these services can be. The NYTD is a system whose time has definitely come!

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) put significant effort into determining what outcomes should be the foundation of the National Youth in Transition Database. Utilizing the results of numerous focus groups with service providers, foster youth, foster parents, and other stakeholders, as well as the support of an advisory group of national experts in the field, HHS developed the following list of outcomes.

- *Increased number of youth who have resources to meet their living expenses*
- *Increased number of youth who have a safe and stable place to live*
- *Increased number of youth who attain educational/vocational goals*
- *Increased number of youth who have positive personal relationships with adults in the community*
- *Increased number of youth who avoid involvement with high-risk behaviors*
- *Increased percentage of youth who can access needed physical and mental health services*

CONNECT FOR KIDS

Reaches Families Over the Web



Connect for Kids – a vibrant, innovative and “virtual” nonprofit organization – is the new “home” for the National Foster Care Coalition. Recently spun off from the Benton Foundation as an independent entity, Connect for Kids is housed in the nation’s capital but lives on the worldwide web at www.connectforkids.com.

Its trendy website is designed to make a better world for children by providing an “information community” for people who care about kids. A recent visit to connectforkids.org revealed articles on kids selling organic produce at a Michigan farmers market, the effect of block grants on families, results from a poll about hot lunches, and tips about how to help children with science fair projects.

“The mission of Connect for Kids has always been to use the Internet to create better communities for families,” says Cecilia Garcia, Connect for Kids executive director. Connect for Kids began in 1996 when the Benton Foundation and the Advertising Council launched an initiative to increase the impact of public service advertising through the Internet. The Advertising Council, which was in the midst of a 10-year commitment to children’s issues, collaborated with the Benton Foundation because of their commitment to children’s issues and to using technology in the public interest.

“Very quickly it became clear that the site could do much more than public service

advertising,” said Garcia. “We changed the original idea and began posting more articles because we saw we could use this exciting technology to provide much more depth. These articles became our weekly newsletter.” This newsletter had 300 subscribers to its first issue. Now there are 40,000 subscribers and an estimated 120,000 people who view each issue.

“Connect for Kids was created on the Internet and thrives on the Internet. Our understanding and use of communications technology makes us fundamentally different,” continues Garcia. “Connect for Kids would not exist as a printed piece. We are always focused on what we are saying, how we are saying it, and what the end result will be. We want to inform people and then move them to take action.”

“The mission of Connect for Kids has always been to use the Internet to create better communities for families.”

Connect for Kids has an important connection to Casey Family Services through their role as administrator of the National Foster Care Coalition. “Foster care has been a priority for us since we worked with Casey Family Programs on *Take This Heart*,” says Garcia. “We want to bring attention to the Coalition and this incredibly important issue. People don’t realize the impact of foster care unless they are directly involved.”

There is also a strong Casey connection through the Celebrating Families (celebratingfamilies.org) part of the website, which is

underwritten by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This site provides journalists, educators and others with ideas and information for positive stories about children and families. This month, 31 celebrations are listed, everything from National Young Readers Day to National Family Week. For each listing, Celebrating Families provides information about the history of the celebration and sources for more information. For example, November 13 is World Kindness Day. Celebrating Families describes the origins of this celebration and how it came into being.

Celebrating Families has been very popular. Shortly after it was launched, 45 organizations linked to the site. “We want to do even more with the site: reach more journalists and provide more information. We are also trying to get into the classrooms,” says Garcia.

The Foundation also sponsors Connect for Kids’ communication initiatives around welfare reform and the impact of the federal budget at the state and local level. “Casey has really been a leader in this area and has helped to involve other leading foundations,” says Garcia. “Organizations say they would never have taken on this communication challenge without this program. This gave them the language that allowed their messages to resonate with policymakers and the public.”

Garcia and her staff of five take all this activity in stride. “This – along with publishing weekly – is what Connect for Kids is all about,” she says simply.

What is... the Child and Family Services Review?

DIALOGUE

Sharing Perspectives on Research, Practice and Policy

by Ben Kerman, Director of Research

While many program fads have come and gone, one program evaluation approach that may have some sticking power is the federal government's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The states depend heavily on the Department of Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for funding of state services for children and families. The Amendments to the Social Security Act (1994) empowered program reviewers charged with assuring state compliance with the titles IV-B and IV-E: If states do not "pass" their review and subsequently fail to make substantial improvements, federal funds can be withheld.

The CFSR thus has some force both to motivate and to enforce system improvement. However, unlike many past approaches to oversight, the CFSR is rooted in many of the same principles as the program practices examined. For instance, the assessment of both strengths and needs grounds the case-study-oriented CFSR in practice in order to help states improve child welfare practices and outcomes. After the assessment or review, areas in need of technical assistance are identified and a remediation effort, or Program Improvement Plan (PIP), is crafted. Then, another review is conducted to reassess the situation and monitor PIP progress.

ACF describes several key concepts built into the CFSR. The reviews emphasize accountability, but are conducted in collaboration with both state and federal govern-

ments. Consequently, the team that conducts the review consists of both the host state and federal staff. The team considers information from multiple sources, including statewide statistics, on-site reviews of a sample of children and families, and interviews with key agency and community representatives. Both outcomes and systemic factors that impact agencies helping children and families are considered as the reviews seek to promote promising and/or valued practices, such as family-centered practice, community-based services, building parenting capacity and individualizing services.

Table 1 lists the main outcomes and system performance factors examined in the CFSR. For instance, threshold criteria are set for specific Safety outcomes which include: (1) children are protected from abuse and neglect; and (2) children are maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate. Similarly, criteria for compliance are defined for each of the two Permanency and three Well-being outcomes.

The actual process begins with a statewide statistical assessment completed prior to the on-site review. First, a team of agency and independent staff examines aggregate data focusing on a set of indicators that address safety, permanency and child well-being. Next, a structured, intensive case study protocol is applied to 30-50 cases. The reviewers review case records and interview a variety of parties connected with the cases.

This may sound similar to the Quality Service Review (QSR) that we have used to examine several Casey programs. The QSR approach, pioneered by Ray Foster and associates at Human Systems and

Table 1. Main Outcomes and Systems Performance Factors considered during the CFSR.

<i>Indicator</i>	
<i>Systems Factors:</i>	
	<i>Statewide information system</i>
	<i>Case review system</i>
	<i>Quality assurance system</i>
	<i>Staff and provider training</i>
	<i>Service array</i>
	<i>Agency responsiveness to community</i>
	<i>Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment and retention</i>
<i>Outcomes:</i>	
<i>Safety</i>	<i>Children protected from abuse and neglect</i>
<i>Safety</i>	<i>Children maintained safely at home whenever possible or appropriate</i>
<i>Permanency</i>	<i>Children have permanency and stability in their living situations</i>
<i>Permanency</i>	<i>Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved</i>
<i>Well-being</i>	<i>Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs</i>
<i>Well-being</i>	<i>Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs</i>
<i>Well-being</i>	<i>Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs</i>

What is... the Child and Family Services Review?

Outcomes Inc. of Tallahassee, Florida, involves a multiple case study with intensive expert on-site case reviews as well. However, in the QSR the parties being reviewed play an instrumental role in defining the focus of the review, creating the criteria for which system performance and service outcomes are to be evaluated.

Despite the majority of states' strong showing on the Systems factors, the results of the CFSR highlight an array of Outcomes areas in need of improvement. Figure 1 summarizes the 32 states, reviewed during the first two years of the CFSR. Almost all of the states had statewide information systems, a Quality Assurance System, and adequate provisions for parent licensing, recruitment and retention. Yet, more than one in three states did not have an adequate Case Review System in place. On closer examination of the full results (Zirps, 2003), states appear to fall short most often of the criteria to develop case plans jointly with parents.

Yet, on any given Outcome, the vast majority of states are considered "not in substantial conformity." For instance, only five states (16 percent) met the criteria for protecting children from abuse and neglect. None of the states reviewed satisfied the permanency outcome of providing children with permanency and stability in their living situations. In fact, 27 states (84 percent) were identified as needing to improve their foster placement stability, identification of permanency goals, and adoption rates.

The development of PIPs in reviewed states is stimulating a great deal of energy and activity, but the CFSR process has critics too. Although a variety of strengths are highlighted in discussions of the CFSR (e.g., interagency collaboration and standards for foster and adoptive homes), much of the attention is drawn to the low scores on outcomes. Many other concerns highlight problems in the aggregate data and the use of inconsistent definitions and procedures across states. Similarly, the extrapolation of statewide performance from a small

sample of cases has also elicited cautionary feedback. Other critics protest the meaningfulness use of "passing criteria" that lead to so many "failing grades."

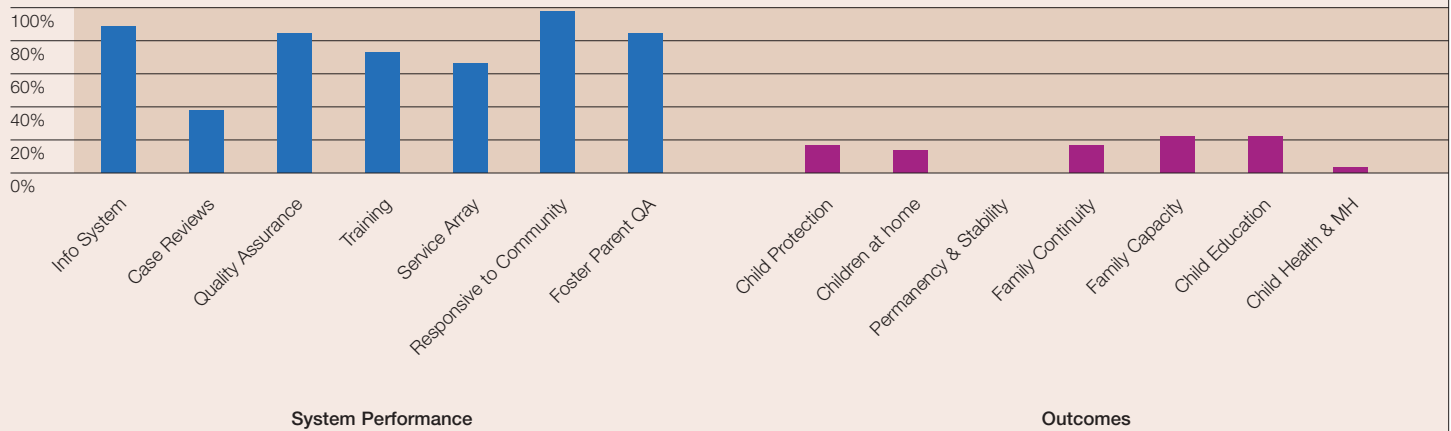
ACF officials are looking to refine the system in light of this critique. A variety of refinements are being planned to improve both the quality of aggregate data available and the conduct of the CFSR. Nonetheless, the process is stimulating a concentrated effort to address the possibility that so many of our systems may be inadequate to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children and families.

References:

U. S. Children's Bureau. *Child and Family Service Review Final Reports*. Available at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/staterpt/index.htm>.

Zirps, F. (2003). *Summary of Child and Family Service Review Data*. Downloaded from: www.childrensrights.org/policy/summary_of_child_and_family_service_data.htm.

Figure 1. Percentage of states in Substantial Compliance with Reviewed Systems Performance Indicators and Outcomes.



Overcoming the Challenges to Consumer Surveys: A CQI Success Story

DIALOGUE

by Bonnie Kerker

Documenting program participants' perceptions of services is a central component of any Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program, as consumers can be better served when their needs and preferences are understood. Recognizing this, the CQI committee at Casey Family Services initiated a recurrent agencywide assessment of consumer satisfaction in 1998. The 2002-2003 survey focused on the agency's foster care programs, which exist in seven of Casey's eight divisions (consumer satisfaction surveys among the family-based programs are being implemented separately). The questionnaire asked respondents to rate their perceptions of gains and potential service barriers, as well as the services and cultural sensitivity of Casey staff, along several key quality dimensions.

Conducting the survey was a collaborative effort among division staff, research staff, CQI staff and management. The "survey team" that took the lead on conducting the survey was made up of CQI and research staff. As with any large project, the complexity of this survey brought with it many challenges. Building on past experience, however, this year's survey team overcame many obstacles and learned a great deal that may be of use to future agency projects.

METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Participants

A survey workgroup, consisting of at least one member of each division, suggested that all open-case adults in the foster care program should be included in the project. In addition, there was a consensus to continue surveying foster children over the age of 12.

Refined questionnaires for younger children and professional collaterals were postponed. Because Casey's foster care programs also serve many youth under the age of 12, the

workgroup recommended including younger children in the survey as well. However, attaining reliable and meaningful results from questionnaires with young children is challenging. Surveying this population requires the use of specially designed tools by highly skilled professionals. Further, the workgroup indicated that past surveys of professional collaterals had been of limited value due to varying levels of investment among providers, and the need to tailor methods to collect the needed information. Consequently, workgroup members recom-

The questionnaire asked respondents to rate their perceptions of gains and potential service barriers, as well as the services and cultural sensitivity of Casey staff.

mended focusing on foster parents and adolescent youth at this time. Because there is much to be learned from professional collaterals, a separate project may be warranted to gather such information.

Design

In the past the surveys were conducted by telephone with youth and by mail with adults. Because telephone surveys generally elicit higher response rates than do mail-in surveys, both the previous and current workgroups encouraged the use of a telephone design with both populations. A low response rate is problematic for the appropriate interpretation of data. It is difficult to generalize to an entire population when few of the individuals contacted respond. This is because there could be systematic differences between those who choose to answer the survey and those who do not, making generalizations from these data somewhat inappropriate. In Casey's 2000 survey, for example, those that took the time to respond to the last adult survey tended to have extreme views (both positive and negative) toward the organization's services. From these data we cannot know whether

all individuals fell into one of these two camps or if some fell in the middle. Consequently, the information gathered in the survey may not be very representative of the larger population. This year, only telephone surveys were conducted.

Random Sample

Even using telephone surveys, achievement of a high response rate can be difficult. When researchers attempt to contact an entire population, they are often spread too thin and are therefore unable to spend much time or energy contacting individuals. In contrast, using a sample indicates that a smaller pool is targeted, allowing for a more focused outreach, which may increase the participation rate among those called. Further, if the sample were *randomly drawn*, it would likely be representative of the total population, meaning the individuals surveyed would be comparable to the rest of the program participants. Consequently, achieving a higher response rate in a random sample yields more valid data than achieving a lower rate among the entire population, even if the number of surveys completed were less in the sample.

When drawing a random sample, however, there is no guarantee that the sample will include enough individuals in every subgroup to be representative of participants in each Casey program or to compare responses between groups. To address this concern, an approach called *stratified random sampling* was used. This means that the entire population was first stratified by subgroup and then random samples were drawn from each group to ensure adequate representation in the final sample.

Procedure

Data were taken from the agency's monthly statistics to estimate the numbers of adults and youth in each Casey program or placement type. A statistical program was used to calculate the size of the samples that would adequately represent the cases in each group. Overall, 185 of 345 foster/adoptive

Overcoming the Challenges to Consumer Surveys: A CQI Success Story

parents and 154 of 312 foster/adopted children were included in this study.

The Case Information System (CIS) generated lists of foster youth, but not their phone numbers or addresses. To complete the lists, each Casey division provided data on their foster/adopted youth and parents (including address, phone number, program type and demographics if available). Division staff's willingness to engage in this "back and forth" discussion was essential to the accurate identification of the agency's consumers.

As with past surveys, both adult and youth participants received a letter (from their division director) prior to being called in the 2002-2003 survey. The letter described the study and how the results will be used, and asked for consent and participation.

Four private consultants implemented the surveys (two for the adult and two for the youth questionnaires). After the letters were mailed, a pilot was conducted in which each interviewer conducted three to five

interviews. Appropriate modifications to the survey methodology and questions were then made. Once the interviews began, bi-weekly phone calls were held to discuss any new problems that arose. For example, if a caller could not reach a participant at the phone number listed, survey staff would contact the appropriate division to ensure that the number was correct. When the interviewers called a home, they asked to speak with the caretaker who had the most contact with the Casey office. Before they began surveys, they reviewed the purpose of the study and the confidential nature of the interviews.

When foster youth could not be reached by phone, written surveys were mailed.

A Preview of Results and Dissemination

Among the 185 foster parents contacted, 159 completed surveys (86 percent). Of the 154 foster youth contacted, 106 completed surveys (68 percent). Among the 144 youth who were called, 103 (72 percent) completed a survey, and of the 11 youth who were

mailed a questionnaire, three (27 percent) returned the survey to the Casey office. Separate reports are being prepared and will be disseminated to Casey staff, foster parents and youth.

Conclusion

Although conducting an agencywide survey entails challenges, the survey team overcame numerous obstacles and successfully completed the project. This was only possible because of an intense level of collaboration between division and administrative staff. Further, although the previous surveys have been highly successful and have yielded useful information, a re-evaluation of the methods enabled the team to replicate the more effective procedures followed in the past, while implementing design changes that have hopefully resulted in even more accurate and useful findings.

For a copy of the complete report, please contact the Research Department, and look for a summary of results in an upcoming edition of *Voice*.

Casey Hosts Training on Grant-Funded Research

by Amy Stephens, Research Associate

On June 2, Casey Family Services' Lowell division hosted researchers, state child welfare directors, foundation representatives and child advocates as they gathered to fine-tune their grant proposal writing skills. The training was offered by the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR), a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization that advocates the importance of research to strengthen the social work profession's capacity to address complex social needs. The training was intended to guide the organization and development of research grant proposals to better meet the needs of agencies requesting evaluative services.

In recent years social service agencies more often have been asked by stakeholders to

examine program outcomes. Demonstrating program efficacy to funding sources has become even more critical as difficult economic times threaten potential funding cut-backs for programs serving children and families. Consequently, well-developed evaluation proposals responsive to agency needs are increasingly important for programs.

Training facilitators Diane DePanfilis, Ph.D., of the University of Maryland School of Social Work, and Mary Ruffolo, Ph.D., of the University of Michigan School of Social Work, presented grant proposal fundamentals based on their years of experience. Participants broke into small groups to discuss sample requests for proposals. These examples, provided by Casey Family Services, generated mutually benefi-

cial exchanges between participants from agencies, foundations, and universities.

The partnership for this project was made possible by Dr. Martha Dore, Casey Family Services' former Director of Research, and Dr. Joan Levy Zlotnik of IASWR, two founding members of IASWR. Participants requested further technical assistance to learn specific skills such as budget development, measurement and design, and data analysis and as an opportunity to further develop mutually rewarding relationships between agency and academic partners. The IASWR/Casey Family Services collaboration provided a valuable service to participants by increasing understanding and promoting excellence in social work research.

Resource

Casey Family Services W 2002 AT A GLANCE
Connections

Someone to Care
a Place to Belong

Corner



Reviews

At a Glance 2002

Casey Family Services has released its 2002 *At a Glance* publication carrying the theme of Connections. The report includes profiles of several families and Casey youth who have found stability and support by connecting to resources within their communities. The issue highlights a brother and sister who find support through a Casey Family Resource Center, a young adult who learns about independence through an innovative life skills program, and the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice as it continues sharing best practices and program models on a national level.

To receive a copy, please contact Darlene McMahon in Casey's Communications Department at dcmahon@caseyfamilyservices.org.

2003 KIDS COUNT Data Book

The 14th annual *KIDS COUNT* Data Book, published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is now available and reports that although national trends in child well-being have been positive over the past decade, there is still wide variation among states along several critical indicators. While there are positive trends, "the high cost of being poor" remains a concern. Although more than 2.5 million parents have transitioned from welfare to work in the last decade, these families must pay more for basic goods, hindering efforts to build financial security for their children.

To view the online issue, visit www.kids-count.org.



AdvoCasey: Juvenile Justice at a Crossroads

The latest issue of *AdvoCasey*, a policy magazine published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF), explores the challenges facing America's juvenile courts and corrections systems. The issue opens with an article by AECF President Douglas Nelson decrying America's embrace of tough-sounding but ineffective strategies in juvenile justice. Four critical challenges facing the corrections systems are addressed, while a feature story highlights the continuing progress of the juvenile detention reform movement in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Other stories include profiling the success of Missouri's "small is beautiful" approach to youth corrections and shadowing Bay Area youth protesters and their adult allies as they strive to slow California's juvenile jail building boom.

To receive a copy or view the document, visit www.aecf.org.

Street Law and Youth Act

Street Law, Inc., Washington, D.C.

For more than a quarter-century, Street Law has been creating powerful educational programs in the United States and around the world. Street Law's unique approach develops problem solving, critical thinking, cooperative learning and communications skills, and encourages effective participation in society. Recognized internationally for

leadership in education, all of Street Law's programs draw real world connections between the lives of young people and the law, human rights and democratic values. Youth Act provides the vehicle for Street Law's diverse programs to move into action by allowing young people to apply their classroom education to solve real life problems. Youth Act is changing young people's lives by helping them develop the leadership, vision and skills necessary to advocate for meaningful change in their communities. Youth Act challenges young people to go a step beyond community service to identify root causes of local concerns – tackling issues at the policy level.

For more information, please visit www.street-law.org.

Voices from the Empowerment Zones: Insights about launching large-scale community revitalization initiatives

"The strategic approach taken by some of the Empowerment Zones (EZ) suggests a different kind of model of neighborhood revitalization than what most cities are doing right now. What cities basically do now is fund institutions to provide services, rather than try to grow neighborhood intelligence to build local capacity. I think this is a very exciting story." That "voice" of a Zone resident is just one among many shared throughout this report from people who openly provide insights and observations from their experience living and working within seven EZ communities. The document was written by Janet Levy of the EZ/EC Foundation Consortium and Mark Joseph of Community Development Associates.

To receive a copy or view the document, visit www.aecf.org.

What the Media Say

Media

Casey building wins award

The old trolley substation in East Baltimore used to be home of the "trouble truck," an emergency vehicle that dashed out when streetcars derailed and got them back on track.

Though streetcars faded from the scene decades ago, the brick building at 25 North Caroline Street has found a new calling as a place that helps people get back on track.

It's part of the new Baltimore home of Casey Family Services, a social services center where single mothers can obtain job training and counseling while their children are in child care [among other programs and services]. The space formerly occupied by the trouble truck is now a conference room for the Casey staff.

The Baltimore Sun, MD, 10/06/03

From foster care to college

The state Department of Children and Families (DCF) honored about 50 state foster children Monday who have been accepted into college.

"It is a great tribute to these students and the many others who have made choices to pursue higher education under this program," Governor John G. Rowland said. "Nothing gives you a bigger leg up than a college education."

As part of the department's Independent Living program, DCF will provide financial assistance to students who are unable to cover the cost of an education through grants or scholarships.

The Hartford Courant, CT, 7/29/03

Adopting older children: A gift from the heart

Beatrice Sullivan of Bloomfield, a single mother of son, Theo, now 11 years old, ...received help from Casey Family Services when she wanted to adopt in 1997. "When I contemplated the idea of adopting an older child, I wanted to make sure I was adopting for the right reasons," says Beatrice. "I went to Casey Family Services to make sure it would be the best situation for both myself and a child. I was concerned that I might be too focused on my own feelings, and did not want to make a selfish choice."

It must have been fate that brought mother and son together. Today, Beatrice is raising a happy active young man. "Theo loves sports...gets good grades in school...He is my life!

"One important message I would like to leave is that there are many older children in the U.S that need loving adoptive homes," says Beatrice. "The best part of adopting an older child is that we got to choose each other..."

The Adoption and Safe Families Act was signed into law in 1997 to promote adoption and other permanent homes for children who need them, and to support families.

Woman Magazine, September 2003

Trouble grows for kids who outgrow foster care

Advocates: Better systems needed

When Senator Stanley Rosenberg talks about the state's foster care system, it's more

than just another priority or program he's trying to protect. The Amherst Democrat is one of the state's most powerful senators and a product of the system, having been a foster child himself.

While Rosenberg and other state officials say the state system is better now than it was 10 or 20 years ago, there is still more that needs to be done to attract foster parents and to help foster children through early adulthood. Experts say the system could use more caseworkers, a better payment plan for foster parents, more early intervention to keep families together, and a better support structure for children who opt out of the system when they reach age 18 ... Denise Monteiro, a spokesman for the state Department of Social Services, which operates the foster-care system, said the state already offers a number of services to foster children in their late teens. There's a program called Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood, which teaches basics like banking and job interviewing. There is a teen peer hot line, a summer-job program, and a mentoring program.

At Casey Family Services in Lowell, other programming is targeted to kids moving out of state care. Francyne Fuller, the resource coordinator at the agency, said the goal is to smooth out the transition process as much as possible. "It is tough, but there's a lot of attention now being paid to kids who are aging out of the system," Fuller said. "We have to improve how we feel about permanency. Kids need to know they have a place to belong."

The Sun, MA, 5/13/03

2003: Important Dates

November

November 5-7

Youth Professionals:
Trends and Perspectives 2003
State College, Pennsylvania
www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/YouthProfessionals

November 7-8

14th National Conference
Children's Rights Council
Hanover, Maryland
www.gocrc.com

November 12-14

Tools That Work
Child Welfare League of America
Miami, Florida
www.cwla.org/conferences

November 16-18

International Conference on Civic
Education Research
Center for the Study of Participation and
Citizenship
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.indiana.edu/~civiced

November 20-21

Critical Concerns Courses
Youth Specialties
San Francisco, California
www.youthspecialties.com

November 22, 23-29

National Adoption Day
www.nationaladoptionday.org

National Family Week

December

December 1

World AIDS Day
www.avert.org

December 1-5

First Annual Trauma Treatment Clinic
American Professional
Society on the Abuse of Children
Lahaina, Hawaii
www.apsac.org

December 8-9

Youth Accountability through Restorative
Justice
Project CARE
Quakertown, Pennsylvania
www.justcommunity.com

January

December 8-12 & 16-18

Council on Accreditation Trainings
Baltimore, Maryland
Contact: Ryan McGuire
(866) COA-8088, x258

January 26-30, 2004

2004 San Diego Conference on Child and
Family Maltreatment
National Resource Center for Information
Technology in Child Welfare
San Diego, California
www.charityadvantage.com/chadwickcenter

January 15-17, 2004

National Leadership Conference on Child
Welfare Issues
Alliance for Children and Families
Florida
www.alliance1.org