



Voice

Fall 2004 Volume Five Issue Four

*Special Report:
Viewing "Family" Through
a New Lens*

*National
Adoption Study
Underway*

*Adoptive
Families Honored*

First Jobs Maine





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Voice

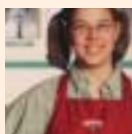
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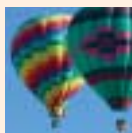


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The Foundation is dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. Started in 1976, Casey Family Services offers quality foster care, post-adoption services, family reunification, family preservation, family advocacy and support, family resource centers, assistance to young families and families affected by HIV/AIDS, and technical assistance through the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice. 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

Every child needs and deserves to grow up in a caring, nurturing family setting. Every child should reach adulthood secure in the knowledge that there will always be a caring adult to whom he or she can turn at any point in life.

A simple notion with profound significance, permanency is about security.

Most children have that security, the anchor that holds their lives steady in the midst of life's many storms, large and small.

Yet for an appallingly large number of youth still in their teens, reality is a harsh awakening to being truly alone. Every year more than 20,000 foster youth "age out" of the foster care system nationwide and too many are thrust out on their own with no meaningful connection to a family, a responsible adult, or anyone else.

Without reliable relationships, these young people—certainly still more children than adults—are at risk, terrible risk, of falling victim to the consequences of their own uninformed, unwise life choices. For some that may mean drug addiction, for others crime, for others, parenthood long before they are ready.

November is National Adoption Month, a time to celebrate the commitment of adults who have stepped forward to provide the gift of family for children and youth, especially those in foster care. National Adoption Day on November 20th will bring together some of the nation's leading judges, attorneys, social workers, parents and children in a coast-to-coast event designed to add more than 4,000 adopted children to the nation's roles.

In this issue of Voice, we have taken the opportunity to salute the individuals, parents, families, mentors and youth who have made "connections" with others their mission in life. We hope they will provide inspiration to many, many others.

Raymond L. Torres



Raymond Torres, derecho, con Linda Goldenberg, directora de Casey Family Services en Bridgeport, CT, izquierda, y John Ortiz, Jr, centro.

Del Escritorio del Director Ejecutivo

Cada niño necesita y merece la oportunidad de crecer en un ambiente familiar cariñoso y estable. Cada niño debe llegar a ser adulto con la seguridad de que siempre habrá algún adulto cariñoso a quien él pueda acudir en cualquier momento de su vida.

Un concepto sencillo con significado profundo: la seguridad es clave para establecer permanencia.

La mayoría de los niños tienen un ancla que sirve para estabilizar sus vidas en cualquier situación. Sin embargo, para un gran número de jóvenes, la realidad es que están verdaderamente solos. Cada año más de 20,000 jóvenes en el sistema de cuidado de crianza cumplen la mayoría de edad y salen de este; tienen que vivir por su cuenta, muchos de ellos sin ninguna conexión significativa con una familia, un adulto responsable o cualquier otra persona.

Sin tener conexiones de confianza estos jóvenes—aun más niños que adultos—están a riesgo de caer víctimas a las consecuencias de sus decisiones ingenuas e imprudentes. Para algunos, esto puede resultar en la adicción a drogas, el crimen, o para otros, el hacerse padre o madre antes de que estén verdaderamente preparados.

Noviembre es reconocido nacionalmente como el Mes de la Adopción, un tiempo para celebrar el compromiso de los adultos que han tomado un paso adelante para compartir el regalo de la familia con niños, niñas y jóvenes, especialmente los que están en cuidado de crianza. El Día Nacional de Adopción, el 20 de noviembre, se juntarán destacados jueces, abogados, trabajadores sociales, padres, madres y niños en un evento a nivel nacional para realizar más de cuatro mil adopciones.

En esta edición de “La Voz” damos reconocimiento a los individuos, padres, madres, familias, amistades y jóvenes que se han dedicado a ser “una conexión” con los demás. Esperamos que ellos sean una inspiración para otros.

Raymond L. Torres

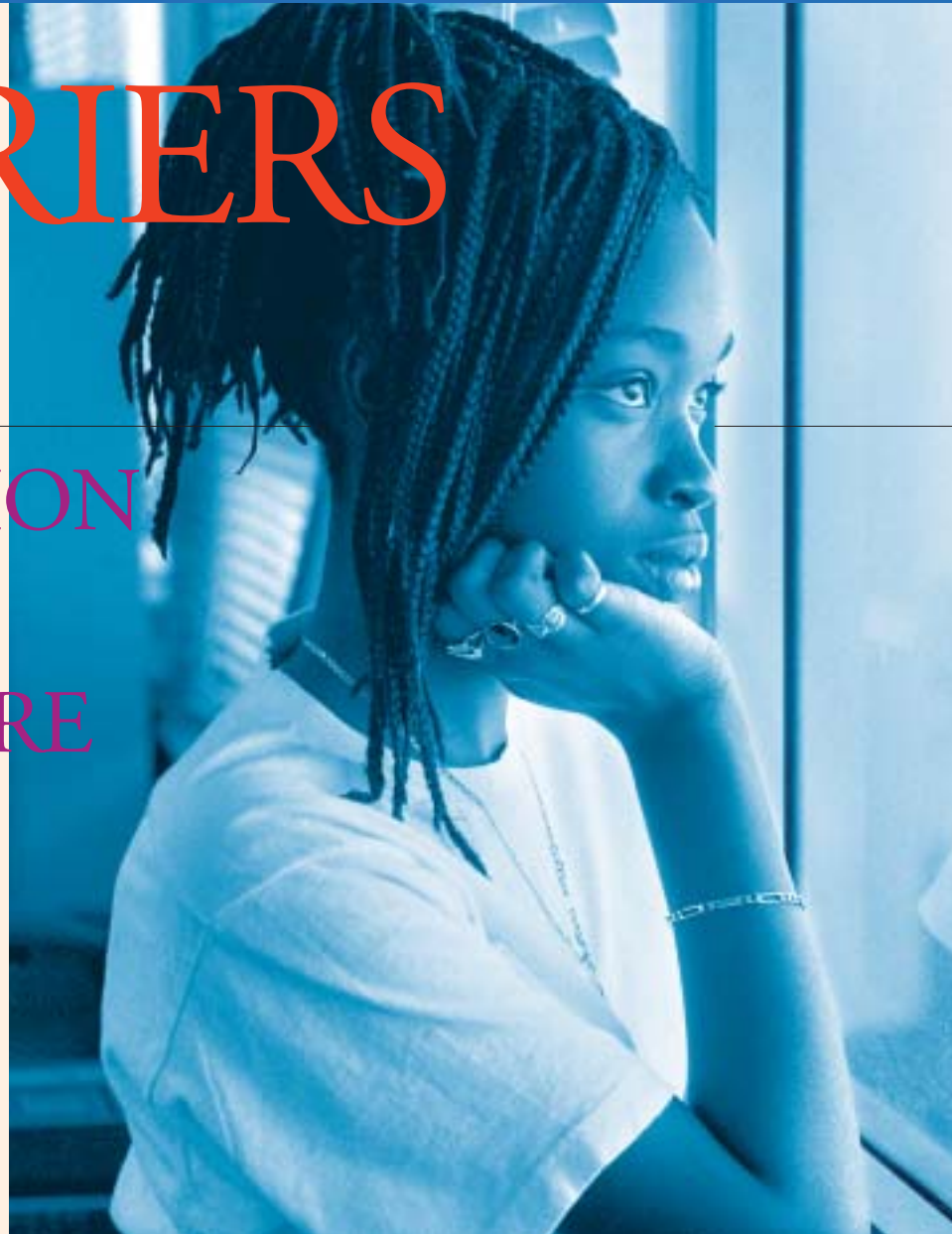
BARRIERS

TO ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE

URBAN INSTITUTE STUDY TO SHED NEW LIGHT ON A CONTINUING PROBLEM

The National Adoption Day Coalition has commissioned the Urban Institute of Washington, D.C. to conduct a national research study that will provide recommendations and solutions to help more foster children find permanent homes. The study will be published in time for National Adoption Day, celebrated on November 20, 2004.

Raymond L. Torres, executive director of Casey Family Services and a founding member of the Coalition, believes the findings will have an impact on national policies and practices. "In our discussions with legislators and colleagues at the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, we learned that there was a need for a comprehensive, state-by-state report on barriers encountered at each phase of adoption from foster care," says Torres. "Our study is also exploring gender, age and ethnicity issues that will help inform policymakers."



National Adoption Day was founded in 1997 by the Alliance for Children's Rights in Los Angeles, which originated the concept of voluntarily opening courts on Saturdays to help process foster care adoptions more efficiently. Janis Spire, executive director of the Alliance, says the Urban Institute report is the next step toward ensuring that the more than 120,000 foster children waiting for adoption have safe, permanent homes.

"National Adoption Day began in response to our frustration with a system that couldn't keep up with the thousands of foster children waiting to be adopted," says Spire. "Each year, the National Adoption

Day Coalition has encouraged more judges across the country to open their courts on the Saturday before Thanksgiving and dedicate the day to finalizing adoptions of foster children. On November 22, 2003, for example, more than 3,000 children were adopted, up from 1,500 the previous year. But there are still thousands of children waiting to be adopted because of policies and practices that need to be identified, challenged and changed."

To further these goals, the Urban Institute will conduct an analysis of the adoption barriers and challenges in communities



“There has been no easy way to look at state-by-state findings on a single topic, like adoption. Our study will provide a way for policymakers and child welfare administrators to easily access and use the information.”

across the nation. Rob Geen and Jennifer Ehrle Macomber, nationally recognized experts in the field of adoption, will oversee the project, which will produce a set of state profiles that identify barriers and innovations, as well as a national overview.

“The project will draw on three sources of data,” says Geen. “Each provides different indicators of the progress states are making in achieving permanency for children in foster care through adoption efforts.”

The primary source of data will be the state Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR), a tool used by the federal government to ensure that state child welfare agencies conform to federal requirements. State CFSR provide a current and comprehensive source of information about barriers to permanency for children in foster care. The CFSR also provide a way of determining how children and families are being served and to examine case outcomes. A team of experts conduct the review in each state, which assesses both the strengths and the needs of the state programs.

“The Child and Family Service Reviews are a tremendous source of data that has not been widely used because the information is so comprehensive,” says Ehrle Macomber. “There has been no easy way to look at state-by-state findings on a single topic, like adoption. Our study will provide a way for policymakers and child welfare administrators to easily access and use the information.”

Findings from the CFSR analysis will be supplemented with data from the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). This system

Agency Factors	Organizational Structure	Stages of Adoption	
		Child Welfare Agency	Courts
Resources	Identify placement	PLACEMENT	Finding of abuse / neglect
	Establish change / goal Initiate concurrent planning	PERMANENCY	Hold hearing
	Diligent search File TPR petition Provide legal services	TERMINATE PARENTAL RIGHTS	Conduct proceedings for TPR Provide legal services Conduct proceedings for appeal Finalize TPR
Case Management	Conduct child-specific recruitment Approve placement Background checks Training Home study ICPC	ADOPTIVE PLACEMENT	Conduct proceedings for adoption Finalize adoption
	File adoption petition Adoption subsidy / establish services Prepare / transition child and family		
	Provide post-adoption services	POST-ADOPTION	

provides a compilation of state reports on the numbers and characteristics of children waiting to be adopted and those who have been adopted, including age, gender and ethnicity.

The *Urban Institute Child Welfare Survey*, conducted in 1997, 1999, and 2001, has collected information from nearly every state on the financing of child welfare services. Data on expenditures for adoption services will be extracted to provide the fiscal context in which states provide these services. The Urban Institute has also produced *The Wednesday's Child Program Evaluation*, the Packard Foundation's *Study of Attrition of Adoption Applicants* and the *Kinship Adoption* study.

Rita Soronen, executive director of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, another founding member of the National Adoption Day Coalition, agrees the study will move forward a national discussion on issues impacting children and families. “By collaborating with the Urban Institute to research the barriers to adoption and how states are addressing those barriers, we can continue to educate and motivate those in a position to make change,” Soronen says. “Those are the first steps to assuring safe, nurturing and permanent homes for every child in need.”

Other Coalition founding members are the Children's Action Network, Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, Freddie Mac Foundation and Target.

ANGELS IN ADOPTION HONORED IN NATION'S CAPITAL

ANGELS

Audra Holmes-Greene, post adoption team leader for Casey Family Services' Bridgeport, CT Division, views a digital photo with Achaunti Strong while celebrating the Strong's Angels in Adoption award in Washington, DC.



In an early prelude to National Adoption Month (November) and National Adoption day (November 20, 2004), the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) in September honored hundreds of individuals and groups who have accomplished extraordinary services on behalf of children awaiting adoption. The event, the sixth annual *Angels in Adoption* gala, gathered more than 500 adoptive families, Members of Congress and others to celebrate the power of family.

And for the second consecutive year, a Casey family was selected to receive the Congressional *Angels in Adoption* Award. U.S. Senator Christopher J. Dodd named New Haven residents Carol Parker Strong and James Strong for the 2004 award.

In 2000 and 2001, the Strongs adopted two young foster children with special medical and educational needs. Since then, they have worked tirelessly with case workers from Casey Family Services and the Yale Child Study Center to find the training,

therapy, educational programs and support groups their family needed.

Casey Family Services Executive Director Raymond L. Torres said he is delighted the Strong family was singled out for this prestigious award. "Our staff members are on a constant search for parents like Carol and Jim who are willing to open their homes to children with special needs and become part of the Casey family," he said. "When they

“Our staff members are on a constant search for parents like Carol and Jim who are willing to open their homes to children with special needs and become part of the Casey family.”

adopted Johnae and Achaunti they knew there would be challenges, but they were willing to make a permanent commitment to two children who deserved a loving family. We are proud to be a part of their support team.”

In 2003, Anthony and Jacqueline Barrows of Coventry, Connecticut were honored. Since 1999, the *Angels in Adoption* award has recognized individuals, families and organizations from each state who have worked to help foster youth waiting for adoptive homes. In addition to the award recipients and Members of Congress, the 2004 *Angels in Adoption* celebration included actress Jane Seymour, PGA golfer Kirk Triplett and Pat Williams, general manager and senior vice president of the NBA's Orlando Magic.

CCAI is a founding member of the National Adoption Day Coalition, which also includes Casey Family Services, the Children's Action Network, the Alliance for Children's Rights, the Freddie Mac Foundation, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and Target Corporation.

Kerry Marks Hasenbalg, CCAI executive director, noted that the event and the organization have come a long way since they were launched in 1999. “At that time we operated out of the Congressional Caucus Office on Capitol Hill and had only one staffer. Today we have several staff members; our offices are in MacLean, Virginia, and the Angels program is one of four core programs we offer.”

As part of the 2004 Angels gala, CCAI turned the spotlight on another of its pri-



James Strong embraces his adopted daughter, Johnae, in Washington DC after the sixth annual Angels in Adoption gala this Fall.

“CAROL AND JIM WERE WILLING TO MAKE A PERMANENT COMMITMENT TO TWO CHILDREN WHO DESERVED A LOVING FAMILY.”

mary programs, the Congressional Foster Youth Internship Program. This year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation (including Casey Family Services) will provide funding and technical assistance support to the growing program.

Foster Youth Internship Program

Since 2002, with support from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, the internship program has provided foster youth currently enrolled in college or graduate school an opportunity to work in con-

gressional offices for the summer. Supplemental to their work on Capitol Hill, the interns take part in an orientation and training program, bimonthly educational sessions and a mid-summer retreat. In addition, CCAI provides a stipend, covers all housing and travel expenses and acts as an ongoing support network.

In the first year of the program, Senator Larry Craig (R-Idaho) and Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) offered internships in a pilot effort. The following year, CCAI expanded the program to eight congressional offices representing both parties in the Senate and the House. By the summer's end in 2004, the program had placed 42 interns, according to Hasenbalg.

Looking back at what she calls her favorite program, Hasenbalg recalled one particular intern who won her heart. Nyanja came to the United States from Rwanda, a refugee of unspeakable horror in a war between the country's two main ethnic groups. She arrived here at the age of 10, and very soon ended up in the foster care system in Massachusetts. “She has never become a U.S. citizen, because no one stepped forward to help her to do that,” Hasenbalg said.

While a college student, Nyanja applied for the CCAI Foster Youth Internship Program and was accepted. “When she arrived in Washington she told me that she had been trying for years to find out what had become of her family,” Hasenbalg said. “She had written to the Embassy of Rwanda every month, to no avail.

ANGELS IN ADOPTION HONORED IN NATION'S CAPITOL

Audra Holmes-Greene (post-adoption team leader from Casey Family Services' Bridgeport Division), Carol Parker Strong (adoptive mother from New Haven), Johnae Strong (adopted daughter, 9), Achaunti Strong (adopted son, 7) and Jim Strong (adoptive father).

"But during her first week as an intern in Senator Inhofe's office, she was able to meet with the Rwandan Ambassador. She had dinner with him, and he promised to follow up personally." In the meantime, Hasenbalg said, she and her husband Scott have become Nyanja's sponsors so she can become a citizen of this country.

"She spent her 21st birthday with us," Hasenbalg recalled. Now in Uganda, where she is working with orphans, Nyanja plans to return to Rwanda to search for her family.



A group of young people completed their summer internship in Washington DC, thanks to the Congressional Foster Youth Internship Program, which affords foster youth who are enrolled in college or graduate school an opportunity to work in congressional offices.

"ONCE YOU HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH A CHILD OR A YOUNG PERSON, THEY CAN NEVER AGAIN BE AN ABSTRACT IDEA...THEY'RE SIMPLY VERY REAL."

"I'll be with her when she goes," she added.

Hasenbalg has made several trips to Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America as part of her international work with the organization. Last month she conducted a tour of Honduras for a delegation of Members of Congress. The CCAI International Program facilitates ongoing communication, adoption education and fact-finding trips between government entities, often in col-

laboration with the U.S. Department of State. Delegates are given the opportunity to meet with the foreign officials in charge of adoption, visit government-run institutions and experience successful child welfare programs.

"In all that we do, we work to provide Members of Congress and their staffs all the insight, data and information they need in drafting sound, positive legislation affecting foster care and adoption," Hasenbalg explained.

"And, with all that we do, I still think the most effective programs put the Members in touch, face to face, with children and families. "Once you have a relationship with a child, a young person, or a family they can never again be an abstract idea...they're simply very real."

A Win-Win for Youth and Business

Kate, a First Jobs participant

Joe pins his Hannaford identification tag onto his baseball cap. He and his sister, Kate, don bright orange vests and dash out of Hannaford's Windham, Maine store to collect grocery carts from the parking lot. The store manager calls after them cheerfully, "Don't forget – no more than five at a time!"

Joe and Kate are part of an employment program targeted to youth in care called *First Jobs Maine*. The program was piloted in partnership with Employment Trust, Inc. (ETI) of Portland and the Hannaford Bros. Company. Funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, with technical support from Casey Family Services and the

First Jobs

University of Southern Maine's Muskie School, *First Jobs* provides initial and transitional employment opportunities at Hannaford for youth ranging in age from 15-21.

"To know this program is to understand what 'win-win' is all about," said Mark Millar, director of Casey Family Services' Maine Division. Millar explains that in the dual customer model, employers like Hannaford fulfill the demand for added employees during high tourist season, and youth in the program receive customized job placement, training, coaching and retention support. *First Jobs* combines the expertise of mentors, employers, social ser-



vice agencies and career coaches to work with youth in a supportive, positive environment.

While serving on the advisory committee for the School-to-Career Program, now administered by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Rob Franciose, president and founder of ETI, developed the rationale for *First Jobs*. The program is targeted to youth who have experienced abuse and neglect, have never held a job and many of whom have learning and other disabilities. "Employment is a functional way to address some of the issues these kids face. It's all about equal access – equal rights, breaking down the barriers to employment for these kids."

Breaking down barriers to employment has been the cornerstone of Franciose's work. With ETI's 12-year experience as a specialty workforce development agency for people with barriers to employment, *First Jobs* is predicated on staffing and coaching. ETI submitted a grant proposal to the Annie E. Casey Foundation for the project in October, 2003, targeting 25 total jobs, 18 of which were intended for a "summer jobs" component and seven as part of a "transition-to-hire" component. By December, the program was funded and within six months, *First Jobs* was up and running.

The summer jobs component targets high school students for a 10-week work period.

FIRST JOBS: A WIN-WIN FOR YOUTH AND BUSINESS

FIRST

The second component, transition-to-hire, targets youth for job placements in regular year-round jobs at Hannaford stores. Participating youth are on ETI's payroll until they complete a one- to three-month training program, at which point they are "transitioned" to Hannaford's payroll with full benefits.

"Transition-to-hire is a critical part of the program because it is designed to prevent failure on the job," says Kevin O'Sullivan, ETI vice-president. According to O'Sullivan, the 15 summer hires in Hannaford's Windham, Standish and Wells stores did so well in the 10-week program, that 12 were offered an opportunity for part-time work during the school year, including Kate, who is re-employed at the Windham store a couple of evenings a week and on Saturdays. "So, the summer jobs program turned into 'summer-to-hire,'" beamed Kevin.

In fact, every aspect of *First Jobs* is designed to make the job experience a successful one for youth who have serious challenges in gaining and maintaining employment. "We want to break the chain of getting a job and losing a job," said Rob Franciose. "If they're on our payroll, we can support them through the learning stages so they don't give up," he said, referring to the training period for which the youth are paid.

First Jobs is structured around several other elements that have helped to ensure its success:

1) JOB COACHES who have been trained in the tasks performed by the First Jobs associates, are on site at all times, providing support and assistance when needed. Job



Joe (right) enjoys working in the Seafood Department at Hannaford's Windham, Maine store during his first summer with the Jobs First program.

coaches are supervised by the vocational coordinator, a role fulfilled by another ETI team member, Anthony Taliento. "For many of these kids, their life experience has emphasized their not belonging, feeling like outsiders. This sometimes results in behavior problems that contribute to the cycle of failure in the workforce. We need to bridge the gaps by hanging in with these kids and never judging them," he adds. "At the same time, we need to make sure that the employer gets what they need. So, bridge-building is a critical part of the process."

2) THE EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM provides 10 weeks of interactive sessions in which youth are able to knit together their own individual workplace experiences with structured learning about employment. These sessions provide a forum for consistent interaction with trained facilitators from the Portland Career Center's Training Resource Center as well as guest faculty from Hannaford, banks and other businesses.

3) THE HANNAFORD PARTNERSHIP has been critical to the integrity of the program. Hannaford's culture of hiring many young people, investing in its employees and focusing on retention makes the grocery chain a perfect corporate partner. Hannaford's associate relationship managers, responsible for day-to-day human resources issues, have met regularly with ETI and were another on-site resource for the *First Jobs* associates. At the end of the summer, Hannaford placed many of the associates on "educational leave" status, rather than terminating them, so the youth have the option to return next summer if they choose.

4) THE COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP with Casey Family Services and the Muskie School has proved invaluable to recruitment efforts and to facilitating communication with Maine's Department of Health and Human Services. Casey and the Muskie School also have partnered to create an in-service training program for Hannaford management and supervisory staff, focusing on the issues of youth in care and on providing insights, tools and techniques relating to effective and sensitive workplace communication with the young employees.

5) INDIVIDUALIZED JOB PLACEMENT has ensured that each *First Jobs* associate was placed in a job that best fit his/her skills, interests and Hannaford's business needs.

6) CUSTOMIZED SUPPORT has helped overcome barriers to job success. ETI was the watchdog on any issues that might impede the chances for a youth's success on the job. The ETI team met with the *First Jobs* associates over time to learn of any relevant

“Helping each associate through the learning and experience curves, giving them the same ‘life experience’ as many other youth, are the keys to ensuring lasting success in employment.”

JOBBS



Joe helps his sister Kate round up grocery carts in front of Hannaford's in Windham, Maine. Both are part of Maine's First Jobs program.

challenges, health problems, or conditions that could affect their work performance. An open door policy on the part of ETI and Hannaford management encouraged youth at any time to discuss concerns or questions as they came up.

“Helping each associate through the learning and experience curves, giving them the same ‘life experience’ as many other youth, are the keys to ensuring lasting success in employment,” explains O’Sullivan. His colleague, Josh Verville from the Muskie

School adds, “Work should be part of foster kids’ exposure. Learning job skills, hanging in at a job is something they need to do to prepare for life.”

With all these elements in place, no one is resting on the laurels of the first year’s success. Currently, ETI, Casey Family Services’ Mark Millar, Hannaford and other employers in Maine are exploring with the Annie E. Casey Foundation an expanded program for 2005 so that more youth may be served.

Brian S. Lyght, senior associate in system and service reform for the Foundation, played a key role in funding the program. “We’re encouraged by the outcomes that *First Jobs* has achieved, particularly as we consider promising practices for connecting these young people to opportunities for

economic success. An evaluation of *First Jobs’* model and outcomes is being conducted through a partnership with the Enterprise Foundation,” he said.

As Kate and Joe hang up their orange vests at the end of the day, they share a smile. Like many foster siblings, they haven’t lived together since they were very young. But *First Jobs* brought them together in the workplace for a summer. Just like many kids their age, they worked, earned money, met new friends, learned new skills, and most importantly, discovered something about themselves. They learned that they can succeed at a job as well as anyone. For that summer, Kate and Joe had the chance to belong.

DOCUMENTARY FILM RAISES AWARENESS, ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

Three young adults talk about their dreams at the end of *Aging Out*, a film by Roger Weisberg and Vanessa Roth that offers an emotionally honest portrayal of teens' struggle to make it on their own after emancipating from the foster care system. Today, two of those young people are living out their dreams—one, David, is working on a fishing boat in Alaska; another, Daniella, is a proud wife and mother of two and is a student at Trinity College in Hartford. But the third youth in the film will never have the chance to finish college and launch a career in a helping profession as she had wished. Tragically, Risa was shot to death in Los Angeles last June, a sad and riveting reminder of how foster youth can fall through the cracks of the system into lives of poverty, homelessness, drug addiction and violence.

"All the kids in the film really wanted to emancipate from foster care and be out on their own," explained Vanessa Roth, co-director/co-producer of the film, commissioned by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI). "But at the same time, like all kids who turn 18, they still needed consistent support," she said. "In each case, there was really no one adult who provided that for any of these youths."

JCYOI and other Casey organizations intend to use the film to raise awareness about the struggles of the more than 20,000 teens who age out of the foster care system every year in the United States. The film is scheduled to air nationally on PBS this spring. Outreach Extensions, a national



Panelists answer questions from the audience after the screening of Aging Out at Film Fest New Haven. The community forum event was dedicated to the memory of Risa Bejarano, who was murdered in Los Angeles last June.

"ALL THE KIDS IN THE FILM REALLY WANTED TO...BE OUT ON THEIR OWN. BUT...THEY STILL NEEDED CONSISTENT SUPPORT. IN EACH CASE, THERE WAS REALLY NO ONE ADULT WHO PROVIDED THAT FOR ANY OF THESE YOUTHS."

consulting firm that specializes in comprehensive, high profile educational and community outreach campaigns for media projects, is also providing its expertise to market the film to local PBS affiliates in 22 locations.

In addition, according to Roger Weisberg, the film has been screened in more than a dozen film festivals across the country, and shown at youth summits, independent living programs and child welfare conferences.

Most recently, *Aging Out* won an Honorable Mention at Film Fest New Haven (Connecticut), where the central issue of transitioning teens was discussed in a community forum following the screening at Yale University's Off Broadway Theater. A panel that included Casey Family Services Executive Director Raymond L. Torres, Lauren Frey of the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, two of the youths portrayed in the film and both filmmakers, answered questions from a diverse audience.

Torres implored everyone present to take ownership of the issues by fostering, mentoring or hiring foster youth. "The three faces in the film are representative of the thousands of kids who leave the system every year," he said. "They are eager to get on with their lives, but the majority do not have the family, financial or emotional supports needed to succeed."

Co-director/producer Vanessa Roth, struck by Risa's desire to help others by telling her own story, befriended Risa during the filming of *Aging Out*. "Risa's life represents more than any other the need for human connections," said Roth. "When Risa turned 18 and went to college, her case was closed. Her foster mother, Delores, was no longer supported by the system and neither was Risa, so she lost her bed in Delores' home," Roth related. Roth explained further that the system did not provide the information or resources that would have supported a



permanent connection for kids after 18. “When holidays came up, Risa had no place to go. When she and her friends wanted to get an apartment at school, she had no one to co-sign a lease for her. When she was hospitalized [with severe depression], there was no emergency back-up for her. And when she died, there was no one to claim her.”

Asked what he had hoped to accomplish in filming *Aging Out*, director Roger Weisberg explained, “In making *Aging Out*, I wanted to take viewers inside the embattled world of teenagers in foster care to reveal the tremendous obstacles they face as they try to become self-sufficient adults.” Weisberg



Veasna and Daniella Rin Hover, two youth portrayed in Aging Out, and filmmakers Vanessa Roth and Roger Weisberg discuss the challenges of leaving the foster care system with little or no support.

said that a variety of audiences have responded positively to the film. “General audiences are intrigued to get to know the kids in the film and tend to feel more responsible for helping them,” a fact that



Filmmakers Roger Weisberg and Vanessa Roth stand outside one of the venues for Film Fest New Haven before the screening of Aging Out, which won an Honorable Mention

“THEY ARE EAGER TO GET ON WITH THEIR LIVES, BUT THE MAJORITY DO NOT HAVE THE FAMILY, FINANCIAL OR EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS NEEDED TO SUCCEED.”

was borne out at the New Haven forum when people spoke up to offer their services. “Youth in foster care,” he continued, “find something that resonates with their own lives, so they tend to identify with the film. For people working in the [child welfare] system, the film puts a human face on stories they see and hear every day.”

Whatever the audience, *Aging Out* is a clarion call for a change in the way the system views foster youth. For any young person,

the transition to adulthood doesn’t happen in the magic moment one turns age 18, or even 21. It happens over time. It happens with consistent financial and emotional support. It happens with the love and caring concern of parents who provide a sanctuary called home.

One Connecticut state legislator appealed to everyone who was engaged in the issue to advocate for “age outs” and to educate their state policymakers. He pointed out that in light of the vast number of competing issues in front of legislators every day, advocates must be a consistent voice for change. The film *Aging Out* is providing that voice for change, one community at a time.



JERRY HOBBS

Close-up

Jerry Hobbs is the executive director of Foster Care Alumni of America, a new and growing non-profit organization working on behalf of youth and adults who have experienced foster care. A former teacher, business executive, and child welfare professional, Hobbs has attributed his own life achievements to the caring adults who have helped to guide him—and none more than the foster parents he still calls “Mom and Dad.” As Voice goes to press, we are saddened to learn of the death of his dad, Ray Piercy, in Kingman, Arizona, and our deepest sympathy goes out to Jerry, his mom, Billie Jean Piercy, and their entire family.

VOICE: What is Foster Care Alumni of America?

JERRY HOBBS: Foster Care Alumni of America is an independent 501(c)3 organization created to connect, engage and empower adult alumni of foster care. Our intention is to create a powerful collective voice that can transform the lives of those involved in, or in transition from, legal out-of-home care.

Voice: How did it come into being and what role are you playing?

JERRY HOBBS: It is in the process of coming into being. It has been incubated at Casey Family Programs, which has promised to continue support for operations for another year. That generous funding has enabled us to approach other funders for underwriting of our core programs.

I came to this pretty naturally. I am an alumnus of foster care. Before being named as executive director of the organization, I was an educational specialist with Casey Family Programs in San Diego, California. I've always seen a link between educational opportunities and good outcomes for foster children. I actually began my professional career as a public high school teacher of English, social studies, speech and debate.

Later I entered into the business world and became the CEO of a manufacturing firm. When I retired, I wanted to return to the work I really love.



Jerry Hobbs, right, with his foster parents, Ray and Billie-Jean Piercy, whom he has always called “Dad and Mom.”

Voice: Until recently you were located in Washington, DC. Where are you now, and why did you choose to move?

JERRY HOBBS: We have just moved our offices to Richmond, Virginia. We had several reasons for the transition. First, we had to consider sustainability; we are a fledgling non-profit organization, so we had to carefully look at the cost of doing business. There were a lot of other issues as well.

Here in Richmond, which is a beautiful city, we're near Washington, and we're also near several first-rate universities and schools of social work. The Richmond school system is

struggling, but kudos are in order for the new superintendent, and we're planning to become involved in mentoring in the schools. Moreover, foster care is largely administered by state and county systems, so we knew that we should be in a state capital where we can have an influence.

We are located in a lovely neighborhood of row townhouses. As you walk in our door you will see a stack of five antique leather suitcases. The suitcases are symbolic of children in care. Each of the five represents 100,000 kids in care. And we have an actual lightning rod.....alumni want to be a lightning rod for change for foster care in America.

Voice: Now that you're in your new home, what's top on your agenda?

JERRY HOBBS: We're actively building our website. It will be crucial to our work. And we're continuing to do research as we put together a comprehensive database that will include every organization in the country dealing with foster care in one way or another (e.g., independent living coordinators, state professionals, state providers, alumni groups, youth groups, foundations, social workers). We're expecting to test

“As you walk in the door you will see a stack of five antique leather suitcases. The suitcases are symbolic of children in care. Each of the five represents 100,000 kids in care.”



launch our website in November, and have a more formal launch in May during National Foster Care Month. The idea is that youth (and older alumni) will go to the website and register. We'll assure safety and confidentiality, but we'll also encourage people to share their information.

Voice: What are your core programs?

JERRY HOBBS: Our programs are

- Foster Find
- Foster Recruit
- Foster Purpose
- Foster Gratitude (to honor individuals, teachers and others for their contributions to kids.)

Voice: Are you tapping into any particular program models for your work?

JERRY HOBBS: I am particularly interested in the University of Pennsylvania resiliency model, which is about helping youth identify their life purpose and accept accountability in being able to bounce back from adversity and in being able to use appropriate tools and resources to overcome anxiety. The thinking is that if disruption happens, and if we've given children resources, then they'll do all right.... This is what Foster Purpose is all about.

Voice: What is your goal for Foster Find?

JERRY HOBBS: We're going to ask who is important to foster youth...siblings, former foster brothers and sisters, teachers, social workers, mentors... and we'll hope to locate them through the database. Once we have such matches, sibling matches, for example, then we'll facilitate an active exchange.

Voice: How important are lasting connections for foster youth?

JERRY HOBBS: Connections are very important. I've stayed very closely connected with my foster mom and dad, whom I call "Mom and Dad." That connection has been important to me, as have other key relationships in my life. Some of those key relationships have been with school teachers, and I believe that is an experience common to foster kids. The impact a teacher can have is profound.

Voice: How was that true for you?

JERRY HOBBS: I had a 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Perry, whom I'll always remember. She agreed to take me into the class because I was so big. I've always been a big person. But because of all my disruptions, I was performing academically at about a kindergarten level in many areas. Mrs. Perry insisted that I was not going to be placed with much younger kids in a lower grade. Instead, she said that I would do well in her class, and she stayed after hours to work

with me to make sure of it. She made me work very hard on my reading and basic math skills.

And later, in my senior year, another teacher, Miss Fellows, stopped me as I was walking in the hall. She asked if I was on my way to take the SAT tests. The application period had already passed, the tests were going on, and I didn't know anything about it. But she said, "You must take the tests, or you won't be able to get any scholarships for college." That was the first time anyone had talked to me about college and scholarships. She suggested that I do a "walk on," so I did, carrying my No. 2 pencil with me. It was the last testing session. I did well, and won a full four-year scholarship.

Voice: What about your birth family?

JERRY HOBBS: Even though I rejected my mother's lifestyle, when I was 18, I tried to go back to her. I wanted to save her. I passed on the college scholarship I had won and went to a community college instead. I had my mother move in with me to rescue her from the streets. I was so sure that I could do it. But I couldn't keep her from the streets, and she fell back into her world of drugs and alcohol. (Fortunately for me, the university had held the scholarship for me.)

My mother's tragic life has shaped my passion about gender and racial issues. I think of my mom struggling to raise six kids, working very hard when she could. And, as a result I think, I've tried to be a super par-

CLOSE-UP: JERRY HOBBS



ent. Today I'm very close to my own kids. I have a daughter, 26, who is a theater teacher in San Diego, and a son, 23, who is a graduate of UCLA. He has been in South Africa working at Mandela University in Port Elizabeth in an AIDS education program and conflict resolution initiative around AIDS issues. I was there a few months ago to visit. I'm very proud of both of them.

Voice: What was your experience in foster care?

JERRY HOBBS: I had nine placements in foster care in the space of three years. There were six of us—all boys—who went into care. We were one year apart in age.

Three of us went to one family and three to another. The state tried to keep us together by last name, but they didn't realize that our last names weren't really relevant. Our youngest brother was adopted almost right away. During the first couple of placements the Hobbs boys stayed together. But not for long, and when I was eight, in the fall of 1963, I was placed at the Sacramento Receiving Home. This was after a failed attempt to reunite all of us with our biological mother.

Part of the reason that I'm committed to the work I am doing now is rooted in that experience. At age 11, my foster mother Billie Jean Piercy took me in. She had been a foster child herself. She provided a lot of strength and understanding...but also

“OUR INTENTION IS TO CREATE A POWERFUL COLLECTIVE VOICE THAT CAN TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF THOSE INVOLVED IN, OR IN TRANSITION FROM, LEGAL OUT-OF-HOME CARE.”

tough love. “I know what you're feeling,” she'd tell us when we were acting out, “but your actions won't get you anything but restriction.” What she meant was that no matter how hard we tried to disrupt this placement, it wasn't going to happen; we were staying put.

Voice: In what ways was Billie Jean Piercy special to you?

JERRY HOBBS: Long before it was popular, she took a personal interest in sibling reunification. She started the Sacramento Foster Parents Association in the early 60s and not long after that, Dan, my older brother, was placed with us. In fact, as she found out about my five brothers, she told the authorities that she would take each of them when and if their placements disrupted. And they did disrupt, and eventually four out of five

of my brothers came to live with us. And we've stayed very close to Billie Jean and Walter Piercy. They are 77 and 76 today and living in Kingman, Arizona.

Voice: Is there one time that you can remember when you knew you would be part of the Piercy family forever?

JERRY HOBBS: I remember a time at the church we attended. During one service, the whole congregation was supposed to sit together in family groups. Then the pastor would ask each mother and dad to stand and introduce all their children by name. He called upon my mother and said, “Billie Jean, now tell us which of these children are your real children.” Without missing a beat, she replied, “Why Wilbur, you know that all my children are real.” She would never allow any distinctions to be made.

Voice: What would you tell other adults thinking about foster care?

JERRY HOBBS: I'd tell them that they should go into this work as a foster parent for life....If they do then they will be the beneficiary just as much as the child.

Voice: And what do you tell foster youth?

JERRY HOBBS: I tell young people that if you want to stop hurting, start helping. To heal, go help. Some people have called me the Dr. Phil of foster care. I'm not so sure about that, but I do tell kids that they have every excuse to fail, and every reason to succeed.

LAUREN FREY



Close-up

Since 1978, Lauren Frey has been professionally and personally committed to adoption and permanency for older children, teenagers and children with special needs. Since 2003, Frey has been project manager at the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice.

She cites a quote by Anne Tyler—“they move through life with the grace and dignity that only comes from having once been cherished.”—as the basis of her philosophy. “This is what all our young people need, no matter where and who they are,” she says.



Lauren Frey (right) with Sarah B. Greenblatt (left) director of the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, and Kristina Poly from Connecticut’s Department of Children and Families confer at a training session on Lifelong Connections.

Voice: How did you come to Casey Family Services?

LAUREN FREY: I grew up in Pennsylvania, went to college in Massachusetts and got my Master’s at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. After I graduated from college in 1978, I got a job at an adoption agency for older and special needs kids and worked there for 17 years.

From there I went to Massachusetts Families for Kids. Massachusetts was one of 11 states that received funding to reform the system for permanency. We focused on the backlog of kids waiting for adoption. During the eight years I was there, we developed some cutting-edge ways of work-

ing in the system with kids, particularly those like older adolescents who hadn’t been focused on before. We also developed a family-teen mediation model and were advocates for post-adoption services. And I joined Casey Family Services in 2003.

Voice: How did you become interested in foster care and adoption?

LAUREN FREY: I was always interested in adoption and special needs. I did a lot of work on a volunteer basis with kids with special needs and I happened to grow up around a lot of families with adopted kids. I had several friends who were adopted, my single aunt took in a teenager, and my grandmother did some informal care. I saw these as some of many ways that families came to belong to each other.

Voice: Tell us about your own family.

LAUREN FREY: I have four kids. They all joined my family after aging out of the foster care system between the ages of 18 and 21. They are now in their 30’s. They have taught me so much.

Voice: What do you think is the most important lesson for foster and adoptive parents?

LAUREN FREY: Commitment. It sums up the whole experience for adoptive parents and foster parents. As a foster or adoptive

parent, you are always a thread in that child’s life, and you make a difference either for a reason, a season or a lifetime.

Voice: If you could change one thing about the current system what would that be?

LAUREN FREY: It would be that we would come to honor the sacredness of family in the life of children. If we truly honored that, we would have a system that works much better for children. Every child is fundamentally entitled to a family. Every child. Even if their birth family can’t be with them for a certain time, that family’s place in the child’s life must be honored. We especially need to honor the right of older kids to a family.

Voice: You have spoken eloquently on the regrettable impact of the child welfare system’s compartmentalization of permanency and independent living. Have you seen progress in breaking down that rigidity?

LAUREN FREY: We do need to integrate permanency and transition. These systems have been operating separately, but the challenge is to bring these two silos together. Any change in the system is very difficult. But it is also very doable. Change starts in small

CLOSE-UP: LAUREN FREY

“The biggest challenge is being alone during a time of life that is so huge in its implication. For every teenager, it is a time of trying out the idea of leaving everything that is safe and striking out on your own.”



Voice: What is the greatest challenge youth face during transition?

LAUREN FREY: The biggest challenge is being alone during a time of life that is so huge in its implication. For every teenager, it is a time of trying out the idea of leaving everything that is safe and striking out on your own. Doing that when you are feeling alone puts the experience on a whole different level.

Voice: What can help?

LAUREN FREY: Every teenager needs to have a family he or she can take for granted. Everyone of us needs to know we have a place to go to when we need a place to stay.

Voice: Can you share a story of a youth who made a successful transition?

LAUREN FREY: In her book *Somebody's Someone* (Warner Books, June 2003), Regina Louise tells how she bounced around in her family until the age of 13, when she ended up in a children's home. Her life was touched by a child-care worker who took an interest in her and believed in her. She was going to adopt Regina, but the system decided that was not appropriate. They were separated for many years. They reunited two weeks after the book was published, and the child-care worker adopted Regina, who is now 40.

What I think is especially interesting about this story is that Regina is a successful businesswoman and mom, a person who has

After raising their biological children, Jacquelyn and Tony Barrows decided to adopt Coady (Left) from the foster care system when he was 13. In 2002, they became foster parents to another teen, Kevin.

places and grows. Across the country, in a number of places, people, agencies and organizations are experimenting with new ways to work together. We want to get some good data on what works and share those lessons.

Voice: What is your assessment of your opportunity to advance the work of the Casey Center on permanency?

LAUREN FREY: For a variety of reasons, the time has come for the topic of permanency. Casey has excellent experience in the areas of permanency, integrating family relation-

ships, life skills and other support for older kids. It's very exciting to be right on the cusp of this very important work.

Voice: You have written about the need for child welfare programs to operate from “the eyes of the youth.” Can you explain that?

LAUREN FREY: It's so much the right thing to do. Changes that make sense from “the eyes of the youth” work from the point of view of the people who will be living those changes, especially kids. If they don't make sense, we shouldn't do them.

Policies and practices have to be informed by the people who will be affected. It's like the South African saying, “nothing about us, without us.” We need to do a very good job of listening to their experiences. Then we will get what we need to make good policies and practices.

TRANSITIONING YOUTH: BLENDING THE WORLDS OF PERMANENCY AND INDEPENDENT LIVING



Through the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, Sarah Greenblatt and Lauren Frey share promising practices and offer technical assistance to states around the country on ways to improve services to children in the system.

made it in the world. What helped make her what she is was the picture of this child-care worker that she carried in her heart.

It's not the schooling, not the resources, but the people who will make a difference. It's a remarkable example of what can carry a young person through. And it's a reminder that we should make sure that each child is somebody's someone.

The following is excerpted from "Merging the Worlds of Permanency and Independent Living: Lifelong Family Relationships and Life Skills for Older Youth," by Lauren Frey, published in the September edition of the NRCY Update, National Resource Center for Youth Development

"I grew up in a very loving and caring foster home ...but no matter how happy I was, I always had in the back of my mind that my foster parents were only taking care of me ...Being adopted (at age 19) changed my life ...I was always part of a family, but now that family is my family."

— Sarah Coryell, former foster youth

The work of Casey Family Services has long been dedicated to making sure that youth in our child welfare system have safe and secure families—regardless of their age, challenging needs or complex circumstances. As the agency listens to youth in care like Sarah, it continues to push the boundaries of its own work in increasingly more comprehensive and creative ways—making sure youth who are reaching the age of "transition" have all the life skills, supports and services they need and the most secure, enduring and legally permanent family relationship possible.

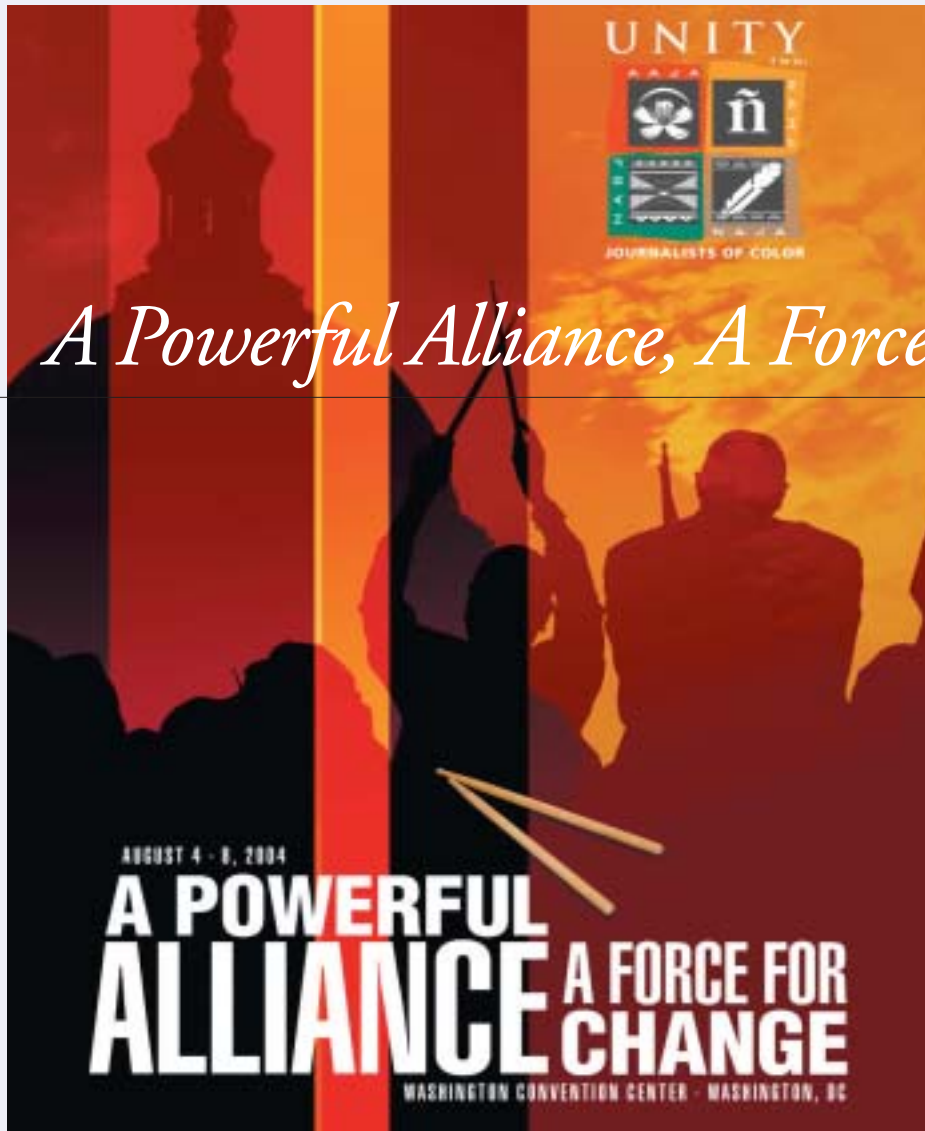
In almost all states, child welfare systems too often compartmentalize their work with children and youth by giving them service plan goals that offer either "legal family membership" (reunification, adoption, guardianship) or "long-term support" (another permanent planned living arrangement, independent living). The Casey Center is committed to promising practices that blend the best of both worlds for youth — assuring them a permanent parenting

relationship, permanent extended family connections and comprehensive life skills, supports and services.

Although these two distinct service arms of the child welfare system—permanency and independent living—have each achieved progressive policy leaps and promising practice advances of late, from "the eyes of a youth" the compartmentalization is still there. The blending of these two worlds is imperative if our youth are ever to be adequately prepared for life, love and work in adulthood.

To promote a holistic model for the youth of our child welfare system, the Casey Center bases its technical assistance on best and promising practices according to an evolving framework of guiding principles. When addressing systemic change related to transitioning youth, the following needs are emphasized:

- The need to be guided by a sound definition of permanency.
- The need to customize permanency outcomes.
- The need to be committed to comprehensive, continuous and customized services.
- The need to engage youth in integrated life planning.
- The need to be youth-centered.
- The need to be family-focused, using an expanded definition of "family."
- The need to employ a collaborative process of family team planning and decision making.



A Powerful Alliance, A Force for Change

gic communications in Baltimore. “As the Foundation, including Casey Family Services, works to address issues of poverty, under-resourced neighborhoods, youth in foster care and those transitioning out of care, it is the journalists and media professionals who get these issues in front of policymakers, elected officials and opinion leaders who can really address disparities in the system,” she said.

Foundation staff, including several from Casey Family Services, were on-site throughout the conference to provide data and resource information on a variety of topics pertaining to children, family and community issues. Casey hosted experts from Foundation-funded programs and sponsored a reception for UNITY’s high school journalism program — *J Camp*—to encourage more young people of color to pursue careers in journalism and communications. More than 40 students who filled the 2004 class of *J Camp* learned from a faculty of journalism luminaries that included Tim Russert, Helen Thomas, Carole Simpson and Carl Bernstein.

After four days of workshops, discussions and presentations (including addresses by President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry), the UNITY conference presented recommendations for changing the composition of the Washington press corps and Washington bureau management to reflect more accurately the makeup of the U.S. population, which today, is nearly one third non-white (2000 U.S. Bureau of Census). Yet, according to a recent study conducted by UNITY Journalists of Color, Inc. and the University of Maryland’s Philip

In the nation’s largest gathering of journalists in history, more than 8,000 media professionals met in Washington in August to explore ways to improve the quality of diversity in the news business. Sponsored in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the 2004 UNITY: Journalists of Color Convention provided an opportunity for in-depth discussions of issues of common interest.

The convention brought together four national associations of journalists of color: the Asian American Journalists Association, National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, and the Native American Journalists Association. Conference attendees gathered under the theme “A Powerful Alliance, A Force for Change.”

As a strategic alliance, UNITY’s mission is to act as a force for positive change to advance the presence, growth and leadership of journalists of color in the fast-changing global news industry. In addition to regional meetings and the national conference, held every five years, UNITY develops programs and institutional relationships that promote year-round journalism advocacy and education, with a focus on fairness and accuracy in news coverage and diversity in newsrooms.

“We wanted to connect with journalists about Casey’s leadership and programs that are helping to build strong futures for vulnerable children, families and communities, with an emphasis on issues affecting communities of color,” said Dana Vickers Shelley, the Foundation’s director of strate-

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

News

Merrill College of Journalism, there are disproportionately low numbers of journalists of color in key decision-making positions in news organizations.

Building on the need for increased diversity in the ranks of newsrooms across the nation, Casey staff also took the opportunity to link the issue to the problem of disproportionate representation of children of color within foster care. This is dramatically illustrated by the fact that while African-American youth represent just 15 percent of our nation's young people, they comprise 40 percent of the children in foster care. With juvenile minority populations expected to increase significantly, especially Hispanics, who now comprise 27 percent of all children in foster care, concern is growing. (Source: Child Welfare League of America, www.cwla.org/programs/culture/



The Unity Conference in Washington DC boasted many political luminaries, including President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry, who



each answered questions from panels of prominent journalists and members of the audience.

disproportionatestatement.pdf). Casey Family Services and its Foundation colleagues have undertaken a variety of initiatives to explore and address this and other issues affecting at-risk children and families.

Casey plans to continue working with the minority journalist associations in the coming years, providing their members with

updates on programmatic and policy issues, meeting with reporters and columnists who cover issues affecting kids and families and reinforcing Casey as the model for positive outcomes for children.

Photos by Toby McClary, Smoke Signals

Torres Named to Advisory Board of National Hispanic Group

At Film Fest New Haven, Casey Family Services Executive Director Raymond L. Torres and Lauren Frey of the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice engage the audience in a discussion about teens who "age out" of foster care.



Ray Torres has been named to the Advisory Board of the National Center for Advocacy and Community Building of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. (CHCF). Headquartered in New York City, CHCF was founded in 1982 by a group of Latino health and human service professionals in response to the need for culturally sensitive services for Latino families in the foster care and adoption system. CHCF has developed and implemented programs that meet the needs of low-income Latino families and children in such critical areas as youth development,

child care, HIV/AIDS prevention and education, Latino immigrant services and public policy/advocacy.

CHCF developed the National Center for Advocacy and Community to empower Latino communities and provide them with an active policy voice in areas in which they have been historically excluded from participating. The purpose of the Center is to fulfill the interests of Latino children and families on a national, state and local level.



UP, UP, AND AWAY...

Gregory M. Simpson, Case Information System Administrator

Among Casey employees, administrative assistant Maryann Lappies has a unique option for commuting to work. She flies. Weather permitting, she hops in her Cessna to make the 28-mile flight to the Concord, New Hampshire airport which is located near the division.

Before becoming FAA certified this year as a pilot, Maryann had already accomplished an even more notable flying milestone. She is the first New Hampshire woman ever to be FAA licensed as a hot air balloonist. Piloting hot air balloons since 1979, she is one of 23 hot air balloonists in New Hampshire and 3,200 in the entire country.



Maryann's interest in flying blossomed when her 25-year old brother took flying lessons. Seventeen at the time, Maryann was told by her mother "absolutely not" when she asked about learning to fly, too. She had to wait twelve years until her husband-to-be took her on a first date in his single engine plane to Ohio's Lake Erie Islands. She was hooked. Two months later he took her on a tethered balloon ride.

"The very first time, you get anxious and an adrenaline rush. Once you realize how gentle it is, the feeling goes away immediately. Then you find yourself just floating across the country." Maryann describes her most "incredible" hot air balloon flight as flying over the Red Rocks in Gallup, New Mexico last year. She and her husband participated in the International Hot Air Balloon Festival in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2002 and 2003.



In addition to flying her Cessna airplane, Maryann Lappies is the first New Hampshire woman to be FAA licensed as a hot air balloonist.

After acquiring commercial certification in 1988, Maryann began taking passengers. Balloon rides cost \$225 and last an hour or more, depending on how long it takes to find a suitable landing location. Sometimes this can be a challenge, she reports, as New Hampshire is 92 percent forest.

Hot air balloons can fly up as high as 10,500 feet and are flight tested at 8 mph, although Maryann has flown up to 25 mph. "If you fly in higher winds, when you land, you're going to bounce. That's when people can break an arm or a leg," she explains. Although she has a perfect safety record, she does report one harrowing, near miss experience. She once had almost no fuel left and could see no open space to land. "I prepared the passengers to put the balloon in the trees. At the very last minute, I saw a little clearing. By the time I got to the edge of the field, I was jumping in the basket to take off weight to make it to the field."

Hot air ballooning is not inexpensive, Maryann attests. Balloons the size of her Monkey Business cost \$28,000. This includes the basket, burners and balloon. Add the cost of insurance, maintenance and a trailer. The balloon fabric lasts about 1,000 hours of flight time. "You're literally cooking that fabric," she says, which explains in part why she also became a FAA certified hot air balloon mechanic. "It's really about sewing, plus fixing baskets and working on burners." Through this, she achieved another distinction. She and her husband were awarded the Aero Club of New England's "New Hampshire State Award for 2004," for among other accomplishments, operating New Hampshire's only balloon repairing station and organizing the largest-attended annual balloon safety seminar in New England.

The most fun of ballooning, she affirms, is "meeting so many wonderful people. Lots of people have become lifelong friends." One first-time rider became a hot air balloon pilot himself. Riders celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, or just ride for the fun of it. Several have proposed marriage. "I tell them in advance to stand in the middle of the balloon when they propose so that in the excitement the ring doesn't go flying overboard," chuckles Maryann. Every balloon flight ends with a champagne toast, a tradition originated in France, home of the first hot air balloon flight in 1783.

Maryann shares that her favorite thing about flying and working at Casey Family Services is the same. "Every day is different," she offers. "You never know what the day is going to bring."

Catching Up, Staying Connected

CATCHING UP



Former foster youth and artist Ratna Pappert is face to face with one of her recent projects! Ratna is currently working on puppets for animation at Jim Hensen's Creature Shop in Hollywood.

This article is a follow-up to one that first appeared in the Fall, 2003 issue of Voice.

by Jim Dwyer

It's been four years since Ratna Pappert and I first connected to work on the Casey Family Services Calendar December art and holiday card. Since then, her holiday art has become an established ingredient in the popular annual calendar. Ratna, who lived with her foster family in New Hampshire as a teen, moved from Portland, Oregon to Chatsworth, California (outside of Los Angeles) about a year ago.

I recently had an extended telephone conversation with her in which she brought me up to date on her activities. I found it fascinating to see how this "artist in progress" is

progressing. Here are some highlights from that exchange.

I began by reminding Ratna that the last time we spoke for an article in the Fall 2003 edition of *Voice*, she was about to leave her freelance artist life in Portland to start a new teaching job in Los Angeles. I wondered aloud how that job offer came to her and how she found the experience.

"My aunt was starting a progressive charter middle/high school and invited me to apply as an art teacher," Ratna explained. "Before school started, the teachers met to discuss potential teaching assignments. I saw that there was a lot of collaboration and flexibility."

"So, you had a connection to start," I observed. "Now after a year of teaching, what have you learned from the experience?" I asked Ratna.

"The kids in my classes ranged in age from 11 to 15 years. One of the things I found is that I connect best on a one-to-one basis," she said. "Sometimes when I tried to focus on serving the whole class, there would be a few students who didn't want to be served, and I'd spend a lot of energy trying to include them at the cost of giving less to the participating students."

"I found that the smaller the class, the more effective and enjoyable the experience was for all of us," she continued. "But I learned a lot from working through situations where people were disruptive or in conflict.

CATCHING UP, STAYING CONNECTED



I learned to influence kids by being patient and to talk to them to gain their trust.”

“One day I’d make mistakes or something wouldn’t go well. But the next day I’d get to start again, to learn from it and do my best.”

“And you now have experience being a mentor to your students. Are you being mentored by your aunt or any of the other teachers?” I asked her.

“We had staff meetings on Wednesdays after school. The meetings were great, a really supportive environment,” she recalled. “We would discuss issues concerning students and any difficulties we were experiencing. It reminded us that not only were the students trying to be the best people they could be, but also that we were in the process of trying to be the best people we could be, with the inevitable stumbling. I did not feel isolated. There was a real sense of community and support. We included having fun in every meeting. Sometimes just being real silly. It was very open and bonding. Occasionally, some students would overhear our festivities.

“I usually kept my guitar at school, and sometimes played it while I had lunch outside,” she went on. “One day, one of the students who resisted learning in the classroom asked if he could try it. I showed him a few chords. It loosened the roles we usually felt as teacher and student.

“Another thing I learned in teaching is not to feel responsible for other people’s moods. Just as in life, most of the time, another person’s mood may have nothing to do with me or with anything I’ve done,” she said.



Ratna enjoyed a supportive environment while teaching art at a progressive charter school in California.

“I’ve received a lot of positive feedback from other people at Henson for my contributions and abilities.”

“That’s been really helpful to remember.”

“Let’s talk about your new adventure,” I suggested.

“Maybe what I should say is that after the spring semester started, I began to feel deeply that I missed being an artist,” Ratna explained. “The schoolwork took a lot of time and energy. I felt that acknowledging this to the other teachers would convey that I wasn’t dedicated to being the best teacher I could be. I felt guilty. But in a staff meeting the topic came up that ‘it’s safe to talk about what’s really going on with you.’ So I talked about how I missed feeling like a professional artist. The fact that I said it out loud, and the staff acknowledged it and felt all right with it, was amazing to me. It helped me feel good through the spring semester.

“But during that time I started to follow up some connections I had made among other animators and artists,” she added. “Then my uncle, who is a sculptor and puppet-maker specializing in foam fabrication, got a job at Jim Henson’s Creature Shop in Hollywood.

“I was excited for him. He would be supervising a big project. A week later he asked if I could come to work as his assistant.

Within days of the end of school, I began working at the Creature Shop, answering phones and doing administrative work. I also got the chance to work on fabrication, sewing, painting and assembling puppet parts, and doing some design work (drawing pictures to see how certain characters might look, move and be put together).

“I’ve received a lot of positive feedback from other people at Henson for my contributions and abilities. They’re very encouraging and have given me a lot of opportunities to use my existing strengths and develop new skills.”

“You’re learning so much,” I said. “I’m glad you have the courage to pursue each step you take.”

“Yes, in a conversation with my uncle we talked about how every experience adds something to me that turns out to be useful going forward,” she said.

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 curriculum for younger artists. This is his fourth year serving as creative director and designer of Casey Family Services’ calendar.

Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood— Never an Either/Or Proposition!

View from Washington



by Robin Nixon, Executive Director, National Foster Care Coalition

Back in 1998-1999, when advocates in Washington and around the country were working furiously to build support for expanded independent living services, I was very encouraged by the commitment of Members of Congress and their staffs to improving the well-being of young people aging out of foster care. At the same time, I was troubled by what I saw as a very limited perception among our representatives about the purposes and goals of independent living programs. Although the Members' understanding of the purpose of the programs focused on preparation for adulthood, that understanding emanated from the perspective of the child welfare system's failure to secure a family for the youth, rather than from the perspective of the need shared by all young people to develop skills and competencies for a successful transition.

This fundamental and regrettable misunderstanding of the programmatic and philosophical relationships between permanency and independent living services has had significant implications for how child welfare policy is addressed at the federal, state and local levels, and has led to an "either/or" separation of dollars, services and staffing for older youth in foster care.

Child welfare, as a field, has taken a number of steps to resolve what has emerged as a conflict between advocates for equal resources for permanency and those who would prefer moving away from what they see as "unrealistic" permanency goals for older youth. A very useful expression of a current trend toward collective understand-

ily and community life as well as in the workplace."¹

WE MUST CONTINUE TO WORK TOWARD A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED FOR INTERDEPENDENCE, OR WE PLACE FUNDING OF CRITICAL PROGRAMS AT RISK.

ing of what children and youth need in order to achieve good long-term outcomes can be seen in the introduction to the new CWLA *Standards for Excellence in Transition, Independent Living, and Self-Sufficiency Services* (TILSS). The goal for such services is stated to be *interdependence*.

"Interdependence is a desirable outcome for all young people. Interdependence can be viewed as a two-part goal consisting of:

- A life-long connection to family (birth, kin, adoptive, or identified) supplemented by a strong social network of support.
- Achievement of competency in the knowledge, skills, and relationships needed to participate actively and successfully in fam-

How do we influence policy and practice so that they maximize the development of interdependence among children and youth in foster care? Current events in the state policy arena demonstrate the challenges of bringing the ideas of permanency and independent living together. In California, legislation went into effect on January 1, 2004 that prohibits the discharge of youth from care unless strong family or other adult support can be demonstrated. In New York, new policy prohibits the assignment of "independent living" as a formal permanency goal without extensive review. At the same time, a number of states have increased levels of financial support for youth who age out of care through tuition waivers or other expanded independent living services, while at the federal level there has been increasing support for legislation to address the educational, mentoring and mental health needs of youth who are aging out of the child welfare system. These changes are positive, but they do not represent a holistic approach to ensuring that young people leave care with *both* strong connections and adequate preparation for adulthood. We must continue to work toward a broader understanding of the need for interdependence, or we place funding of critical programs at risk.

¹ The new CWLA *Standards for Excellence in Transition, Independent Living, and Self-Sufficiency Services* will be available in early 2005.

FOSTER CARE ALUMNI OF AMERICA...

DESTINED TO SERVE

by Ginny Stephan

Are you ready to break out of the mold, set a new course and build a strong and lasting heritage for our children? Yes, of course, many of us could be guests on the next *Oprah Winfrey Show*, sharing the horror stories of our childhood. We could become passionate, angry foster alumni who hate

We owe it to the world to become productive members of the community in which we live. And we owe it to ourselves to stay connected to each other and to the good people who have our best interests at heart.

Foster Care Alumni of America (FCAA) is a community of professional alumni who are ready to serve children now in care as well

believe that the foster care systems—and those who work within the various systems—while not perfect, have been maligned for too long. We believe it is long past time for alumni of foster care to speak up—loud and proud—to tell our communities, our nation and our policymakers that the individuals and families serving within the foster care system are worthy of respect and support.”

“WE BELIEVE IT IS LONG PAST TIME FOR ALUMNI OF FOSTER CARE TO SPEAK UP—LOUD AND PROUD—TO TELL OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR NATION AND OUR POLICYMAKERS THAT THE INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES SERVING WITHIN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM ARE WORTHY OF RESPECT AND SUPPORT.”

Always remember that we alumni have bright futures ahead of us if we choose to make the decisions that lead us on the right path. I am a firm believer that we went through the foster care system for a reason. I know I would not be where I am today if I had not been removed from my biological parents. And now it is time to begin a generation of excellent foster care alumni who are ready to serve the communities that supported us through our difficult years in care.

For more information, please contact Ginny Stephan, Board Vice President, Foster Care Alumni of America, at ginnystephan@msn.com.

the system that tried to help better our future. But in doing so, we would do a disservice to millions of kids.

Today, a call is going out to all alumni ready to give back to the foster care community without anger or shame.

as the 10 million alumni across this nation. We know that we can make a difference by working together with social service agencies and the many other individuals that help service the foster care community.

Jerry Hobbs, the executive director of Foster Care Alumni, explains the importance of alumni giving back to the community this way:

“Our experiences teach us that contributing creates healing—and we have research to show that our belief is well-founded. We know that the individuals who responsibly serve within the foster care system are deserving of our gratitude and respect. We



Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care

PERSPECTIVES

by *Sania Metzger, Esq., Director of Policy*



The 2004 KIDS COUNT essay, entitled “Moving Youth From Risk to Opportunity,” examined the plight of our nation’s “disconnected youth” – the

3.8 million youth between the ages of 18 and 24 who are struggling to transition to adulthood without the needed supports, resources and opportunities their more successful peers usually enjoy. One of the negative outcomes youth transitioning out of foster care too often share with other “disconnected youth” is their inability to graduate from high school. Research indicates, for example, that youth in foster care are academically behind, are disproportionately placed in special education classes, and have a high school dropout rate as high as 55 percent.¹

A 1997 longitudinal study by Blome demonstrated that children in foster care had changed schools three times or more since fifth grade, twice the rate of children in the control grade who were not in and out of home placements.² High rates of absenteeism, tardiness, and educational mobility are among the contributing factors to the poor educational outcomes experienced by a majority of youth in foster care.

This article takes an initial look at a public policy strategy recently adopted by the California legislature to prevent the routine disruption of educational placements for youth in foster care. The overarching goal of this new policy is to improve the educational achievement level for a student in

foster care by stabilizing his/her attendance in a regular, comprehensive, public school that is proximate to the student’s home and community, when appropriate.

California Raises the Bar

Effective educational advocacy on behalf of children in foster care received an enormous boost in the state of California with the state’s recent enactment of Assembly Bill 490, followed by a series of administrative policies initiated by school boards. This important state law expanded upon the educational rights of vulnerable students articulated in the federal McKinney-Vento amendments, which mandate state intervention to better ensure an appropriate education for homeless youth.

The McKinney-Vento amendments broadly defined homeless youth to include any youth without a “fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.” While youth in foster care “waiting for a placement” meet this definition, the tens of thousands of children and youth in foster care who experience multiple placements and their predictable negative educational consequences are not explicitly protected by the federal McKinney-Vento amendments.

Based on its assessment of the unmet and specialized needs of youth who are wards of the state, either through the dependency or the juvenile courts, the California legislature enacted a sweeping measure that identifies and protects valuable legal rights for children and youth in the care of the state. In so doing, California joins other jurisdictions around the country implementing policies aimed at stabilizing the educational placements of students in foster care.

The California policy holds the state child welfare and educational systems jointly accountable for any educational neglect a student in foster care suffers as a result of their arbitrary decisions and processes. The new policy requires that child welfare case workers factor in a “best interest” analysis when deciding whether or not to change a student’s school placement, and the policy also requires the responsible school district to provide transportation in order to maintain that youth in his/her school of origin.

ONE OF THE NEGATIVE OUTCOMES YOUTH TRANSITIONING OUT OF FOSTER CARE TOO OFTEN SHARE WITH OTHER “DISCONNECTED YOUTH” IS THEIR INABILITY TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL.

Students, and their advocates, are further empowered by the AB 490 with expanded legal rights clearly articulated in the legislation. For example, students in foster care now have the right to remain in their school of origin until a contested school placement issue impacting them has been resolved through a hearing process at which students are entitled to have legal representation.

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Highlights of the AB 490

AB 490, introduced by Representative Steinberg, became effective in California on January 1, 2004. Some of the statute's highlights include provisions which:³

- establish legislative intent that students in foster care have the same educational opportunities to meet academic standards, maintain stable schools, be placed in the least restrictive environment and have access to all academic resources, enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- require that all education and school placement decisions are to be made based on "the best interest of the child."
- create school stability for foster care children by allowing them to remain in their school of origin for the duration of the school year when their placement changes and remaining in the same school is in the best interest of the child.
- require county placing agencies to promote educational stability by considering the child's school attendance area in placement decisions.
- require local educational agencies (LEA) to designate a staff person as a foster care education liaison to ensure proper placement, transfer and enrollment in school for youth in foster care.
- make LEAs and county social workers jointly responsible for the timely transfer

of students and their records when a change of schools occurs.

- provide that a student in foster care has the right to remain enrolled in his/her school of origin pending resolution of school placement disputes.
- allow a child in foster care to be immediately enrolled in school even if all typically required school records, immunizations, or school uniforms are not available.
- require an LEA to deliver the pupil's education information to the next educational placement within two days of receiving a transfer request from a county placing agency.
- require school districts to calculate and accept credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by the student.
- authorize the release of educational records of students in foster care to the county placing agency.
- ensure that foster youth will not be penalized for absences due to placement changes, court appearances, or related court ordered activities.

As we all know, the most impressively crafted public policies are only as effective as their implementation and their demonstrated ability to change practice in the targeted arena. Close monitoring, data collection and ongoing evaluation of AB 490's implementation will inform us whether or not California's policy has reduced educational mobility and has contributed to improved educational outcomes for students in foster

care. The child advocacy campaign that contributed to California's renewed commitment to meet the educational needs of all of its students, including youth in foster care, will undoubtedly keep a close and watchful eye as AB 490 is rolled out.

Here are a few questions to explore in your own areas:

Are effective policies being implemented in your state to end educationally disruptive practices and to prioritize the educational success of students in foster care? Is there an advocacy campaign in your state that insists that *all* children—including students in foster care—are easily enrolled in school, placed in the least restrictive environment and provided with supports, resources and opportunities to help ensure their successful completion of high school?

¹ KIDS COUNT Essay 2004 at www.aecf.org.

² Blome, W.W. (1997), "What Happens to Foster Kids?" Educational experience of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Social Work*, 14, 41-53.

³ Visit www.naccchildlaw.org for information on the National Association of Counsel for Children, Educational Advocacy and Youth in Care (Handout Materials).

Resource Corner

Reviews



You Don't Have to be Perfect...

AdoptUSKids, in partnership with the Ad Council and the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has developed a multi-media, national recruitment campaign to encourage the adoption of children from foster care. Entitled *Answering the Call*, the campaign uses print and broadcast public service announcements (PSAs) using the tagline "You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent."

Barbara Holton, executive director of the Adoption Exchange Association and project director for *AdoptUSKids*, says the campaign addresses prospective adoptive parents' fears and encourages individuals to realize that they have the ability to be adoptive parents. "It serves as a national call-to-action for prospective adoptive parents by offering important, accurate information about the foster care system and the adoption process."

Introduced by Secretary Tommy Thompson and Assistant Secretary Wade Horn, the campaign is one of many Administration for Children and Families activities aimed at achieving permanency for children in foster care.

To receive a toolkit, including a video of TV PSAs, a CD of radio PSAs, ad slicks of print PSAs, fact sheets, talking points and a sample press release, log on to www.adoptuskids.org or call the campaign's toll-free number at 1-888-200-4005.

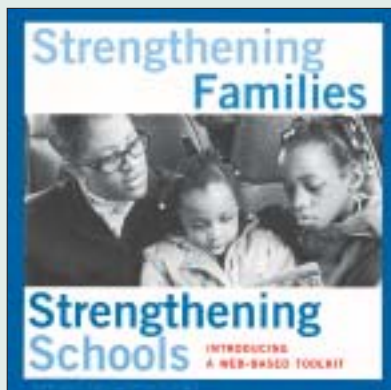
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Schools A Web-Based Toolkit

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has released a new web-based resource to help schools, families, and communities develop more effective connections and partnerships. The toolkit includes:

- research and good practices from school and community resources
- checklists and printer-ready materials
- links to websites
- resources for families who want to get more involved in the children's schools.

The toolkit contains videos, a glossary section and four separate components: Getting Started; Strengthening Families; Strengthening Schools; and Strengthening Policy.

For more information:
www.aecf.org/mc/schooltoolkit



The Tangled Heart Project

Patti Bongiorno is the author of three exceptional books—*Where Does a Mom's Love Go?*, *Grandma, Does God Make Mistakes?* and *My Dad's Footsteps*—that were endorsed by FEMA and distributed by The Salvation Army to comfort the families of September 11th victims. Her latest book, *Tangled Hearts*, is a teen novel about adoption.

Bongiorno is a staunch advocate for adoption, especially for the 100,000 foster children who are eligible for adoption. "We need homes: good, stable, loving homes that, frankly, this country has in abundance," she says. "I've traveled throughout the United States and met countless caring people. Why then is there such a shortage of foster and adoptive homes?"

To educate and activate people around foster care and adoption, Bongiorno established the Tangled Hearts Project, which will focus on advocacy, activism and fundraising for foster children. Net proceeds from the signature Tangled Hearts Necklace are donated to a scholarship fund administered by The Orphan Foundation of America.

For more information about *The Tangled Hearts Project*, go to www.TangledHearts.com

What the Media Say

National Adoption Month

The purpose of National Adoption Month is to focus attention on the increasing number of children in the child welfare system waiting to be adopted. Each year, the president joins the adoption community across the country in proclaiming November as a month when Americans should be aware of adoption as a way to build a family. More than 1.7 million families have adopted children (under age 18) living in their homes. This year, National Adoption Day will be celebrated on November 20.

U.S. Census Bureau Newswire Report
September 22, 2004

"I grew up in foster homes...I bounced around. In the fifth grade, a caseworker from Catholic Social Services introduced me to Lloyd Winston, the man who changed my life. He took me in, adopted me, and it has been great ever since. I was a troubled child. I didn't know where I was going to end up. My father showed me sports and (taught) me a way I could live where I wouldn't be caught up in drugs and gangs and crime. He put me in an environment where I can live and have fun and have friends and get an education."

Morris Virgil
University of Illinois football star
Chicago Tribune
August 25, 2004

Inside and outside New York's child-welfare system, Mr. [John] Mattingly's hiring (as New York City's new Commissioner of Children's Services), was seen as a coup for the Bloomberg administration. At the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a Baltimore-

based philanthropy devoted to child welfare, he directed reform programs and pioneered a foster-care method that is used in New York and many other parts of the country. Mattingly says he has high hopes for what he calls the nation's premier child-welfare agency. "If we can do excellent work routinely, the rest of the country will no longer have an excuse," he said.

The New York Times
September 1, 2004

Rowell says she was nurtured by her foster mother Agatha Armstead, who encouraged the girls to write to their birth mother "because Agatha believed that she deserved to know how her kids were doing." Armstead also encouraged her foster daughter's ambitions. "She was the gateway to what was my passion, and that was fine arts."

Victoria Rowell
People Magazine
September 13, 2004

Victoria Rowell Honored by Today's Child Magazine

Casey Family Services National Spokesperson Victoria Rowell received the Special Guiding Light Award from *Today's Child*, a national parenting magazine that provides information and resources to families of color. Victoria was recognized for her advocacy work on behalf of foster children, and the foster care storyline she helped create for her character on the CBS-TV daytime drama *The Young and The Restless*.

The award ceremony took place during the fourth annual National Parent and Provider Enrichment Conference, presented by



Photo by April Houston

Casey Family Services national spokesperson Victoria Rowell is honored by Today's Child magazine. Pictured (from left): Victoria's niece Stephanie Wash, Victoria Rowell and Michelle Drayton-Martin, President and CEO of Today's Child Communications, Inc.

Today's Child Communications, Inc. and The National Black Family Promotion Coalition, on Saturday, September 18, at the New York Marriott, Brooklyn Bridge. The theme of this year's conference was "Sharing Resources and Enhancing Lives," providing information, ideas and networking opportunities to help families and communities succeed.

Program Helps Foster Kids

Opportunity Passport is expected to serve Rhode Island foster youth next year. ...Gary Stangler, executive director of Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative ...said the goal is to develop a proven model that the public sector can adopt to help foster children make a transition. The program focuses on teaching financial literacy to foster care children and alumni ages 14 to 23, helping youth forge connections to adults who can assist them...in finding employment and accessing services.

The Call
Providence, RI

2004-2005: Important Dates

December

December 3

Mending Broken Hearts: Using Expressive Therapies and Creative Strategies with Youth and Adults
Community Program Innovations
Tyngsboro, Massachusetts
www.communityprograminnovations.com

December 6-10

LifeSpace Crisis Intervention
Kids Peace Institute
Donley Center, Pennsylvania
www.kidspace.org

December 10

Asperger's Disorder, High-Functioning Autism and Nonverbal Learning Disability: Best Practices
Community Program Innovations
Tyngsboro, Massachusetts
www.communityprograminnovations.com

February

February 11

Children & Adolescents Who Witness Violence: Clinical & Ethical Challenges
Community Program Innovations
Tyngsboro, Massachusetts
www.communityprograminnovations.com

March

March 6-8

2005 BACW National Conference
A New Covenant: Reengineering Systems of Care for African American Children
Black Administrators in Child Welfare, Inc.
Arlington, Virginia
www.blackadministrators.org

March 9-11

CWLA National Conference
Children 2005: Crossing the Cultural Divide
Child Welfare League of America
Washington, DC
www.cwla.org

April

March 18

Working with Children & Adolescents: Nurturing Resilience & Managing Resistance
Community Program Innovations
Tyngsboro, Massachusetts
www.communityprograminnovations.com

April 2-3

Casey Family Services Foster Parent Conference
Boston, Massachusetts
www.caseyfamilyservices.com

April 16-19

National CASA Annual Conference
Growing a Better Tomorrow for Every Child
National CASA Association
Atlanta, Georgia
www.casanet.org/conference

May

May 2-4

2005 Finding Better Ways Conference
Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Children, Youth, and Families
Child Welfare League of America
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.cwla.org