



Voice

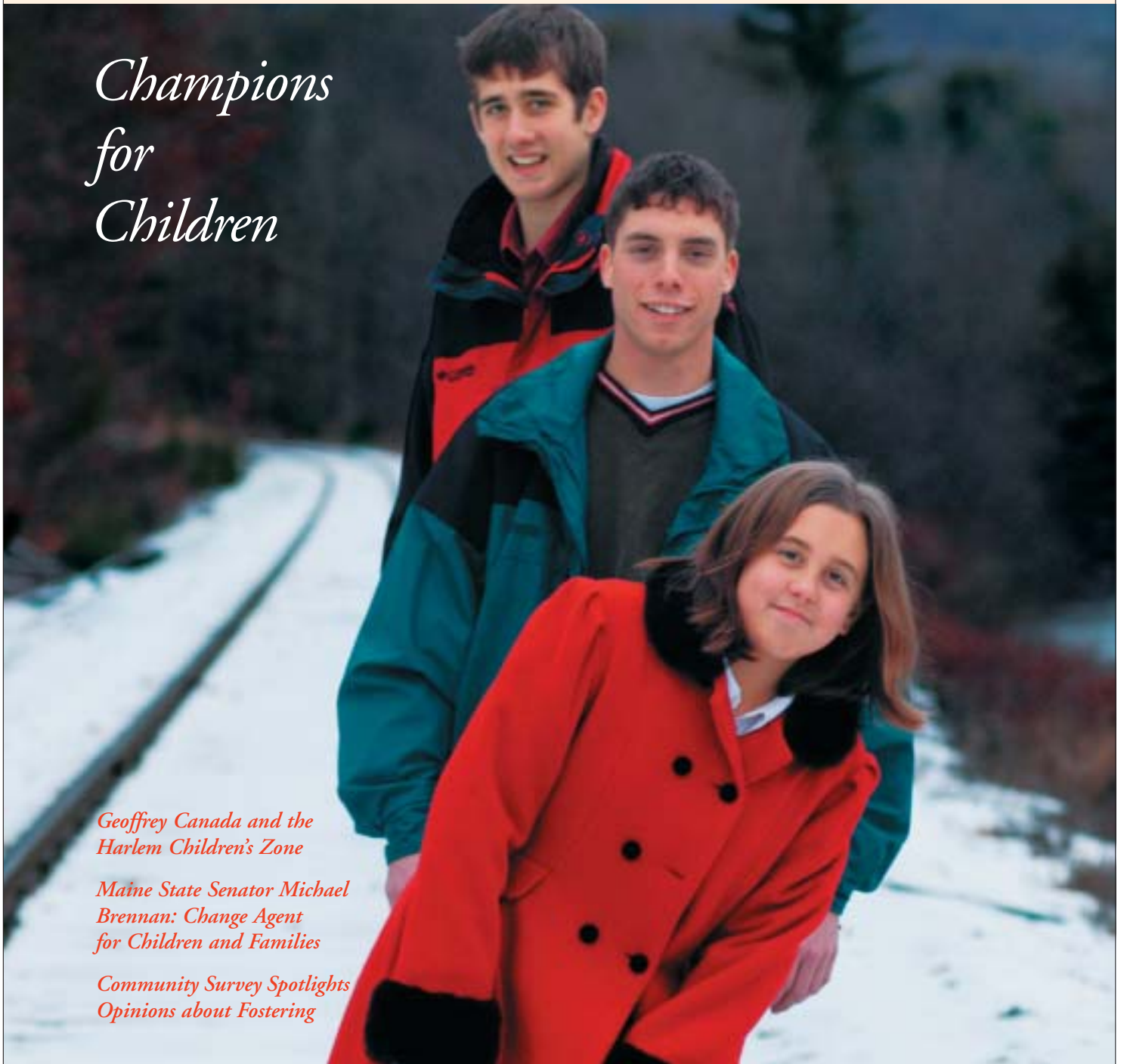
Winter 2005 Volume Six Issue One

Champions for Children

*Geoffrey Canada and the
Harlem Children's Zone*

*Maine State Senator Michael
Brennan: Change Agent
for Children and Families*

*Community Survey Spotlights
Opinions about Fostering*





From the Executive Director's Desk

At the close of 2004, I had several opportunities to reflect on the year with many of the families and children we serve. I was struck then and continue to be moved today by the courage and resilience of these vulnerable, yet hopeful, families and by the dedication of the professionals who work with them.

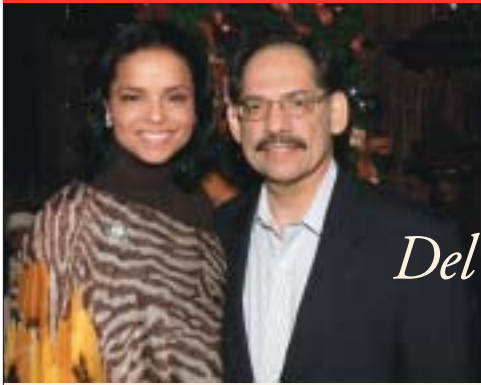
Although there were dozens of demonstrations of human caring, compassion and connection in the past year, one in particular caught the imagination of the nation. Just before Thanksgiving, in more than 200 communities across the country, National Adoption Day brought together parents with love to give and foster children in need of families. The result: More foster children were adopted on this one Saturday than ever before on a single day. The remarkable day was made possible through the selflessness of scores of volunteer attorneys, judges and social workers across the country. Because of them, more than 3,400 additional children now have a "forever family" to call their own.

Looking ahead, there are other challenges to face.

We must move quickly and with great determination to overcome the daunting obstacles that continue to plague families and prevent them from providing stable, safe and nurturing homes for their kids. Despite growing needs among poor and working poor families everywhere, I am nonetheless encouraged. The growth of private involvement in endeavors such as School-to-Career, which gives jobs and job mentoring to transitioning foster youth, is a promising indicator of change. The recent announcement of Capital One's scholarship program for foster youth is still another sign of hope, and it heralds the limitless potential of public-private partnerships on behalf of children.

In this issue of Voice, you will meet many truly outstanding people, each championing children in different ways: Geoffrey Canada, founder and president of the widely respected Harlem Children's Zone; Anita and Wayne Adams of Chester, Vermont, who have adopted a foster child who recently returned safely from a tour of duty in Iraq; and Bob Kline, a seasoned social worker in our Vermont Division. We salute them, along with social workers everywhere, especially during March, National Professional Social Work Month.

Raymond L. Torres



Victoria Rowell, representante nacional de Casey Family Services, y el Director Ejecutivo Raymond L. Torres en California dando reconocimiento a los activistas que velan por los derechos de los niños.

Del Escritorio del Director Ejecutivo

Al fin del año 2004, tuve varias oportunidades de reflexionar con muchas de las familias y niños que servimos. Me impresionó mucho el valor y la esperanza de estas familias y también la dedicación de los profesionales que trabajan con ellos.

Aunque hubieron muchas expresiones de cariño, compasión y relación este año, una en particular llamó la atención de todo el país. Esto fue el Día Nacional de Adopción que ocurrió justo antes del día de Acción de Gracias. En este día, en más de 200 comunidades de todo el país, se reunieron padres deseosos de compartir su amor y niños adoptivos que necesitan una familia. El resultado: en solo ese sábado hubieron más adopciones de niños bajo el cuidado del estado que en cualquier otro día. Ese día tan notable fue posible mediante la compasión de muchos abogados voluntarios, jueces, y trabajadores sociales de todo el país. Gracias a ellos, más de 3,400 niños ahora tienen una “familia para siempre.”

Mirando al futuro, hay otros desafíos que enfrentar. Debemos responder con mucha determinación para superar los obstáculos que agobian a familias y ayudarles a proveer estabilidad y seguridad en sus hogares.

A pesar de las crecientes necesidades de las familias pobres, me animan los indicios de que los estadounidenses han empezado a reconocer la importancia de ayudar a los niños adoptivos, quienes se cuentan entre los niños más frágiles de todos. La participación del sector privado ha aumentado en proyectos como el “School-to-Career,” que dan trabajo y apoyo en el trabajo a la transición de los jóvenes en cuidado de hogares de crianza. Esto indica un cambio positivo. El anuncio reciente de la beca de Capital One para niños en hogares de crianza es otra señal de esperanza y demuestra el potencial sin límites de la cooperación entre organizaciones públicas y privadas por el bien estar de los niños.

En esta edición de La Voz, conocerán a personas verdaderamente increíbles; cada una está apoyando a los niños de una manera distinta: Geoffrey Canada, el director ejecutivo de la respetada Harlem Children’s Zone (Zona de Niños de Harlem); Anita y Wayne Adams, de Chester, Vermont, quienes adoptaron a un joven que regresó recientemente sano y salvo del servicio militar en Irak; y Bob Kline, un trabajador social experimentado de nuestra división de Vermont.

Les damos reconocimiento, juntos con trabajadores sociales de todas partes, especialmente durante el mes de marzo, el Mes Nacional de Trabajadores Sociales Profesionales.

Raymond L. Torres

FOSTER PARENT CONFERENCE: TOOLS FOR A LIFETIME OF CONNECTION



Offering children strong, sincere and life-long family connections is at the heart of all that we do at Casey Family Services. Each day, we're helping youth build strong foundations that are based on warmth, security and resiliency. As our children become adolescents and our teens become adults, they continue to share a common need for love, support and connection. By forging bonds that last a lifetime with children, we increase their chances for a happy and safe adulthood. More important, we strengthen our families through love.

Building strong and permanent family connections is rewarding work, and often it's an

effort that engages children, foster parents, birth families, communities, social workers and organizations simultaneously.

This spring, Casey Family Services will advance this important work with its bi-annual Foster Parent Conference, set for April 2 and 3, 2005, at the Marriott Copley Place in Boston, Massachusetts. "Children, Families and Communities: Connections Count for a Lifetime" promises to be a highlight of our year. This special event will bring together more than 500 foster parents, Casey alumni, adoptive parents, Casey staff and leading experts for a free exchange of ideas, information and strategies that improve the lives of children.

It's easy to see the importance of permanency for children and youth. In your 20s, did you lean on your parents for support? Did a favorite aunt or grandparent talk you through a difficult experience? Did you enter the world secure in the knowledge that you would always have a place to call home? Imagine if you didn't have someone to call when celebrating an accomplishment or seeking solace when things fell apart.

This year, more than 30 conference workshops will aim to enhance permanency for youth. These informative sessions will focus on reducing barriers to adoption, helping children maintain connections with their birth families and developing strategies that

“We appreciate our foster parents. We respect what they do and hope that it’s rewarding to hear from leaders in the field and that they feel bolstered by the workshops and activities.”

blend permanency and preparation for adulthood to teens transitioning out of the system. As always, these workshops are presented by staff, foster parents and Casey alumni so expect honest talk from people who deal with these issues every day.

Despite the seriousness of the work, the Casey Family Services Foster Parent Conference remains a celebration of everyone’s accomplishments and contributions. “Foster parents are a lifeline in the organization,” says Raymond L. Torres, Casey Family Services executive director. “This conference is an opportunity for us to reach out, acknowledge, thank and, we hope, rejuvenate our dedicated foster parents. It’s a small token of our appreciation.”

Casey hopes that foster parents will use the conference for respite, enjoying the hotel’s accommodations, good food, entertainment and the backdrop provided by the city of Boston. This year, participants can look forward to country line dancing and an up-and-coming jazz singer to help them unwind in the evening.

“We appreciate our foster parents,” says Mary Anne Judge, Casey Family Services staff development and training manager. “We respect what they do and hope that it’s rewarding to hear from leaders in the field and that they feel bolstered by the workshops and activities.”

The dialogues make this conference special, whether it’s with a keynote speaker, with Casey alumni in a workshop or in the elevator with a new friend.

“This will be our third conference,” says Renee Burns, a foster parent from West Baldwin, Maine. “It’s great getting together



Rikki and Craig Carpenter, foster parents in Casey’s Hartford Division, talk with others about the experience of fostering.

with Casey. After so many years, the faces start to look familiar, and you begin to connect with people from the different divisions. The social atmosphere allows us to share knowledge and experiences easily. My husband, Dennis, and I get teased because we’re literally on a farm with our three foster children, and it’s such a different perspective from that of families living in the more inner-city areas.”

Despite different environments, foster parents share common goals and stories, according to Jim Cameron, a foster parent to two teenage girls in Casey’s Massachusetts Division. “It’s nice to share ideas with the other foster parents,” he says. “It’s beneficial to spend time with people who are in the same circle as you.”

Just as foster parents are helping build community in their hometowns, the Casey Foster Parent Conference creates a broader sense of unity for participants. “It’s easy to see at the end of the first day,” says Judge. “People don’t feel so alone in doing this important work. The conference offers a broader perspective on what it means to raise children who are not born to you.”

As always, this year’s workshops will offer concrete tools that will help foster parents.

“I’ve worked with other organizations, and Casey’s the only one that puts on a conference like this,” says Cameron. “I’m really looking forward to hearing the guest speakers.”

The 2005 slate of key speakers promises something for both new and experienced foster and adoptive parents:

- Geoffrey Canada, president/CEO, The Harlem Children’s Zone (see article on page five)
- Victoria Rowell, Casey Family Services national spokesperson
- Bob Danzig, former CEO, The Hearst Newspaper Group and former foster youth (see article on page four)

More than 100 foster parents, Casey staff members and alumni will lead 30-plus workshops and discussions. A sampling of planned topics includes: nurturing connections between birth and foster families, growing up adopted, understanding fatherhood, parenting young mothers, transitioning to adoption, dealing with disruption and utilizing martial arts.

“Casey alumni are the most popular part of the conference,” Judge recalls from surveys that gave the previous conference a 90 percent satisfaction rate. “Kids are honest. They offer a perspective to parents that things are going to turn out all right, regardless of the conflicts today.”

Despite all the knowledge, speakers and resources available, however, the highlight of any conference might be the chance to be somewhere new, away from the 24/7 job of parenting, even for a little while.

BOB DANZIG:

A Champion for Every Child

The audience may number several hundred ... or a half dozen. It doesn't seem to matter. The effect is the same when Bob Danzig has the microphone. He is talking only to you, making you feel like the only person in the room. A honed skill? Perhaps. But more likely, it's his passion for people and his absolute conviction that "you are worthwhile."

That was the mantra trumpeted over and over by one of Bob's social workers, the one who supervised the move from his fourth foster home to his fifth. "I can still hear her quiet whisper," he wrote in his book, *Every Child Deserves a Champion: Including the Child within You*, "never forget, you are worthwhile."

The simple but powerful statement stuck. Bob Danzig barely graduated from high school, and, like so many of the 20,000 kids who "age out" of foster care in the United States every year, he had no family support, no money and no specific plan for his life. But, through a friend, he landed a job as an office assistant at his local newspaper, Albany's *Times Union*. Nineteen years later, after graduating magna cum laude from Siena College in New York State, he became publisher of that paper and eventually went on to become vice president of The Hearst Corporation and CEO of The Hearst Newspaper Group.

Today, he is an award-winning author and popular motivational speaker, a member of the faculty at the New School University in New York City and the guiding hand of



Author, mentor, publisher and former foster child Bob Danzig will present at the 2005 Foster Parent Conference.

CASEY FAMILY SERVICES WILL WELCOME BOB DANZIG AS A KEYNOTE SPEAKER AND WORKSHOP PRESENTER AT ITS 2005 FOSTER PARENT CONFERENCE, APRIL 2 AND 3 IN BOSTON.

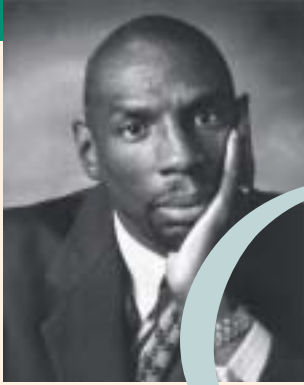
The Hearst Newspaper Group. A member of numerous boards of directors, including his alma mater, St. Peter's Hospital, Russell Sage College, Albany Institute of History and Art, and others, his impressive professional and philanthropic involvements bear testimony to his belief that every life has promise, no matter how rough or humble its beginnings.

Danzig credits his successful journey from office helper to CEO to the "champions" in his life – to the "applause of a few key indi-

viduals" who made all the difference, as he explains in *Every Child Deserves a Champion*. Drawing from the gifts of encouragement he received from these individual "angels," Danzig's goal is to be an instrument for renewed affirmation that every single person is worthwhile.

He is achieving that goal through his writing, speaking and personal involvement as a champion for children (particularly foster children) and adults alike, helping them to realize their potential. In addition to *Every Child Deserves a Champion*, he has authored *The Leader within You*, *Vitamins for the Spirit*, *Angel Threads* and *There Is Only One You: You Are Unique in the Universe*. As one of the country's most popular motivational speakers, his featured topics – "The Spirit Driven Organization," "Discovering the Leader within You," "The Confidence Academy" and "The Softer Side of Success," among others – inspire people to discover their leadership qualities, enhance the power of self-confidence, and open their hearts and minds to the light of higher purpose.

Casey Family Services will welcome Bob Danzig as a keynote speaker and workshop presenter at its Foster Parent Conference, April 2 and 3, 2005, in Boston. All of his speaking and author fees are donated to foster children and to gifted young musicians, in honor of his wife's talent for and love of music.



GEOFFREY CANADA

Close-up

Geoffrey Canada is the founder and president/CEO of the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), a program that combines educational, social and medical services to provide children a web of support from birth to college and extends that web out to surround entire neighborhoods. According to The New York Times Magazine (June 20, 2004), "The program operates on the principle that each child will do better if all the children around him are doing better." Established in 2001, HCZ employs more than 650 people in 20 programs that reach about 80 percent of the 3,400 children under the age of 18 living in a 60-block area. Those programs include Harlem Gems, a head start program for pre-kindergarten children, as well as Promise Academy, a new charter school that opened last fall. Programs also include a family-counseling component that aims to keep families intact and in their homes and Baby College, teaching better parenting.

*A native of the South Bronx, Canada and his three brothers were raised by their mother and experienced many of the obstacles he says are a part of every poor family's life. He is the author of *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America*, in which he describes the rituals and codes of violence that governed life in the inner city as he was growing up. He is a graduate of Bowdoin College and Harvard University Graduate School of Education.*

Canada will be a keynote speaker at Casey's 2005 Foster Parent Conference.

VOICE: *Your work was the subject of a recent New York Times Magazine cover story. How did that affect your programs?*

GEOFFREY CANADA: People have been calling every day from all over the country to try to learn more about what we're doing and how we're doing it. All of us have been kind of stunned by the level of interest and by the range of organizations and institutions represented. We've received inquiries from the cities of Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle. We also got a call from a church-led group in Hartford, Connecticut that already has named its area the Asylum Hill Children's Zone, and



The New York Times Magazine recognized the Harlem Children's Zone for its innovative work.

we've heard from the Gates and Annenberg foundations.

VOICE: *How are you responding?*

GEOFFREY CANADA: I've just come from a meeting with people who are helping us develop a business plan for creating a Practitioners Institute to help others repli-

cate this work. We will be looking to assist folks who are interested and who have the skills and resources to carry out the complicated work involved.

VOICE: *How will you decide which organizations you will assist?*

GEOFFREY CANADA: We're using a scorecard, establishing quadrants of high need, high capacity and low need, low capacity. We'll ask people a number of questions to determine where they fit into the quadrants.

We're hoping to share what's best practice in using the arts with middle and high school students; for example, what's best practice in fostering early childhood development; in setting up evaluation models; and in opening charter schools.

We think there are organizations that will be interested in any number of these small slices of our work and others that will be interested in replicating the whole thing.

VOICE: *In some ways, this is similar to our own Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, which evolved out of our work in post-adoption services and foster care. How have the Harlem Children's Zone and now the Practitioners Institute evolved from your early work in housing?*

“The real challenge for young people today is to figure out a way they can be safe, they can be known and respected, and they can find real care and affection from significant people – adults, teachers, community-based organizations.”



Geoffrey Canada works with a student at the Harlem Children's Zone.

GEOFFREY CANADA: At one time, I worked with Sarah Greenblatt before she joined Casey Family Services as the director of the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice. With the support of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, we were looking at whether intensive case management would help families stay in their apartments. To better understand the impact environment has on stability, we looked at whether drugs were being sold in a particular building and how safe the building was. We discovered that safety was really more important to a family's decision to stay or to move from their home or neighborhood than whether or not they held a certain set of living, social or budgeting skills.

This got us to look at whether or not we could change the conditions of the building. And once we had done that, we looked at a block and then a community. It led to an understanding that there are a lot of factors in an environment that impact how people respond, relate to one another and get a chance to enjoy life or feel victimized. And that's what ultimately led us to this work.

***VOICE:** How soon do you expect to be able to share your work with others?*

GEOFFREY CANADA: We expect to be working with our first group by mid-February.

***VOICE:** How will you accomplish such an important task so quickly?*

GEOFFREY CANADA: We're looking at a model that works off of a set of decision points. We think we'll get a couple hundred requests. We'll use the scorecard to determine who will really be able to do this work. We'll invite those people to site visits, and from that group, we'll decide who will come into our three-day workshops. The visits and workshops will be structured to help organizations understand not only the program but also the infrastructure, administrative, evaluation and fiscal aspects of the operation.

We will use our own faculty and program directors for the institute. I expect that when it's fully operational, the institute will be working with about 10 groups each year.

***VOICE:** You were eloquent in your presentation at the 2004 release of KIDS COUNT, the Annie E. Casey Foundation report that examined the growing problem of disconnected youth in this country. What do you see as the overarching challenge in meeting the needs of today's youth?*

GEOFFREY CANADA: The real challenge for young people today is to figure out a way they can be safe, they can be known and respected, and they can find real care and affection from significant people – adults, teachers, community-based organizations. The safe part is absolutely critical.

If kids don't feel safe, they will go and do almost anything to increase their sense of safety. Most of the time, they don't know

what to do, so they'll listen to practically anything about what it would take to make them feel safe. Too often, what they hear is dangerous and counterproductive.

One of the reasons so many young people use drugs and alcohol is that these substances give a sense of safety and security. They lessen anxiety and fear. You magnify the problem threefold to fourfold when you add into the equation the children and youth who are really vulnerable because they don't have a family support structure.

Everybody needs someone or something to belong to, and if there is a series of transient relationships, your ability to feel part of a community is greatly diminished. And when you don't feel part of a community, it's very easy to get caught up in a lifestyle that's destructive. What stopped most of us as teens from getting involved in destructive behaviors was that sense of community. What would our mothers say, what would our teachers or our pastors say? Without that filter, kids are particularly susceptible to trying high-risk actions that often come at a staggering cost in terms of their health and safety. I don't think that people really understand how critical this is.

***VOICE:** Is that a problem limited to inner cities?*

GEOFFREY CANADA: No. It's pervasive. There are many rural communities that have issues at least as serious as those in cities like New York. For example, there are places where methamphetamine or crack cocaine has destroyed whole communities. I go to upstate New York and people tell me, "You have no idea: Things are worse here than in New York City," and they honestly mean that.



I think that part of the reason we as a nation have allowed our children to live so poorly is that people have always thought of this as a problem impacting minorities. We have not accepted the fact that these are issues impacting all of America.

We've still got some work to do in helping people understand that the face of teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence and incarceration is not necessarily a black or brown face.

VOICE: What can be done?

GEOFFREY CANADA: I think we have to be very intentional about letting folks know where the problems are in America. We need real leadership around this issue at the Cabinet level, at the legislative level and at the state level. We really need a national agenda for how we can provide for the safety of children. That agenda is long overdue.

VOICE: How can we address the issue of the disproportionately high number of children of color in our foster care system?

GEOFFREY CANADA: We're trying to deal with some of those issues right here. I believe there is a real community-based response to child protection in minority neighborhoods particularly. I say, for instance, that we ought to be demanding that Harlem children stay in Harlem. That could be said for any community and especially communities of color.

We know that we have a network of support for families. It's important to recognize and support these networks and ensure that families know where help is. It's just as

important for child welfare organizations to know that there are families who can step forward to help children who must be removed from their homes. What has been missing is a real community-based strategy for supporting families in a different way. We've started down that path in Harlem, and I think we have very positive results.

WE NEED REAL LEADERSHIP AROUND THIS ISSUE AT THE CABINET LEVEL, AT THE LEGISLATIVE LEVEL AND AT THE STATE LEVEL. WE REALLY NEED A NATIONAL AGENDA FOR HOW WE CAN PROVIDE FOR THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN.

VOICE: What is your approach?

GEOFFREY CANADA: Here, our first priority is to try to prevent children from going into the system.

If they must, then we try to keep them with family members in the community, and we try to keep the families in the community. We try to keep other parts of the child's civic life together while the parents are trying to get their lives together. Children shouldn't have to lose everything.

VOICE: What results have you seen?

GEOFFREY CANADA: We put this process into place in Harlem, and, for the first time, the negative child indicators have gone

down. There hasn't been a parallel drop in communities around us, so I have to think that what we're doing is working.

We said early on that if we did certain things, the number of children going into care would drop. We did those things, and the numbers went down. I'm very encouraged by that, and we need to continue to track the results.

VOICE: What were those things?

GEOFFREY CANADA: They included:

- Focusing on schools.
- Getting data on the number of kids.
- Getting data on where the kids were on a monthly basis.
- Identifying the hot spots (where most kids were going into care).
- Going to the hot spots (we had groups of people who walked the hot spots and began to talk with people about what was happening in those communities and how they felt about children going into care).
- Going to homeless shelters.
- Inviting groups of providers (both foster care and preventive services) to meet on a regular basis to talk about strategies to prevent kids from unnecessarily going into care.
- Designating an HCZ staff member to attend every conference so we could offer services where needed.

The issue is that we've got to be able to give parents the help they need. We've got to help the whole family. This is the best investment we can make.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS:

PERMANENCY IN THE FACE OF AIDS



Patricia shares news about a recent success with social worker Hans Sherrod.

The day before Thanksgiving, Casey Family Services social worker Hans Sherrod visits with Patricia, a former Family Connections client just home from the hospital. The 33-year-old mom, who had suffered a stroke-like attack, is with her daughter Raquel, 11, surrounded by cookie cutters, flour, sugar and smiles. It's a moment no child should be denied: quality time with a loving parent. This domestic scene, however, represents a victory for a household besieged by chronic illness.

At 21 years old, Patricia gave birth to a beautiful daughter. But Patricia soon learned that her significant other, the father, was HIV-positive. Patricia was tested and, on her birthday, discovered that she had the disease as well. Tests also confirmed that Raquel was positive. The trauma continued when the father, Patricia's first love, died from AIDS just three months later, leaving his young family alone.

"My life was over," Patricia recalls. "Life wasn't worth living anymore." Patricia also was overcome with intense guilt about passing her infection to her baby. "It was so hard to look at her, knowing what I'd done. It's hard to come to terms with saying, 'I love you,' and feeling like a murderer."

Raquel eventually improved, and, a few years later, the family contacted Casey Family Services and its Family Connections program in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Founded in 1993, this initiative supports families affected by HIV/AIDS in planning to transition children to alternative caregivers if and when needed. Family Connections also helps children and their parents deal with the stigma and social problems presented by HIV/AIDS.

Patricia's first attempt to make permanency plans for her child was not a success. "I was using drugs to numb myself," Patricia says. "Casey still tried to reach me, to get me the help I really, truly needed. I wasn't having it. I was dying, so who cared?"

The door at Casey and the hope it offered, however, never closed. Recognizing Patricia's struggles, the organization committed to being there for her. "Once a Casey connection, always a Casey connection," explains Audra Holmes-Greene, a team leader in the program, which served 25 families and 51 children in 2004.

It took a few more years, and another episode of illness for Raquel, before Patricia decided to turn her life around. Off drugs, she returned to Casey, where she was paired with Hans, who would be her social worker. "At Casey, I knew I could get the compassion and help that I needed," she says.

One of the less publicized tragedies of the AIDS epidemic is children left parentless by the disease. The challenge of finding new families for these children is intensified when the children are infected and require more care. "I needed to face my reality, that I could die," Patricia explains. "I was not going to leave my child alone."

Permanency planning – one part creative thinking and another part legal wrangling – is truly a process, particularly for smaller families without many resources.

"In trying to find a potential caregiver or support, we identify a family's formal and informal support networks, including friends, family members, extended family, clergy or parishioners," says Diana Cruz, a family support worker in Family Connections.

In the end, Patricia worked with Casey to name the sister of Raquel's father as co-guardian, which was a difficult decision. As part of this plan, her guardian will be aware of Raquel's needs and can be an important part of their family, building a strong bond with the child.

While permanency is the ultimate goal of Family Connections, it often is the final step in a long process.

"When a family comes to us, they might not be aware of permanency issues," Audra says. "We're also dealing with the nuts-and-bolts issues of substance abuse, mental health and poverty. It's difficult to start with permanency because there are other equally important and immediate issues involved. When you talk about the future, the parents' illness and their eventual death, it brings up difficult emotions."

A family's emotional issues are not resolved when permanency is secured. The realities of HIV can have devastating effects on children and the family.

"Because there's medication now, people think it is okay," Patricia explains. "But these drugs have horrific side effects. We're living longer, but we're living a lot harder."

AIDS

“Seeing the compassion and love that Casey Family Services has for me, and the empowerment they give, inspired me to do what I do for others. Life gave me lemons, but I have learned with Casey to make lemonade and share it with the world.”



These regimens present obstacles to parenting, particularly for a single mother. “When I started a new medication, I had nightmares, loss of memory and hallucinations,” Patricia recalls. “I couldn’t get out of my bed. It felt like somebody was stabbing me and my legs locked up.”

Motivated by her child, Patricia learned to work past her pain. However, when she needed support, Casey was there.

For example, the director of Raquel’s after-school program wanted to exclude her from attending due to her HIV status. He even told staff and parents about her condition. Frantic, Patricia called Hans, who went with Patricia to meet with the director the next day, advocating for the child’s rights.

Clearly, Raquel is a little girl with a very adult disease. “Hans has done a lot to help my daughter maintain her childhood,” Patricia says. “She was in the performing arts group at Casey, and she got tutoring there. Not only did I get the services I needed, I got the support my child needed.”

Patricia has since left Casey as a client, but she remains an advocate and a resource for those served by Family Connections. Spreading the word about HIV-related issues is a passion, one shared by Raquel, who joined her mother in talking about World AIDS Day to local students.

“My daughter is my inspiration, the reason I get up in the morning,” Patricia says. “I want her to feel at peace saying, ‘I’m positive and living in this world.’”

Currently, Patricia works as a housing coordinator for St. Luke’s LifeWorks/Bread & Roses, a program for those living with HIV. In addition, she has traveled to Washington, D.C., to be certified as a trainer on HIV-related issues. She inspires her clients to advocate for themselves, both with their doctors and politicians. She works to instill empathy in young students, volunteering to speak to group after group at no cost. She also is helping Casey staff in understanding the changing face of HIV.

“Seeing the compassion and love that Casey Family Services has for me, and the empowerment they give, inspired me to do what I do for others,” Patricia proudly says. “Life gave me lemons, but I have learned with Casey to make lemonade and share it with the world.”

BUILDING A FAMILY THROUGH FOSTER CARE



Haley, Jon, Wayne, Anita and Derek Adams of Chester, Vermont, are together after Jon's tour of duty in Iraq.

The Adams household in Chester, Vermont, is a happy, busy place. Parents Anita and Wayne and their children – Jon, 22; Derek, 15; Haley, 12; and 10-year-old Tess – are a loving team. Like most American families, they are busy with school, work and other activities.

What makes this family a bit different is that Jon and Tess came to the Adams as foster children: Jon at 11 and Tess at nine. Jon and Tess have been as much a part of the Adams family as their biological children. "You know it's working when you forget they're not your own children," laughs Anita. "Sometimes Wayne or I will say, 'That must come from your side of the family,' and then we remember."

Building their family has been a growing experience for everyone. "Derek and Haley are two fantastic, wonderful kids," says Anita. "Even when they get mad at Tess, they understand what we are doing. Now, Jon and Haley are very close, and Derek and Tess are starting to make that connection, too."

Getting Involved in Foster Care

Anita always wanted to do something for children. She even looked into being a Big Sister when she was just in high school. After she and Wayne got married, she read an article about therapeutic foster care. She called the organization that was launching the program and decided to start with respite care.

With training, Anita and Wayne began working with a 12-year-old named Scott. "The state had been trying to place him for

two years and it just wasn't happening. He ended up coming to our house every weekend." When Scott became available for care, the Adams took him in. "I was pregnant with our second child, and Derek was about two-and-a-half," recalls Anita. "Scott lived with us for two years until he went back to his dad's house. He's married now and has two children. His kids call us grandma and grandpa. I was a grandma by age 30!"

When they met Jon in 1994, the Adams immediately felt a connection, but there were significant challenges. "He was very confrontational and streetwise when he came to us," remembers Anita. "But there was something about him that I just loved from the beginning." She remembers that Jon always was very ambitious and focused.

From left: Haley, Jon and Derek walk the wintry woods of Vermont, reunited for the holiday.



“I knew he would be fine,” she recalls, “but I didn’t know exactly what he would do.”

As predicted, he has done great. After graduating from high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in Afghanistan for six months and Iraq for eight. Since returning home, Jon has been working with Wayne in his masonry business. At the same time, he went to law enforcement school and graduated in October. Now he’s working full-time as a mason and part-time as a police officer in nearby New Hampshire.

Ready to Adopt

Anita and Wayne waited to adopt Jon until he was 18 to spare him the trauma of having to sever his mother’s parental rights. The adoption of older teens and foster children is very important because the system is winding down its support just when children need it most. “Any parent will tell you that the teen years are when children need the most help and direction – even if that’s just the time when they seem to resent it most,” says Casey Family Services Executive Director Raymond L. Torres. “This is even truer for foster children who have faced so much uncertainty throughout their lives.” Each year, approximately 20,000 children in foster care will age out of the system without ever being placed with a permanent family.

In fact, the Adams were surprised by the impact that Jon’s adoption had on him. “We thought he knew how much we loved him. For us, it was just a paperwork change. He was already our son,” says Anita. “But for him, it was more than that. It really seemed to make a big difference.”

“ANY PARENT WILL TELL YOU THAT THE TEEN YEARS ARE WHEN CHILDREN NEED THE MOST HELP AND DIRECTION – EVEN IF THAT’S JUST THE TIME WHEN THEY SEEM TO RESENT IT MOST.”

Last year, the family agreed to do weekend respite for nine-year-old Tess. “Since Haley was five, she has wanted a younger sister,” says Anita. “After Jon moved out, we had room and Casey Family Services knew Tess was just what we were looking for. It’s smoothing out. Now we’re dealing with just regular sibling rivalry.”

The Adams also are adopting Tess. They had been waiting until Jon got back from Iraq so the whole family could share in the joyful day. The adoption is set for early 2005.

The National Picture

“There are about 523,000 foster care children in our country and 118,000 of them are available for adoption,” says Torres, referring to recent federal estimates. “The

Adams family is an example of how well adoption can work for foster children and their families. We need to find ways to encourage families to consider taking that step.”

As part of last year’s National Adoption Day celebration, Casey Family Services and other members of the National Adoption Day Coalition sponsored a study identifying barriers to adopting foster children and promising approaches to encouraging these adoptions. The report, “Foster Care Adoption in the United States,” was conducted by the Urban Institute’s Child Welfare Research Program.

In Vermont, where the Adams family lives, the study found that families praised the statewide consortium that provides post-adoption services. This coordinated approach has helped the Adams. “We always have felt supported,” says Anita. “Casey Family Services has helped us a lot. And we have wonderful friends and family who help us in so many ways. They have been phenomenal.”

“We believe every child has the right to a caring family,” says Torres. “We are privileged to provide the training and other help families like the Adams need to make this dream a reality.”

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY COALITION & THE URBAN INSTITUTE

FINDINGS INDICATE ADOPTION PROCESS STILL NEEDS IMPROVEMENT



U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu (D. Louisiana), co-chair of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, speaks about the Urban Institute study.

In the first analysis of data from the Congressionally-mandated Child and Family Services Reviews, the National Adoption Day Coalition and the Urban Institute identified the most significant barriers to adoption and a number of promising new approaches in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

There has been an increase in the number of children adopted from foster care as a result of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. In fact, 49,000 adoptions took place in 2003, according to federal reports. However, there is concern among child welfare experts that even when children are freed for adoption, the adoption process takes too long. For the 118,000 children waiting for permanent families, it can take, on average, two years to legalize an adoption after the termination of parental rights, according to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The National Adoption Day Coalition works to draw attention to the waiting children and to celebrate the parents who adopt them. According to Rita Sorenson, who is the executive director of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and a coalition member, the group commissioned the Urban Institute to conduct a state-by-state analysis in order to identify common barriers and effective approaches that exist in the foster care to adoption process.

“We commissioned this study because we learned from our colleagues at the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute that legislators and their staff members needed this information in a concise and focused format,” explains Sorenson. “We hope this study will enable

KEY FACTS ABOUT ADOPTION

1) There were an estimated 523,000 children in American foster care, according to 2003 estimates published by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Of these children, 118,000 were waiting to be adopted.

2) Four in 10 Americans have considered adoption, according to a 2002 survey conducted by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. That translates into more than 80 million Americans.

3) Since 1987, the number of children in foster care nearly doubled by 2001, and the average time a child remains in foster care has lengthened to nearly three years (33 months).

4) In 2001, approximately 19,000 children in foster care aged out of the system without being placed with a permanent family.

5) Of the children adopted from foster care in 2001, 35 percent were black; 38 percent, white; 16 percent, Hispanic; one percent, American Indian/Alaskan Native; two percent, Asian/Pacific Islander; three percent, two or more non-Hispanic races; and five percent, not determined.

6) The adoptive family structure in fiscal year 2001 was: married couples, 67 percent; single females, 30 percent; single males, two percent; and unmarried couples, one percent.

7) Children in foster care were adopted by four types of families in 2001. During the available reporting period: 59 percent of the adoptions of children in care were by their foster parents; 23.3 percent were by relatives; 17.4 percent by families to whom the children were not related; and 0.3 percent by a stepparent.

To find out more about adopting a child from foster care in the United States, please check out www.nationaladoptionday.org or www.davethomasfoundation.org or call 1-800-TO-ADOPT.

Statistics were provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, using preliminary AFCARS data for fiscal year 2001, released in 2003.

Inadequate information systems, crowded court dockets, staff turnover and heavy social worker caseloads are the primary obstacles to finding permanent homes for foster youth.

legislators to develop more effective and uniform policies to support permanency for children through adoption.”

While previous research looked at state-specific barriers to adoption and the influence of various policies and programs to address them, this study looked at how all states are faring after the Adoption and Safe Families Act was enacted, according to Jennifer Macomber, Urban Institute research associate and the study’s project director.

As evidenced by the report, states continue to be challenged by three barriers of particular note to adoption: finding adoptive families, streamlining bureaucratic case management and addressing the complex process around termination of parental rights.

U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu, the Louisiana Democrat who is co-chair of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, acknowledged that much work remains. “My colleagues and I will work to do everything possible to overcome these barriers [cited in the Urban Institute’s study],” she said. The senator spoke to the need for improving the funding stream to states that focuses on permanency and finding safe families for children.

Based on the findings identified in the report, the National Adoption Day Coalition recommends more attention to areas of inter-agency coordination and workforce issues affecting the permanency planning and adoption process. Some states

are finding success by reorganizing staff and developing specially trained adoption units or task forces while others are working to have courts and state agencies employ the same information technology so caseloads can be tracked more accurately.

The complete Urban Institute study can be found at www.nationaladoptionday.org.

The founding members of the National Adoption Day Coalition include the Alliance for Children’s Rights, Casey Family Services, the Children’s Action Network, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Freddie Mac Foundation and Target Corporation.

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY COALITION RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research in this report, the National Adoption Day Coalition recommends the following:

1) Direct future adoption opportunities grants toward addressing identified barriers.

This funding stream may continue to direct resources to explore strategies for addressing the barriers identified in this study as the most common and persistent or those not yet addressed by many states.

2) Use National Child Welfare Resource Centers to provide technical assistance.

The National Child Welfare Resource Centers could garner resources and expertise to continue providing technical assistance around the barriers identified in this study,

and could be used as a repository for information on promising approaches.

3) Focus attention on coordination between courts and child welfare agencies.

Two of the five most reported barriers (terminating parental rights and establishing/changing permanency goals) reflect the complex and difficult interplay between courts and child welfare agencies at several stages in the adoption process. Heightened attention needs to be given to the role of the courts in the adoption process and the vital importance of ensuring coordination between courts and child welfare agencies.

4) Ensure that the improvement of workforce issues has a place on the agenda for reform.

Case management issues in both the courts and child welfare agencies were among the most cited barriers in the adoption process. A greater focus and higher priority on staffing issues, organizational culture and information systems must be part of the national and state agendas to improve the foster child adoption process.

5) Encourage peer-to-peer learning.

Child welfare administrators, policymakers and legislators can use the state-level information provided in the report as a springboard for sharing ideas about promising approaches. While the report is not able to provide detailed information on the particular approaches, the hope is that states will contact each other to learn more.

SCENES FROM

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY 2004

A couple in Connecticut adopts a seven-year-old, giving their son the little sister he always wanted. A loving uncle in Los Angeles adopts his two nephews and a niece when his sister is unable to care for her children. A husband and wife in Massachusetts become instant parents of three preschoolers, adopting a sibling group.

These are just a few of the more than 3,400 adoption stories created on November 20, 2004 – National Adoption Day.

On that day, judges opened their courthouses in more than 200 cities and 37 states to process adoptions of children from the foster care system. Cynthia Billey, an attorney with The Alliance for Children's Rights in Los Angeles, is a founding member of the National Adoption Day Coalition. She hopes the events held across the country will help more of the 118,000 foster children currently waiting for adoption to find loving, permanent families.

"We need more people to understand that there are many wonderful children in this country hoping to find caring parents to adopt them," says Billey. "As an attorney, I have had no greater privilege than to stand

at the side of these families as they complete their adoptions, true heroes who have saved the lives of children who otherwise would grow up in foster care without the warmth, love and guiding hands of parents.

"The Alliance and many other state and private organizations are working to make the adoption process easier to navigate and to ensure that parents will receive the financial, educational and medical supports they need to care for the children they adopt," Billey says.



During a National Adoption Day event in New Haven, Connecticut, more than 200 people gathered to celebrate adoption. From left: Diamond, Judge Frank Forgione, Daniel, Doshia Bowling and T'najia. Forgione, who is a judge for the New Haven Regional Probate Court for Children's Matters, presided over the adoption of T'najia that morning. Bowling, of New Haven, has adopted all three children.

Ailin, an adopted eight year old from West Hartford, Connecticut, works on a craft project with Raymond L. Torres, Casey Family Services executive director, during the New Haven National Adoption Day celebration.

Emmy Award-winning actress Patricia Heaton, star of the CBS television hit "Everybody Loves Raymond," hosted the National Adoption Day celebration in her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. Organizers displayed 6,000 pairs of shoes in front of the courthouse, each representing a child in the foster care system of Ohio who is eligible for adoption.

Actor Henry Winkler assists in the adoption of Juan, Arthur and Emily Gutierrez, who were adopted by their uncle Tony and his wife Jackie Gutierrez at the Los Angeles National Adoption Day event.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILD WELFARE REFORM

ROUNDTABLE ON THE PEW REPORT

Casey Family Services and the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors brought together more than 90 regional leaders to discuss the recent report by the Pew Commission on Foster Care. The one-day roundtable discussion focused on “Fostering the Future: Safety, Permanence and Well-Being for Children in Foster Care” and the issues raised by this groundbreaking report.

The commission was launched in May 2003. Supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, the panel includes some of the nation’s leading child welfare experts who were charged with developing recommendations related to federal financing and court oversight of child welfare to improve outcomes for children in foster care. In 2004, the group proposed a restructuring of existing child welfare resources, as well as targeted new investments. The panel also recommended that children receive a much higher priority in state courts.

Three of the Pew commissioners – the



Sania Metzger, Esq., Casey Family Services director of policy; Helen Jones-Kelley, Pew commissioner; Raymond L. Torres, Casey Family Services executive director; and Julie Springwater, director of the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors.

Honorable Maura Corrigan, chief justice, Michigan Supreme Court; Helen Jones-Kelley, Esq., executive director of Montgomery County, Ohio Children Services; and Gary Stangler, executive director of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative – traveled to Mystic, Connecticut, to participate in the roundtable. Jones-Kelley set the tone when she said, “It is time

to stop piloting what we know is good practice for kids.”

Casey Family Services Director of Policy Sania Metzger, Esq., says, “The Pew Commission’s report and recommendations for improving foster care is just the kind of analysis we need. The guiding compass for the commission’s work was that all children need safe, permanent families that love, nurture, protect and guide them.”

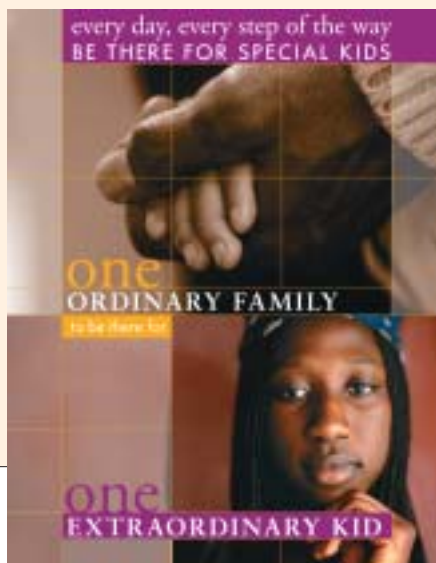
The group then took a closer look at matters such as federal legislation, fiscal issues, judicial recommendations, subsidized guardianship, and preventive and treatment services. For the final session, participants divided into seven state caucuses for further lively discussions.

The roundtable was informative and thought provoking for all the participants. Chief Justice Maura Corrigan of Michigan summed it up when she said, “The Pew Commission was my most exciting adventure in 32 years of government service.”

CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO FIND FOSTER PARENTS IN CONNECTICUT

The campaign to find foster parents for a special treatment foster care project shared by Casey Family Services and the Yale Child Study Center is under way, and the initial response is encouraging.

Casey and Yale are working together to find committed, caring families who can help foster children make a successful life-changing transition back to family settings in Meridan, Middletown and New Haven, Connecticut. To help, Casey and Yale are



providing support services that are ongoing and uniquely comprehensive.

The campaign, “One Ordinary Family for One Extraordinary Kid,” is using multimedia and targeted outreach to identify prospective families.

Reimagining foster care:
1-888-799-KIDS
www.OnekidOnefamily.org

MICHAEL BRENNAN:

From Social Worker to Policymaker



In statehouses across the nation, lawmakers are grappling with initiatives to improve their communities, often without a deep understanding of the challenges faced by children and families, particularly those at risk. In Maine, however, legislators on both sides of the aisle are benefiting from the

Brennan is the new leader of the Democratic caucus, which holds a one-person majority in the 35-member senate. From his new position, this clinical social worker is making an informed and impassioned contribution to the debates involving child welfare and the state's system of care.

Family Services are providing a vehicle to change systems across the nation.

“Casey Family Services truly is innovative in the area of child welfare, developing new programs and looking at new ways to promote best practices,” he says. “It’s very unique to have a national foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, that has a direct service arm. Casey Family Services offers a rare opportunity to really look at best practices, perform evaluations and do research to determine program effectiveness. We are then able to use these experiences to influence public policy in Maine.”

Befitting his background, he currently chairs the Board of Advisors’ policy subcommittee. “We have been working with senior management staff to support Casey Family Services in developing more policy-related activities and to engage other child welfare leaders in the debate.”

Brennan has worked hard to speak with authority on the issues that matter to his community. First, he earned a Master’s in Public Policy from the Muskie School. This experience, coupled with his new role in the state legislature, motivated him to earn his Master’s in Social Work in 1994 from the University of New England.

“I really wanted to understand clinical practice as it relates to policy,” Brennan says. “For example, deinstitutionalization is a great policy that returned people to the community from mental institutions. However, we were not very successful in implementing it because people didn’t understand the clinical implications of mov-

“On a fairly regular basis, there is a gap between policymakers who don’t understand clinical practice and clinicians who don’t articulate their issues and needs very well,” according to Brennan. “There can be a mismatch between those making policy and the people working with children and families. I really believe that best practices on a clinical level should be reflected in statutes, and I hope that I’m able to facilitate that connection.”

He put his skills to the test effectively in the last session, when he chaired the state’s Health and Human Services Committee. Responding to community feedback that the state’s system of care was uncoordinated and disjointed, lawmakers – under Brennan’s leadership – restructured the Department of Human Services and the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services into one mega-agency.

He also chaired the Joint Select Committee on Health Care Reform, which, with the endorsement of Governor John Baldacci, championed the creation of the Dirigo Health Program, a state-subsidized health insurance initiative. “Maine is one of the first states in the country to have a plan to reach universal health care in the next five years,” Brennan says.

While his elected position keeps him working to improve conditions in the “Pine Tree State,” his long-standing ties to Casey

experiences of their new Senate Majority Leader: a social worker looking to connect effective practice with sound policy.

For Michael Brennan, the intersections between policy and social work have defined his career. Professionally, he is a policy associate with the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine. Personally, he has volunteered on the Board of Advisors for Casey Family Services since 1991 and recently was named a co-chairperson. Politically, he has served in the Maine legislature since 1992, first in the House of Representatives and now in his third senate term.



From left: Nita Lescher, Casey Family Services’ Vermont Division director; Executive Director Raymond L. Torres; and Maine State Senator Michael Brennan talk at the Pew Commission Roundtable in Mystic, Connecticut.

MICHAEL
BRENNAN:

“Casey Family Services offers a rare opportunity to really look at best practices, perform evaluations and do research to determine program effectiveness. We are then able to use these experiences to influence public policy in Maine.”



ing people who had lived for 20 years in a facility into an apartment in Portland. When we do child welfare, it's hard to understand what is useful unless you've worked with addicted parents or abused children. People are not abstract concepts.”

The lack of hands-on experience with vulnerable populations is one of the reasons that good policies sometimes fail, Brennan says. “That’s why being on the Board of Advisors is so exciting. Every day at Casey Family Services, we’re trying to translate what we’ve learned in the field into the best policies for state and federal governments.”

For Brennan, the experience of a second graduate degree wasn't about the credential but about the experience of working with those in need. “For my first rotation, I worked in a homeless shelter with adults. I

then worked for a year in a substance abuse unit at a juvenile correctional facility. When you see the benefits of treatment for these kids, you know this work is meaningful and important. You make an impact on the rest of their lives.”

In the newly launched session, he will continue his work to reform Maine's child welfare system. Since 2001, when a child in the foster care system died tragically, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has been providing systems reform consultation and technical assistance to the state. The legislature will work to implement the changes recommended by the Foundation this year.

“The reforms may lead the new Department of Health and Human Services to focus more on kinship care, do a better job at permanency and move children more quickly through the system. In addition, we need to promote adoption when appropri-

ate,” he explains. “We want to reduce child abuse and neglect, which means more family preservation and reunification programs.”

What keeps this public servant so dedicated? For Brennan, it stems from an appreciation of the opportunities that he's been presented in his own life.

“In the legislature, I've spent more time on education issues than child welfare. Education made a huge difference in my life. My life is very different from what it could have been simply because I went to college. So I've always believed strongly in providing educational opportunities for people and trying to address some of the barriers that people have in making the most of educational and work opportunities. Child welfare, at its best, can reduce those barriers and change lives.”

News

“Everybody Is Kung-Fu Fighting...”



Vermont Social Worker Bob Kline will offer his expertise at the 2005 Foster Parent Conference.

*by Gregory Simpson, CIS Administrator,
Casey Family Services*

One can't tell by looking, but Bob Kline, a Casey Family Services social worker in the Vermont Division, can break six boards with one hand or even two boards with his fingertips alone. Likewise, one can't tell that he is a nationally-ranked martial arts expert, having won the Amateur Athletic Union Senior Black Belt's sparring championship and the U.S. Tae Kwon Do Union's ultra-senior light heavyweight champion. Despite appearances, all are true.

“The martial arts are about people bettering themselves through the sport's basic tenets,” Kline says. For Korean Tae Kwon Do, these

principles include self-control, perseverance, integrity, courtesy and indomitable spirit. Since the martial arts are “a mixture of Eastern philosophy, military discipline and courtesy woven together,” respect for one's country, friends and parents is important.

Since 1998, Kline's venue for teaching martial arts has been the Blue Wave gym in Bradford, Vermont, which he owns. Along with nine other black belts from the Blue Wave Tae Kwon Do Association, he instructs dozens of students from ages five to 55.

Perhaps it's the social worker in Kline that feels it's important to offer a free scholarship to a child from every school in the area, covering instruction, testing, fees and uniforms. He specifically looks for students struggling at home and school who need structure. “I let the kids know how it works,” he says. “It's about fun, discipline and time. Martial arts are built on respect in relationships. If the kids can bond with the instructors, they generally stay and advance.”

“I've never asked a student to leave my gym,” Kline states. “Pushups are my reward for misbehaving in class.” Teaching self-control is essential, since “martial arts are about trying to find the will power and the strength of spirit so that the physical instrument doesn't take over.”

Kline kicked off his martial arts career in his late 20s, acquiring his first-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do in just four years. He also studied Jujitsu and Filipino stick fighting. Now a third-degree black belt, he will be eligible to advance this summer. By the time he retires from Casey, he hopes to achieve master's level, the next step.

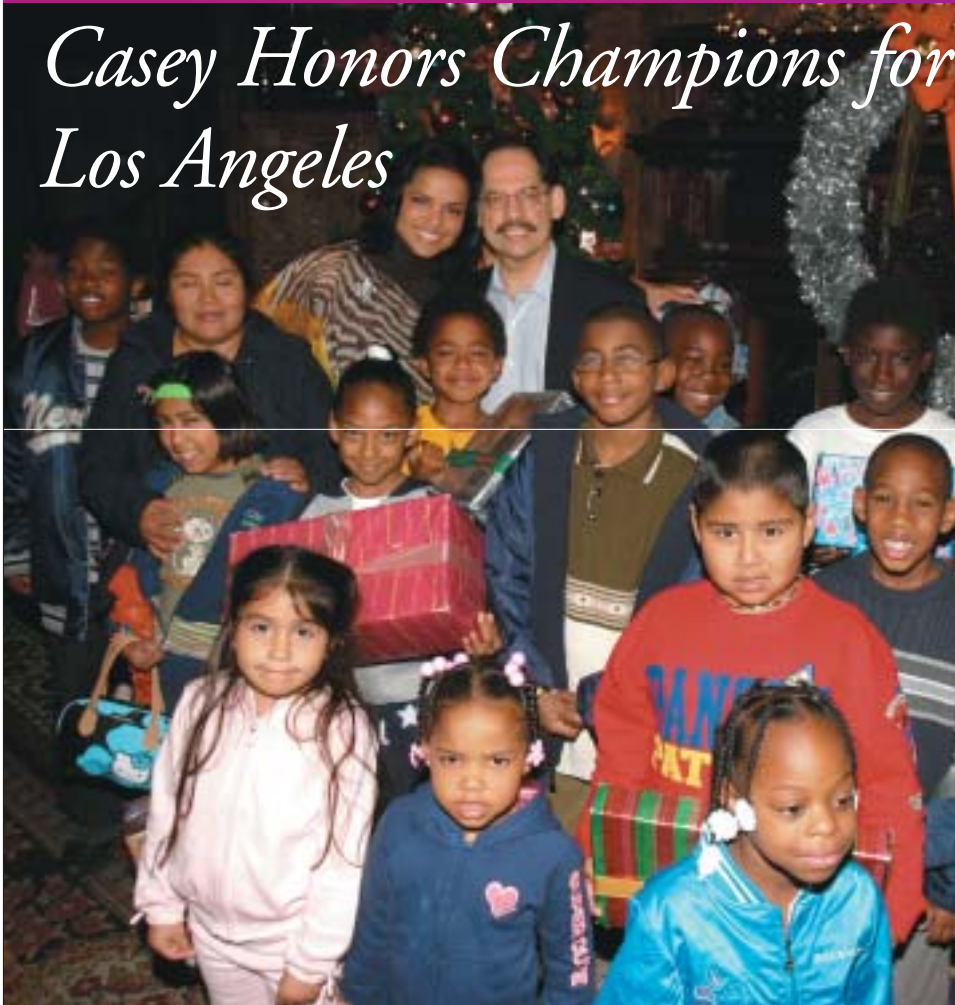
Kline and his wife, Mary, began martial arts training while living in Kansas and looking for recreational outlets. Their commitment continued through moves to Washington and Vermont. Mary is a Tae Kwon Do red belt, the level just below black, and also has studied Kung Fu. Rounding out his training in Eastern philosophy, Kline is certified in Reiki, a Japanese healing art, and, since 1970, has belonged to a yoga organization. He also enjoys watching martial arts movies, especially those of actor Jet Li.

Keeping in shape for martial arts is ongoing and involves lots of skipping, hopping, kicking, running and competing. In preparation for tournaments, Kline drives to Burlington on weekends to practice at a gym owned by his association president. “Something on me always hurts or is bruised, torn, pulled or sprained,” he reports matter of factly.

In addition to the physical costs, competing at his level hits his wallet. “It's an incredible expense to fly to a city for a four- to five-night tournament,” he says. “If you lose your first fight, you're done.” Tournaments focus on three categories of competition: fighting, form and breaking.

The benefits of martial arts, of course, outweigh the pain and expense for Kline. “I love it all: the teaching, the kids and the competing,” he says. “It's a great community and my gym is family-oriented. Some of the people in the association are my best friends.”

Casey Honors Champions for Children in Los Angeles



CASEY HONORS TELEVISION PRODUCER AT VICTORIA ROWELL'S ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

Actress and Casey Family Services National Spokesperson Victoria Rowell hosted her foundation's annual holiday party on December 5, 2004, for foster children at the famed House of Blues club on Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard. The day included a luncheon buffet, musical entertainment and holiday gifts for more than 100 foster children served by the Rowell Foster Care Positive Plan Foundation in Los Angeles.

Executive Director Raymond L. Torres attended the event and took the opportunity to present the Casey Family Services Distinguished Service Award to Jack F. Smith, the co-executive producer and co-head writer for "The Young and the Restless," an award-winning daytime drama series on CBS television.

"Casey Family Services honors 'The Young and the Restless' for building understanding and support for America's children in foster care with its recent storyline," Torres announced to attendees. "I am confident that your compelling stories will advance foster care among the show's millions of viewers."

Consulting with Rowell and Casey Family Services, Smith developed the foster care storyline. On the show, Drucilla Winters, played by Rowell, is a high-powered career woman and a former foster child. Because of her own childhood experiences, Drucilla pleads with her husband to let her take care of Devon, a foster teen, to keep him in the community where he belongs, in a family instead of a group home.

JAMIE FOXX HOSTS NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT ON ADOPTION

For the past six years, Children's Action Network has partnered with CBS television and the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption to produce "A Home for the Holidays," a musical entertainment program that profiles families who have adopted kids from the foster care system.

Actor, musician and comedian Jamie Foxx hosted and performed during the broadcast, which aired nationally on December 22, 2004, on CBS stations. Black Eyed Peas, Kenny G., Chaka Khan, Ashlee Simpson, Rod Stewart and Train were among the artists who performed, and actors Jamie Lee Curtis, Dennis Quaid, Rene Russo and Bruce Willis presented inspirational stories about adoption.

Casey Family Services Executive Director Raymond L. Torres attended the show's taping as a special guest with his family on December 4 in Hollywood: "Jamie Foxx

Above: Victoria Rowell, actress and Casey Family Services national spokesperson, and Executive Director Raymond L. Torres at the star's holiday party for foster youth. Below: Raymond L. Torres with Jack F. Smith, co-executive producer of "The Young and the Restless," in Los Angeles.

was excellent as the master of ceremonies. He talked about his own experience of being adopted as a 'triumphant day,' and he encouraged the audience to get involved in changing kids' lives," he said. "The event was an outstanding occasion to help focus national attention on the many children who are eligible for adoption," Torres says.



FINDING COMMON GROUND: EXPLORING DIVERSITY IN NEW HAMPSHIRE



On November 16, 2004, Casey Family Services' New Hampshire Division, Child & Family Services and Lutheran Social Services of Northern New England hosted "The Diversity Journey: Finding Common Ground from a Patchwork of Experience." The conference brought more than 200 participants together from a variety of New Hampshire agencies and professional backgrounds to participate in 17 workshops focusing on the diverse needs and experiences of the state's population.

The Right Reverend V. Gene Robinson, the Episcopal bishop of New Hampshire, provided a thought-provoking and encouraging keynote address. Participants were



The Right Reverend V. Gene Robinson, Episcopal bishop of New Hampshire, served as keynote speaker at the diversity conference.

entertained after lunch by Nzinga's Daughters, a troupe that teaches about the Underground Railroad through song and dance.

The array of workshops offered at this year's conference reflected the depth and breadth of the services provided by the three hosting agencies. Workshop topics included issues of faith, the effective use of interpreters, the refugee experience, bilingual parenting and spirituality in mental health practice.



Participants in the 2004 Diversity Conference listened to the sounds of Nzinga's Daughters.

The Faith Quilts Project offered a workshop that not only taught participants about their work, facilitating dialogues on faith through collaborative quilt-making, but also provided participants an opportunity to create their own quilt square.

Natural Connections Stand the Test of Time

View from Washington



by Robin Nixon,
Director, National Foster
Care Coalition

I am sitting here, cozy and comfortable in front of the fireplace, looking at a beautiful New England landscape and feeling right at home. I'm not in my own home, but am visiting the home of a good friend – my very oldest friend, in fact. She lives in Exeter, New Hampshire, which I consider to be my hometown – the place I lived the longest during a very mobile childhood that included about 15 moves. She and I have been friends since the fourth grade. I come back to Exeter as often as I can to see both my friend and another important connection in my life, my 10th grade world history teacher. Almost 30 years ago, he redirected my teenage energy from trouble making into a passionate interest in learning, and I consider him a treasured friend and mentor.

For most people, their sense of home, comfort and belonging come from family. However, we also get that sense of connection from people and places that make a difference at some particular point in our lives, and, sometimes, these connections sustain us for a lifetime.

For me, thinking about these nurturing relationships and their longevity gives me reasons to believe in connections that last.

We all can play a part in helping foster children and youth develop the same kinds of lasting, positive relationships.

I spend much of my working life thinking about and trying to have an impact on the policies, funding and legislation that affect the lives of children, youth and families in the child welfare system. When we think

“I BELIEVE THAT STRONG PROGRAMS AND SERVICES DO MUCH TO ENSURE SAFETY, PERMANENCY AND WELL-BEING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.”

about promoting lasting relationships for foster children and youth, how do we link the needs of kids to policies, funding and legislation? Is this an issue on which legislation and funding can really have an impact? How important are opportunities created through programs and services?

I believe that strong programs and services do much to ensure safety, permanency and well-being for children and youth. I also believe that we must look at how services can create opportunities for kids to find lasting connections that develop naturally. Unless our programs can contribute to the stability and connectivity of foster children's lives, we are denying them the opportunity to experience the diverse kinds of connections that sustain us throughout our lives.

Policies and funding must promote opportunities and environments that support a sense of community and belonging as much as support the connections themselves. Policies must support strong case management and high levels of child-social worker interaction. Funding must support respite care, high-quality caregiver training and ongoing support that encourage caregivers to keep going even when the going gets tough with a child or youth. They must support strong policies, minimizing the number of placements, placement change and school changes that children and youth experience. They must continue a strong focus on timely permanency.

At the most basic level, policies and funding must support significant levels of community-based and family-centered prevention that will allow families to stay together and prevent children's placement in foster care in the first place.

There is a place for structured programs to create connections – such as mentoring programs – in addition to helping kids achieve permanency. It has been my experience, however, that the strongest and most lasting mentoring relationships are not from structured programs, but they start and grow naturally out of relationships that have a chance to develop in schools, communities, places of worship, neighborhoods and playgrounds. We just need to make sure that foster kids have the same chance as other kids to plant those seeds and see them grow.

AN ALUMNA PERSPECTIVE:

P-A-R-E-N-T-S: PROMOTING SUCCESS IN A FOSTER CHILD

by Ginny Stephan



Foster parenting is a priceless journey. Foster parents take on the responsibility of raising a child so they can make a difference. They read every book about children at risk. They read all the success stories and vow that the foster child they take into their homes will be a successful adult.

However, when their foster child actually arrives, usually within 48 hours, the new foster parents quickly realize that it will not be easy. To help make the challenge a bit easier, here are a few things to keep in mind when going through the trials and tribulations of raising foster children:

P: Prepare them for the future.

Many times, foster children do not stay with their foster families forever. Encouraging these children to map out a plan for their future will help focus them on what they need to accomplish. Younger children need help building friendships. In framing relationships, children learn life skills by experiencing different personalities, and it is important for your children to embrace differences. Teenagers need guidance and information about life after high school. They need help in choosing a career path. That may mean looking at the local community college, tech school, liberal arts college or a full-time job. Helping teens not only to discover their gifts and talents, but also to fully realize what it will take to become financially independent is crucial.



A: Accept them.

It's normal for foster parents to have dreams and visions for the children they take into their homes. But it's very important to remember to give children choices and then let them make mistakes. It is important to help them turn failures into learning experiences. Failures forge character.

R: Recognize their personality.

According to accepted literature, there are four different personality types: fun-loving, introverted, the "organized whiz" and the "sentimental genius." Learning the personality types in your family helps in communicating with each member. By understanding each child's strengths and weaknesses, you will grasp how he or she will receive your discipline and love.

E: Educate them.

Educate your foster child about his or her family heritage, relationships and financial responsibility. For example, help set up a savings or checking account and teach your child how to budget money. By teaching about money and the basics of finance, you are imparting skills that many children, even in traditional families, do not possess. Many times, we can expose foster children to enriching life experiences they would not otherwise have.

N: Never give up.

Never quit on a foster child. These children already have experienced more rejection than the average adult. Use all your resources and do not expect perfection. When you feel lost and isolated, this is when you should tap your network of friends and support staff. Your tenacity will speak loud and clear to the children. Unconditional love is something they rarely have experienced. Teach them to receive and give love, and you will give them the necessary tools to live their lives well.

T: Treat foster children like your own.

Now this is difficult. Just try to do the best you can. Foster children want to be perceived as "normal," and they will appreciate anything you can do to help this process.

S: Set foster children up for success.

"Think outside the box." This expression works well when parenting foster children.

Orchestrating another's success is almost impossible. Ultimately, we know a person's success comes from the choices he or she makes. A foster parent's main goal should be helping foster children see all the opportunities the world holds. The important thing is to love your foster children along their journey, believe in their possibilities and embrace their differences.

For more information, please contact Ginny Stephan, board vice president, Foster Care Alumni of America, at ginnystephan@msn.com.



WHAT IS ...

DISPROPORTIONALITY?

PERSPECTIVES

by Kristin Mattocks, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, and Sania Metzger, Esq., Director of Policy

Background

In the child welfare system, disproportionality refers to a situation in which a particular group of children is represented at a higher percentage than other racial/ethnic groups.

Disproportionality is apparent when comparing the proportion of African American children in the foster care system with their representation in the overall U.S. population. Although African American children compose 40 percent of the nation's foster care population, they represent less than 20 percent of all children. Similarly, Native American children are just one percent of the nation's child populace, yet they constitute two percent of the foster care system. Furthermore, in states with large Native American populations, these children represent 15 to 65 percent of those in care. In sharp contrast to these groups, white children are 64 percent of the country's children, but only 31 percent of the foster care population (AECF, 2002).

Disproportionality is most apparent in large cities with significant African American and foster care populations. In San Francisco, for example, African Americans compose 11 percent of all children, but represent 70 percent of the city's foster care system (Bowser and Jones, 2004). Disproportionality is equally problematic on the East Coast. Of the 42,000 children in New York City's system, 40,700 were non-white in 1997 (AECF, 2002). Looking deeper, in central Harlem, where 86 percent of the population is black, nearly 10 percent of all children and adolescents are in foster care (Center for an Urban Future, 1998).

What are the causes of racial disproportionality? Research suggests that incidences of child abuse and neglect are more than 26 times higher in families earning less than \$15,000 per year when compared with those with incomes above \$30,000 (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). Since African American, Latino and Native American families are more likely to be living in poverty than whites, it is not surprising that these families often have greater involvement with the child welfare system (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Data clearly show that elements of the system exhibit signs of differential treatment toward certain groups of children. Although research indicates that African American children are no more likely to be victims of abuse or neglect than white children, African American families are more likely to be reported to state authorities (Sedlak & Schultz, 2001; AECF, 2002). Once a child of color enters the system, he or she often remains much longer than a white child. In addition, African American children are more likely to be placed in foster care and less likely to be reunified with their families than children of any other group (U.S. DHHS, 2001; Courtney & Wong, 1996).

Disproportionality is a serious problem within the child welfare system. What can be done?

The Disproportionality Initiative at Casey

Last year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Center for the Study of Social Policy hosted retreats to address disproportionality and racial disparities. Representatives from the center, as well as members of the Casey Collaborative – which includes the Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Fam-

ily Services, Casey Family Programs, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and the Marguerite Casey Foundation – gathered for two days of discussion. Attendees shared organizational perspectives, strategies and current efforts on how to promote equitable child welfare policy and practice. The group also explored ways to maximize its impact and influence to eliminate disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color involved with child welfare.

As a result of this session, the organizations committed to developing a business plan that coordinated efforts to end disproportionality. The strategy will focus on:

- building public will and communication;
- promoting public policies to eliminate disproportionality;
- deepening the research and data about disparities; and
- working with sites to show that disparities can be reduced.

Conclusion

Racial and ethnic disproportionality is a serious problem. Further research needs to highlight the causes and consequences of this phenomenon. Successful partnerships between practitioners, researchers and policymakers must stress the importance of addressing, and eventually eliminating, disproportionality in the child welfare system.

References

For a complete list of references, please email co-author Kristin Mattocks at kmattocks@caseyfamilyservices.org.

LIFE SKILLS, LIFE SUCCESS

“IT’S MY LIFE” CONFERENCE SHOWCASES BEST STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH IN TRANSITION

By David Johnston, Senior Program Associate, Life Skills



For the second year in a row, Casey Family Services helped sponsor the “It’s My Life” conference, held October 12-14, 2004, in Sacramento, California.

This national transition conference was held under the leadership of Casey Family Programs and in cooperation with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

More than 600 child welfare professionals, caregivers, youth in care and foster care alumni participated in the conference, which focused on building life skills and helping transition foster youth to independence. The conference showcased state-of-the-art approaches, sharing the best ideas and strategies from across the country. With a large number of youth and former foster children in attendance, it was an incredible opportunity for professionals to learn from adolescents on both sides of the “aging out” process.

The conference also gave Casey Family Services the opportunity to highlight one of its innovative life skills programs and one of the industrious co-founders of that effort, Brittany. For her, preparing for transition has been a sweet success.

Now 19, Brittany was one of four adolescents who helped create a business through the Youth Entrepreneurial Business Program at Casey’s Hartford Division last year. Working with former life skills specialist, T.J. Michalski, this team of teens was responsible for every aspect of launching a small business – “Casey’s Tasty’s” – a business that sells fruit smoothies at local events during the summer months.

While the program empowers youth to make decisions about the business, it also earns them a profit if they are successful. More important for the kids, the experience of running a business gives Casey staff members a unique opportunity to assess their clients’ skills. For example, in this real-world setting, we can determine who needs additional customer service training or how well they handle pressure. By watching youth at work, we can tailor our transition efforts much more effectively.

WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF YOUTH IN ATTENDANCE AT THE CONFERENCE, IT WAS AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY FOR PROFESSIONALS TO LEARN FROM ADOLESCENTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE “AGING OUT” PROCESS.

Brittany brought this message of youth entrepreneurialism to California for the “It’s My Life” conference, joining with another youth, Mookie, to talk about the role foster children can play in small business ventures. She was joined by Michalski as well as Alan MacKenzie from Hartford’s Street Smart Ventures, which works with youth agencies to create businesses.

“The conference was very beneficial,” Brittany says about her experience. “I really took in a lot of great information from the other workshops, particularly about housing

and money management. More important, people seemed to really like our presentation. Most people don’t think that kids can start their own business, but we showed them that we can. It felt good to talk about what we accomplished. We heard that people from Alaska and Ohio were taking the idea back to their states.”

As one of the older youth on the Casey’s Tasty’s team, Brittany already had distinguished herself as a leader in the group, assuming a natural supervisory role. Therefore, it was no surprise that she rose to the occasion of presenting to an eager group of youth and professionals during the conference. She did a great job sharing the benefits of involving youth in small business efforts that help them earn cash, develop self-esteem and learn important life skills for adulthood.

Today, Brittany is working part-time and attending a local community college. This spring, she will be back helping Casey’s Tasty’s make delicious smoothies, as well as a profit.

“The project has been very positive and really prepared me for the job that I have now, particularly dealing with people,” Brittany says. “It also taught me a lot of leadership skills, and making some money was nice.”

Plans already are under way for the 2005 conference to reach the East Coast. Set for Baltimore, Maryland, the goal is to include more youth in conference planning and in workshop selections. For more information, contact David Johnston at djohnston@caseyfamilyservices.org.

SPOTLIGHT ON RECRUITMENT:

COMMUNITY SURVEY SPOTLIGHTS INTEREST AND OPINIONS ABOUT FOSTERING

by Lisa M. Jones, Ph.D., Research Assistant Professor, University of New Hampshire, and Ben Kerman, Ph.D., Director of Research, Casey Family Services

How do foster caregivers come to foster? It's a simple-sounding question that defies simple answers. Research typically identifies the characteristics of people who foster. For example, they are described as religious and altruistic. However, this information may not be adequate to benefit recruitment methods. Do these features distinguish foster parents from other parents in the community? How do such findings help us understand how parents decide to foster?

Faced with a pronounced gap between the number of children needing families and the number of families providing care, the press to understand how people feel and think about fostering grows acute. This need for recruitment insight is even greater among communities of color from which children are often over-represented in foster care.

A Casey Response: Casey Family Services has long recognized the challenges of finding foster parents with the “right stuff” to succeed in this challenging role. Dr. Lisa Jones, from the University of New Hampshire, and Dr. Ben Kerman, from Casey’s Research Department, recently convened an advisory board of practitioners to address the mysteries of recruitment. As Figure One illustrates, there is a narrowing path that potential caregivers follow on their way to fostering. There is a benefit – to both practitioners and researchers – in understanding what occurs with families at each exit point.

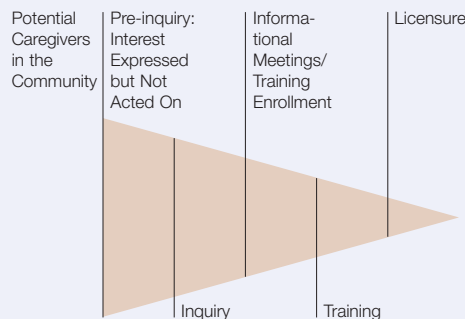
Focusing on the earliest stage of potential foster parents – those at the pre-inquiry stage – the researchers developed survey

questions to find who in the community is interested in parenting and how they learn about fostering. These answers are needed to help recruiters understand how potential parents can be moved to become active caregivers.

With questions in hand, the research team surveyed households across New England, with an emphasis on several communities with strong African American and Latino populations, as well as predominantly white rural areas. In all, 932 respondents took part in the telephone interviews.

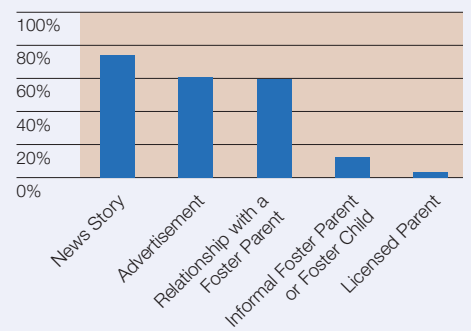
Summary of Findings: Results indicated that most New Englanders describe themselves as fairly familiar with foster care and that more people think, at least briefly, about the idea of fostering than previously assumed. African Americans and Latinos surveyed in four of the region’s cities identified high levels of interest in foster parenting. These populations expressed more openness to fostering infants and children with disabilities than their less urban counterparts.

Figure One. Stages of Foster Family Recruitment and Retention



Sixty-one percent of all respondents described themselves as somewhat or very familiar with foster care. Sources of this familiarity were varied (see Figure Two):

Figure Two. Sources of Familiarity with Foster Care



As expected, the most familiar sources were the news and mass media. However, more than half noted learning about fostering from someone they knew. More than 10 percent also had informal experiences with foster parenting themselves.

Deciding to Be a Foster Parent: The majority of respondents reported thinking a little about becoming a foster parent (58 percent). Eleven percent had thought about fostering a lot. Three percent thought it very likely they would become a foster parent in the future. The survey provided some important information about those at different levels of decision making:

- Females were more likely than males to think about fostering (67 percent), but 47 percent of males surveyed also described having thought about fostering.
- Greater attendance at community events and volunteering were highly predictive of having thought about fostering.

COMMUNITY SURVEY SPOTLIGHTS INTEREST AND OPINIONS ABOUT FOSTERING

- Having experience as an informal foster parent and knowing other foster parents were also highly predictive of thinking seriously about being a licensed foster parent.
- Increasing interest in foster parenting was particularly related to a decreasing concern about the cons or barriers to fostering. Some of the key concerns were the emotional and behavioral problems of foster children and the difficulties that would cause one's family.
- While preferences for fostering an infant were mixed, there was decidedly less of a preference to foster teenagers and children with disabilities and more of a preference to adopt a child from foster care.

Communities of Color: From the survey with African Americans and Latinos in the selected cities, responses indicated a high degree of interest in fostering:

- For African American respondents, women were more likely than men to have thought about fostering, and those with a college degree were less likely to have thought about it.
- For Latino respondents, those younger than 40, those who volunteered with community groups or agencies and those who knew other foster parents were more likely to have thought about fostering.
- Respondents in both racial groups had less of a preference for fostering a teenager, more of a preference for an infant and more of a preference for a child with a disability than was found with respondents from the markedly white New England population.
- A greater percentage of both the African American (33 percent) and Latino (22 percent) samples described being a caregiver at one time for a friend or family

member's child compared with the general sample (13 percent).

Implications for Practice: The survey results offer useful information for improving recruitment. Implications include:

- 1) Keep the decision-making process in mind and target recruitment messages accordingly. One example would be to deliver an introductory message about fostering through television to a wide audience, hoping to get those who have never thought about foster parenting to think about it. Another might target those likely to have already thought about fostering, such as those working as volunteers in their community, to get them to call an agency and learn more about the licensing process.
- 2) Tap into the public's experience with informal caregiving and their acquaintance with foster parents. For example, recruitment programs could draw from the idea that the public already is experienced at caregiving and that becoming licensed is a great next step to continuing that commitment. Likewise, recommendations in recruitment literature to include foster parents as much as possible (Cox, Buehler, & Orme, 2002; Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies, 2000) are supported by the survey results. There also is support for the movement toward using pre-existing networks of care to find homes.
- 3) Consider community service and religious organizations as possible keys to reaching those who have thought about fostering. Parent organizations, children's groups such as Boys and Girls Clubs, and other charitable organizations would offer ideal audiences for messages that emphasize

the strengths these individuals could bring as foster parents.

4) Address concerns about the cons of fostering. For those debating the idea of foster parenting, the difficulties of fostering are front-and-center in their minds. Potential caregivers may be over-emphasizing the degree of problems or may be underestimating their family's ability to handle such problems. Recruitment programs could disseminate messages from current foster parents that acknowledge how hard their job is but also emphasize their family's skills at taking on these challenges, how positively the experience affected their family and how proud they felt giving children a positive family experience.

5) Target the strong interest in fostering that can be found in urban African American and Latino communities. Recruitment programs targeted to these communities can take advantage of information that informal caregiving is frequent, that these groups are interested in being foster parents, and that interest in caring for infants and adopting children is particularly strong among those who have thought about fostering.

Conclusion and Future Directions: The cross-sectional nature of the study means that we don't know much about what predicts individual movement toward becoming a foster parent. More information should be gathered from those who are thinking very seriously about foster parenting to understand what holds some back and what pushes others forward into initiating the licensing process. Additionally, those who do call foster care agencies could be followed through to understand some of the later decision-making process.

Resource

Corner

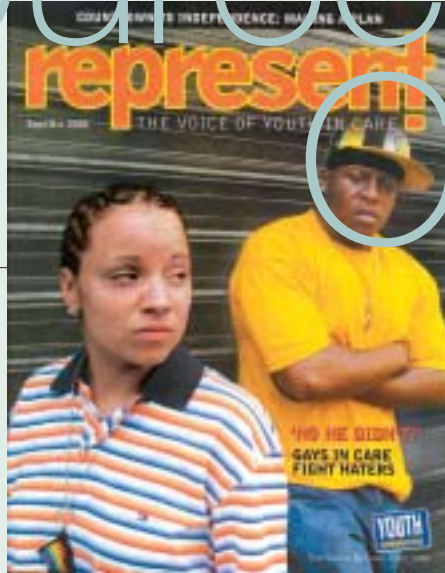
*Reviews**Foster Care Adoption in the United States: A State-by-State Analysis of Barriers and Promising Approaches*

This study is the first nationwide analysis of adoption information collected from the Congressionally-mandated Child and Family Services Reviews conducted in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The National Adoption Day Coalition, composed of seven partners – The Alliance for Children’s Rights, Casey Family Services, the Children’s Action Network, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Freddie Mac Foundation and Target Corporation – commissioned the Urban Institute to conduct a state-by-state analysis to identify the common barriers and promising approaches that exist in the process of adopting children from the foster care system across the country.

To review the report, please visit www.nationaladoptionday.org.

Educational Experiences of Children in Out-of-Home Care

Schools are shaping the development of children, and successful school experiences increase the likelihood of their successful transition to adulthood. For youth in out-of-home care, the state serves in place of the parents, bearing responsibility for the educational needs of children in care. This report, published by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, presents the findings from a study assessing the educational experiences of Illinois youth in out-of-home care. The findings thus far suggest an increased need to address educational achievement and



outcomes for children in out-of-home care but also the continuity of their school experiences and the connections between the children and both of the organizations or institutions serving them.

To review the report, please visit www.chapinhall.org.

Personal Reflections on Adoption

The documentary film “I Have Roots & Branches” conveys a positive, encouraging and honest message about adoption and is most appropriate for a young audience. As adopted children contemplate their personal journey, seeing and hearing other children who are adopted validates their feelings about adoption. A 2004 winner of the prestigious Film Advisory Board Award of Excellence, which recognizes children’s entertainment, features those who have been adopted, ranging from childhood to adulthood, sharing their deepest thoughts and emotions on the adoption experience that has profoundly shaped their lives and those of their loved ones.

To order this video, visit www.adoptionvideo.com.

Represent: The Voice of Youth in Foster Care

Formerly *Foster Care Youth United*, this award-winning magazine captures the spirit of the times as well as its mission to help foster youth across the country stand up, be counted and be heard. *Represent* is the only national magazine written by and for youth in foster care. For teens, it is a useful guide to help plan their future, negotiate the present, and hear similar voices and experiences. For adults and professionals, the magazine’s authentic personality is helpful to better understand what teens are going through, offering them the training they need to succeed.

For more information and resources, visit www.youthcomm.org.

Strengthening Families/Strengthening Schools Toolkit

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has launched a new web-based feature called the Strengthening Families/Strengthening Schools Toolkit. The site features examples of schools that work in partnership with families, practical ideas for work in schools and ideas for families about working with schools.

The Strengthening Families, Strengthening Schools Toolkit was prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation in collaboration with: California Tomorrow, Children and Family Futures, Coalition for Community Schools Family Support America, Institute for Responsive Education and Interfaith Education Fund.

Browse the toolkit at www.aecf.org/mc/schooltoolkit.

What the Media Say

Media

Capital One, the McLean, Virginia-based credit card and financial services company, will give \$450,000 to two national foster care organizations that will administer the (new) Fostering Our Future scholarship for foster youth. Capital One, the Children's Action Network and the National Foster Care Fund, founded by actor Bruce Willis, will set application criteria and select recipients. Raymond L. Torres, executive director of Casey Family Services, the division of the Annie E. Casey Foundation that works directly with 500 foster children, said his group and others are always looking for more private donors. "Having a national private organization like Capital One make such a commitment is relatively rare," Torres said.

The Washington Post
December 7, 2004

"For kids aging out of the (foster care) system, a permanent connection with a family and a network of supports to help them make the transition into adulthood is just absolutely critical," said Allen Casad, director of Casey Family Services' Massachusetts Division. "Foster children who 'age out' of foster care without establishing that permanency run a higher risk of becoming incarcerated, a high school dropout and unemployed or working in a marginal job."

The Patriot Ledger
Quincy, Massachusetts
November 23, 2004

The Urban Institute, an economic and social policy research organization, released a report commissioned by the National Adoption Day Coalition, of which Casey Family Services is a founding member, that examined barriers (to foster care adoption) across the country. Those barriers included difficulty finding adoptive homes. According to the report, 47 states – including Connecticut – have a hard time finding families to adopt these children. [Raymond] Torres [Casey Family Services executive director] said that there is a particular difficulty in recruiting homes for older children, those with special needs and racial and ethnic minorities ... "National Adoption Day is a way to bring more visibility to the plight of these children," he said.

The Connecticut Post
November 24, 2004

In the first nationwide analysis of adoption from foster care information collected from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, a study by the Washington-based Urban Institute released this week points out that despite the efforts of child welfare agencies and courts, significant barriers impede the adoption process ... "The National Adoption Day Coalition in the report recommends more attention to issues around coordination. And with regard to case management barriers, the coalition recommends more attention to workforce issues affecting the adoption process. Some states are creating new adoption units within their agency or identifying specialized staff to work on adoption issues, some are providing additional training on adoption and some are creating task force committees.

United Press International
November 18, 2004

According to the (Urban Institute) study, the adoption process is complicated by the constant coordination required between child welfare agencies and family courts ... Senator Mary Landrieu, the Louisiana Democrat who is co-chairwoman of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, described the (foster care) system as "somewhat broken." Federal financing for foster care should be funneled to the states in a more focused way, she said, adding, "The passion is there, the people's support is there, but the system itself needs a tremendous amount of shoring up."

The New York Times
November 18, 2004

Casey Family Services and the Yale Child Study Center are working together to find committed foster families for special needs children through the "One Ordinary Family for One Extraordinary Kid" campaign. We offer training for all foster families and 24/7 support, as well as other special services and support to help them create a safe home ... The children in this program have had difficult childhoods and they have been in residential treatment for most of their lives. They are now stable and are ready to be in a family again ... To help them, all a potential foster parent needs is to be caring and patient and able to offer a safe and loving home.

Denise Creacy from Casey Family Services' Bridgeport Division, in a public affairs interview on WEZN (99.9 FM) and WPLR (99.1 FM)
December 26, 2004

The Washington Post

2005: Important Dates

February

February 11

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

March

March 1-31

National Professional Social Work Month
www.socialworkers.org

March 6-8

BACW National Conference
“A New Covenant: Re-engineering Systems of Care for African American Children and Families”
Black Administrators in Child Welfare, Inc.
Arlington, Virginia
www.blackadministrators.org

March

March 9-11

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

March 18

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

April

April 2-3

Casey Family Services Foster Parent Conference
“Children, Families and Communities: Connections Count for a Lifetime”
Boston, Massachusetts
www.caseyfamilyservices.org

April

April 16-19

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

April 18-23

National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect
Boston, Massachusetts
nccanch.acf.hhs.gov

May 1-31

National Foster Care Month

May

May 2-4

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

May 9-14

National Foster Parent Conference
National Foster Parent Association
Hyatt Regency Orange County
Garden Grove, California
www.nfpainc.org

Casey 2005 Calendar available



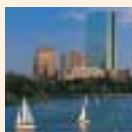


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Voice

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Voice is published quarterly by Casey Family Services for child welfare professionals, advocates, and the children and families they serve. The opinions expressed within this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Casey Family Services or the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Casey Family Services is the direct service arm of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization established in 1948 by United Parcel Service Founder Jim Casey and his siblings in honor of their mother.

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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