



PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG FAMILIES

PSF Headquarters  
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Learn more about the innovative practices that make our system of care unique.

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PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG FAMILIES

# PARTNERSHIP CONNECTION

July - September 2016



## PSF RECEIVES FUNDING, SUPPORT FROM THE UNITED WAY

By Aldreka Everett, Community Relations Assistant

We are excited to share that the United Way of North Central Florida recently selected PSF as an Impact Partner, providing \$63,000 to our agency over the course of three years. The funding will help enhance the services provided during emergency shelters for foster youth thanks to a relatively new partnership with Ignite Life Center in Gainesville.

This partnership strengthens the services available to high-trauma youth, including youth who have been abandoned by their families after release from the Department of Juvenile Justice or crisis stabilization unit, victims of human trafficking and youth who have experienced great trauma. For these youth, finding the placement that will best suit their needs can often take an extended amount of time. While they await placement, they enter into temporary, emergency shelter.

In the past when youth were without an identified placement, they would stay overnight in the office of a partnering agency, sleeping on a mattress on the floor while case workers took shifts supervising them. Not only was this situation not ideal for our youth, it greatly affected staff turnover rates for caseworkers and significantly increased overtime costs. Understanding that we had a duty to better serve this population, PSF set out to establish partnerships that could help.

Our partnership with Ignite Life Center helps us do just that. Now when a child does not have an identified placement, Ignite Life Center provides a bed, a place to shower, hot meals and wraparound services. Staff from Ignite are also able to supervise our youth during placement, alleviating our caseworkers from having to work around the clock. Moreover, youth are provided outlets to learn, express themselves and try new things.

A youth who was placed at Ignite attended PSF's most recent Board of Directors meeting to share a little about his experience there. He shared some of his favorite programs that have helped to build his confidence, many of which focus on exercise and well-being. He has also taken an interest in the culinary program, and even brought made-from-scratch cookies that he proudly shared with everyone in attendance. He now has an identified goal in life - to become a professional chef.

Funding from the United Way is helping to sustain this program, and we are continuing to seek ways to further fund our contract with Ignite. We are grateful for United Way's support in helping to enhance the services available to these deserving youth.

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## PSF'S BACK TO SCHOOL DRIVE

By Aldreka Everett, Community Relations Assistant

PSF's Annual Back to School Drive is in full swing! With the support of community partners and individuals, the Back to School drive is our second largest donation drive of the year. Our goal is to ensure that every child in our care is given the opportunity to achieve academic success by providing them with the supplies they need for the school term.

Just last year, we were able to collect supplies for more than 430 deserving children. The success of this drive is dependent solely upon the support and generosity of the community. So far, the Alachua County Sheriff's Office, Crom Corporation, James Moore and Company, The Vineyard Church, Congregation of B'nai Israel, Greenhouse Church, UF Health, UBS Financial, UDV of Florida, PPR Talent Management, Starbucks, Mattress Firm and other individuals have generously committed to support our children this year. We also received a grant from the Wal-Mart in Lake City. This grant allows us to purchase school supplies from Wal-Mart for the children of Columbia County. Currently, we are accepting all donations, including: **Non-Rolling Backpacks, 1" Binders, Index Cards, Crayons, Pencil Cases, Markers, Colored Pencils, Notebook Paper, Pens, Pencils, Folders, Scissors, Glue and Calculators.**

Please consider partnering with us by donating supplies at any Starbucks of Gainesville or MattressFirm Stores on Archer Road. If you are not within reach of either of these locations, school supplies can also be purchased and shipped to our office via our Amazon Wishlist. The link to our wish list can be found by visiting [www.partnerfamily.org](http://www.partnerfamily.org). Don't have time to shop? Make a monetary contribution and we will do the shopping for you! A donation of just \$25 is all we need to make sure each child has all they need for academic success. Checks can be mailed to PSF's Gainesville office and made out to Partnership for Strong Families with "Back to School" notated in the memo line. For more information on ways to get involved, contact Aldreka at [Aldreka.Everett@pfsf.org](mailto:Aldreka.Everett@pfsf.org).





## PSF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Michael Bowie  
*Chair*

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*Chair Emeritus*

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Mr. Ed Peddie  
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Dr. Muthusami Kumaran

Mr. Donovan Arnold

PSF Board meetings are normally held on the fourth Monday of every other month.

For more information and the current location, please view the calendar at [psf.org](http://psf.org).

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Stephen Pennypacker  
President/CEO

Community Partners and Friends,

Our agency is on the cusp of some major improvements to better serve the children and families in our care. I am pleased to report that our funding for the 2016-2017 fiscal has been increased by the Legislature. This includes increased funding for case management and money earmarked specifically for safety management services. As a result, our case management agencies will be able to hire more staff and reduce caseloads.

In line with our improvements to our service delivery, our Board of Directors has led our agency through an intensive Strategic Planning process to develop our goals and objectives for the next three years and beyond. This plan will serve as a living document to guide our decisions and priorities moving forward. With input from our staff, partners and community stakeholders, we are confident that this plan will take us to a new level of innovation to improve outcomes for the children we serve and the community at-large.

As you'll see on page 4, we've made the decision to bring our adoption program in-house beginning July 1. Children's Home Society has been a valued partner of our agency and has certainly left a positive mark on this community, finalizing more than 1,500 adoptions since 2003. This transition will create a more streamlined approach to finding forever families for the children in our care who are awaiting permanency, and I am very proud that former CHS adoption staff have accepted positions in our new in-house adoptions unit.

We've also just broken ground on a new modular home adjacent to our headquarters office in Gainesville to serve youth awaiting placement. Historically, these children would have spent a day in our office, which could be a harsh transition for many during an already traumatic time in their lives. The modular home offers a comfortable and more child-friendly alternative as they take the next step in their journey toward reunification or permanency.

It is my continued honor to work with this dedicated team of board members, staff and partners to improve outcomes for North Central Florida's abused and neglected children.

Stephen Pennypacker  
President/CEO

## COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

*By Pebbles Edelman, Senior VP of Clinical and Community Services*  
As most of you by now know, our former Director of Community and Government Relations, Jenn Petion, has accepted a position with FamiliesFirst Network and had her last official day with our agency in June. We could not be more happy for Jenn as she accepts this well-deserved opportunity, and we know that she will continue to accomplish great things.

Jenn left her mark on our agency, helping us finalize our new Strategic Plan, implementing a robust social media campaign to recruit Partner Families and spearheading efforts to bring school supplies and holiday presents to every child in our care for the past five years. While her shoes are large ones to fill, I am excited to announce that we have selected Patty Carroll to fill this role as our new Community and Government Relations Manager.

Many of you may recognize Patty, pictured right, as she has been with our agency for more than five years now, working

directly under Jenn. Patty started with PSF as the Community and Government Relations Intern, quickly getting hired as Community Development Assistant, then promoted to Community Relations Coordinator and finally her last position as a Senior Community Relations Professional, assuming increasing responsibilities with enthusiasm and ease every step of the way. She has been an invaluable part of the community relations team, leading our five regional Children's Partnership Councils, implementing creative social media campaigns and writing numerous successful grants to name just a few of her successes. During this transition, Patty will gradually assume the full duties of Director of Community and Government Relations. I know that Patty will continue to do great things for the children and families we serve.



## CAMP ANDERSON

*By Cheryl Twombly, DCF Community Development Administrator for Circuits 3 & 8*

While working in our communities with DCF, I am privileged to encounter extraordinary individuals and groups dedicated to improving the lives of children. One such group is the team at Camp Anderson, a faith based summer camp program located in Old Town, Florida. For the past two years, Camp Anderson has been a source of support for our kids by providing scholarship slots to send 30 children to their summer camp program. This summer, they exceeded this commitment by sharing 400 scholarships for at risk youth throughout Florida.

Camp Anderson has created an environment where children are challenged to try new things, supported through both successes and failures, and constantly told how special and loved they are. They take their mission to "reach the unreachable of the next generation" to heart, and strive to ensure that each child feels like they have a group cheering for them through every challenge. The kids returning from their camp week are all smiles, telling stories of who caught the biggest fish, how high they flew on "The Blob" and which cabin was the big winner during camp games.

We cannot thank Camp Anderson enough for their generous donation to our kids as well as the positive influence they will provide more than 4,000 youth who attend their camp over the summer.

To find out more about this camp program, go to [www.camanderson.org](http://www.camanderson.org).



## CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL UPDATE

*By Patty Carroll, Community and Government Relations Manager*

This past fiscal year brought along many accomplishments for our Children's Partnership Councils. An annual report will soon be posted on our website that will highlight some of the goals, objectives and successes that the Councils achieved over the past 12 months. The report will also highlight funding allocations and some of the Councils' goals and priorities moving forward.

This past April, the Columbia County Children's Partnership Council hosted their first-ever Child Abuse Prevention Month event in Fort White, pictured right. While the event did not draw as large of a crowd as we would have hoped, it presented a unique and needed opportunity to network with partners from around the County who share similar missions and brought more individuals to the table for our Council meetings. The Council is currently working on plans for their annual Back to School Bash, which will take place on August 11 at the Fort White Community Center. This event typically brings 150-200 children and their families and offers free school supplies, backpacks, resources, games and prizes.



After careful thought and Council deliberation, we are excited to share that the Madison, Taylor Children's Partnership Council will soon be joining the already established Madison and Taylor Shared Services Meetings that are facilitated by the Healthy Start Coalition. These meetings share a similar goal of the Councils in gaining a better understanding of the resources and supports already available in those counties. Understanding the power of collaboration, we are confident that this merger will greatly benefit both groups. Each month, the Children's Partnership Council will be added as an item on the Shared Services' agenda, and both parties will play a role in allocating Council funds to best meet the needs of the counties. PSF's Senior Community Relations Professional will continue to attend the Shared Services Meetings as well.

Beginning the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year, each Council will have a \$5,000 budget to allocate toward resource gaps in their community. Within the next few months, Councils will begin to decide where these funds will be able to make the largest impact in their community. Already, the Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy Children's Partnership Council has allocated funds toward purchasing cabinet locks for families with toddlers, GED vouchers for students who would otherwise not be able to afford the exam and CPR certification cards for individuals who need the certification to gain employment.

The next fiscal year will bring many changes to the Councils, beginning with a new Senior Community Relations Professional to facilitate these meetings and help guide decisions and priorities. I say this with mixed emotions as facilitating the Councils has been such a valued experience over the past two years, but I know that the next individual to fill this role will continue to move the Councils forward.



## PSF'S RESOURCE CENTERS UPDATE

By Stacy Merritt, Director of Resource Centers

As one of Casey Family Programs' Communities of Hope (CoH), PSF's resource center staff are awarded unique opportunities to attend meetings and trainings across the country. During this past quarter, identified staff have attended meetings with other CoH representatives in both Washington D.C. and New York, along with a training and tour of Magnolia Place, a well-established resource center in Los Angeles. Additionally, in July 2016, Casey will be sending representatives from Bartow County, Georgia, to visit the Tri-County Community Resource Center and learn about PSF's Resource Center Model, local successes and the unique benefits and challenges related to opening and operating a resource center in a rural area.

### Tri-County Community Resource Center (TCCRC)



TCCRC recently celebrated its first year of operation with a community-wide "First Birthday Party" on April 30, 2016. In addition to approximately 65 volunteers, partner agency representatives and staff, more than 180 community members attended this family-oriented event complete with two bounce houses, food, games, give-away items and other exciting activities. This event also allowed families to learn about the many resources available to them and provided a safe, stress-free environment to ask questions about these local resources and supports. Participating organizations were also able to learn more about one another and make professional connections that are necessary to better serve local community members.

TCCRC had a very successful first year with more than 4,000 visitors to the center, establishment of at least 40 formal and informal community partners (many of whom participated in the celebration) and a number of exciting on-site programs and supports designed specifically to meet local community needs. The center has offered learning opportunities with topics such as financial literacy, legal matters, computer skills, CPR and child birth. Children's programming and special events have also been made available to local families.

As further evidence of the quality work being done at TCCRC, on June 16, TCCRC Manager Beverly Goodman was recognized by the Central Florida Community Action Agency (CFCAA) as the recipient of the Levy County Community Partner of the Year Award. CFCAA noted the outstanding work being done at TCCRC, along with Beverly's enthusiasm for engaging families and passion for educating others about the unique struggles facing families residing in rural communities.



Using community input and lessons learned from their first year, TCCRC continues to plan programming and services

with the local communities in mind. Some upcoming events include: legal workshops, CPR trainings, job readiness sessions, a children's cooking and nutrition class, parent-child engagement activities and much more!

### SWAG Family Resource Center

Due to the wide-spread recognition of the positive community impact SWAG FRC has had since opening its doors in June 2012, a number of opportunities have presented themselves for Resource Center growth and development.



One such opportunity occurred thanks to a local advocate, Gail Sasnett, and her involvement with an international nonprofit agency, the Legacy Center. Based upon need and potential impact, SWAG FRC was selected as the recipient of an Extreme

Makeover Project that was completed over a two day period under the leadership of the Legacy Center and with help from community volunteers. As result of this project, SWAG FRC is better able to utilize their existing space with the creation of a multipurpose room that includes a library, young children's play area, meeting space and workstations, along with improved storage solutions, creation of a more welcoming waiting area, a lounge for teens and a fresh coat of paint throughout most of the Resource Center.

SWAG FRC was also recently selected to receive a \$25,000 grant from Alachua County Court Services to design and implement mental health education and prevention programming for children and youth residing in the local communities. The proposed programming will focus on behavioral health and overall well-being. It will incorporate an evidence-based curriculum related to child resiliency into existing after-school programming and will also provide several special sessions that will encourage parents and community members to actively support their child(ren) in the development of positive social and emotional skills. There are plans to hold a kick-off event in September 2016, so keep your eyes open for more information.

Finally, SWAG FRC has completed the first of two sessions of their annual children's Summer R.A.P. Program, (Retain, Apply, Play). This year's theme, "Around the World," has allowed students to learn about a variety of different places and cultures. For example, during lessons about China, students practiced Tai Chi and made their own dragon masks while learning about the Chinese New Year. Participating students were also able to attend a field trip to a local wildlife rescue center, where they were able to see and learn about exotic animals.



## NON GALA EXTRAVAGANZA

By Michelle Kidney, Recruitment Specialist

To celebrate National Foster Care Month, PSF sent out invitations to members of our community to *not* attend our annual Non-Gala Extravaganza. This party was unique because there was *not* an actual event planned. We encouraged our attendees to stay home with their families and not spend money buying a dress, renting a tux or paying a babysitter. Instead, we invited them to make a contribution to support the children in our care.

The Non-Gala Extravaganza garnered enthusiastic support from individuals across PSF's service area. The event collected \$1,650. These funds will go directly to support the more than 800 children in out-of-home care and the recruitment of Partner Families who provide safe homes for these children.

Kindly RSVP by May 18, 2016

M \_\_\_\_\_

Will not attend and will gladly donate the following amount:

- Little Black Dress - \$500
- Tuxedo - \$350
- Limo Rental - \$250
- Pearl Necklace - \$100
- Babysitter - \$50
- Bow Tie - \$25
- Pocket Change (any amount welcomed) - \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to  
Partnership for Strong Families  
5950 NW 1st Place, Suite A  
Gainesville, FL 32607  
Memo: Non-Event Gala

cordially invites you to *not* attend our first annual

# Non <sup>^</sup> Gala Extravaganza

This event will *not* be held some Saturday night in May to raise awareness for

## National Foster Care Month

Drinks will *not* be served at 6 p.m.  
Dinner will *not* follow at 7 p.m.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if...

- You needn't rent a tuxedo *or*
- Buy a new dress, shoes and purse *or*
- Arrange a limo and a babysitter.
- There's no need to take your jewels from the vault *or*
- Book an appointment for nails, hair or make-up.
- You needn't spend hours coming and going *or*
- Need a nap the next day!

Instead, we kindly ask for a donation to benefit more than 800 children and teens currently in out-of-home care within our system, and invite you to enjoy an evening at home with your family. Besides, we'd rather you just contribute the money you would've spent getting dressed up to go straight to our foster kids' needs!

A special thank you to our "guests"  
Sheriff Sadie Darnell, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Peddie, Patricia Snyder, Creative Counseling Services, Mr. and Mrs. Doug Bagby, Judge and Mrs. Richard B. Davis, Wilson Brothers, Perry Roofing, Muthusami Kumaran, Jim Stringfellow, State Attorney William Cervone, Chief Joel DeCoursey Jr., Judge Sheree Lancaster, Kenneth Cornell and Karen Pearson for supporting this year's Non-Gala Extravaganza.

*Haven't had a chance to show your support?  
Don't worry you can always come late to the party!*



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Back to School Drive

#### July and August 2016

PSF's Back to School Drive is in full swing. All donations are due by July 29. For information on ways to donate visit [www.partnerfamily.org](http://www.partnerfamily.org).

### DCF Child Protection Summit

#### September 7-9, 2016

DCF's Annual Child Protection Summit will be held in Orlando this year. Several PSF staff will attend to learn best practices, network with leaders throughout the state and present some of the unique strengths of our agency.

### PSF Superhero 5K

#### November 5, 2016

Join us at Westside Park as we race to ensure every child in our system knows the stability of permanency. Visit [PSFSuperhero5k.org](http://PSFSuperhero5k.org) for more information.

### Wish Upon a Star 2016

#### September - December, 2016

PSF gets into the Holiday Spirit early! Consider helping us make a child's Christmas merry this year. Call Aldreka at 352-244-1629 for more information.

## REFLECTING ON THE GOALS AND SUCCESS OF THE 2015-2016 FISCAL YEAR

By Aldreka Everett, Community Relations Assistant, and Michelle Kidney, Recruitment Specialist

Every year, PSF sets tremendous organizational goals with the hopes of meeting and exceeding them. The heartbeat of our agency is keeping local children safe. In some cases, this means the child being placed temporarily in the home of a relative, non-relative or Partner Family while they await reunification. In circumstances when a child cannot safely be reunified with their family of origin, PSF works to match that child with an adoptive family.

The licensing and adoptive teams worked hard during the 2015-2016 fiscal year to achieve the goals set forth at the beginning of the year.

In order to effectively reach more potential Partner Families in PSF's 13-county catchment area, PSF has moved the majority of recruitment efforts to an online platform. These efforts focus primarily on using targeted advertisements through social media to direct potential families to the PSF website. Since these online efforts began in mid-September, we have

## GAL VOLUNTEERS CONTINUE TO MAKE LASTING IMPACTS

By Paul Crawford, Northwest Regional Director



In a few short weeks, schools will be back in full swing! It's hard to believe how time can fly by. Seems like it was a very short time ago that my kids were counting down the days until school would be out for summer break, and now it's almost over already. This has made me really empathize with the children we serve in the dependency system.

A childhood is short. Many of the experiences for these children will not be filled with memories of family and fun, but of abuse, separation, confusion and fear.

The Statewide GAL program has recently received a grant from the National CASA Association to provide training and support in marketing, branding and recruitment of GAL Volunteers. We have also applied for and are very optimistic that the GAL will be receiving a VOCA grant that will initially be used to focus on the recruitment, training and support of additional volunteers. At the GAL program, we have seen how important it is to have a well-trained volunteer advocate as a member of our advocacy team. They strive to assist in reaching permanency for the child and help to ensure they don't linger in the dependency system unnecessarily. The GAL, through its volunteers and local non-profit entities, also assists in providing many of the normal childhood experiences that the child may not have had while in this over strained system. With this additional support and the continued support from our communities, we will continue to grow in numbers of volunteers and financial abilities as well. We at the GAL program truly understand the enormous demands and strains that have been put on all of the child welfare professionals as we work to ensure the safety and well being of the increasing numbers of children we are seeing entering the system. We hope to continue to improve our ability to advocate for and provide assistance in the months ahead. It is an honor to work together with all of you to keep these children's childhoods from passing them by without doing everything that can be done to help them.

I admire and appreciate all that each of you do every day to make such a positive impact in the lives of these children. If I can ever be of any assistance to you, always feel free to reach out to me.

spoken with more than 240 families who have either taken our Partner Family Orientation online or called the PSF office directly for more information on becoming a Partner Family.

While some of the families were calling about adoption, becoming a relative or non-relative caregiver, or finding ways to support our current Partner Families, the majority of the families were interested specifically in starting the licensing process. Of these families, 51 are enrolled in a PRIDE class or have graduated PRIDE and are working toward licensure. During this fiscal year, PSF licensed 43 Partner Family homes.

We are also happy to share that 160 adoptions were finalized this fiscal year. We want to recognize every caseworker and staff member who made changing lives a priority. To them, we say thank you for helping to establish 160 forever families this year. 160 children can now rest easy with a family to call their own. 160 families are now complete.

## ADVOCACY UPDATE

By Patty Carroll, Community and Government Relations Manager

Stepping into this new role, I am in awe of the peers who now surround me. Attending the 2016 Florida Coalition for Children Foundation's Annual Conference was one of the first opportunities I had to meet with advocates from around the state who are helping to shape the policies that will ultimately determine the course of child welfare for years to come. What an amazing honor it was to be among them.

Florida's children deserve every opportunity to succeed, and children who have experienced abuse or neglect must be afforded those same opportunities. In my time at Partnership for Strong Families, I've learned that everyone has a role to play in advocacy. It is our duty to be the voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. Their stories matter. Their experiences matter. They must be heard.

I feel very fortunate to have the support and guidance from some of the most influential people in the state so that I can learn how to better tell these stories. I will soon be working hand-in-hand with representatives from the Florida Coalition for Children and Gray Robinson to ensure our agency can continue our reputation of building positive relationships in the community and advocating on behalf of the children and families we serve.

I look forward to meeting with our local legislators to share the success of community-based care, the positive impact of our prevention strategies through our Resource Center Model have made and what resources our community still needs to better serve our most vulnerable children and families. I invite you to join me in this great endeavor. As partners and advocates, our collective voice is one of the most powerful tools we have.

Please don't hesitate to call or email me to get involved: [patricia.carroll@pfsf.org](mailto:patricia.carroll@pfsf.org) or 352-244-1561.

*If you would like to become involved in advocating on behalf of our community's children, please contact the Community and Government Relations Department at 352-244-1561 to learn more.*

## PSF BRINGS ADOPTIONS IN-HOUSE

By Patty Carroll, Community and Government Relations Manager

Partnership for Strong Families and our partners are continuously seeking ways to improve permanency outcomes for youth whose goal is adoption. In an effort to more efficiently serve children in our care awaiting adoption and to streamline adoption recruitment efforts for prospective families, PSF and Children's Home Society (CHS) have made the joint decision to end our contract and bring adoption services in-house as of July 1, 2016. Current adoption staff workers will be re-assigned, and few positions will be lost as a result of this transition.

We are also going to be rolling out a social media campaign to increase our recruitment efforts for Adoptive Families. As detailed on the fiscal year re-cap article on page 4, we have seen great success with this strategy when it comes to Partner Family Recruitment. We are expecting similar results in reaching a larger audience of prospective Adoptive Families, but we know that we can do much more.

The Community and Government Relations team is working hand-in-hand with our new Adoptions staff to identify our target audiences, establish new faith-based and community partnerships and strengthen our reach across our 13 counties.

PSF values CHS as a longtime partner, and the agency will remain a trusted provider of counseling services to the children and families in our care. Working together to finalize more than 1,500 adoptions since 2003, CHS has created a legacy in North Central Florida. PSF is excited to build on this success as we work toward our goal of ensuring all children available for adoption in North Central Florida will find the support, security and love of a forever family.

## SAVE THE DATE!

Join PSF's Second Annual Superhero 5K to raise support and awareness of the children in our care who are in need of a forever family. Visit [PSFSuperhero5K.org](http://PSFSuperhero5K.org) to learn more! Hope to see you there.

