



PARTNERSHIP FOR
**STRONG
FAMILIES**

THE PARTNER TIMES

April - June
2016



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Stay Connected!

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NEW HOME GOAL MET

By: Lakisha Mills, Recruitment and Retention Specialist

This fiscal year, PSF's Licensing team was tasked with a state goal of licensing 30 new homes. We are elated to announce that this past January we reached our goal six months ahead of schedule. The team has diligently worked together in great strides to make this happen. Although the past several months have been daunting to our staff, we continue to work hard to ensure that PSF is licensing top quality homes that shine throughout the state of Florida.

We value our Partner Families and understand that without you, there would be no us. We appreciate the time, love and commitment our Partner Families pour into the lives of our children. Partner Families also play an important role in the recruitment of new families. Remember, Partner Families who recruit a home that becomes licensed receive an incentive of \$125. It is a token of our appreciation for going above and beyond and recruiting quality homes for our children.

Although we have attained our goal for the fiscal year, our efforts still continue in recruiting and licensing new homes. As our children continue to have a need for loving and caring homes, we all have work to do in ensuring their needs are met. Continue to be advocates for our children and encourage others to explore becoming a Partner Family.

PSF is especially seeking to increase our number for teen homes. We are looking for individuals who are ready to provide love, guidance and life skills to help a teen transition into adulthood. If you or someone you know would like the opportunity to learn more about fostering teens please visit PartnerFamily.org or contact our recruitment specialist at 352-244-1629 or recruitment@pfsf.org.

PSF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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 pfsf.org.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Stephen Pennypacker
President/CEO

Community Partners and Friends,

This April marks my second anniversary as CEO of Partnership for Strong Families. It is a very different world than what I was used to at the Department of Children and Families, and I am proud of what we are able to accomplish on a local level. Community-based care does work, and I see it daily in our ability to problem-solve and work with our community partners to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children in North Central Florida.

Since returning to work in the community I have spent most of my life in, I have been fortunate to reconnect with colleagues and community leaders who are important partners in our system. I have also met a lot of new faces, including the Partner Families who open their homes to children entering foster care. These individuals remind me continually that the heart of what we do is not the systemic issues we battle, but it is fighting for the child who is dropped into their lives at their most traumatic moment, for whom we are their best hope for a brighter future.

A newer side of child welfare for me is the work we do to prevent child abuse from ever occurring. With April being recognized as Child Abuse Prevention Month, it is a good time to tout the success of PSF's Resource Center Model, for which we are known on a state and national level. Recent data shows a 44-58% decline in verified child maltreatment in the communities surrounding the three Alachua County centers since we opened the doors to our first one in 2009. These centers have become a beacon in the local community, strengthening families before crises occur so that children never need to enter the formal child welfare system. While PSF operates these centers, they are a true reflection of the benefits of community-based care. Each center has more than 30 community agencies as partners in daily operation and making services available at no cost to patrons.

This spring, join us in both recognizing that child abuse is preventable and honoring those Partner Families who take in children who have lived through that abuse.

Stephen Pennypacker
President/CEO

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION UPDATE



Lakisha Mills
386.242.8804



Casey Stern
352.244.1536

The Licensing Department would like to congratulate Conda Curry-Green on replacing Karima as the new foster care licensing analyst. We would also like to welcome our two new licensing specialists; Joyce Griffin and Gail Jackson. Joyce will be covering Alachua County, and Gail will be covering Columbia, Suwannee, Hamilton, Baker, Bradford and Union counties.

Not only has our Licensing Department welcomed new faces, our number of Partner Family homes has grown by 11 since our last update. We are excited for the growth not only in our department but also in the Partner Family community.

Even with new staff and Partner Families, our recruitment efforts are still in full swing.

You may have recently seen our recruitment campaign using a house visual to illustrate the immediate need for more Partner Families. The campaign fliers were shared 46 times on social media and reached more than 4,200 people. A unique aspect of this campaign is that each flier illustrates the specific number of homes needed by region and the number of children who are being placed outside of their home county. The numbers are impactful.

Please be sure to "like" us on Facebook and be a part of recruiting other Partner Families using social media. Your post could be the one that helps a family start the process of becoming a Partner Family.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO PARTNER FAMILIES THROUGH THE FOSTER CLOSET

The Foster Closet is a free resource for Partner Families to access clothing, toys and furniture for children and teens. Through generous contributions from the community, Foster Closet's inventory is abundant. The Foster Closet relies on a vast network of volunteers and donors. The top donation priorities to serve foster families include: cribs, bunk beds, dressers, clothing, shoes and toys.

Whether you are a Partner Family in need of an item, or you're interested in becoming a "Friend of the Closet" by providing monetary support or donating items, visit their website at www.fostercloset.org or contact the Alachua Director at 352-260-2468.

GET TO KNOW YOUR LICENSING TEAM

By Karima Haughton, Licensing Manager

With the recent departure of Akiva Ford, the licensing department underwent a series of transformations. We would like to take this opportunity to formally introduce you to the new and improved Licensing Team.

Licensing Manager

Karima Haughton has worked for PSF for the past five years. Karima was recently married to the love of her life this past November, and together they have five children. Karima enjoys spending down time with her family, traveling and being a new wife!

Licensing Analyst

Conda Curry-Green has worked with PSF for the past 11 years. Conda has been married for seven years and has three sons, four step-children and seven grandchildren. Conda and her husband are huge FSU fans and love sports in general (football, basketball, baseball, Nascar and Supercross).

Licensing Supervisor

Jessie Chance has been with PSF for a total of nine years. Jessie is considered the Betty Crocker of Licensing because she loves to bake delicious cakes and muffins for her coworkers. According to Jessie, she loves to bake because it is stress reliever. Jessie also enjoys riding motorcycles!

Partner Family Advocate

Christy VanValey has worked for PSF for the past three years and has been a Partner Family for the past six years. Christy and her husband adopted three children through foster care. Christy is the founder of Aunt Goosey Creations, a business created 10 years ago to help children learn through crafts and fun.

Retention and Recruitment Specialists

Casey Stern has been with PSF for a year and a half. Casey is currently in school pursuing a Master's degree; however, when he's not studying he loves to travel visiting art shows with his best friend who is a photographer.

Lakisha Mills has been married for 16 years and has three children. Lakisha has worked with PSF for three years. She enjoys watching movies, hanging out at the mall and leading the teen bible ministry at her church. Lakisha is a two year breast cancer survivor who is extremely thankful to God for giving her the strength each day to press on.

Licensing Specialists

Brenda Mims worked for DCF for 28 years before switching over to PSF where she has since worked for the past 11 years. Brenda has been married for 42 years and has two daughters and two granddaughters.

Joyce Griffin has worked for PSF for the past nine years. She has one son and one granddaughter who are "her everything." Joyce is a football fanatic and bleeds ORANGE and BLUE.

Ashley Johnson graduated from the University of Florida and proclaims herself a die-hard Gator fan. When Ashley is not at work, you will most likely find her at a softball field somewhere watching her daughter play ball. Ashley eloped in Vegas ... and is still married. Ashley's household is very busy, as it consists of a three year old, ten year old and fifteen year old.

Bobby Brown has appeared in two Matlock 2-hour made-for-TV specials and was once \$3.00 short of becoming a multi-millionaire as he played the same lottery numbers one time a week for \$1.00 a week. He quit playing, and three weeks later six numbers came up. He would have been a multi-millionaire.

Gail Jackson is the newest member of the licensing team. She recently came over from Pathways, where she worked as a Family Care Counselor for 13 years. Gail loves fishing, interior design and tailgating.

Administrative Assistant

Lakeysha Allen has worked for PSF for nine years. Lakeysha is a photographer in her spare time and loves the Syfy channel, working out and going to the beach!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FOURTH QUARTER P.R.I.D.E. CLASSES

LAKE CITY
Thursdays
April 7 - June 2
6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

TRENTON
Wednesdays
April 13 - June 8
6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

GAINESVILLE
Tuesdays
May 3 - June 28
6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

LAKE BUTLER
Every Other Saturday
June 4 - July 30
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

GAINESVILLE
Tuesdays & Thursdays
June 2 - June 30
6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Day in the Park Partner Family Appreciation Picnic

Saturday, May 21
12:00 - 4:00 p.m. at
Trinity United Methodist
Church

If you'd like to register, please
contact Lakeysha Allen at
Lakeysha.Allen@pfsf.org or
352-244-1521.

This event also counts as
training hours toward your
required annual training for
licensure.

*Make sure to visit our website at
www.pfsf.org for updates on
agency and community events
going on in your area.*

SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR ANNUAL AWARDS

By Casey Stern, Retention and Recruitment Specialist

World renowned social worker Brené Brown once said, "It is gratitude that makes us joyful." In that case, Partnership for Strong Families may be the happiest place on earth. Every May, PSF likes to give back to all of the Partner Families throughout our communities to show our gratitude for everything they do. This year is no exception as we are deep in preparations for our Day in the Park, the Partner Family Appreciation Picnic, on Saturday, May 21. One of the most exciting elements of the annual event is the recognition of five Partner Families who have gone above and beyond, as well as one staff member who has displayed exemplary service skills in working with families.

Last year, Family Care Counselor Francisco Garcia was honored with the "Power of You" award that is annually given out to a worker in the local child welfare industry who has gone above and beyond their duties. He recently said that his winning was a very "humbling experience" and stated, "Recognition serves as food for the soul, and for people who do most of their work behind the scenes (especially foster parents), this is a great way to say THANK YOU!"

We are currently accepting nominations for these six awards:

Family Connections Award - This Partner Family assists with maintaining family connections with biological parents, siblings and relatives to assist with reunification.

Supporting Educational Needs Award - This Partner Family attends IEP's, school meetings and encourages the child to excel in their education. This parent is diligent with helping with homework and acts as an advocate for the child.

Normalcy Award - This is a Partner Family who encourages children to participate in after school activities, hobbies and clubs. This is a home where you can't tell which child is the foster child in the home.

Health and Well Being Award - This Partner Family consistently transports the children to medical, dental and therapeutic appointments ensuring their physical and emotional needs are met.

Model Parent Award - This Partner Family co-parents children in their home with the biological family by modeling positive parenting techniques. They may allow the biological parent to come into the home to help with the bedtime routine or participate in Family Team Conferences to assist with reunification.

Power of You Award - This worker (Family Care Counselor, Guardian Ad Litem or Independent Living) exemplifies extraordinary service to our Partner Families by providing information, support and guidance to our partners and the children in their care.

For more information or to nominate a family, please email Casey Stern at Casey.Stern@pfsf.org

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By: Jenn Petion, Director of Community and Government Relations

The 2016 Legislative Session has officially ended and with much less of the quibbling between chambers that shut down last year's Session.

Several positive bills impacting our system made it through, in addition to some much-needed funding increases. The community-based care system was also able to work with legislators to prevent any bills passing that would have been detrimental to the system, and for that partnership we are grateful.

The Child's Best Hope Act was signed into law by the governor on March 23 and goes into effect July 1. The bill was championed by the statewide Guardian ad Litem program and enhances a statute change that came about a few years ago allowing a parent to sign their child over to a private adoption entity instead of the state in advance of a termination of parental rights ruling. The important change allows the judge to determine if allowing the private agency to intervene and assume custody and permanency responsibility for the child is in the child's best interests and to deny it if it is not.

House Bill 657 provides another opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous contribution foster families make to the child welfare system and the community as a whole. The law designates the second week of February as Foster Family Appreciation Week and encourages DCF, local governments and community agencies to highlight the work of these individuals, whom we call Partner Families.

Finally, lawmakers recognized that the child welfare system in Florida remains underfunded, which is more severely realized with the current trend of more children entering the system. Legislators appropriated an additional \$22.9 million to child welfare, with \$12.9 million of that being designated as recurring dollars that will be added to the annual appropriation for community-based care agencies.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW PARTNER AND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

By Casey Stern, Retention and Recruitment Specialist

Over the course of the 2016 calendar year 18 different P.R.I.D.E. classes are scheduled in nearly half of the counties Partnership for Strong Families serves. They are offered on weekends, weekdays and even in an accelerated format. There are a total of nine different classes that our new Partner Families attend in order to become licensed. At our most recent Alachua County graduation, 22 individuals graduated P.R.I.D.E. and are in the process of completing the home licensure process to become either a Partner or Adoptive Family. In Columbia County, our trainers recently graduated five new individuals.

As the need for families grows throughout our area, so do the number of classes offered. If you are interested in becoming a Partner Family or know someone who is, please go to our website www.PartnerFamily.org, and complete the Partner Family Orientation.

Congratulations to our new graduates and welcome to our family.



March 2016 Alachua County Graduating Class

Front Row (left to right): Cori Traynham, Melissa Weaver, Kelly Fraser, Hayden Wygant, Jennifer Speedy, Juantez Ellis, Elizabeth Gutierrez, Alba Henesy.

Second Row: Jeff Traynham, Phillip Weaver, Chang-Yu Wu, Mei-Fang Lan, Bobby Brown (trainer), Denis Valle, Natercia Valle, Laura Chen, Charlie Chen, Jennifer Yanez-Calvo, Lashon Jenkins (trainer).

Third Row: Brandon Telg, Tito Yanez-Calvo, Latonia Jackson.

Not Pictured: Dollie Wygant, Dianna Rosenbaum



March 2016 Columbia County Graduating Class

From left to right: Tyuanna McCall-Akins (trainer), Brian Fannon, April Fannon, Racheal Hofman-Ots, Michele Thorton, Lesley Thorton and Lakisha Mills (trainer)

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405 S. Georgia St.
Starke, FL 32091
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On-Call: (904) 964-1540
follow prompts
Toll-Free: (866) 888-6548

CHRISTY'S CORNER

By Christy VanValey Conner, Partner Family Advocate

Have you ever had someone talk to you about fostering? I am sure you have ... so many people come to me and tell me how they just couldn't foster, it would break their heart. For many Partner Families this phrase is cringe-worthy. Personally, I have gotten to the point where I acknowledge their concern and tell them they don't have to foster, but they can do something. They can make a meal for a Partner Family. They can donate clothes to the clothes closets in the area. They can become a back-up babysitter. They can help raise awareness of the need for more Partner Families in our communities. They can ask their churches to pray for Partner Families, case workers, birth families and all the children in care. These are just a few ways others can help.



Yes, I agree not everyone can or should foster, but we can help others find a way they can help. Help empower them while raising awareness. As Partner Families you are on the front line, you know the needs that are out there. We have needs, but are you aware of the needs within our case management agencies? Because our need for teen homes is great, our case workers are working many hours to care for the teens on their caseloads, and we all know they don't have just that one teen. We are fortunate to have a temporary place for them to stay in the evenings and this has helped case managers, but they are still needing help transporting to school and from school. Many of our Partner Families want to help with this, but as we know these particular times are also very busy for our families. Do you know someone who wants to offer back-up babysitting and help with transportation? This is a huge need and would be so very valuable for our teens and caseworkers.

Have you seen PSF's page on Facebook? This is another way to raise awareness! Like and share the stories and the ads you see on social media ... you just never know who will feel led to care for our children. Thank you all for everything you do each and everyday! I don't think I can say that enough. I know the sacrifices you and your families make, and you are appreciated! Keep doing what you do best ... loving and caring for children!

Welcome New Partner Families!

Victoria Southard & Jackie Brown,
Shoneea Brown, Katherine Kuhn,
Natalie Gordon, Maudestine Morgan,
Shannon & Abraham Abdala, Gennell Scribner,
Lora & John Noone, Dawn & Joshua Crews
and Kimberly Wright.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

[In Person]

Looking for other Partner Families who are fostering to talk to? Join your local Foster Adoptive Parent Association! Associations meet regularly to share ideas on how to support parents and the children they care for. This is also a great way to get your 8 hours of training needed toward re-licensure every year to continue to serve as a Partner Family.

Gainesville: Meets the third Saturday every other month from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at The Arc of Alachua County: 3303 NW 83rd Street in Gainesville. Email the association at acfapa@gmail.com.

Tri-County: Please contact the Gainesville FAPA.

Starke: Please contact the Gainesville FAPA or Lake City FAPA.

Lake City & Live Oak: Meets the second Tuesday every other month from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at PSF's Lake City Service Center: 1211 SW Bascom Norris Drive. Contact Beverly Pope at popebeva@aol.com.

[Online]

1. www.qpiflorida.org
These training videos are free and will issue you a certificate to give to Licensing.

2. www.FosterParents.com/PFSF
The first two trainings are free. Reimbursement is available for additional trainings.

3. www.FosterParentCollege.com
Contact Lakisha to register. All trainings are free after a reimbursement submission. Forms are available through your Recruitment & Retention Specialist.

[TRAINING CALENDARS]

APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

MAY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JUNE						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

QUICK FACTS

CLIENT TRUST FUNDS

If you have a child with a client trust fund, or believe that a child in your home should have a trust fund, please contact Florence Hale with any questions or concerns at 352-244-1562.

TRAVEL

Foster Parent Travel logs are due on a monthly basis. Travel submitted past two months will not be eligible for payment. All travel requires supporting documentation. For more information please contact our Licensing AA at (352) 244-1548.

BLUE FOLDERS

Each child is required to come to your home with a placement letter stating the child is being placed in your care with a blue folder containing the child's legal and medical information. Contact your FCC or Placement Specialist as soon as possible if the child has not arrived with these items.

PARTNER FAMILY MONTHLY BOARD RATE BREAKDOWN

	0-5yrs	6-12yrs	13yrs+
Current board rate:	\$439.30	\$450.56	\$527.36 + 10%
Allowance:	\$10	\$10	\$12
Incidentals:	\$8	\$9	\$11
Life Skills/Normalcy Supplement:			\$52.73
Clothing:	\$35	\$36	\$43
Rate Only:	\$386	\$395	\$449
Initial Clothing:	\$50	\$50	\$70
Annual Clothing Allowance:	\$200	\$300	\$300

PSF would like to remind you that all foster children should be receiving a monthly allowance as mandated by the Department of Children and Families. Allowances cannot be withheld as a form of discipline.

For Board Rate and financial questions, please contact Lisa Vickery, Fiscal Specialist, at 352-244-1560 or lisa.vickery@pfsf.org.



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FAMILIES**

5950 NW 1st Place, Suite A
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Visit us at
partnerfamily.org



We
Appreciate
You!

Join us
for a

**DAY IN
THE PARK**

SATURDAY

**21
MAY**

12 P.M. - 4 P.M.

Trinity United Methodist Church
4000 NW 53rd Ave, Gainesville, FL 32653
Please RSVP by May 2 to Lakeysa Allen at
Lakeysa.Allen@pfsf.org or 352-244-1521



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