May is National Foster Care Month, and to celebrate Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) is launching our foster care awareness campaign across North Central Florida! This month we are partnering with organizations to advocate for local children in our care. As a community, we are working to foster hope in the youth we serve, show our Partner Families our love and appreciation and help those ready to open their hearts and homes to youth in foster care.

To learn more about the campaign visit www.pfsf.com/wefostercare and be sure to look out for, #WeFosterLove, #WeFosterHope and #WeFosterCare on social media throughout the month. Below are some ways you can get involved!

**Foster Hope**

Provide hope to the local youth in care by becoming a campaign partner! If you are interested in having a yard sign outside of your business or home, having tent cards displayed at your business, putting a window cling up or wearing a foster button to raise awareness, give us a call at 352-244-1629! As an individual or family, another way to foster hope in your community is through our annual drives such as our Back to School drive or the Wish Upon a Star drive. You can also donate to our normalcy funds to provide the children in our care with things like prom dresses, funds for field trips, summer camps or new clothes; things they need to live their best lives when the rest of their lives may feel very uncertain. Donate today at: www.classy.org/give/163260/#!/donation/checkout

**Foster Love**

Show love to our Partner Families who take youth in care into their homes. You can show them love and appreciation by cooking the family a meal or offering to babysit. It is important to offer support and gratitude to Partner Families. They commit their lives to taking care of and advocating for local children and deserve to be recognized for their efforts!

**Foster Care**

This is the biggest commitment but very rewarding. You can become a Partner Family to provide a stable, loving home to local youth in foster care. To learn more about becoming a Partner Family, please contact Nicole.Hernandez@pfsf.org or 352-213-7219.
MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear esteemed community members, partners and friends,

The Spring months bring a lot of activity, and the staff here at PSF are enthusiastic about what’s ahead. While we are keeping an eye on several legislative initiatives in Tallahassee, we are also preparing for Foster Care Awareness Month in May and the new Kin Caregiver Program and Guardian Assistance Program coming in July. Our adoptions department also has some great numbers to share concerning adoptions in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

The proposed legislation that is moving through the Florida Legislature is giving us plenty to keep an eye on. PSF stands behind legislation promoted by DCF to keep the names of foster parents and their families from Florida’s public record laws. This legislation would ensure that our partner families are both safe and their privacy is protected.

With potential changes working their way through our state legislature, relative and non-relatives will have a new option for financial assistance starting July 1. The Kin Caregiver Program gives relative and non-relative caregivers convenient access to receive funding for the youth in their care, have additional training and receive some added support.

This May our team is also preparing for National Foster Care Month. This month gives us the opportunity to spotlight our Partner Families for the great work and unceasing dedication they show our youth. On May 18, our Partner Families and their children were invited to our annual Fostering and Friendships event, featuring food, awards and prizes. Foster Care Awareness Month reminds all of us here at PSF of the great work our Partner Families do throughout the year.

Lastly, I would like to extend my congratulations to our adoptions team for their great work during the 2018-19 fiscal year. They have finalized over 200 adoptions during this fiscal year, and with a few months to go, that numbers can only go up. Thank you so much for all of your hard work in ensuring that the youth in our care find loving forever homes.

Sincerely,
Stephen Pennypacker
President/CEO

FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK: COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND RECRUITMENT UPDATE

We are welcoming spring this year in big ways as we celebrate National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, National Foster Care Month in May and National Reunion Month in June. This issue is packed full of information about each celebration, and as you’ll see, the community is at the heart of every activity we have planned.

I am especially excited as we roll out a brand new campaign for National Foster Care Month. As you’ll see on our cover story, the “We Foster Care” campaign highlights the collective impact we can have in supporting youth in foster care and the families who serve them. This is a great time to consider how you may be able to offer support. You may consider making a donation to support normalcy activities for youth in care, or maybe you know a current Partner Family who could use a night out - now is the perfect time to offer to babysit or even run an errand for them!

Perhaps you are thinking of how you can do even more. Saying “yes” to becoming a Partner Family can be intimidating, and we want you to know we’re here to support you every step of the way. Now might be a great time to RSVP for one of our upcoming Info Nights.

I have loved getting to watch these events evolve to meet the needs of our potential foster and adoptive parents. You will hear about the process, supports available to you and, most importantly, you’ll get to talk with current Partner Families and ask them what this journey really looks like. Check out our Facebook page or give us a call to see when an Info Night is coming to your community!

Our agency is also getting ready for some major changes as we prepare for the new Kinship Care and Guardian Assistance Programs to go into effect. We’re excited to welcome some new faces as we implement these changes and are eager to see how these new programs will positively impact our caregivers and youth. Learn more on page 7!
I am really happy to report that thanks to an AMAZING group of donors, sponsors and supporters, we had record-breaking results during The Amazing Give. This year, our donors raised $8,585.80, more than $2,000 over the previous year. With this outpouring of support, we will be able to serve our youth care in many incredible and unique ways.

One of the best aspects of planning The Amazing Give was organizing the kickoff party at The Flying Biscuit in Gainesville, and what a fun time was had by all. The Flying Biscuit pulled out all the stops by donating their time, space and delicious food and drinks while Royal for a Reason at the University of Florida brought delight to children in attendance by presenting Princesses Anna and Elsa. A big thanks is also in order to the eleven incredible businesses and individuals who donated some fantastic prizes to our kickoff party raffle, including a two-night getaway to Amelia Island worth over $700!

Of course, a big thank you goes out to The Community Foundation of North Central Florida for sponsoring this fantastic opportunity for the fourth year. Your support for nonprofits across Alachua County is a huge privilege to have as we work to serve families and children in North Central Florida. Once again, thank you to over 111 donors who helped make this year's campaign such a success.

**Donors:**
Abigail Doege
Alec Cutajar
Alexa Quillen
Alexandra Beach
Alexis Curls
Amanda Williams
Audra Moraski
Barbara Locke
Beverly Pope
Brendan John
Brian Beverly
Bridget Bourke
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Chani Morris
Chelsea Poulin
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Daran Bedenbaugh
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Declan and Patty Carroll
Donavan Arnold
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Marie Laston
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Martie Gillen
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Robert and Pebbles Edelman
Sandra Pardue
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Sarah Zeenberg
Sean Werner
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Stephanie Anderson
Stephen Pennypacker
Susan Arnold
Susan Hall
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Teresa Werner
TerryChanashing
Torri Messer
Vivian Rios
William Halvosa

**Raffles Prize Donors:**
Elizabeth Pointe Lodge
Le Clos Restaurant
Skate Station Funworks
Gainesville Health and Fitness
Fit2Run
Advanced Massage - Elisa Moreland
Blackadder Brewing Company
First Magnitude Brewing Company
Ward's Supermarket
Tannis and Glenn Curls
Child Abuse Prevention Month
By Jacob Clore, Community Engagement Specialist

April is an especially important month here at PSF when we recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month by spreading awareness about the reality of child abuse and sharing information and resources to prevent it from happening. The statistics surrounding child abuse are sobering; 1 in 5 children will experience abuse by the age of 18 while five children will die every day due to child abuse. That is why it is so important for our community to prioritize our youth.

Our Resource Centers play a big part in our child abuse prevention efforts. The four centers are comprised of the Library Partnership Resource Center, Cone Park Library Resource Center and SWAG Family Resource Center in Gainesville and our Tri-County Community Resource Center in Chiefland. Each Resource Center was founded in a geographic region where we identified high reports of child abuse and neglect, and they each offer different programs and services depending on the needs of the community. Some of these services include clothing and food assistance, after-school help, job and financial-related assistance and community activities. Since the founding of each center, we’ve seen rates of child abuse and neglect decrease in the areas the Gainesville centers serve. This Child Abuse Prevention Month, our centers had child safety items on-hand like first aid kits, door knob covers and outlet covers for families to assist them in keeping their children safe.

In recognition of this month, PSF was also out in the 13 counties we serve with information and resources for caregivers, educators and professionals who work with children. At events like Kids Day in Suwannee County and Children’s Day in Columbia County, we distributed safety items such as cabinet locks, water wings, door alarms and furniture safety straps to ensure caregivers have the tools necessary to keep their children safe. During the Celebrate the Child event in Alachua County, we also had information on-hand pointing families in the direction of our Resource Centers.

While we were busy spreading the word about child abuse prevention efforts this month, it is important for everyone to realize that they have the power to stop child abuse. Some common signs of abuse in children include, but are not limited to: unexplained burns or marks, being dirty or unbathed, extreme hunger, nightmares, regression, hostility or aggression, fear of a person or people and bedwetting. If you suspect that a child is the victim of abuse, please call the Florida Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE. It is important that all of us work together to prevent child abuse from impacting the life of one more child.
**PRIMARY PREVENTION AT THE RESOURCE CENTERS**

By Stacy Merritt, Director of Resource Centers

**What is Primary Prevention?**

Simply stated, primary prevention is any intervention designed to prevent child abuse and neglect before it occurs. Over the past 10 years, PSF has placed a focus on primary prevention through work being done at our four Resource Center locations. We are proud of the growing success of our model and the positive impact on local children and families. Moving forward, we hope to further expand the availability of these resources to additional at-risk communities within PSF’s service area.

One such effort includes an expanded collaboration between PSF, Meridian Behavioral Healthcare (program lead), and the Child Advocacy Center as part of the Healthy Social & Emotional Development (SED) Pilot Program. The SED Program is currently serving five early learning centers in Alachua County: Small World, A Child’s Place, Cuddly Kids, Angel’s Christian Academy and Lee’s Preschool located in Alachua. The program is funded through the Alachua County Children’s Services Advisory Board and provides families and children (ages 0-5) with a full array of wrap-around services and supports, including, but not limited to, mental health consultations, classroom observations, family support services and coaching/training for both parents and early learning center staff. PSF’s role in the program is to provide family support services designed to build upon caregiver protective factors and increase family stability. As with the Resource Centers, PSF is using the research-informed Protective Factors Framework to guide the work being conducted at these locations. Two Early Childhood Family Support Facilitators, employed by PSF, meet with interested caregivers one-on-one to help identify and meet immediate needs (e.g., food, clothing, housing), make appropriate community connections and develop future goals with the family.

**Does Primary Prevention work?**

Mary and Catherine are both single mothers attempting to improve their family situations through new employment opportunities. Mary is currently working with the school system in an entry-level position.

She has a Bachelor’s degree and the necessary experience to apply for her teaching certification; however, limited income has prevented her from taking next steps. Through a grant-funded Opportunity and Empowerment Program offered at one of our Resource Centers, Mary was provided with financial assistance to pay for her teaching certification exam and work towards her goal of becoming a full-time teacher and gaining financial independence for her and her son.

Catherine, the mother of four children, recently gained full-time employment as a CNA. While Catherine was proactive in completing the training and certification process, she was struggling to pay for uniforms needed for her new job. Through the Opportunity and Empowerment Program, Catherine was provided with financial support to meet this need. Upon hearing about Catherine’s situation, a local store helped her to find the best deals, resulting in her being able to purchase multiple sets of scrubs and other work related items. Catherine, who has not worked full-time since 2004, stated she feels “empowered” through her new job. She further hopes to “inspire [her] four children to do their best!”

Chelsea participated in the 2017 Re-Entry Partnership Initiative where she not only learned practical skills towards obtaining gainful employment, but was also provided with the hope of a successful and productive future. Chelsea and her family continue to participate with various Resource Center activities and know there is continued support available, if needed. The letter above expresses Chelsea’s gratitude for the opportunity.
NINE WAYS TO PREVENT AND RECOGNIZE CHILD ABUSE

By Nicole Hernandez, Foster Care & Adoption Recruitment Specialist

1. TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS.
If you know of an incident of child abuse or domestic violence, it needs to be reported, and it needs to be reported quickly. If a child is in danger, they need help today. Call 1-800-96-ABUSE or 911.

2. RECOGNIZE THE WARNING SIGNS.
Not all signs of child abuse are physical. Some of the most common signs of child abuse are changes in the child’s behaviors such as becoming more withdrawn, anxious or aggressive. These signs are not indicative of abuse, but a possible sign.

3. PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THE CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS AROUND YOU.
Whether it is giving a break to a caregiver by offering to babysit, coaching through parenting strategies or helping with financial stability during a difficult season, you can always find practical ways to help struggling parents and families.

4. REMEMBER THE RISK FACTORS.
You can help prevent child abuse by recognizing when a family has risk factors. Risk factors of child abuse include domestic violence, every day stressors, inexperience and lack of support systems.

5. BE A SAFE PLACE.
Be a safe place for children to come to if they need to talk. You can do this by connecting to the children in your life in positive ways.

6. CREATE MORE AWARENESS.
Set up posters or informational tools on warning signs around your community or work place. The more we spread awareness and talk about the realities of child abuse, the closer we will be to ending it.

7. KNOW YOUR LOCAL SUPPORTS.
Come visit one of our local Resource Centers to learn about the services and supports available! To find out more about our Resource Centers, call 352-244-1500 or visit www.pfsf.org/resourcecenters.

8. BE AN ADVOCATE.
By contacting lawmakers, politicians and elected officials through emails, letters or phone calls, you can bring attention to the needs of children who are victims of abuse.

9. BE PRESENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY.
Being present in your community will allow you to not only observe the families in your neighborhood but also set a good example for them. Preventing child abuse can including being a good neighbor or friend. If you see a friend or neighbor struggling with parenting, ask what you can do to help and let them know you are there for them. Setting a good example can go beyond treating your children with love and respect. You can also step up to provide mentorship to young mothers and fathers.
Jim Stringfellow, a long-time PSF board member and child advocate, passed away on April 29. Mr. Stringfellow made a huge impact on the lives of the children in our care through his tireless dedication. He was a leader in our community and lobbied for local children in the state capital. He was a descendant of one of Gainesville’s oldest families. Throughout his years, he carried on and uplifted his family legacy in Gainesville by focusing his advocacy efforts on ensuring the health and well-being of the community. Mr. Stringfellow will be greatly missed, but his legacy will live on in the lives of those children he advocated for and the community members he inspired. To date, PSF has received $3,788 in memorial donations. These funds will be used to help medically needy children in our care. Below are excerpts from some of the donation letters we have received on behalf of Mr. Stringfellow:

“In memory of an intellectual, creative, determined colleague.”
- Parker & Natalie

“He was a wonderful man, dear friend, we will always enjoy our memories of our wonderful times together. Our love is with all the family as well.”
- Virginia

“The legacy he leaves behind in your family and in the community is extraordinary!”
- Leslie Jones

We remember that fateful day gun shots rang out in the calm of an ordinary afternoon. We remember looking out across the parking lot from our office as law enforcement and emergency medical services responded to Ace China. We remember the overwhelming sadness learning that two Gilchrist County Sheriff’s Officers lost their lives in a senseless act of violence. We remember the sense of community and outpouring of love shown in the wake of the tragedy that took the lives of Sargent Noel Ramirez and Deputy Taylor Lindsey on April 19, 2018.

Our Trenton PSF office is flying the Thin Blue Line Flag in honor of our fallen heroes. The Blue represents the officer and the courage they find deep inside when faced with insurmountable odds. The Black background was designed as a constant reminder of our fallen brother and sister officers. The Line is what police officers protect, the barrier between anarchy and a civilized society, between order and chaos, between respect for decency and lawlessness. Together they symbolize the camaraderie law enforcement officers all share; a brotherhood like none other.

In Memory of Jim Stringfellow
By Mikaela David, Community Relations Assistant

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- Virginia

“The legacy he leaves behind in your family and in the community is extraordinary!”
- Leslie Jones
STAFF RECOGNITION EVENT
By Mikaela David, Community Relations Assistant

We had our 3rd annual Employee Recognition Brunch hosted by the Partnership for Strong Families Board in March at the lovely C-Bar Ranch. The event included great food, outstanding employee recognition and a special visit from Mini Blessings Ministry therapy horses! Each department was able to nominate an outstanding employee within their department to be recognized as well as an employee from another department who is seen as the most valuable partner to their department. Check out this year’s winners to the right. As you can see, we had several employees who go above and beyond so much they were nominated by multiple departments. Great job everyone!

Exemplary Service Award
BJ Jean-Philippe
Jessica Morrison
Kathy Wintons
Kishanna Spooner
Mikaela David
Trish Westland
Linda Means
Rithley Jean-Bart
Lisa Vickery
Chastidy Starling
Krystal Maldonado

Most Valuable Partner
Varnessa McCray
Jennifer Edwards
Trish Westland
Sue Jones
Linda Means
Kaila Elliott
Salina Rubio
Kim Baker
BJ Jean-Philippe
Andrea Adams
Kalan Lawyer