



PARTNERSHIP CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

October
thru
December
2024



FEATURE ARTICLE:

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT -
NORTHSTAR FAMILY
RESOURCE CENTER

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With the holiday season on the horizon, it's time for Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) and our community of supporters to start preparing for our Wish Upon a Star holiday toy drive! This incredible giving opportunity provides donors with the chance to spread some holiday cheer to youth in care during what can be a challenging holiday season for them. This year, we anticipate serving approximately 1,100 children!

Here are a few ways our supporters can help:

- **SPONSOR A WISH LIST(S)**: Shop for gifts from a child's wish list. Each donor is asked to purchase at least two of the child's wishes to value at least \$60. Wish list sponsors may participate in one of two ways:
 - **SHOP IN-PERSON**: You may shop for a child's gifts in-person and drop off the gifts to us. In order to expedite the process of getting presents to the children we serve, we ask that donors please return the gifts unwrapped. Details on drop-off location and time will be arranged with our donors.
 - **SHOP VIA AMAZON WISH LIST**: If you would like to shop from the comfort of your own home, we can also share a specific link to Amazon for you to shop from and have the gifts shipped directly to us.
- **MAKE A MONETARY DONATION** - Provide a monetary donation and we will do the shopping for you, or you can ask us about our business sponsorship opportunities.
- **PURCHASE GENERAL TOYS** - Donate general new toys to help us supplement for sibling groups and make their gifts as equal as possible.

To sign up:

scan the **QR code (on the right)** and submit our short donor survey. Thanks for helping us make the holidays bright for youth in care!

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A Message from our CEO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As we approach the close of another eventful quarter, I want to take a moment to express our deep gratitude for your continued support. Your partnership is invaluable to the work we do here at Partnership for Strong Families, and together we are making a lasting impact in the lives of the children and families we serve.

October marks Child Health Awareness Month, a timely reminder of the importance of health in a child's overall well-being. At PSF, our Network of Family Resource Centers are central to addressing the social determinants of health—factors like access to healthcare, nutrition, and safe housing that significantly impact family stability. By providing critical resources such as health screenings, mental health referrals, and nutrition education, our centers help bridge the gap that many families face when accessing care. These services are essential to our prevention efforts, helping families stay strong and resilient, and keeping children safe and healthy in their homes.

We are also thrilled to welcome four new members to our board this month. Each brings unique expertise and fresh perspectives that will help us guide the agency toward even greater success. Their passion for child welfare and commitment to the community will further strengthen our ability to deliver innovative solutions and improve outcomes for the children and families we serve.

With National Adoption Month on the horizon in November, we are excited to celebrate the many families who have opened their hearts and homes to youth in need of permanency. One of the highlights of this special month is our Adoptions Superhero 5K, taking place on November 3rd at Westside Park. This fun-filled, family-friendly event brings our community together to show appreciation to adoptive families and raise awareness about the ongoing need for loving, permanent homes, when reunification is not an option. We invite you to join us by participating, sponsoring, or volunteering – as we celebrate the real-life superheroes in our community.

Finally, as we look ahead to the rapidly approaching holiday season, we are preparing for our annual Wish Upon a Star holiday toy drive and campaign. This initiative ensures that every child we serve can experience the joy of having their holiday wishes fulfilled. We invite you to consider supporting this effort, knowing your generosity brings smiles and hope to so many.

Your continued dedication to PSF is at the heart of our success. Thank you for playing a vital part in our mission to protect and nurture children and strengthen families. I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together in the coming months and beyond.

Ms. Kay Ayers,
Chair

Ms. Kitty McElhaney,
Chair Emeritus

Mr. Guy Jopling,
Treasurer

Mr. Kenny Brighton,
Secretary

Ms. Elizabeth Mitchell,
Chair-Elect

Mr. Patrick Allen

Ms. Lashone Surrency

Mr. Denny George

Rev. Sharon Surrency, RN

Mr. Donovan Arnold

Dr. Timothea Jackson

Ms. Lisa Lee

Mr. Will Halvosa

Warm regards

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ginger Griffeth'.

Ginger Griffeth
President and CEO
Partnership for Strong Families

Spotlight Features

Resource Center Spotlight - Tyrone Mullins

The 2024 Annual Back2School Bash, sponsored by NorthStar Family Resource Center and the Community Barbers, exceeded all goals and expectations. Nearly 800 children received backpacks and school supplies, and over 200 received haircuts.

Tyrone Mullins, one of the owners of Jazzy Cuts Barber Shop launched the first event 9 years ago in 2015. At that time, the event was held at the Richardson Community Center, then moved to Niblack Elementary School. In 2021, the event was moved back to Richardson Community Center. The annual event began with only 4 barbers from one barber shop and has grown to 20 barbers from most of the barber shops in Lake City.

Tyrone and his wife Thayla work very hard to ensure that this event goes smoothly. From securing volunteers, school supplies, and vendors, to organizing, setting up and breaking down the space. This year, Tyrone and his crew set up 20 barber stations in the Richardson Gymnasium.

Tyrone's commitment to the Back2School Bash is unwavering. Even during the COVID epidemic, he facilitated a method to ensure the event could happen safely. When Hurricane Debbie threatened this year's event, it seemed like it might not happen.

However, Tyrone's determination prevailed. Despite the personal loss of his grandfather the day before the event, Tyrone worked throughout the event with the same enthusiasm while providing emotional support to his family, especially his grandmother.

Partnership for Strong Families' NorthStar Family Resource Center is thrilled to work alongside partners like Tyrone Mullins and Community Barbers. Thank you!



Donor Spotlight - Give Back for Impact



One of Give Back for Impact's goals is to secure a safe, stable, and permanent home for at-risk youth. I am a former social worker, and I have learned through the years the impact of stabilizing a home for a child. My passion is to help children in situations that they cannot control and try to make their day better. Whether it is helping a foster family or biological family with clothing, food, school supplies, adoption support, toys, or furniture, if you donate it helps reach the goal of stabilizing a home for the local children in care. Our goal with supporting initiatives like Wish Upon a Star, the Amazing Give, and the Superhero 5k is to support the local community and make a daily difference in the lives of the children that Partnership for Strong Families is working with.

Recruitment



As this season brings nicer weather, fall festivals, and school open houses, that also means a lot of recruitment opportunities! We're so excited for the chance to meet with parents and teachers at open houses throughout our area, and the Recruitment and Outreach Team is also attending more weekend festivals in October and November. This is a perfect opportunity to shine a light on National Adoption Month in November to both celebrate the families brought together through adoption and also share our need for more families to say "Yes" to the lifelong journey of healing for our population of adoptive youth. If you have questions or want more information on foster care or adopting from foster care, our team is ready to talk with you! Contact us at (352) 244-1615 or HopePartner@pfsf.org.

Adoptions Updates

We love to celebrate our adoptive families during National Adoption Month in November each year. From July 2023 through June 2024, PSF was able to assist in finalizing the adoption of 163 children from within the 13 counties PSF serves, as well as an additional 31 children whose cases originated outside the PSF serve area. During National Adoption Month, we will hold a National Adoption Event (location and date to be determined), as well as our **10th Annual Superhero 5K** scheduled on November 3, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. at the Albert Ray Massey (Westside) Park. As we do each year, we will share success stories from our adoptive families and encourage and support our community members in exploring how to begin their own adoption journey.



University of Florida Campaign for Charity

The University of Florida Campaign for Charities (UFCC) runs from September 30 to October 18, encouraging faculty and staff to donate, but everyone is welcome to contribute. By donating to PSF during this campaign, you can help us secure additional funds for programs supporting youth in care and families connected to our Network of Family Resource Centers. You can choose to donate to a specific charity or make an undesignated donation, which will be allocated to nonprofits based on the number of designated donations they receive. The more designated donations PSF receives, the higher the percentage of undesignated funds we will receive. In 2023, we raised 27% more thanks to our dedicated donors! For example, a \$35 donation can provide a backpack for a child in foster care, helping them feel more confident in school. A \$50 donation can supply a new pair of shoes for a child who just entered foster care, while a \$100 donation can offer a utility credit to encourage participation in programs that promote self-sufficiency, such as financial literacy courses and employability workshops. To make your pledge during the UFCC, please scan the QR code. Thank you for helping us strengthen and nurture local children and families!



Back-to-School

The backpacks are filled and 550 local youth in foster care are off to school prepared to excel. We appreciate all our Back-to-School drive partners who donated monetarily or contributed donations of new school supplies (this includes organizations who hosted our donation bins and helped gather supplies).

Youth in foster care face many hurdles when it comes to completing their education, including the reality of moving schools and being preoccupied by the status of their case. Preparing the youth we serve with the supplies they need helps them avoid the stigma and barrier of not having what they need to complete their assignments. Thanks to all those who helped steer our youth towards academic success!

Back-to-School Drive Donor Recognition!

Special thanks to the following sponsors of our annual Back-to-School drive:

Hogtown Brewers

Infotech

Love 'N' Care Preschool

Snyder Air Condition, Plumbing & Electric

Tri-County Metals

Vystar Credit Union

**UF MOVER
GUYS & Storage**

Resource Center Updates

Community Partner Networking Fairs

In July and August, respectively, our Family Resource Centers hosted the Tri-County and Gainesville Community Partner Networking Fairs. These annual events provide an opportunity for us to celebrate partnerships, while at the same time allowing us to learn more about many of the amazing resources available in our communities! Unlike other networking fairs, during these events partners table and share information about their services with other community serving partners. This helps to promote the concept of wrap-around services, remove silos and encourage partner agencies to work together in creative ways as they support local children and families. With more than 30 partners attending each event, they were a great success for all who attended. A special thanks to Tri-County Community Resources, Inc. and the Children's Trust of Alachua County who sponsored the events!



Hurricane Impact

This hurricane season has hit our area particularly hard. Our Resource Centers, especially those in Tri-County and Columbia County, mobilized to meet the needs of residents devastated by Hurricane Helene. We're grateful for the generous community partners who stepped in to help us meet this tremendous need.

Tri-County Community Resource Center

Thanks to the United Way of North Central Florida for donating \$10,000 in disaster relief assistance to our Tri-County Community Resource Center. They also dropped off a carload of infant formula!

NorthStar Family Resource Center

The Altrusa International of District Three Virtual Club, including member and PSF board member Kitty McElhaney, presented NorthStar Family Resource Center with a \$350.00 donation.



Mental Health Insights

Specific to Youth in Care

Studies show that youth in foster care are two and a half times more likely to contemplate suicide than youth not in foster care and four times more likely to attempt suicide. Building research indicates a strong connection between childhood abuse or trauma and increased risk of mental health concerns, suicide attempts and completions. A youth's physical, emotional, or psychological trauma stems from abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or substance use in the home prior to removal. PSF works to reduce the impact of trauma in multiple ways, including the work of our Clinical Services team.

Did you know that up to 80% of children in Foster Care have significant mental health concerns compared to approximately 18-22% of the general population, according to the 2019 National Conference of State Legislatures?

The Clinical Services team is dedicated to making sure that children who need intensive treatment can access the services they need. They provide clinical expertise and support to our case managers, identifying appropriate services based on the children's needs. They facilitate regular staffings to monitor the treatment for children in higher levels of care and serve as liaisons to our expert mental health and psychiatric providers. Our community can assist through donations that can fund specific interventions not funded by insurance. Helping children heal from trauma is one of the amazing outcomes we get to be a part of and is vital to achieving permanency and stability.

Kelsey's Korner



Since joining PSF in 2022, I have had the good fortune of collaborating with Stacey Steinberg at the University of Florida Levin College of Law's GatorTeam Child clinical program to develop an externship for law students interested in child welfare law. The students focus on case reviews for youth at risk of aging out of care without permanency. They have also been developing a series of one-page documents that address some of the aspects of the dependency system that can be confusing and translating them into more understandable language with clear explanations about how the law works in practice. They are cutting through the legalese and acronyms that can lead to misunderstandings and providing useful information for youth, caregivers, and case managers.

Initially, they addressed emancipation, which is a pathway youth sometimes ask about that is often not a realistic possibility given the legal requirements. They also did a comparison of the juvenile and adult criminal systems, as often questions come up regarding the two systems and the difference in consequences after you turn 18. These one-pagers were geared toward assisting case managers who often field questions from youth in these areas. The interns have also worked on some documents for information that must be provided to youth in the Independent Living program in an effort to present the concepts in a clear fashion. The law student externs are now turning their attention to providing clarity around what it means when the goal in a dependency case changes from reunification to adoption or permanent guardianship. It is important to share the legal and procedural requirements so that caregivers can understand all that must happen before one of these alternative goals can be finalized. I'm grateful for this dynamic partnership with GatorTeam Child and the opportunity to provide practical experience for the next generation of lawyers who will be joining our ranks and bringing fresh energy and enthusiasm to their chosen areas of practice.



PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG FAMILIES

PSF Headquarters
5950 NW 1st Place, Ste.300
Gainesville, FL 32607
352.244.1500

Learn more about
how our innovative
services are keeping
our community's
children safe.
Visit us at
www.pfsf.org



Partnership for Strong Families is a community-based care lead agency contracted with the Department of Children and Families.

Save the Date!

Each year, Partnership for Strong Families works with community partners and donors to provide holiday "wishes" to every child in our care. Having experienced abuse, neglect or abandonment, many of the youth in our care will spend the holidays away from home. **Wish Upon a Star** provides an opportunity for the community to add some joy to their holiday.

