



Inside This Issue

National Foster Care Month	1
Message from the CEO	2
The Amazing Give	3
The Amazing Give cont.	4
From the Editor's Desk	4
Child Abuse Prevention Month	5
CPC Update	6
Youth Advisory Board	6
NorthStar First Anniversary	7
Resource Center Annual Report	8

Featured Story

**Learn More about
the upcoming
Amazing Give on
page 4!**

MAY IS NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

by Melissa Montrowl, Recruitment Specialist

Learning about fostering is like learning a new language. Whether fostering is somewhat familiar to you or completely foreign, one thing is certain when you begin the journey: there is always more to learn. As the Recruitment Specialist, I'm often the first person to give concrete information to prospective families beyond Google searches which gives me a unique vantage point into foster care. I hear firsthand the burning questions and understandable concerns people have about fostering and get to introduce them to this language. "Partner Family" is usually among the first terms learned to get the lay of the land, and it naturally leads to the follow up question: who are you partnering with?

There are several correct answers to that question, but there's one in particular that holds a key principle to fostering. It's so simple that we might miss it. Partner families partner with the children, youth, and teens that they foster. The children in care have interests, needs, and personalities like anyone else, so at the risk of sounding obvious, fostering is about more than having a bed. It's about entering into that child's story at a critical moment in their life, affirming their place in the world, and accompanying them through the challenges and victories that they'll face. Whether we are PSF staff or partner families, we have the privilege of playing a part in a child's story, and helping to create those brighter possibilities. It's hard and humbling and we never know it all. But the one thing we do know with certainty: it's worth it.



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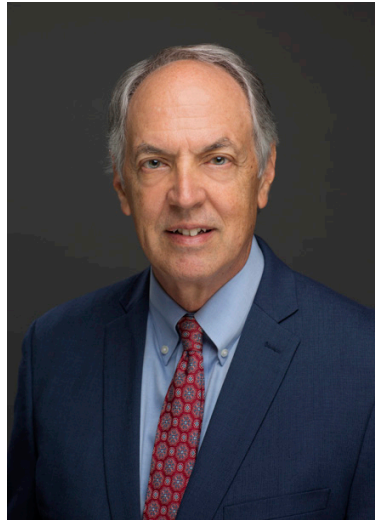
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Partner. Foster. Adopt.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Happy Spring! The weather has certainly been appropriate for the season lately with mostly cool nights and warm, dry days.

The legislative season is almost over as well. The regular session ended March 14th and a special session to address congressional districting will start soon. The most important news is that a \$150 million dollar increase in core funding for child welfare was approved. While it has yet to be signed off by the Governor, it is not expected he will veto any sections of this part of the budget.

For Partnership for Strong Families, this could mean between 6 and 8 million new recurring dollars for us to use to increase case manager and staff salaries to improve recruitment and retention, expand services for diversion and prevention, and implement the Family First Prevention and Services Act with fidelity. Other changes coming out of the session include a \$200 per month additive to be used for child care expenses for licensed caregivers of children in out of home care from birth to school age, Level 1 relative and non-relative caregivers to receive the foster care board rate, and an increase in the monthly stipend for children in Post-Secondary Education Services from \$1,256 per month to \$1,720 per month. Another significant change is to shift the appointment of Qualified Evaluators of children's mental health from the Agency for Health Care Administration to the Department of Children and Families and for the criteria to be considered by the evaluators to include behavioral issues in addition to mental health diagnoses. Finally, the legislature passed a fatherhood initiative which includes \$53 million in grant funding to assist fathers in finding employment, managing child support obligations, transitioning from a period of incarceration, accessing health care, understanding child development, and enhancing parenting skills.

The increased funding in many areas should prove to be transformational. We have lots of work ahead to make the best use of the new money, but compared to previous years, this is more than welcome news.

Stephen Pennypacker
President/CEO



2021-2022 Sponsors/Donors

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Campus USA

Walmart

Publix

Sun Stop

Target Distribution Center

New Bethel Missionary Baptist

New Mt. Pisgah AME Church

Northside Church of Christ

And many more!

THE AMAZING GIVE

by Jacob Clore, Community Engagement Specialist

As April 21st approaches, Partnership for Strong Families is preparing for The Amazing Give. This is a community wide giving day focusing on non-profits in North Central Florida. During The Amazing Give, Partnership for Strong Families fundraises for our normalcy fund. This offers our youth in foster care the opportunity to have typical childhood experiences and resources they may not otherwise have the money to experience (think of family bonding, trips with caregivers, a cap and gown for graduation, summer camps, money to help them get their drivers license, and more!).



Help us reach our \$15,000 goal and build brighter possibilities for youth in foster care! Scan the QR code to the left to view our donation page.

Join us for a delicious

FUNDRAISER

Dick Mondell's will be donating the proceeds of all drink sales to benefit our fundraising efforts during The Amazing Give!

Starting April 20th at 7 PM through April 21st until close



Please join us on April 20th or April 21st at local favorite, Dick Mondell's, for a refreshing beverage and a delicious burger! All of the proceeds from drink sales will be donated to PSF's normalcy fund for The Amazing Give. We can't wait to see you there!

#BeAMemoryMaker

#HelpBuildBrighterPossibilities

THE
AMAZING
GIVE

April 21, 2022

7 a.m. to 7 p.m.



This year during The Amazing Give, we are offering a tiered incentive program for sponsors. PSF's social media pages reach over 9,300 followers and our emails are received by over 700 subscribers, increasing the reach of your brand. Our tiered sponsorship program provides the following incentives:

\$250 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Social Media (Instagram/Facebook) Post thanking company for donation • 1 Thank You Certificate 	\$500 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Social Media (Instagram/Facebook) Post thanking company for donation • Business name recognition in email to all of our donors and supporters • 1 Thank You Certificate
\$1,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Social Media (Instagram/Facebook) Posts (one thanking business for donation, one highlighting business) • 1 name recognition in sponsor section of email to all of our donors and supporters • 1 Thank You co-branded plaque to display at business 	\$1,500 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Social Media (Instagram/Facebook) Posts (one thanking business for donation, one highlighting business) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1 post boosted as a Facebook Ad for 2 days • 1 Social Media Story thanking sponsor • 1 logo recognition in sponsor section of email to all of our donors and supporters • 1 Thank You co-branded plaque to display at business
\$2,500 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Social Media (Instagram/Facebook) Posts (two thanking business for donation, one highlighting business) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1 post boosted as a Facebook Ad for 3 days • 1 check presentation at business • 1 Social Media Story thanking sponsor • 1 logo recognition in sponsor section of email to all of our donors and supporters • 1 Thank You co-branded plaque to display at business 	\$5,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Social Media (Instagram/Facebook) Posts (two thanking business for donation, two highlighting business) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1 post boosted as a Facebook Ad for 1 week • 1 check presentation featuring company at location of company's choosing • 2 Instagram Posts thanking sponsor and highlighting company • 1 email about the business to all of our donors and supporters • Press release write-up to be shared to press contacts, on website, and social media • 1 Thank You co-branded plaque to display at business

Please contact Jacob Clore at Jacob.Clore@pfsf.org or 352-318-1298 if you are interested in being a sponsor for The Amazing Give.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: Community Relations and Recruitment Update

It is hard to believe it is already Spring! With April being Child Abuse Prevention Month, it gives us the opportunity to reflect on the importance of the work we do here at PSF. Our team has been busy planting pinwheel gardens and creating social media posts and campaigns to generate more awareness around this important time. Make sure you visit us on Facebook to see these posts and information!

We are also beginning our Amazing Give Campaign for 2022. This year we have a goal of raising \$15,000, all of which will go towards our normalcy fund. We hope to have your support on April 21st! These funds will be put to use impacting our youth and providing opportunities to create brighter futures. Those futures are made brighter already by our incredible Foster Parents, and we are also celebrating them this May during National Foster Care Month. We are so grateful for our incredible, selfless Partner Families that provide care for youth when they need a family most. If you are interested in becoming a partner family email us at hopepartner@pfsf.org.



Stevie Doyle
Director of Communications
and Engagement

APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

by Jacob Clore, Community Engagement Specialist

Child Abuse Prevention Month in April inspires us to set aside special time to advocate for local children, both inside and outside the formal child welfare system. This month, we encourage the members of our local communities to join us as we work to ensure childhoods are happy and healthy and free from abuse and neglect. Fortunately, working to prevent child abuse is not some abstract concept that is out of reach. For members of the community, there are concrete ways to prevent the harrowing statistic that 1 in 5 children will experience child abuse or neglect before the age of 18:

- **Volunteer as a Guardian ad Litem:** Our local Guardian ad Litem offices in Gainesville and Lake City are looking for advocates to work 1-on-1 with local children in the child welfare system. These advocates meet on a regular basis with children, develop strong connections and advocate for their needs in court. If you are passionate about mentoring youth or working with them directly, this is a great opportunity for you! To learn more, visit guardianadlitem.org.
- **Donate to benefit local youth in foster care:** Our youth benefit from donations from community members. Whether that be during donation drives like our Back to School Drive and Wish Upon a Star holiday toy drive or through meeting basic needs like new clothes and toiletry items, donations can directly benefit a local child. To learn more about donating, email GetEngaged@pfsf.org.



How else is Partnership for Strong Families advocating for local children during Child Abuse Prevention Month?

- **Family Resource Centers:** In addition to their regular programming, our Resource Centers will have child safety items on-hand to provide to families and educate them on how to keep their children safe.
- **Presence at Community Events:** Our staff will also be present at family fun days and other community events to educate families and provide child safety items.
- **Planting Pinwheels:** You may notice the presence of blue pinwheel gardens at our offices and throughout North Central Florida. The pinwheel represents the whimsy of childhood, illustrating the goal of providing happy and healthy childhoods to all children

CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL UPDATE

by Jacob Clore, Community Engagement Specialist

With COVID-19 cases on the decline this spring, PSF's Children's Partnership Councils have moved to a hybrid in-person/virtual format. This is great for Council members who want to meet in-person again while also giving those who still cannot travel a voice.



With Child Abuse Prevention Month upon us, Council members wanted to continue sponsoring safety items and other materials to encourage safe practices at home. With in-person tabling events returning to many of our counties, Council members and PSF staff will once again be able to safely hand these items out while having meaningful face-to-face conversations with caregivers. Some of these events include the Columbia and Union County Housing and Urban Development Family Fun Days and the Lake City Kiwanis Kids Day.

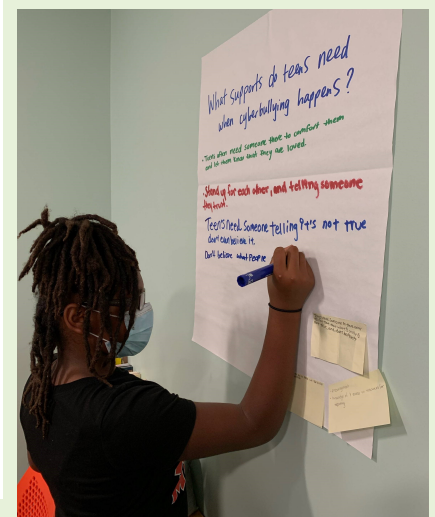
During a time when many families are struggling with the continued economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, councils have prioritized funding individual assistance requests for families, providing much needed relief. These requests range from help with utility bills and rent to providing car seats and pack 'n' plays. One woman served by our NorthStar Family Resource Center lost her job due to scheduling conflicts with her childcare, but Council funding was able to assist her with paying her utility bill while she seeks new employment. There have been several requests just like this one, demonstrating the importance Council funding has on local families.

LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

by Stacy Merritt, Director of Resource Centers

Library Partnership Resource Center (LP), in partnership with the University of Florida's Family Youth & Community Sciences Program initiated their first Youth Advisory Board (YAB) in October 2021. The YAB consists of 9 teens who attend neighboring middle and high schools. Since October, the YAB has worked together to tackle the difficult topics of cyberbullying and online discrimination. The group used their own experiences, along with research, to guide monthly discussions. They also participated in group activities designed to elicit student-led ideas on prevention practices, promote community awareness, develop strategies to promote healthy online activities, and effectively cope with the adverse consequences of risky internet use. As part of the YAB dissemination event, planned and led by the group in February 2022, students also educated parents, teachers, and mentors about what they had learned and how they can best support teens on these issues. The following picture is an example of a resource provided to the adults in attendance.

	Have I checked in today? (Add Date)	 Questions to ask:
Monday		What were the highs and lows of your day?
Tuesday		Do you feel good about your friendship with _____?
Wednesday		Do you think you have enough support at home?
Thursday		How are you feeling today? Why?
Friday		Is there anything about today that you would have changed?
Saturday		What made you laugh today?
Sunday		Do you feel like you are heard both at home & school?



A YEAR IN REVIEW: NORTHSTAR FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

by Stacy Merritt, Director of Resource Centers

March 18th marked the first anniversary of NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) serving Lake City in Columbia County. Many exciting things have happened during this first year, and we are particularly grateful to the Lake City community who has welcomed us and provided much needed support. NSFRC is currently funded by a federal grant through the Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Additionally, our community partners have helped to fund programs and special events designed to promote caregiver protective factors for local families.



During their first year, NSFRC received more than 2,200 visits and 2,400 requests for services. Additionally, more than 40 formal and informal community partnerships were developed. These partnerships are essential to the success of NSFRC and allow us to provide all services and supports free of charge to the community. We anticipate these numbers will grow as NSFRC expands their service array, develops more partnerships, and further gains community trust.



NSFRC offers a number of on-site services including but not limited to computer use, resume and application assistance, a job and resource board, faxing, a clothing closet, access to food items, community walks, homework help, a youth equity and leadership program, and one-on-one staff consultations to help identify patron needs, make community connections, and set goals for future success. In the coming year, there are also plans for employability and financial literacy programs.



As part of our initial needs assessment, the desire for more family and community activities was identified. To help meet this need, NSFRC has hosted a number of community events. The May Day Celebration was the first event hosted by NSFRC. It included family-friendly activities and free resources from more than 20 community partners who came to share information about their programs. NSFRC also hosted a Back2School Event, which provided more than 300 filled backpacks to local students and included a voucher for a free haircut (a special thanks to Jazzy Cuts, who helped sponsor the event). A Community Health Expo, sponsored by FL Blue, was also hosted for the community with topics related to heart health, nutrition, exercise, detecting early signs of dementia, living wills, and more.

Most recently, NSFRC hosted a special community event, Remembering Richardson High School, to signify the importance of the buildings, where NSFRC is co-located, as part of Lake City's history. The event included a historical overview of the site and recorded stories from previous students and faculty of the high school, along with food, music, and activities. Additionally, a monument was revealed dedicating the sites as a historical landmark.



NORTHSTAR
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
Partnership for Strong Families



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352.244.1500

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

We invite you to view our 2021 Family Resource Center Report to see the impact made in 2021.

SCAN HERE
TO VIEW



FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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