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Featured Story

**Learn more about
our Federal Grant
Project on page 5!**

WELCOMING OUR NEW CEO

by Jenna Rowland, Community Relations Assistant



We were able to celebrate our new CEO, Ginger Griffith, and give her a proper welcome as she completed her second week as CEO. We enjoyed refreshments while socializing with our fellow PSF staff, and we heard a few words from Ginger including answers to some tough questions like can we still wear jeans on Friday?

Ginger comes to us from the Department of Children and Families but previously served as a case manager with PSF. She is local to North Central Florida and also a wife and a mom. She is very excited to settle into her role as CEO and continue to make progress in child welfare. We are thrilled to have Ginger be our first female CEO at PSF, and we look forward to seeing all of the contributions she will make!

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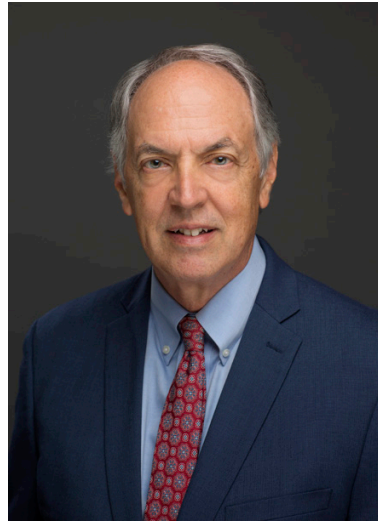
Ms. LaShone Surrency

Mrs. Ginger Griffeth



Partner. Foster. Adopt.

A FINAL MESSAGE FROM OUR FORMER CEO



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Stephen Pennypacker".

Stephen Pennypacker
Former President/CEO

It is hard to believe that this will be my last newsletter. I am turning 65 and have decided it is time to retire. My wife and I have six grandchildren and three of our four parents are still with us. It is time to slow down a bit and spend time with family. My eight years as CEO of PSF have been very rewarding. We have been able to open two new resource centers (Chiefland and Lake City), have increased the number of adoptions we finalize, diversified our income streams, and moved our system of care forward. We are proud of our relationships with our foster parents and now have three of them as members of our Board of Directors. Despite some challenges during the last eight years, most notably keeping our system of care functioning during COVID, we have always made keeping children safe as our number one priority. I don't think that will ever change at PSF.

With your new CEO, Ginger Griffeth, in charge, I know I am leaving PSF in good hands.

Congratulations on your retirement, Stephen!

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

First, I want to take a moment to acknowledge Stephen Pennypacker and his retirement. It has been a positive experience to work for him, learn from him, and see firsthand his passion for every child that we serve. We wish him the best in retirement!

We are excited to have Ginger with us and know that she is going to do great things here at Partnership. Her vision, data-driven mindset, and passion for our youth and reunification will be an incredible asset to PSF.

Our Community Relations department is working hard to provide all the youth in our care with Back to School necessities in our Back to School Drive, and we are also preparing for our last two foster/adoption training classes of the year. We are focusing on recruiting new foster families and working hard to engage in the community to spread the word about the need for new families. If you are interested in helping us spread the word, please email me at Stevie.Doyle@pfsf.org. Thank you!



Stevie Doyle
Director of Communications
and Engagement

BACK TO SCHOOL DRIVE 2022

by Jenna Rowland, Community Relations Assistant

We have just finished packing nearly 600 backpacks full of school supplies for children in foster care across our 13 counties! This is a large effort that would not be possible without support from our generous donors, our amazing volunteers, and our incredible staff. We would like to extend a huge thank you to the United Way of North Central Florida for allowing us to utilize their space during our drive. This back to school season we received \$7,916 in financial donations, we had 16 donation bin partners, and we had the help of 8 wonderful volunteers. We could not be happier with the success of this year's donation drive.

We are especially grateful for the support of our donation drive this year, as it allowed us to provide for so many children and families in our care. While completing our shopping trips for additional supplies, we realized just how much prices have risen this year. Due to these increasing costs, we are incredibly grateful for our ability to alleviate the financial pressures of our caregivers and allow them to focus their energy and time on creating loving homes for the children in their care. It's hard to believe in a few short months we will start planning again for our largest donation drive, Wish Upon a Star! We hope to see you there!



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

by Ginger Griffeth, President/CEO

We are in the process of implementing several new legislative initiatives that you will want to know about. Senate Bill 7034, effective July 1, 2022, amended sections 39.5085 and 409.145, Florida Statutes (F.S.) which:

- Revised room and board rates for Level I licensed foster home caregivers.
- Revised out-of-home caregiver populations eligible for the annual cost of living increase each January and the 10 percent life skills supplemental payment.
- Revised relative and non-relative caregiver rates for families in an open dependency case.
- Establishment of a \$200 childcare subsidy payment to non-licensed and licensed foster home caregivers who have a child placed in out-of-home care between the age of birth through 5 years old.

In addition, effective July 1, 2022, s. 1009.25 Florida Statutes (F.S.) expanded the population of students eligible for the tuition and fee waiver to include:

- A child that is, or was at the time of reaching 18 years of age, placed in the custody of a relative or non-relative under s. 39.6221, F.S.
- A child who was reunified with their parents, who spent at least 18 months in out-of-home care after reaching 14 years of age, including reinstatement of parental rights under s. 39.8155, F.S., who are Pell Grant eligible.

We are thankful to the 2022 legislature for allocating substantial new funding to community-based care. Overall, there will be \$150 million new recurring dollars in the system. For PSF, this means an additional \$5.8 million to our core funding. Like many parts of the economy, it has been difficult to attract qualified applicants for open positions and to retain them once they are on board. These funds were awarded to increase salaries for case managers and lead agency staff to increase recruiting and retention.

FAST TRACK TO FOSTER RECAP

by Stevie Doyle, Director of Communications and Engagement

Last month, we had the incredible opportunity to train new foster parents in person again! We hosted a 3-day PRIDE training class that was fully supported by Foster Florida, a nonprofit that provides wrap around supports to foster families in our area. They provided meals and childcare throughout the whole training in partnership with Destiny Community Church. We had 39 families in attendance, and we expect about 25 of those families to begin the licensing process right away. We are excited about these new families joining us in their fostering journey!



*Thank you to our participants and
community partners!*

FOSTER
Florida



Destiny
Community Church



GRANT UPDATE

by Toni Spolianski, Project Director

We are thrilled to announce we just passed the halfway mark in our five-year Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families Grant awarded in October 2019 by the Children's Bureau! Nearly three years ago, we set out with the mission to evaluate, refine, and expand our Resource Center Model.

Evaluation

In March 2021, after the grand opening of our NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC), we started collecting survey data as part of our evaluation. To date, our Community Research Coordinators have enrolled 176 Resource Center patrons in our research study, and follow ups are past the 80 mark! We have engaged the community every step of the way and sought out their voice in a variety of evaluation activities with more planned for the second half of our grant period.

Refinement

Since the grant was awarded, the grant team, RC staff, and PSF's IT department have worked tirelessly to refine our data collection protocols. With the refinement of our data collection, we can report on new, more profound metrics and better understand how our Resource Centers are serving children and families in North Central Florida.

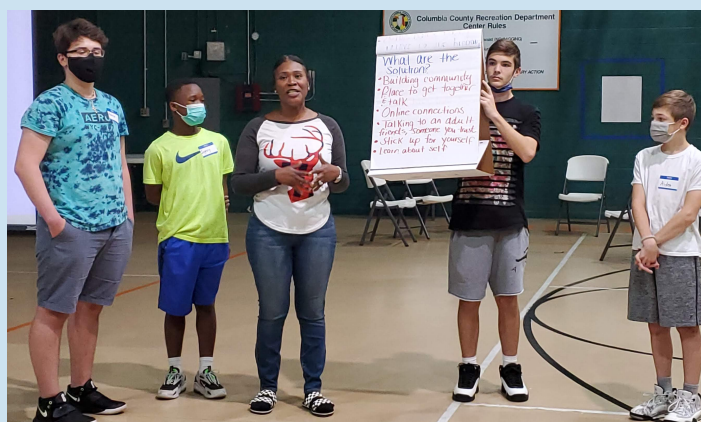
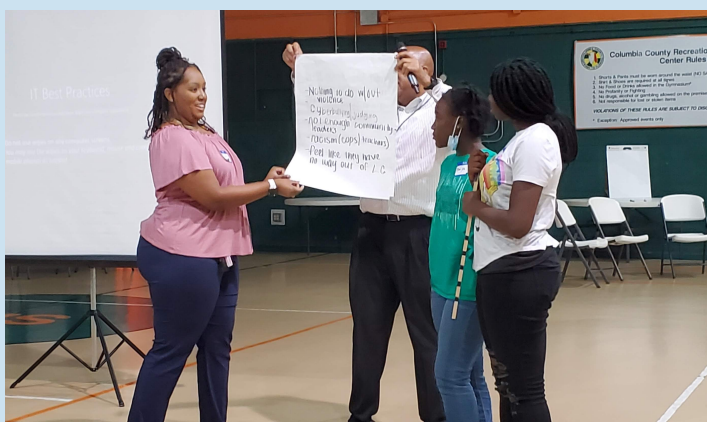
One of the largest refinement efforts to date was the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) process. Each of the three Gainesville Resource Centers completed the SFSA process which engages direct service staff, community collaborators, and community members in equitable evaluation methods to ensure community voice is continuously heard and incorporated.

Based on the discussions from the SFSA process, LP and CPLRC will work to develop Parent and Community Advisory Councils. In addition, our resource centers have already implemented several changes related to inclusion such as increasing the availability of written materials in Spanish and posting LGBTQ+ welcoming signs that let patrons know they are both welcome and safe in our centers.

Expansion

On March 18, 2021, Partnership for Strong Families opened its doors to the Columbia County community at the NorthStar Family Resource Center. Prior to opening, PSF staff, community partners, and community volunteers spent months conducting a community needs assessment to ensure the services and supports offered were what was most needed in the community. As of June 1, 2022, the NSFRC has received 3,315 service requests from 3,090 visitors across our five protective factor categories. We have been able to offer a variety of services and supports like a clothing closet, after school homework help, and job search assistance with the help of community partners. Service requests were mainly related to concrete supports in times of need (43.6%), social connections (39.9%), and enhancing the social and emotional competence of youth (21.7%).

Engaging local teens has been a key focus at the NSFRC. In December 2021, the NSFRC hosted its first "Let's Talk About It!" monthly event, which invites teens and young adults to engage in conversations about their experience in the Lake City community. Growing out of the "Let's Talk About It!" monthly events, a youth council was created to engage and encourage youth to use their voices, develop projects, and obtain leadership skills through problem solving.



THE AMAZING GIVE UPDATE

by Jenna Rowland, Community Relations Assistant

Thanks to the generous contributions from over 100 donors, we were able to surpass our \$15,000 goal during the 2022 Amazing Give. As many of you know, the Amazing Give is our annual donation drive in which we raise money to provide unique experiences, holiday gifts, and supplies for local youth in foster care. These funds have already started to impact youth in care by providing funds for summer camp, gymnastics lessons, and dance recitals.

We are very grateful for the returning and new donors who contributed to this fundraising event. We would not be able to reach and impact as many children with valuable opportunities and cherished gifts without the support from our community members, business sponsors, staff, and so many others who made this a success!

THANK YOU
for helping us
EXCEED our goal!!

— THE —
AMAZING
GIVE

\$15,000 GOAL
\$16,693 RAISED



PARTNERSHIP FOR
STRONG
FAMILIES



SWAG FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

by Stacy Merritt, Director of Resource Centers

SWAG Family Resource Center, the second of five family resource centers operated by Partnership for Strong Families, opened its doors to several southwest Gainesville communities in June 2012. What better way to celebrate this milestone than with a community-wide birthday dinner! The celebration included great food, music, dancing, and sharing memories of SWAG FRC's first 10 years.

During our first decade, SWAG FRC received more than 110,000 visits and 120,000 requests for services, ranging from concrete supports (e.g. food, clothing, baby products) to programs designed to promote parental resilience including employability workshops, health fairs, and financial literacy classes. SWAG FRC is also known for providing quality academic and enrichment programs for local youth, including after school, summer, and Spring Break programs. Children's programs at SWAG FRC receive support from Alachua County CAPP, the SW Advocacy Group, and more.

A special thanks to the SW Advocacy Group who offer ongoing support and guidance for SWAG FRC and helped to make our birthday celebration a success through generous donations and hard work! We also appreciate Christ Community Church who went above and beyond by preparing and serving a celebratory meal for the community members and leaders who attended the event. Like all of our Family Resource Centers, SWAG FRC is a collaborative effort that would not be possible without amazing community partners, volunteers, and donors! Thank you! We are looking forward to celebrating another decade with you in the future.

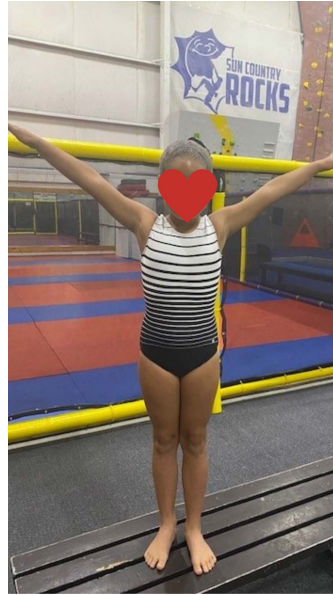


NORMALCY SPOTLIGHT

by Jenna Rowland, Community Relations Assistant

We are so excited that our normalcy program has been more heavily utilized over the past few months. We often provide clothing, camps, or similar activities to children in care, but we love to see unique requests for normalcy. This past month, we received two separate normalcy requests for two girls in care. The first girl was able to attend several gymnastics lessons, and the second girl was able to purchase the dress for her dance recital with normalcy funding.

We also received a request to purchase tickets to the Florida Museum of Natural History for two brothers. We are always thrilled to see our generous donor funds providing enriching opportunities for youth in care. Stay connected with us on social media to see more uses of normalcy funding in the future!



**Are you interested
in a career at PSF?**
www.pfsf.org/join-our-team/

NORTHSTAR FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER'S BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

Please join us and share the word about NorthStar Family Resource Center's Back to School Bash on July 31st from 3 to 6 PM. NorthStar will be giving away 300 backpacks and select school supplies to students in Columbia County. There will be food, music, and local barbers giving free haircuts to students.

No registration is required to attend, so please join us as we help prepare students and parents for the upcoming school year! We can't wait to see you there!





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



Partnership for Strong Families