

# 2019 Annual Report to the Community



PARTNERSHIP FOR  
**STRONG  
FAMILIES**



## A Letter from our President and CEO

The last year has been one of growth and excitement for Partnership for Strong Families. Welcoming new board members, being awarded a large grant for our resource centers, having our contract with the Department of Children and Families renewed, and being re-accredited by the Council on Accreditation are just some of the accomplishments we celebrate when looking back over the past twelve months. Finally, we note that we have now been providing child welfare services for the families of Circuits 3 and 8 for fifteen years!

The PSF Board has discussed for some time creating a position on the Board for one or more of our most valuable partners – foster parents. After putting out the call for applicants and having the difficult job of selecting from an excellent pool of interviews, Beverly Pope from the Third Circuit and Amanda Cruce from the Eighth Circuit were chosen. They have hit the ground running and already provided valuable input on a project to improve foster parent communication and training. In addition, Amanda is the current President of the state-wide Foster and Adoptive Parent Association.

In September, we learned that we were awarded a five year \$2.7 million grant from the federal government (Children's Bureau) to perform a deep-dive study of our three Gainesville Resource Centers and to open a Resource Center in Lake City. Pebbles Edelman and her team deserve a huge thanks for the creativity, vision, and diligence required to write the grant and the passion to take the Resource Center Model to the next level.

Our contract with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) was in its last year and set for expiration on June 30, 2019. DCF had the option of putting the contract out for bid or renewing us for another five years. Because of our consistent performance in delivery of services and fiscal responsibility, DCF elected to renew our contract for another five years without a competitive process, meaning we are under contract through June 30, 2024. This is a reflection of the superior work of all PSF staff, our contracted case management agencies, Partner Families and other service providers.

In a similar vein, during 2019 we underwent a full evaluation by the Council on Accreditation (COA) as a child welfare agency. While not required, COA accreditation is indicative of an agency that meets high standards in six key areas. PSF received high marks in all areas with one suggested area of improvement in succession planning for leadership.

As the third CEO of PSF, I have been fortunate to work from the strong foundation built by former CEOs Steven Murphy and Shawn Salamida. Their guidance and leadership over the first ten years of PSF's history created the framework upon which we have continued building for the last five years. With every new challenge that we experience, we have an opportunity to innovate and excel. As one long-time CEO, Mike Watkins of Big Bend Community Based Care, says, "There is no finish line in child welfare." The last year has been one of many accomplishments for PSF and while we are not working toward a finish line, we can be proud of the race we are running.

# The Power of Community

Our agency and the families we serve are supported by an incredibly strong and vibrant community of partners and advocates working alongside us each day to help advance our mission of keeping children safe. Our community partners allow us to provide services at our Resource Centers at no cost, contribute monetary and in-kind donations that support the youth in our care, and work alongside us as we recruit more Partner and Adoptive Families. Simply put, we could not do the work we do without this collective focus.

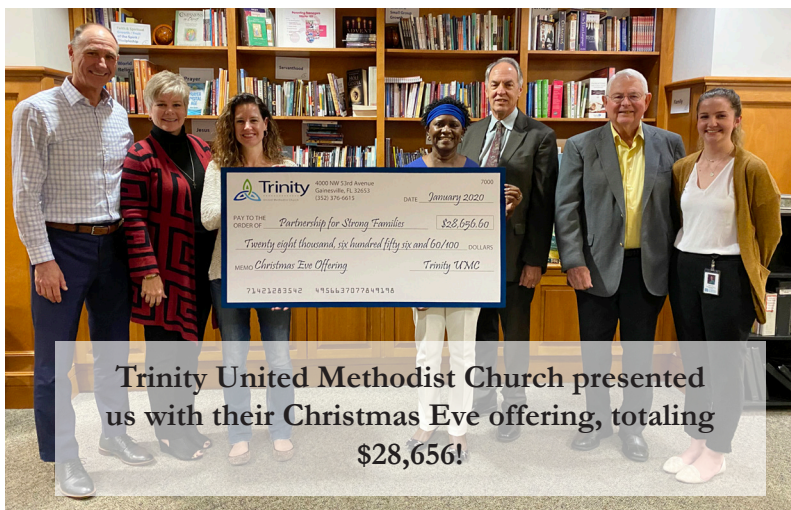
In 2019, our partners contributed more than **\$229,000 in monetary and in-kind donations**, provided nearly **12,000 hours of volunteer service** and allowed us more than **100 opportunities** to share our need for Partner and Adoptive Families.



Over \$8,000 raised during  
The Amazing Give, a local  
24-hour online fundraiser .



85 volunteers helped sort and  
organize over \$75,000 in gifts  
during Wish Upon a Star.



Trinity United Methodist Church presented  
us with their Christmas Eve offering, totaling  
**\$28,656!**

# Before they Become Cases: PSF's Resource Center Model

PSF's network of Resource Centers provide safe, non-stigmatizing environments to build upon family strengths with the ultimate goal of preventing child abuse and neglect. Patrons at our Resource Centers have access to services and resources from more than 75 local community partners and providers. In 2019, there were **34,754 visits** across our four Resource Centers: the Library Partnership Resource Center, SWAG Family Resource Center, Cone Park Library Resource Center and Tri-County Community Resource Center.

Every service offered at the Resource Centers is linked to at least one of five **protective factors** that, when present in families, have been shown to reduce the likelihood of abuse and neglect. Of the **49,210 services provided** in 2019:

**55%** were related to **Concrete Supports**

**22%** were related to **Social Connections**

**12%** were related to **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development**

**8%** were related to **Family Functioning and Resiliency**

**3%** were related to **Nurturing and Attachment**

## The Library Partnership: 10 Years and Growing

In September 2019, PSF celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center with an educational session and Neighborhood Block Party. In its first 10 years, the LP has welcomed more than **100,000 patrons** and provided over **115,000 services**.

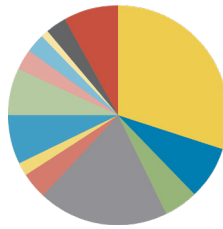
*Pictured Right:* Pebbles Edelman, Senior VP of Clinical and Community Services, Paul DiLorenzo, Casey Family Programs, and Patty Carroll, Director of Community Relations and Recruitment. Casey Family Programs has been a key partner of our Resource Centers since inception.



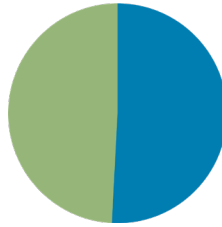
# Case Management Services

Working with our case management agencies, Camelot Community Care, CDS Family and Behavioral Health Services and Deveruex Florida, **PSF served 1,862 children and their families in 2019.** Children in our care may be safely residing with their biological families while their parents meet the goals of their case plan. In other situations, remaining at home would not be safe for the child. In those cases, children are placed in the care of a relative, non-relative (such as a family friend, coach, teacher, etc.) or with one of our Partner Families (foster parents).

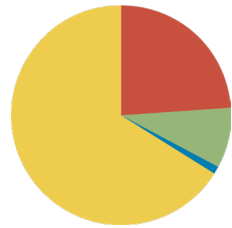
**Percentage of children served by county, gender and race:**



30% Alachua	4% Dixie
19% Columbia	3% Union
8% Baker	3% Hamilton
8% Taylor	3% Madison
7% Levy	2% Gilchrist
7% Suwannee	1% Lafayette
5% Bradford	<1% Other



51% Female  
49% Male



66% White  
24% Black  
9% Multiple  
1% Unknown

## The Need for “Normalcy”

For youth entering out-of-home care, “normal” can seem like a distant concept at times. Moving to a new home with a new set of rules, meeting new friends and, sometimes, even entering a new school, transition becomes the new normal.

Working with partners throughout the community, PSF has been able to raise funds to support normalcy efforts for our youth. Using these donated dollars, we have been able to provide youth with enriching experiences and opportunities.

In 2019 alone, these dollars allowed us to send a child to Disney World with their foster family, purchase prom tickets, pay for extracurricular activities and ensure youth had access to a variety of tutoring services. Experiences and opportunities like this help our children to thrive and ensure they are building upon the unique strengths and interests that make them the amazing kids they are!



# The Impact of Partner Families

Our local Partner (foster) Families are changing the narrative for youth in our care. Partner Families welcome children into their home while working alongside the child's biological family, case manager and other child welfare professionals to achieve reunification or an alternative permanent placement for the child. In 2019, **we welcomed 42 new Partner Families** throughout our 13 counties, but our need for families is still great!

"REUNIFICATION IS ONE OF THE MOST AMAZING GIFTS I CAN GIVE A CHILD - THE LOVE AND SUPPORT OF TWO SETS OF PARENTS. WE HAVE GREAT RELATIONSHIPS WITH FORMER KIDS WHO HAVE BEEN IN OUR HOME, AND WE LOVE SEEING THEM LOVE US AND THEIR PARENTS ... I KNOW THEIR LIFE WILL BE FULLER BECAUSE OF IT."

- **Amanda Cruce, Foster Parent and PSF Board Member**



## Launching New Supports for our Caregivers

On July 1, 2019, PSF officially launched our new **Kin Caregiver** program, establishing the new Level 1 License available to our relative and non-relative caregivers. Achieving a Level 1 License brings additional support to our Kin Caregivers, including an enhanced monthly subsidy and access to a variety of trainings and resources.

Simultaneously, PSF launched the **Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP)** to provide additional supports to our Permanent Guardians. Our Level 1 Kin Caregivers who have been licensed for six consecutive months are eligible to qualify for the GAP program upon the case closing to Permanent Guardianship.

The launch of both of these programs has been very successful, and PSF has had some of the highest numbers of Level 1 licensed homes in the State, consistently ranking among the top three lead agencies.

# Celebrating Adoption

In 2019, 241 adoptions were finalized - that's 241 children being welcomed in to permanent, loving forever homes. PSF's Adoptions team continues to exceed our state-defined goals for adoptions, working with several key partners including Children's Legal Services, case management, Partner Families and other caregivers to ensure youth achieve permanency in a timely manner. These efforts have helped to stabilize the number of children languishing in out-of-home care.

In November, we celebrated the finalization of 26 adoptions during our annual National Adoption Month finalization day at the UF Levin College of Law.



"I GET TOLD ALL THE TIME HOW BLESSED MY GIRLS ARE TO HAVE ME, BUT THE TRUTH IS, I AM THE ONE WHO IS BLESSED. I TRY TO TELL ANYONE WHO IS EVEN CONSIDERING ADOPTION TO GO FOR IT. MAKE THAT CALL AND GET INFORMATION. IF YOU HAVE LOVE IN YOUR HEART FOR CHILDREN, DO NOT LET FEAR HOLD YOU BACK."

- Tosha Beckham, Adoptive Parent



# Resource Center Network

A hallmark of PSF's system of care is our belief that child abuse is preventable. Our Resource Centers continue to provide critical resources and services that are responsive to the needs and strengths of the communities they serve.



## In 2019 there were:

**\$307,093**

RECEIVED IN GRANTS

**\$151,578**

OF IN-KIND DONATIONS RECEIVED

\*Plus the cost of donated services!

**80**

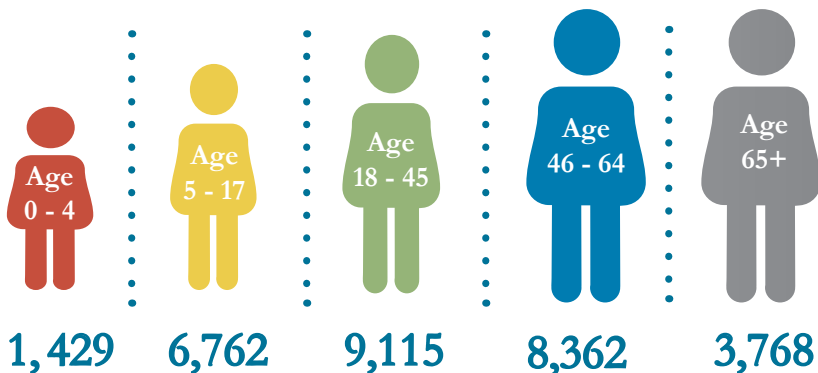
VOLUNTEERS

**11,710**

VOLUNTEERED HOURS

**75**

PARTNERS



**10,213**  
Males



**18,948**  
Females



Visitors by Race:

Black - 59%  
White - 31%  
Hispanic - 6%  
Multicultural - 3%  
Other - 1%



# Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families

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In 2019, Partnership for Strong Families was one of nine sites chosen throughout the nation to receive the Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families grant. This competitive process presented the perfect opportunity for our team to envision how to strengthen the services provided at our Resource Centers through a rigorous evaluation as well as expand our RC Model to Lake City, Florida; a goal that we have been working toward for a number of years. The grant will bring \$2.7 million dollars over a five year period.

For more than 10 years, our agency has been leading innovative approaches to strengthen families and increase the presence of the protective factors through our Resource Centers in Alachua and Levy Counties, and results are promising. Our Resource Center Model has created a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward the ultimate goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. Under the Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families grant, PSF will evaluate our current Model, refine the model based on evaluation findings and bring the Resource Center Model to Lake City.

In doing so, PSF will be able to identify and highlight those components of our RC Model that are directly associated with reducing rates of child maltreatment and entries into foster care. This knowledge will help us to provide targeted services that will be of most benefit to our Resource Center patrons, as well as create opportunities for sharing and replication across our community, state, and nation.

“These grants embody the Children’s Bureau’s commitment to developing new and improved child welfare strategies that are focused on preventing the maltreatment of children by their caregiver, and as a result, creating environments in which families can thrive and children are free from harm. The child welfare field has wholeheartedly embraced this focus, as evidenced by an unusually large number of funding applications representing every state in the country. I am incredibly encouraged about the future direction of child welfare in our country.”

- Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner of the Children’s Bureau

# Training for the Future of Child Welfare

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In 2019, 101 individuals graduated from Pre-Service, gaining the critical skills and knowledge needed to become transformational child welfare professionals!



## Staff Development

2019 was an active year for our Staff Development team, who provided more than 1,038 hours of training to our staff and partners. Our own Lamesha Smith was also recognized by being selected as one of only 20 mentors in the Florida Youth Leadership Academy. This opportunity will allow Lamesha to mentor youth in the child welfare system throughout Florida while engaging in several educational and leadership activities throughout 2020.

While much was gained this year, our staff also had to say goodbye to a longtime member of our team, Connie Pierre-Antoine, Staff Development Director. There aren't many PSF staff members who weren't shaped by at least one of Connie's trainings over the years, and many of our partners came to know her well. Among her many accomplishments, Connie was a great advocate for trauma-informed services, as she helped to train our staff and partners in Trauma-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI). Connie will continue her important work outside of our agency as a consultant, and we wish her all of the best!

# Financials

## Revenue

DCF Contract	\$35,797,561.50
Grants/Donations/Other	\$873,143.89

**\$36,670,705.39**

## Expenses

Case Management	\$6,765,031.60
Adoptions	\$11,608,543.86
Purchased Services	\$3,011,414.64
Foster Parent	\$141,389.88
Independent Living	\$531,930.27
Out of Home Care	\$4,072,989.37
Salaries/Benefits/Administration	\$9,735,254.15
Other Services	\$892,803.86

**\$36,759,357.63**

# Looking Forward

PSF’s Strategic Goals arose from a collaborative effort of our agency and board. These goals lay the framework for PSF’s strategic direction in the coming years.



1. Establish a culture of employee satisfaction and engagement through diversification of workplace tools and supports.
2. Improve engagement with clients, businesses and community partners to strengthen relationships and expand prevention and permanency resources.
3. Improve internal communication and productivity among staff and case management agencies through education, technology and routine assessments.
4. Effectively employ financial and operational resources to improve transparency, credibility and compliance to impact systems change.
5. Diversify funding streams through grant acquisition and community initiatives that support the agency’s mission.
6. Provide ongoing clarification to employees on relationships between corporate entities (Service Management Solutions, Partnership for Strong Families, Technology and Solutions for Children and Real Estate Acquisitions for Children), clearly defining roles, responsibilities and interrelated functions.



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[www.pfsf.org](http://www.pfsf.org) | 352-244-1500

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**Lake City:** 1211 SW Bascom Norris Drive | Lake City, FL 32025

**Live Oak:** 501 SE Demorest Suite B | Live Oak, FL 32604

**Starke:** 405 W Georgia Street | Starke, FL 32091

**Trenton:** 111 NW 4th Avenue | Trenton, FL 32693

PSF provides child welfare and prevention-related services in 13 counties including Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union.

**Mission:** To enhance the community's ability to protect and nurture children by building, maintaining and constantly improving a network of family support services.

**Vision:** To be a recognized leader in protecting children and strengthening families through innovative, evidence-based practices and highly effective, engaged employees and community partners.

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