



PARTNERSHIP CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

*July,
August,
September
2026*



KARSON STRIVING AND THRIVING!

Preventing Child Abuse and Strengthening Families One at a Time!

By Amanda Demaria

Since 2009 with the opening of the Library Partnership Resource Center, we have been preventing child abuse and strengthening families through our network of Family Resource Centers (FRC). Our FRCs continue to provide easily accessible and safe places for families and community members to seek support, and reduce the need for formal child welfare involvement. Our goal is to strengthen families, keeping their children safe and thriving at home. Our numbers are very encouraging, but even more important are the individual families we help become healthier and more resilient. It is our honor that families trust us to work alongside them, through every challenge. We are thrilled to share one of their stories through our newest program, Help Me Grow Alachua.

During one of the most challenging periods for her family, Help Me Grow was there. As the parent of a child with autism, Everlyn faced repeated barriers trying to access services and opportunities for Karson, her son. Everlyn was being turned away from programs because Karson did not meet age requirements or because organizations were not equipped to support a child with autism. These experiences left Everlyn feeling overwhelmed and discouraged.

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A Message from Our CEO:

Supporting and Strengthening All Families

Dear Partners,

At the heart of everything we do is a simple belief: every child deserves to feel safe, loved, supported, and connected to family and community. That belief is what brings all of us together in this work and continues to guide the partnerships we build every day.

Whether children are being cared for by their parents, relatives, foster families, or adoptive families, we know the presence of caring, stable adults can change the course of a child's life. A nurturing home provides so much more than shelter. It gives children a sense of belonging, security, encouragement, and hope for the future. When children feel supported and valued, they are more likely to thrive emotionally, succeed in school, build healthy relationships, and grow into resilient adults.

We also know that families cannot do this work alone. Life can bring unexpected challenges, stress, and hardship, and when families lack support, children often feel those impacts deeply. That is why our mission extends beyond responding to crises. We are equally committed to strengthening families, preventing abuse and neglect, and helping caregivers access the resources and support systems they need to create stability at home.

Our work continues to be grounded in the Five Protective Factors — an evidence-based framework that helps families build resilience and stronger connections:

- Parental Resilience — helping caregivers navigate stress and challenges while remaining a steady source of support for their children.
- Social Connections — ensuring families feel connected to supportive relationships and communities that remind them they are not alone.
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development — providing caregivers with tools, guidance, and confidence to support children through every stage of development.
- Concrete Support in Times of Need — helping families access essential resources like housing, food, healthcare, childcare, and other supports that reduce stress and create stability.
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children — supporting children in building healthy relationships, expressing emotions, and developing problem-solving skills.

Most importantly, this work is about people. It is about communities coming together to support one another. It is about neighbors helping neighbors, partners stepping forward, and all of us sharing responsibility for creating a future where children and families can thrive.

Thank you for the care, compassion, and commitment you continue to bring to this work. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and for the many ways you help strengthen children, families, and communities every day.

With gratitude

Ginger Griffith

President and CEO

Partnership for Strong Families

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PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE AND STRENGTHENING FAMILIES ONE AT A TIME! CONTINUED

Everlyn finally found help and hope when she met Katrina and Jess, our amazing Help Me Grow team! The team helped her navigate the barriers and gave her hope when she felt she had run out of options. Everlyn emphatically believes that the team went "above and beyond" in helping her identify resources, explore opportunities, and continue moving forward despite the many obstacles she encountered. One of the aspects of the program Everlyn appreciates most is the consistent communication and ongoing support. In her words, the communication she receives is "top-tier" and said knowing someone was available to answer questions and provide guidance made a significant difference for her family.

The family was connected with activities inclusive of children on the autism spectrum through Fun4GatorKids. Karson had a wonderful experience participating in these activities and having access to autism-friendly resources reduced stress for the family. Many parents of children with disabilities are unaware of the resources available to them, making these connections especially valuable. Everlyn is also deeply appreciative of the support her family received through CarePortal and a partnering church. As part of their support, they provided a mattress cover and other carefully selected items to support her child's comfort. They thoughtfully selected a foam mattress rather than a spring mattress to better accommodate his sensory and behavioral needs and promote his safety. In addition, they provided a weighted blanket and pillow. Just as important as the physical items, the church volunteers were incredibly compassionate and took the time to understand Karson's individual needs.

Everlyn sees meaningful progress in Karson's development. Karson is now participating in camp activities and is able to spend more time around other children. The camp provides calming spaces where he can regulate when he becomes overwhelmed, allowing him to participate at his own learning pace.

Everlyn is also working with Displaced Homemakers to obtain a computer certification, a step she believes will help her achieve more financial stability and independence. One of her long-term goals is to become financially secure enough to no longer need public assistance while continuing to ensure Karson receives the support and opportunities he deserves. She hopes to provide him with positive experiences, including family vacations and opportunities to simply enjoy being a child. The support she receives through Help Me Grow and its community partners are helping move her closer to those goals!

Child abuse prevention isn't one thing; it is a network of resources and communities supporting parents and children! The families we work with and the realization that we are preventing childhood abuse continues to drive us every day! Thank you for partnering with us to make stories like this a reality!



KARSON HARD AT PLAY!

APPRECIATING OUR FOSTER PARENTS

During the month of May, we celebrated National Foster Care Month by showing appreciation for our current families and raising awareness about the need for additional foster parents. This year, 30 organizations donated a gift basket or gift certificate that were given to many of our local families, and 33 organizations helped us raise awareness across the 13 counties we serve. We are thankful for a community that supports families and children involved in the foster care system.

Thank you to all our foster parents who have opened their homes and are caring for children, especially those who need extra support. "Foster parents provide safety, stability, guidance, and love during some of the most challenging times in a child's life," says Jessie Chance, Director of Foster Care Licensing. "Their commitment goes far beyond meeting daily needs – they help children heal, grow, and believe in their futures."

Even with these incredible families, we still need you to join us in caring for our teens, large sibling groups, and children who have more complex needs. To get more information or to start the process, reach out directly to our recruitment team at 352-244-1615 or HopePartner@pfsf.org.



UPCOMING INFO SESSIONS

Foster Care & Adoption Info Sessions

All Virtual



Tuesday, July 14th
7:00 pm

Tuesday, Aug. 18th
7:00 pm

Tuesday, Sept. 15th
7:00 pm

Thursday, July 30th
7:00 pm

Thursday, Aug. 20th
7:00 pm

Thursday, Sept. 17th
7:00 pm



Scan here to
sign up for an
info session!

HopePartner@pfsf.org



(352) 244-1615

DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT: KINSHIP SUPPORT

Our Kinship Team consists of two dedicated Kinship Navigators, Brooke and Jeannette, who play a vital role in supporting and connecting relative and non-relative (fictive kin) caregivers to essential services and community resources.

The Kinship Navigators assist caregivers in identifying and accessing resources that help bridge gaps in service delivery. This includes support with Early Learning Coalition renewals, referring caregivers for level 1 licensure, obtaining documentation related to family assistance programs, and connecting families with community-based resources such as food pantries, clothing closets, and resource centers. The team also provides guidance throughout the application process for relative and non-relative caregiver funds, childcare subsidies, tuition waivers, representative payee services for children receiving Social Security benefits, and direct deposit enrollment. In addition, the navigators advocate on behalf of kinship families to ensure required documentation is completed and maintained appropriately.

In addition to direct caregiver support, the Kinship Team conducts diligent familial searches and outreach efforts to relatives, neighbors, and family friends to identify potential placement options outside of licensed care, when appropriate. Through these efforts, the team strives to preserve family connections and maintain children's ties to their families, communities, and cultural backgrounds whenever possible.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: GIVE BACK FOR IMPACT

Give Back for Impact is a transformative partner in serving children, youth, and families involved in the child welfare system. Through visionary leadership and a collaborative model, Give Back for Impact is creating meaningful and lasting change in the families for the families we work with.

Give Back for Impact aids foster families, relative caregivers, and biological families in financial need to support children at risk of removal or placement disruption. They provide funds to meet children's needs such as clothing, food, school supplies, toys, and furniture. We have been honored to work with Give Back for Impact the past three years. Give Back for Impact has provided funding to equip children in out-of-home care with the supplies they need to return to school, to ensure that children in care receive the Christmas wishes they request, and to provide all children in out of home care access to normalcy activities.



FOUNDERS AMY AND JAMES HILL

Give Back for Impact also works with CarePortal in fundamentally reshaping how the local community responds to the tangible needs of children and families in Circuits 3 & 8. By directly connecting caseworkers with a network of local churches, CarePortal enables real-time, tangible support to maintain the best placement option for a child in out-of-home care, keep a child from entering foster care, or enable reunification. In the past year, Give back for Impact has provided supports to over 1,000 children.

Through leadership and collaborative partnerships, Give Back for Impact is making a powerful and lasting difference for children, youth, and families we serve. We are so thankful.

NATIONAL REUNIFICATION MONTH

Safely Reuniting Children in Foster Care with Their Families

By Pebbles Edelman

Reunification is not simply the end of a child welfare case; it is the beginning of a new chapter for families working to build a stronger future together.

For families involved in the child welfare system, the journey to reunification is often one of profound growth and transformation. Parents are provided with opportunities to access services, build new skills, strengthen protective factors, and address challenges that may have affected their family's stability. For many, this process includes breaking cycles of generational trauma, learning healthier ways to manage stress and relationships, and developing nurturing parenting practices that create a safe and supportive environment for their children. Along the way, children navigate periods of change and uncertainty while holding onto hope for the day they can return home and reconnect with the people they love most.

National Reunification Month this past June recognized these journeys and celebrated the strength, perseverance, and resilience of families who have successfully reunited. It also is a reminder that behind every reunification is a child who longs for connection, a parent who never stopped fighting for their family, and a community that believed healing was possible. Our foster parent Sandy said it perfectly, "We had to say goodbye to a sibling group of 2. They were in our home for 3 years. It was HARD. But if you could have seen the look on the children's faces, when they left with their forever family, you could not be upset. There were tears, but they were happy tears."

Successful reunification is never the work of one person alone. It is the result of parents, children, foster parents, relative caregivers, case managers, therapists, legal advocates, educators, and community partners all working together toward a common goal: helping families heal and remain safely together.

REPRESENTING PSF

Presentation at the NASW Florida Conference on Community Collaborations in Prevention



Staff at the
Help Me Grow
Annual
Meeting



RC team visiting
the Cross Creek
Family Resource
Center in
Tallahassee





The Power of Little Things

By Kelsey Burnette, Chief Legal Officer

When we talk about serving children in the child welfare system, most conversations focus on the big-ticket items: placements, permanency, court hearings, mental health services, and educational stability. These issues are critically important and deserve every bit of attention they receive. But amid that necessary focus, it can be easy to overlook something smaller and surprisingly powerful: a child's opportunity to simply be a kid.

In child welfare, we call this normalcy. Normalcy means giving children in care the chance to participate in the same everyday experiences as their peers: trying out for the school play, joining a sports team, getting a library card, or singing in the school choir. These ordinary activities may seem small, but they play a vital role in helping children grow, connect, and build confidence.

Florida law recognizes this importance. Through the state's "reasonable and prudent parent" standard, caregivers have the authority to approve many age-appropriate activities without waiting for a case manager, staffing, or court order. The law was designed to promote normalcy and encourage children in care to participate in social, educational, and extracurricular opportunities that support healthy development.

This concept exists in statute because policymakers recognized that focusing only on meetings, services, and transitions misses something essential. In my own family, Boy Scouts, computer coding, and musical theater have played a major role in helping my sons grow into remarkable young men. Every child deserves the opportunity to find their interests, talents, and passions.

Children in foster care already experience more disruption and loss than many adults encounter in a lifetime. Placements change. Schools change. Sometimes even the people they consider family change. In the midst of that instability, a weekly art class, youth group, or spot on the volleyball team can provide an important source of consistency and belonging.

These activities do far more than fill free time. They help children develop relationships and a sense of identity. A team, club, or theater troupe becomes a community of peers who know them for their shared interests rather than their case status. A coach, director, or teacher becomes another caring adult who shows up consistently, offers encouragement, and celebrates progress.

For young people who feel defined by their case file, pockets of normalcy can be among the most empowering experiences available. The good news is that creating opportunities doesn't always require significant resources. A season of recreational soccer, a used guitar, an art supply kit, or transportation to a weekly rehearsal can open doors that change a child's trajectory.

That's where all of us come in. As providers, donors, caregivers, and community partners, we are often in a position to notice a young person's spark and help remove the barriers standing in its way. A modest contribution toward registration fees, equipment, or transportation can be the difference between a child watching from the sidelines and a child finding where they belong.

As you go about your work, I encourage you to ask one simple question: What do you love to do? Then help young people find a way to do more of it.

Permanency and placement stability will always remain at the heart of child welfare work. But so does the ordinary magic of a child discovering a talent, pursuing a passion, and finding a community that is glad they showed up.

Sometimes the little things aren't little at all.



Scan here to join us in providing normalcy opportunities! Your donation will make a lasting difference in the life of a child in care.



PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG FAMILIES

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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.

Summer is here, and our Back-to-School Drive is in full swing. Through partnering with local businesses and the community, every youth in out of home care receives a brand-new backpack filled with supplies! We would love to have you join us this year by donating supplies and volunteering to pack backpacks! Check out the QR code below to learn more.



Presented by:

