



PARTNERSHIP FOR
**STRONG
FAMILIES**

Partnership Connection

JULY - OCTOBER
2021

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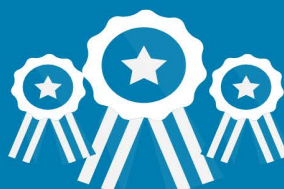


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Featured Story

View our Summer
camp story on
page 8!



EMPLOYEE VIRTUAL RECOGNITION CEREMONY

This year our employee recognition looked different with a virtual ceremony and some unique awards. We gathered all of our staff via Zoom to celebrate our wins this year and our incredible team that went above and beyond during the trials of a pandemic. Congratulations to all of those who received these awards, join us in celebrating them!

MELINDA SCZEPANSKI: FUNNIEST ZOOM / TEAMS HOST AND BEST PET APPEARANCE
ROBIN WILKERSON: RESOURCE CENTER FRONT LINE HERO
RAJNARINE KHUSIAL : MOST TECHNOLOGICALLY CHALLENGED
STEPHEN PENNYPACKER: MOST CREATIVE MASK
TUWANA ROSSIN: MOST CREATIVE SUPERVISED VISITATION
ERIC RAMOS: MOST CREATIVE SUPERVISED VISITATION
LEAH GRACE: BIGGEST MASK COLLECTION
HANNAH SHULLA: FRONT LINE PARTNER AWARD
GREG JONES: FRONT LINE PARTNER AWARD
YVETTE SPENCER: BEST VIRTUAL BACKGROUND AND MOST CHALLENGED SCREENSAVER
LUZ MADERA: MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL HELP AWARD
MERRY JANE-FAIRFIELD: MOST LIKELY TO BE TOLD "YOU'RE ON MUTE"
EUSTACE AND EVELYN MORRISON: PARTNER FAMILY THAT ROSE TO THE COVID-19 CHALLENGE
SARAH LIVINGSTONE: RESOURCE CENTER FRONT LINE HERO
JACOB CLORE AND STEVIE DOYLE : "BEST SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN" FOR THE AMAZING GIVE
OSIE ROLLE: DIRTY JOBS AWARD
IT TEAM - THIS YEAR WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU!





Join our team today!

www.pfsf.org/join-our-team/

A smiling family of five (father, mother, and three children) standing outdoors in a grassy area with trees in the background. The father is on the left, holding a young girl in a yellow shirt. The mother is in the center, holding a young boy in a white shirt. A teenage girl in a denim shirt stands on the right. They are all smiling and looking at the camera.

By Carol Ruth, Director of Quality Operations

If the child's case closes to Permanent Guardianship with a licensed kinship caregiver, the caregiver is in a position to be eligible for the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) which enables the caregiver to continue receiving the same level of financial support after the supervision case is closed. Unlike other means of financial support available to relatives and non-relatives, the Kinship board payments and GAP funds are available to those who live outside of Florida. Youth who close to Permanent Guardianship after age 16 are eligible for a Florida College Tuition Waiver and may be eligible for the Extended Guardianship Assistance Program (EGAP). Youth and young adults who meet EGAP program requirements can continue to receive financial assistance up to age 21. Participation in Kinship Licensing, GAP, and EGAP does not require the caregiver to open a case with Child Support Enforcement. The additional support offered through the Kinship Licensing program helps to increase the stability for children placed with kin which results in fewer placement changes and better outcomes for children in out of home care.

Heart Gallery

Meet Caitlyn - 17 years old



Caitlyn is an artistic teen who greatly desires a family or individual that will love her unconditionally, accept her uniqueness, and offer her a special place in a forever family. Caitlyn describes herself as caring, nurturing, funny, and outgoing. She has a vast amount of interests such as gardening, hiking, swimming, fishing, and hunting. She also loves to participate in outdoor activities such as volleyball, football, and taking a walk through nature trails. Caitlyn is creative and enjoys doing all kinds of art, especially painting. She aspires to attend college and become a registered nurse. She desires to have younger siblings and pets, if possible, in her forever home. Caitlyn would like an active family that enjoys family activities and exploring different places.

For more information on Caitlyn, please contact Seanetta Robinson at Seanetta.Robinson@pfsf.org or 386-243-8812.

Caitlyn states "love is love" and she is open to loving her forever family regardless of their sexual orientation, ethnicity, or race.



During the month of June we celebrated Pride Month.

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

We have been celebrating a lot of wonderful moments and events here at Partnership for Strong Families lately. We had an incredible Amazing Give Donation Drive during the month of April where, thanks to our generous donors, we surpassed our \$10,000 goal and raised \$14,147 for normalcy requests for the children in our care. We even received the "Best Social Media Campaign" award from The Community Foundation of North Central Florida for our efforts during the Amazing Give. I am so proud of our team's hard work and the impact that these funds will make on the children we serve.

May was National Foster Care Month. During this month, we celebrated our incredible Partner Families and spread the word about the importance of fostering throughout Circuits 3 & 8. We tabled at numerous churches, handed out shirts, signs, and flyers, and shared wonderful stories on social media of families that inspire us locally.

During the month of June, we celebrated National Reunification Month. This month celebrates all our families that have been reunified and those that are working with that goal in mind. Please follow us on social media to see what we are up to next! I hope you all have a wonderful summer and get to spend some time with your families. Thank you for your continued support of Partnership for Strong Families. We appreciate you.



Stevie Doyle
Director of Communications
and Engagement

Children's Partnership Council Update

By Jacob Clore, Community Engagement Specialist

The fourth quarter of the 2020-2021 fiscal year for PSF's Children's Partnership Councils brought great examples of collaboration as Council members worked together to fill service gaps for families. While Council members spent the remainder of the yearly \$5,000 on needs like rent and utility assistance, some Councils voted to set aside funding for specific end-of-the-fiscal year initiatives. These ideas came forth from the following Councils:

- **Tri-County Children's Partnership Council:** Council members allocated \$1,425 to provide swim lesson vouchers for 19 children. After hearing from Council member Gigi Daube concerning a need for childcare for grandparents raising grandchildren, the Council allocated additional funding to sponsor camp for these children. Additional funding was also provided for safety items for the Tri-County Community Resource Center, like car seats, pack 'n' plays, and baby bags for new mothers. When ideas for initiatives exceeded the \$5,000 budget, Jonathan Pitts from Clyatt House donated \$530 to ensure all initiatives were implemented. Thank you, Jonathan and Clyatt House for your donation.
- **Columbia Children's Partnership Council:** Similar to the Tri-County Children's Partnership Council, Columbia Council members sponsored camp attendance for 3 children served through the NorthStar Family Resource Center. The Council also purchased school supplies to be distributed at the Fort White Back to School Bash in August.
- **Suwannee-Lafayette-Hamilton Children's Partnership:** After a Council member expressed a need for diapers and wipes for expectant mothers served by the Live Oak Pregnancy Care Center, the Council allocated nearly \$500 to fulfill that need.

As noted by these initiatives, the Councils certainly ended the year on a strong note. While the first meeting of the next fiscal year in July will be virtual, future meetings will take place in a hybrid setting to combine the best in high attendance and collaboration. We look forward to what the future brings our Children's Partnership Councils!



CASE MANAGEMENT UPDATE!

Partnership for Strong Families, Inc., (PSF) shares this announcement regarding a change in one of our subcontracted case management agencies. Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health Florida has served Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, and Levy counties as PSF's case management agency since 2007. Effective July 1, 2021, this contract will be now managed by Lutheran Services Florida (LSF)

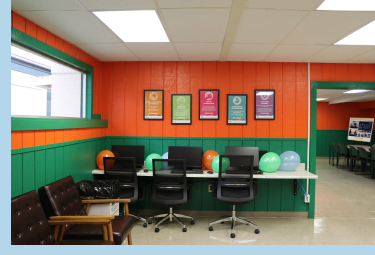
Mike Carroll, Executive Vice President of Programs for LSF will bring his many years of child welfare experience, including as Secretary of the Department of Children and Families, to our clients and partners. "We are excited to expand our Case Management Services to North Central Florida," said Mr. Carroll. "Partnership for Strong Families has been a leader for children's services since 2003, and we look forward to joining forces." Lisa Mayrose, Regional Director of LSF, will oversee the program through supervision of the Program Director in our catchment area.

The transition from Devereux to Lutheran Services Florida will cause no disruption in the system or cases that are currently being managed. "We at Devereux have really enjoyed working with PSF for the past fourteen years," said Lisa Kroger, Executive Director. "We are passionate about doing what is best for children in our care and know that Lutheran Services Florida will continue to serve the children and families in these counties with the same passion."

The process for selecting a new subcontracted case management agency was done through an open procurement process. LSF was selected from among four applicants. "The experience, diversity of current services around the state, and their dynamic leadership team are strengths of Lutheran Services Florida. We know they will be a great asset to the counties we serve. We extend our thanks and appreciation to Devereux for the dedicated support they have provided to children and families in our area, and we are thankful for their continuing generous efforts to make the transition as seamless as possible," said Stephen Pennypacker, CEO of Partnership for Strong Families.

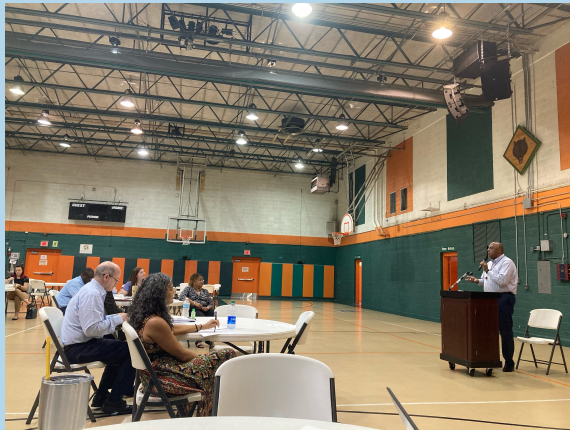


First Look: Our newest Family Resource Center has opened!



To the left:
A look inside our
NorthStar Family
Resource Center

NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) has done some amazing things in our first few months serving the Lake City Community! A community-wide May Day Celebration, including braiding of the May Pole, was hosted on the grounds on May 1, 2021. This event included food, music, and free resources from more than 20 community partners. Additionally, in recognition of Juneteenth, NSFRC partnered with the Columbia County School District for a showing of the PBS film “Tulsa: The Fire and the Forgotten” for sixth grade students, complete with a guided discussion following the movie. On an on-going basis, NSFRC also provides free wi-fi and computer access, job searches, GED tutoring, notary services, community walks, a bi-weekly clothing closet, and much more! The NSFRC Manager, Phil Mobley, is also available to meet one-on-one with patrons to help connect them with needed supports.

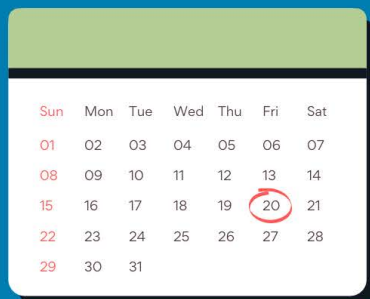


Phil Mobley, NSFRC Manager, speaks at the
Resource Center Advisory Council Meeting



Pictures from the May Day
celebration.

Upcoming Events



August 8, 2021 from 3:00-6:00 pm at the Richardson Community Center, NSFRC will be co-hosting a Back-to-School event for local students. While this is the first year PSF will participate with the event, the “Community Barbers” have sponsored the event annually for the past five years. Students will be provided with free backpacks and school supplies, and a group of local barbers and stylists will provide free haircuts and manicures.

Beginning the week of August 23rd, free after-school homework help will be available at NSFRC.

NORTHSTAR
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER



AMAZING GIVE UPDATE

By Jacob Clore, Community Engagement Specialist

This year's Amazing Give was our best year yet thanks to our AMAZING donors. We exceeded our \$10,000 goal with help from over 85 donors who contributed a total of \$14,147. These funds will support normalcy experiences for youth in foster care: think experiences and resources like supporting a trip for a family to bond, playing on a local youth sports team, new clothes for school, and more.

We at Partnership for Strong Families have so many partners to thank for the outcome of the giving day:

- The Best Restoration, Village Counseling Center, Stephen Pennypacker, and Kay Ayers for sponsoring our matches and challenges
- Dick Mondell's for hosting a fundraiser to benefit our Amazing Give efforts. Altogether, they raised \$497 by donating all drink sales on Wednesday evening and all-day Thursday in addition to asking for donations from customers
- KISS 105.3 for interviewing us to be featured on their station as well as featuring us on a Facebook Live during the giving day
- Our amazing prize donors: Sonny's BBQ, Gator's Dockside, Bagel Bakery Gainesville, Gainesville Health and Fitness, Maple Street Biscuit Company, and Sweetberries Gainesville
- The Community Foundation of North Central Florida for organizing all aspects of the giving day
- Most importantly our incredible donors, we could not have done this without YOU!

UPDATED

AMAZING GIVE

TOTAL **XXXXXX**

OVER 85
DONORS
DONATED
OVER
\$14,000

Workday Edition

THE
AMAZING GIVE

April 22, 2021
7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

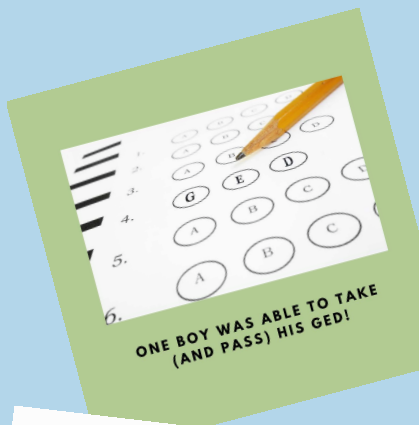
#REMEMBERWHEN
#FOSTERHOPE

 **COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**
of North Central Florida

 **PARTNERSHIP FOR**
STRONG FAMILIES

The requests for normalcy experiences continue to roll in, and thanks to Amazing Give funds, we are able to meet them! If you are interested in supporting our normalcy efforts year-round, visit our website at www.pfsf.org/donate.

WHAT HAVE NORMALCY FUNDS BEEN ABLE TO DO THIS SUMMER?



MANY CHILDREN WERE ABLE TO ATTEND SUMMER CAMP!



5 SIBLINGS WERE ABLE TO TAKE A TRIP TO DISNEY WORLD!



LOTS OF SUMMER CLOTHES WERE PURCHASED FOR THE CHILDREN IN OUR CARE!

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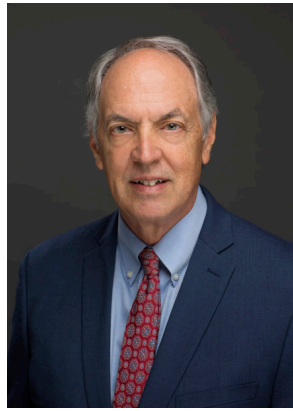
Mr. Kenny Brighton.

Ms. Kay Ayers

Mr. Patrick Allen

Ms. Jenna Hewett

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Dear esteemed community members, partners, and friends,

The beginning of the summer and PSF's fiscal year brings several positive changes to our agency. The continued loosening of COVID restrictions statewide have impacted how we operate, while the implementation of new legislation brings new opportunities and challenges. This time of the year also gives us the opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of our families who have reunified with their children. With positive trends concerning COVID-19 vaccinations and the number of cases, PSF is amending our COVID-19 policies. We are now back to all in-person visitation for caregivers with children, case managers with families, and our licensing team.

We are also finalizing our return to the office plan and have identified which positions will be fully remote, which will be full time in the office, and which will be hybrid. For now, we are continuing to require masks in public areas, but not in individual offices if the persons have been vaccinated. We will continue to update this policy as CDC guidelines change.

PSF staff are also experiencing changes in practices, as new legislation has been implemented or will be implemented later this year. Senate Bill 80, which goes into effect on October 1, 2021, will require a multi-disciplinary team staffing when a child is going to change placements. Part of the placement criteria will include a renewed emphasis on keeping siblings together or maintaining contact between them when that is not possible. A unique provision in the bill allows the court to reinstate parental rights for a parent who previously had their rights terminated upon a prior motion. These be would limited cases where older children have not otherwise reached permanency and the parent has remedied the issues that initially brought the child into care.

Senate Bill 96 goes into effect on July 1, 2021. This bill will make sure children who have been sexually abused receive the care they may need for being victimized and to gather additional evidence against the perpetrator. An additional element of the bill expands the capacity of foster homes from five to six children before an over cap waiver must be sought.

In addition to state legislation, The Family First Prevention and Services Act is federal legislation that was passed in 2018 and goes into effect in Florida on October 1st. The three main features of the Act impact the types of placements available for children in out of home care, utilization of evidence based programs for services, and increased emphasis on prevention of abuse to reduce the number of children coming into the system. Florida has been working hard to assess the current system of foster care, residential group care, specialized therapeutic care, and inpatient treatment settings to determine how best to transition children from their current placements into those that will qualify for reimbursement of federal funds for services. This proves to be quite a challenge going forward. Finally, shifting the emphasis on the whole system to keeping children out of the system by helping families earlier and with more targeted services is a primary goal of the law and is consistent with PSF's Resource Center model. Here at PSF and around the country, we also recently celebrated National Reunification Month. Reunification is the primary case plan goal by statute because children should be with their families if they can be safe. This month gives us the opportunity to celebrate the hard work of biological parents, caregivers, foster parents, case management staff, and providers to make a child's return to their home successful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Pennypacker'.

Stephen Pennypacker
President/CEO



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



Summer Camps at The Resource Centers

This summer we are excited to launch our Annual Summer Camp Program at SWAG Family Resource Center, Cone Park Library Resource Center, and Library Partnership Resource Center. Our summer camps are not only fun, educational, and engaging for children in our service areas, but they are offered at all our Gainesville Resource Centers for free! Our youth will have the opportunity to embark on adventures, meet new friends, and even go on field trips this year.

The positive effects that attending summer camp have on youth are endless. They learn countless lessons, gain opportunities to make friends, and create childhood memories that they will remember forever. To learn more about our summer programs and get a full list of Resource Center locations, visit our website at pfsf.org.

