



PARTNERSHIP CONNECTION NEWSLETTER



Adoption: A Risk Worth Taking

November is National Adoption Month across the US and here at PSF. We want to take this time to celebrate the families that have chosen to adopt through us. We are highlighting a family that embraced the challenge with love and patience. They knew their daughters are worth it.

The Newton Family Adoption Story:

Adopting teenagers is challenging but so worth it! On November 19, 2020, our family of 5 grew to a family of 7 when our 15-year-old twin girls moved in. Together, we decided to invite them into our family after we found out about the abuse that they were experiencing.

Our girls may look identical on the outside but are two very different and unique people with different dreams. One desired a mom, dad, and siblings and one desired a safe place to find her independence. Today, I can tell you that both dreams are valid, I can also tell you that our family had to learn to accept and embrace both of their hearts' desires even if it differed from ours.

Of course, my husband and I hoped both girls would want us to be their parents, but, we had to learn and accept and respect both choices. Both of our girl's stories are beautiful and both have brought joy and strength to our family and our community.

On our adoption day, one took our last name, one did not.

Story continued on page 5

October, November, December 2025

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A Message from Our CEO: The Certainty of Belonging

Dear Partners,

At the heart of our mission is one guiding truth that every child deserves a safe, loving, and permanent home. For children in foster care, permanency is not just about stability, it is about belonging. It is about knowing where you will spend holidays, who will be cheering you on at school events, and who will still be there for you when you are grown. Permanency is the foundation for healing, growth, and the hope of a brighter tomorrow.

Foster care provides a critical bridge during times of uncertainty, but it is not meant to be the destination. Our ultimate goal is always to support children in safely returning home to their biological families whenever possible. Reunification is a beautiful and powerful outcome, restoring families and giving children the chance to thrive with those who love them most. Yet, there are times when returning home is not possible. In those moments, adoption becomes a path toward permanence.

Adoption is never without loss. It begins with a child losing their first family. But even amid grief, love can grow. Adoption offers children the chance to know without question that they are chosen, cherished, and wanted. Every adoption story reminds us of the resilience of children and the extraordinary capacity of families to open their hearts. National Adoption Month in November reminds us all to honor these children and families.

As we walk alongside children and families on this journey, we are also entering a new chapter in our own story. Our organization is preparing to move into a new location that has been thoughtfully designed to meet the unique needs of the children and families we serve. This new home will allow us to create a warm and welcoming space for family visits. Most importantly, it will be a place where every person who enters feels safe, respected, and valued.

We could not do this work without you. Your partnership makes it possible for us to build futures filled with hope. Thank you for believing in our mission and for standing with children who need us most. Together, we are turning loss into love, and uncertainty into belonging.

With gratitude

Ginger Griffith

President and CEO

Partnership for Strong Families

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: HELP ME GROW

We are honored to partner with the Children's Trust of Alachua County to bring the Help Me Grow Program to Alachua County. Help Me Grow is a national initiative dedicated to supporting healthy child development for children birth to eight. The program is offered locally at both PSF Family Resource Centers in Gainesville, Library Partnership and SWAG. In addition, staff are doing outreach throughout all of Alachua County. Through our two Help Me Grow Coordinators, families are connected with educational programs and therapeutic services that empower parents and caregivers to help their children reach their individual full potential.

We recently sat down with the parents and had the wonderful opportunity to speak with Ebony and Travis, parents of Taevin, the most precious six-year-old. Ebony and Travis have been working closely with our Help Me Grow Coordinator, Katrina, to access resources that will support their young son.



Ebony first began noticing concerns when Taevin was nine months old. "He would master things and then, after a while, he would lose them," she recalled. "I was thinking, 'This isn't normal.'" For years, Ebony brought up her concerns with Taevin's pediatrician, with little support or insight provided due to their busy schedules.

This past spring, Ebony was introduced to the newly launched program. Ebony quickly completed the online screening and was connected to Katrina. In addition to getting to know Ebony and Taevin, Katrina conducted additional screenings with Taevin while Ebony completed two developmental questionnaires. "When the results came back, it gave me confirmation that we needed to move forward in getting a formal diagnosis," Ebony shared.

Katrina supported Ebony and Travis with finding the right resources and next steps to address their son's developmental needs. "It can be overwhelming at times when you're trying to navigate all of this as a parent," Ebony said, "but Help Me Grow gives you a sense of empowerment. It gives you a sense of hope, like you've got somebody who is backing you."

Through early intervention, personalized support, and strong community partnerships, Help Me Grow continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of local families by ensuring every child can thrive.

For more information on the Help Me Grow Program or to complete the initial screening, please visit <https://www.pfsf.org/resourcecenters/alachuahelpmegrowflorida/> or stop by one of the Gainesville Family Resource Centers.

NEW LOCATION ANNOUNCEMENT & RIBBON CUTTING

Celebrate the Launch of PSF's New Service Site!

Join us on November 6th, 2025, at 4:30pm for the exciting launch of PSF's new service site! We are thrilled to invite community members, partners, and supporters to be part of this special occasion.

We look forward to welcoming you as we embark on this new chapter of growth and collaboration! Attendees will have the chance to meet our dedicated team and learn more about the innovative programs we will be introducing, as well as see our space.

This event marks not only the celebration of our new location, but also highlights the collective efforts and shared vision aimed at positively impacting the lives of families in our region. Let us unite to commemorate this milestone and create a path toward brighter futures.



CASE MANAGEMENT INTRODUCTION - 4 SISTERS SOLUTIONS



As of January 1st, 4 Sisters Solutions has been providing comprehensive case management services for PSF in Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy and Taylor Counties. "By collaborating with 4 Sisters Solutions and their solution-focused, strength-based & trauma-informed approach to case management, we are expanding resources and creating a meaningful and lasting impact in our communities" Ginger Griffeth, President and CEO of Partnership for Strong Families.

4 Sisters Solutions is committed to building upon the strong foundation of services that Partnership for Strong Families has established. By enhancing existing programs and introducing new approaches to reunification, 4 Sisters Solutions will empower families with the tools they need for reconciliation and sustainable change. 4 Sisters Solutions is also employing staff who live in the local communities to better understand the needs of the families they will be serving.

ADOPTION STORY CONTINUED: THE NEWTON FAMILY

When our girls moved in they were unable to make eye contact, cringed when anyone touched them, or tried to hug them. I will never forget the day I was standing on an overlook in the rain trying to get a family picture. Just before I snapped the picture my son laid his head on his adopted sister's shoulder, she did not cringe but slowly leaned into him. It was that moment that took my breath away. I knew she was ours and we were hers.


From 2020 to now we have watched and celebrated our girls graduate from high school, one as valedictorian and the other as 3rd in their class, succeed in college classes, gain independence, advocate for foster children, move out, chase their dreams, and still come back home. Our journey has not been easy, but we would do it again and again. They are amazing young women and we are thankful to be a part of their lives forever!

There are lots of teens that are in need like our twins, teens that need love, stability, guidance, and a forever family. Our family would love to encourage you to take a risk and allow one of these teens to melt your heart.



FOSTERING & RECRUITMENT


The Recruitment team has certainly been busy this summer! We've enjoyed many opportunities to table at events around the area and present to various churches and community groups. Each of these events allows us to bring greater awareness to the need for loving, stable foster homes and help others see the real children in the facts and figures of foster care. As we transition into fall, we look forward to tabling at the seasonal activities around the area and speaking to more churches and groups. We have a particularly great need for families willing to give a permanent home to our teens waiting in foster care for an adoptive match. If you have questions or would like more information on foster care or adopting from foster, we would love to speak with you! Contact us at (352) 244-1615 or HopePartner@pfsf.org.



AUG. 2025

PSF by the Numbers

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 647 | Children in Out-of-Home Care |
| 177 | Cumulative Adoptions SFY 24-25 |
| 2611 | Resource Center Visits in August |
| 150 | Licensed Foster Homes |

 **PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG FAMILIES**

BACK-TO-SCHOOL UPDATE

A Strong Start for All Students!

By Brianna Peterson

Thanks to our incredible community, we were able to support 462 youth in out-of-home care during this year's Back-to-School Drive! Seven sponsors, fourteen individual donors, eighteen donation bin partners, and twenty-two volunteers helped to ensure each student in care has a backpack filled with tools they need for the upcoming school year.

We also organized two Back-to-School events in the community to support students in under-served areas. In Lake City, our NorthStar Family Resource Center partnered with Community Barbers of Lake City to provide 743 students with free haircuts and school supplies, along with 500 backpacks donated by the local Wal-Mart. For the event's 10th anniversary, over 40 community partners gathered to support families and prepare local youth for the coming school year.

In Fort White, the PSF-led Children's Partnership Council (CPC) of Columbia County coordinated an event and resource fair at Fort White High School. 18 local agencies served over 300 students with free supplies. Families appreciated learning about support in their area. We enjoyed the sense of fellowship and empowerment that was shared during these wonderful events!



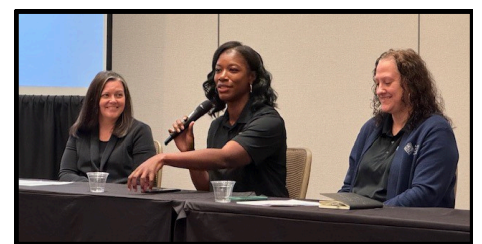
PSF AROUND THE AREA



NSFRC Back-to-School Drive



SWAG Family Resource Center Goes to the Zoo!



Chief of Case Management and Permanency
Alissa Cross Attends the Alliance for
Workforce Enhancement Conference



PSF CEO Ginger Griffith speaks at
the DCF Summit



TCCRC Networking
Fair



Philip Mobley Speaks at "What Happened
to Our Hospitals Community Event?"



Legal Permanence: A Brief and Partial History

By Kelsey Burnett

In 1997, Congress passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). 1997 also happens to be the year I graduated from law school and discovered the child welfare system. I was the new kid on the block in a small prosecuting attorney's office in West Virginia, and I was tasked with handling civil child abuse and neglect cases (what in Florida we call dependency cases) on behalf of our local Department of Health and Human Resources (the equivalent of Florida's Department of Children and Families).

I was nervous and excited, as newly minted baby lawyers tend to be, and fortunately for me, one of the first things that happened was a training on the new federal law, ASFA, and the corresponding changes to WV's state statutes. ASFA refocused federal child welfare law on child safety and timely permanence for youth in foster care, as well as on encouraging adoption, and like West Virginia, the other 49 states made changes to their laws and policies consistent with ASFA.

Florida law is detailed in its approach. It includes specific possible permanency outcomes. The top three, in order of preference, are Reunification, Adoption, and Permanent Guardianship. FL law also provides that permanency should occur in the shortest time possible but no later than one year from removal or adjudication of dependency. There was concern that too many children were lingering in foster care without permanence, and the laws were designed to address that concern.

If you read my articles, please remember this, as in my next article, I plan to talk about Permanent Guardianship specifically. Although the court is required by law to retain jurisdiction of cases that close in Permanent Guardianship, allowing for the possibility of reopening and modifying its order, Permanent Guardianship is meant to be permanent. In my next article, I will delve into what this means and how it plays out in real life.

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 4, 2025, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM – NorthStar Family Resource Center's Community Health and Wellness Expo at Richardson Community Center, 255 NE Coach Anders Lane, Lake City, FL 32055. The event is open to the entire community. It will provide health screenings, health discussions, and exercise classes for all ages and abilities.

October 6, 2025, 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM – TCCR Celebrity Waiter Event at Beef 'O' Brady's, 7050 NW 140th St, Chiefland, FL 32626. Twelve community leaders will greet guests and share how the Tri-County Community Resource Center connects local families with vital services. Dine with family and friends, visit with local Celebrity Waiters, and consider making a donation to benefit TCCRC before you head out.

November 19 – December 12: Wish Upon A Star Volunteering at Campus USA Credit Union, 107 NW 140th Terrace, Newberry, FL 32669. Join us for a few hours to prepare the gifts for the children we care for. We will be sending out a link to sign up in mid-October or you can email Bri at brianna.peterson@pfsf.org to sign up now.



PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG FAMILIES

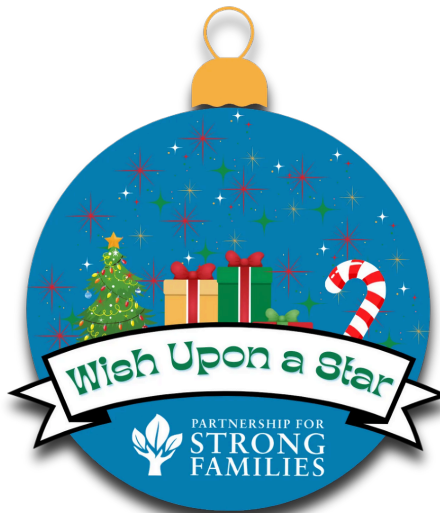
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Learn more about
how our innovative
services are keeping
our community's
children safe.
Visit us at
www.pfsf.org



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

Our annual Wish Upon a Star donation campaign for the youth in our care has arrived!



Scan here to
Sponsor a Child!



Scan here to
Donate!