



PARTNERSHIP FOR
STRONG
FAMILIES

PARTNERSHIP CONNECTION NEWSLETTER



PSF Staff Recognition Awards

Child Welfare: From Prevention to Permanency

By Amanda Demaria, Director for Development and Engagement

For us, child welfare is our commitment to ensuring each child grows up free of abuse and neglect. Actions matter when supporting and creating safe, nurturing environments where children thrive.

Children are the foundation of our community. When they experience abuse, neglect, or instability, the impact is felt throughout society. We exist to protect vulnerable children, promote healthy family dynamics, and ensure every child is part of a safe and supportive home. Community-based child welfare services work because we bring resources to families, foster trust, and encourage collaboration. By working with case management, we respond quickly and tailor solutions to meet unique family needs, often preventing crises from escalating into child removal.

Our Core Principles

Partnership for Strong Families is guided by values that shape every decision:

- Provide a safe environment for all children
- Make prevention of abuse and neglect a community priority
- Individualize services for children and families
- Respect dignity and pursue permanency
- Partner with communities and families for better outcomes
- Honor diversity in every interaction
- Commit to accountability through measurable outcomes
- Maintain children in their homes whenever safely possible

Our principles guide every decision to prioritize children's well-being and strengthen families.

Article continued on page three.

**January,
February,
March
2026**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

CHILD WELFARE	1
A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO	2
CHILD WELFARE CONTINUED	3
WHY WE FOSTER AND ADOPT	3
PSF AWARD CEREMONY	4
COMMUNITY RESOURCE NAVIGATOR PROGRAM	4
PARTNER SHOUTOUT: FAITH COMMUNITY	5
CASE MANAGEMENT INTRODUCTION – CAMELOT COMMUNITY CARE	5
WISH UPON A STAR	6
KELSEY'S CORNER	7
KEY PROTECTIVE FACTOR: CONCRETE SUPPORT	7



A Message from Our CEO: An Open Letter to Our Incredible Team

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear PSF Team,

As we close out another year and look ahead to the next, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you. The work you do behind the scenes makes an extraordinary difference in the lives of children and families every single day.

Your dedication to keeping kids safe is the foundation of everything we stand for. From recruiting amazing foster homes to ensure every child has a loving and supportive environment, to matching each child with the best home for them, your efforts are life-changing. You support caregivers (biological, foster, and adoptive) with the resources they need to provide secure homes. You use creativity and perseverance to secure donors and additional funding, and you stretch every dollar in our budget to deliver far more than the minimum.

Administrative work may not always be visible, but its impact is profound. Every efficiency you discover, every process you improve, and every challenge you overcome helps us provide better care for the children who depend on us. These victories, both big and small, are what allow our mission to thrive.

Please know that your hard work does not go unnoticed. You are the heartbeat of this agency, and your compassion and professionalism set the standard for excellence. Thank you for showing up every day with determination and heart. Together, we are strengthening families and building brighter futures for kids who need us most.

With gratitude

Ginger Griffeth
President and CEO
Partnership for Strong Families

Ms. Elizabeth Mitchell,
Chair

Ms. Kay Ayers,
Chair Emeritus

Mr. Guy Jopling,
Treasurer

Mr. Denny George,
Secretary

Mr. Kenny Brighton,
Chair-Elect

Mr. Will Halvosa

Dr. Timothea
Jackson

Ms. Lisa Lee

Ms. Lashone
Surrency

Rev. Sharon Surrency

We have moved! This fall, we relocated to two new Gainesville offices.
PSF Corporate Office: 2850 NW 43rd Street, Suite 200| Gainesville, FL 32606
Gainesville Service Site: 5719 NW 13th Street| Gainesville, FL 32653

CHILD WELFARE: FROM PREVENTION TO PERMANENCY CONTINUED

The following departments live these principles every day:

- **Clinical and Youth Champions** – Supporting youth with behavioral and mental health needs
- **Data & Technology** – Driving decisions through information and innovation
- **Development & Engagement** – Building a strong community of supports
- **Family Resource Centers** – Offering community support to strengthen families
- **Foster Home & Kinship Care Licensing/Recruitment** – Building and supporting temporary homes
- **Human Resources, Legal, Training, & Quality Assurance** – Supporting staff and compliance
- **Independent Living** – Equipping young adults for success
- **Adoptions & Placement** – Building permanency for youth
- **Utilization Management** – Ensuring resources are used effectively
- **Case management Oversight & Contracts** – Supporting youth and families

Child welfare is not just the services we provide; it's our shared responsibility. We invite you to join us in this most important work. As you read through this newsletter, we ask you to consider the best way for you to get involved. By working together with families, communities, and partners, we can create a future where every child feels safe, valued, and supported.

Amanda can be reached at amanda.demaria@pfsf.org or (352) 359-8169.

WHY WE FOSTER AND ADOPT

We often talk about child welfare as a field you are called to work in, no matter which department you're a part of. Some of our staff have also answered that call in their personal lives. Here are a couple of their stories.

Jessica Kinton, Adoptions Program Director (Adoptive Parent)

I adopted after working in child welfare for approximately 4 years. I always enjoyed working with teens and became invested in their futures as there was limited opportunity for them to achieve permanency or have a good support system in place after aging out. While I was an Adoption Case Manager, I met and quickly built a strong mentoring relationship with one of the young teens I worked with. After she experienced a failed adoptive placement, I vowed if she remained in foster care at the age of 16, I would apply to adopt her. This is us on our adoption finalization day!



Kari Etters, Adoption Case Manager (Foster Parent)

I was a foster parent from 2018 to 2022 before working in child welfare, and that experience guided me into this profession. Without it, I wouldn't have gotten my first job at DCF working for a new program to foster connections between prospective foster parents and the agencies across the state to begin the process. It was during this time I knew my talents were to work within the dependency system itself. This is a picture of two of the kids who were with me until they reunified with their family!



ANNUAL STAFF AWARDS



COMMUNITY RESOURCE NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

Prevention is powerful! Established in 2023, our Community Resource Navigation Program is an expansion of our Family Resource Center Network into rural Alachua County communities not easily served by one of our family resource centers.

By meeting families where they are, we prevent child abuse and a family's challenge from becoming a crisis. Allow us to share one of our family success stories from this past year.

"A local mother of two came to one of our CRN locations seeking emergency resources for housing and employment. With our support, she completed her education at Santa Fe College, secured stable housing for her family, and is now employed with a major home improvement retailer. Her journey is a powerful example of resilience, and we are honored to continue supporting her as she builds a brighter future."

Thank you Children's Trust of Alachua County for partnering with us on child abuse prevention!



Community
Resource
Navigation
Program



PARTNER SHOUTOUT: FAITH COMMUNITY

We are very thankful to all the faith partners in our area who have stepped up as advocates in our community to help raise awareness about foster care and the need for more foster parents. Various congregations throughout our area have invited us to come speak, join them for tabling events, made announcements and passed out flyers. Every opportunity someone has to learn more about foster care inches them closer to saying yes and opening their home.

A special thanks to Victory Christian Teaching Ministries in Lake City, Greenhouse Church in Gainesville, City Church in Gainesville, North Lake City Church of God, Trinity United Methodist (Gainesville), Christ Central (Lake City), and Southside Baptist in Perry!

We appreciate the faith community working together to meet needs in our community. There are also many churches that are partnering through the Care Portal Network to meet tangible needs of families and children involved in the foster care system.

To learn more about how your faith community can get involved, email us at hopepartner@pfsf.org.



CASE MANAGEMENT INTRODUCTION - CAMELOT COMMUNITY CARE



Since 2010, Camelot Community Care has been a child welfare partner with PSF. Camelot currently provides comprehensive case management services for PSF in Columbia, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, and Suwannee Counties.

Camelot works with PSF to continue building a strong network of services and supports for families. Camelot's Child Welfare Case Management programs provide dependency and permanency services to children in state custody in out of home care. Case Managers work alongside families to establish goals, creating plans to achieve the goals, providing services to meet needs identified in assessments, monitoring progress toward achievement of the goals, and closing cases when goals have been achieved.

We are honored to work along side Camelot to strengthen families.

WISH UPON A STAR

Our community came together this holiday season to make the 2025 Wish Upon a Star gift drive a joyful success. With the support of more than 40 dedicated volunteers, Partnership for Strong Families packed gift bags for 915 youth in our care. 147 donors celebrated the season of giving with us by adopting children's Star Wish Lists. 30 businesses, organizations, and faith-based groups also contributed their time and resources to spread hope and cheer. Our partners with Ticket to Dream donated boxes of books, clothing, socks, makeup, games, and more, adding extra cheer and comfort to every gift bag.

We are deeply grateful for the thoughtfulness and care our supporters showed by choosing meaningful and personalized gifts for our children. The youth we serve face challenges and changes that make the holidays a difficult time for many but Wish Upon a Star reminds them that they are seen, cared for, and loved.





KELSEY'S CORNER



Putting the Permanence in Permanent Guardianship

By Kelsey Burnette, Chief Legal Officer

As mentioned in my last article, Permanent Guardianship (PG) is the third preferred permanency option after Reunification and Adoption. Like Reunification and Adoption, it is meant to be permanent; however, the Court is required to retain jurisdiction over the case, and parental rights remain intact. Therefore, it is possible for PG cases to reopen.

The best reason for a PG case to reopen is due to a child being reunified with a parent. The Court determines that the circumstances that brought the child into care have been remedied and that returning the child to the parent would not be detrimental to the child. The most successful situations are when all parties, are all in agreement that reunification is best for the child.

Sometimes PG cases reopen because the Permanent Guardian is no longer able to care for the child. We see when an older caregiver passes away or otherwise incapacitated. Sometimes in these situations other family members are able to step in to assume Permanent Guardianship over the child. This must still go through the Court for oversight and approval. Other times, the child must return to foster care, and the dependency case reopens to assess current circumstances and identify a new goal for the child.

On rare occasions, a PG case may be reopened for purposes of adoption. This would not be done unless there has been a significant change in circumstances. This may occur when the child's parents die following the closure of the case to PG. In some cases, the caregiver would like to adopt, and the child would like to be adopted. In those situations, the case is reopened and the goal changed to adoption. Caregivers enter into the adoption process, which includes an application to adopt, an adoption home study, and other legal requirements. A caregiver changing their mind about PG would not constitute the basis for reopening to seek adoption. In all cases, both case management and DCF's Children's Legal Services will carefully review the circumstances to determine that a PG case meets the standard required for reopening.

There are also situations where a Permanent Guardian struggles to meet the needs of the child in their care. In these cases, caregivers are encouraged to contact Partnership for Strong Families, as there may be additional services or supports provided to help stabilize and maintain permanence for the child.

KEY PROTECTIVE FACTOR: CONCRETE SUPPORT

Alachua County and Frog Song Organics teamed up with us to provide healthy food to Gainesville families. Thanks to these awesome partners, we provided fresh produce to over 400 families in November and December!





PARTNERSHIP FOR
STRONG
FAMILIES

PSF Headquarters
2850 NW 43rd St., Ste.200
Gainesville, FL 32606
(352) 244-1500

Learn more about
how our innovative
services are keeping
our community's
children safe.

Visit us at
www.pfsf.org



COUNCIL
ON
ACCREDITATION
ENGAGE. EMPOWER. EVOLVE.



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY



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



Scan here to donate!



**Scan here to learn more
about foster care!**