



# PARTNERSHIP CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

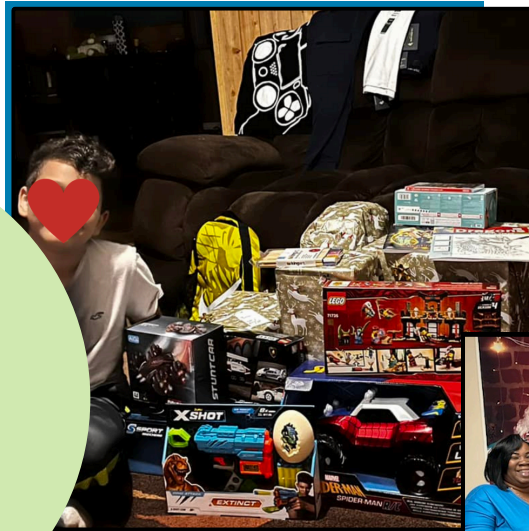
*January  
thru  
March  
2025*



**FEATURE ARTICLE:**

**PARTNER & DONOR  
SPOTLIGHTS!**

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## WISH UPON A STAR GRATITUDE

As the holiday rush fades, we're filled with gratitude, joy, and warmth in our hearts reflecting on the incredible success of this year's Wish Upon a Star holiday toy drive. Thanks to the unwavering generosity of more than 250 donors, we were able to fulfill holiday wishes for nearly 1,050 youth in care, ensuring they experienced the magic of the season during what can often be a challenging time.

Your kindness brought smiles, hope, and bright holiday memories to the children and teens we serve. Each gift represented more than a present—it was a reminder to these youth that they are loved, supported, and not alone.

We'd like to extend a special thank you to UF Mover Guys, who seamlessly relocated our holiday workshop from our Gainesville office to Campus USA Credit Union's Headquarters in Jonesville. Campus USA graciously hosted us for 4.5 weeks, during which their staff went above and beyond—volunteering their time and stepping in to purchase gifts as the drive came to a close. And we could not do it without the 91 volunteers who showed up daily to assist.

To all our donors, sponsors, patrons, and partners: your support made this year's holiday drive a success. Together, we're building brighter futures and stronger communities, one small act of kindness at a time. Thank you for being a part of this heartwarming tradition.

We look forward to partnering with you again next year to spread even more holiday cheer!

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# A Message from our CEO

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Partners,

As we prepare to welcome a new year, I am excited to share updates on important changes within our organization and our contracted Case Management Agencies. These developments represent a significant opportunity to enhance the care and support we provide to children and families across North Central Florida.

Every three years, Partnership for Strong Families undertakes a comprehensive procurement process to ensure that our partners align with our mission and meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve. This year, we received proposals from four highly qualified agencies, and after an in-depth evaluation, we are pleased to announce that Camelot Community Care, 4Sisters, and Jewish Family Services have been selected to provide case management services across our 13-county region.

These changes will take effect on January 1, 2025, and bring a wealth of enhanced resources, innovative ideas, and specialized expertise to our system of care. By working with these exceptional agencies, we aim to strengthen our support network, ensuring that every child and family in our region receives the care they deserve.

To make this transition as seamless as possible, we have developed a robust, multi-tiered transition plan that prioritizes continuity of care for the children and families we serve. Additionally, a comprehensive communications strategy is in place to keep our families, partners, and donors informed throughout this process.

This season, our Wish Upon a Star program brought so much joy to so many children served by our agency. Thanks to your generosity, we provided nearly 1,050 children with their wish lists including toys, books, electronics, and holiday cheer. Your contributions truly made a difference and ensured that the holiday season was bright for so many.

As we embark on this new chapter in 2025, I am confident in the positive changes ahead. The partnerships we've cultivated and the innovative approaches we are implementing position us to make a greater impact than ever before. Together, we are not just meeting challenges but building brighter futures and making lasting, meaningful changes in the lives of Florida's children and families.

Thank you for your unwavering support, collaboration, and commitment to our mission. I look forward to continuing our work together and celebrating the successes we achieve as a community in the coming year.

Ms. Kay Ayers,  
*Chair*

Ms. Kitty McElhaney,  
*Chair Emeritus*

Mr. Guy Jopling,  
*Treasurer*

Mr. Kenny Brighton,  
*Secretary*

Ms. Elizabeth Mitchell,  
*Chair-Elect*

Mr. Patrick Allen

Ms. Lashone Surrency

Mr. Denny George

Dr. Timothea Jackson

Ms. Lisa Lee

Mr. Will Halvosa

Rev. Sharon Surrency,  
*Registered Nurse*

Warm regards

Ginger Griffeth  
President and CEO  
Partnership for Strong Families



## RESOURCE CENTER UPDATES

This holiday season, our community continues to come together to support those in need. SWAG FRC, through the SW Advocacy Group, provided 200 Thanksgiving baskets to families in need. Thanks to an annual donation from Trinity United Methodist Church, Library Partnership Resource Center and our Community Resource Navigators distributed an additional 30 Thanksgiving baskets. Additionally, Tri-County Community Resource Center provided 25 baskets, allowing families to share a homemade holiday meal. TCCRC again led efforts for Toys for Tots, with 701 children being served in the tri-county area alone, and all the resource centers and Community Resource Navigators ensuring families enrolled had a bright holiday. The Miracle on Main Street program, sponsored by the Junior League of Gainesville, also provided children's gifts to 20 of our families in Alachua County. The festivities continued throughout December with onsite celebrations for families and the community!



## KELSEY'S KORNER



I am stepping outside my comfort zone for this article. I'm pretty good at making book recommendations, but this time, I'm recommending a television show that I have been enjoying on Apple TV. It's called, "Trying," and it's definitely worth watching.



The title of the show didn't draw me in when I first saw it, but I'm so glad I took a second look. As you make your way through the series, the word "trying" takes on so much significance. Initially, the couple at the heart of the story, Nikki and Jason, are trying to have a baby. Later, they are trying to be approved to adopt a child. Finally, they are trying to be patient as they wait to be matched with a child. The child welfare system is often trying their patience, and when they finally have children placed with them, the word "trying" takes on a whole new meaning, which most parents can probably relate to.

Although "Trying" is set in London, there are plenty of similarities to the child welfare system in Florida, and the show does a great job of capturing the challenges of infertility, as well as the decision to become an adoptive parent and figuring out how to maneuver through the child welfare system. I enjoyed the portrayal of the social workers Nikki and Jason interact with and the many emotions the couple experience as they go through the foster-adopt process. The acting is excellent, and you will laugh and cry right along with the characters.

The show also does a nice job of portraying the children, Princess and Tyler, who Nikki and Jason end up becoming a family with. They don't shy away from the effects of trauma on children, the importance of preserving sibling bonds, or the challenges in addressing questions about biological parents and family.

The show is a lot of fun because Nikki and Jason's journey is set against the backdrop of their lives, including their own somewhat dysfunctional but very lovable extended family, their jobs, their friends, and their challenges with affordable housing. You'll become attached to this quirky bunch and enjoy watching them learn and grow and develop. I highly recommend giving "Trying" a try, and I hope you like it as much as I do.

# PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - RESOURCE CENTER



Our Tri-County Community Resource Center (TCCRC) received a generous \$100,000 donation from Suncoast Credit Union in October. This significant contribution has allowed TCCRC to expand and enhance essential services for tri-county residents affected by recent hurricanes. The funding supports vital needs such as food, housing, clean-up, repairs, and more. Over the past several years, Suncoast Credit Union has been an on-going supporter of TCCRC (and the tri-county communities) and we are extremely grateful for their continued commitment. With the support of key donors such as Suncoast Credit Union, TCCRC is better able to address our patrons' urgent and evolving needs, empowering families, building resilience, and ensuring access to resources that enable them to rebuild and thrive during challenging times.



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT - CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL

This quarter, we are thrilled to shine our donor spotlight on Congregation B'nai Israel for their unwavering generosity, support, and volunteerism. For the past several years, this incredible congregation has gone above and beyond to support our mission by participating in our Back-to-School Drive, Wish Upon a Star Holiday Drive, and The Amazing Give. They've also stepped up during unexpected moments of need, providing hurricane relief supplies, clothing for youth in foster care, and essential baby items.

Their heartfelt commitment shines brightly in their words during our recent Wish Upon a Star initiative: "This is our favorite program each year – just knowing the joy children will feel during difficult times of their lives!"

We are deeply grateful for Congregation B'nai Israel's steadfast partnership and their dedication to sharing our mission and needs with the broader community. Together, we are making a lasting difference in the lives of the children and families we serve.





# ANNUAL HOLIDAY CELEBRATION & AWARD CEREMONY

On December 4th, PSF staff came together for our annual holiday party, a joyful celebration of the season and our collective accomplishments. The event featured a delicious holiday meal, fun games, and a special award recognition to honor the incredible efforts of our staff throughout the year.

A heartfelt thank-you goes out to our Employee Recognition Committee for their dedication in planning this festive gathering. Moments like these remind us of the strength and camaraderie that drive our mission forward.



## **Outstanding Employee:**

Administrative Services: Danielle Alenda  
Financial Services and Eligibility: Jean Patray  
IT, Facilities, and UM: Sarah Jordan

Clinical Services and Development and Engagement: Jacob Clore  
Resource Centers and Federal Grant: Elisha Johnson

Case Management and Permanency (Contract Support, QA, Permanency, IL): Holly Brown

Case Management and Permanency (Adoptions): Cecelia Buckley  
Placements and Caregiver Support (Placements, Kinship, Recruitment/Outreach): Angie Bell

Licensing and Caregiver Support: Nedge Jean-Bart

## **Most Valuable Partner:**

Administrative Services: Lisa Vickery  
Financial Services and Eligibility: Trina Ratliff  
IT, Facilities, and UM: Chastidy Starling

Clinical Services and Development and Engagement: Juanita Mobley  
Resource Centers and Federal Grants: David Peters

Case Management and Permanency (Contract Support, QA, Permanency, IL): Ryan Parker

Case Management and Permanency (Adoptions): Gregory Days  
Placements and Caregiver Support (Placements, Kinship, Recruitment/Outreach): Rose Lawson

Licensing and Caregiver Support: Valerie Harper

## **Special Awards:**

Guardian of Efficiency Award: Maxim White  
CEO Star Fish Award: Jessica Kinton



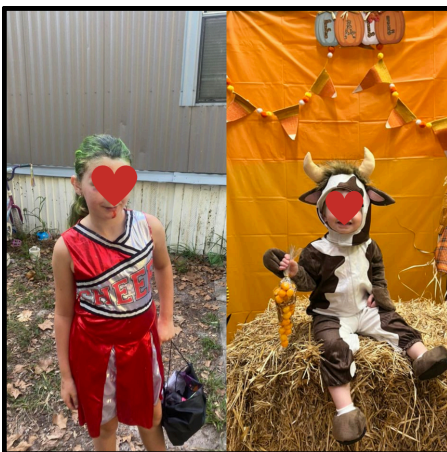


# ADOPTIONS UPDATE

During this past quarter, PSF Adoptions was able to celebrate as a community through our 10th Annual Superhero 5K, as well as with our adoptive families during our annual National Adoption Month event held at O2B Kids Super Center. This quarter has been especially busy as our adoptions team assisted with achieving permanency for an additional 63 primary children and 12 Out of County or ICPC children. Seven of the primary children finalized during this period were recruit children who were matched with their forever family. PSF Adoptions is on track for meeting the DCF contract goal with 62% of the annual goal met at the close of the 2nd quarter.



## FOSTER & ADOPTIVE KIDS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

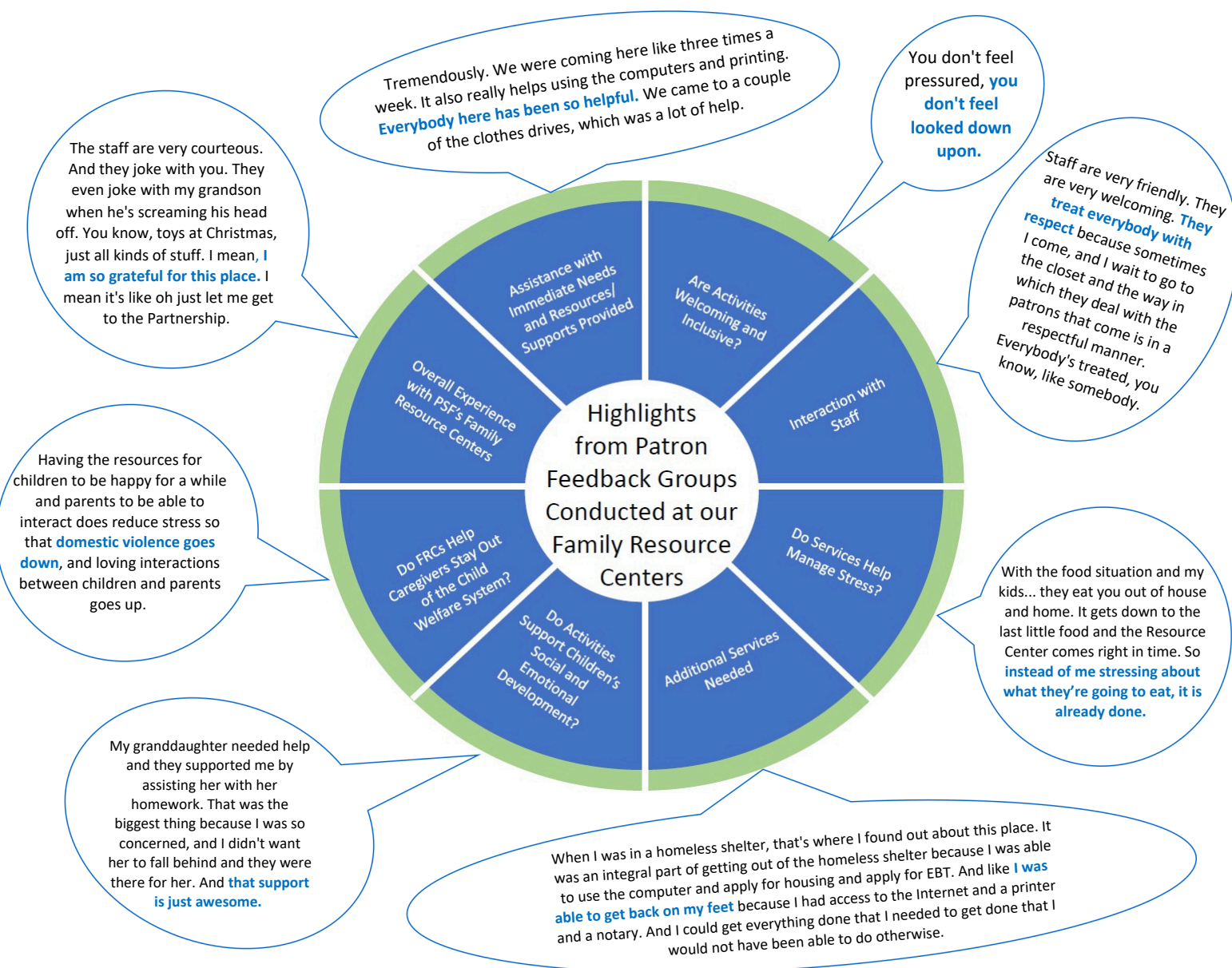


We are endlessly grateful for our incredible foster and adoptive families who open their hearts and homes to children, creating safe spaces for them to build healthy attachments and cherished memories. During the holidays—like Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other special celebrations—these families provide warmth, love, stability, and joy that make the season truly magical. We're especially touched when they share their photos and stories, capturing moments of holiday cheer and the bonds that make every memory unforgettable.



# FEDERAL GRANT WRAP-UP

Five years ago, the Children's Bureau awarded Partnership for Strong Families a \$2.5 million federal grant to lead a five-year project aimed at evaluating, refining, and expanding our Resource Center Network. We will be sharing highlights of our outcomes in our next newsletter as well. Much of our research was qualitative and included eight Patron Feedback Groups (focus groups) across four of our Family Resource Centers—to gather insights on the alignment of our services and supports with the protective factor model through nine targeted questions. Take a look at some of the direct feedback received from families and individuals served through the resource centers.



Check out our website to read the full reports containing information regarding the patrons' responses to each of the questions we asked them! <https://www.pfsf.org/>





## 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](http://www.pfsf.org)



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



PARTNERSHIP FOR  
STRONG  
FAMILIES

## THE AMAZING GIVE



Your opportunity to  
positively impact the  
youth and families we  
serve with your donation is  
on the horizon! The  
Amazing Give 12-hour  
giving event is

**April 24, 2025.**

Whether your passion lies  
in prevention of abuse or  
neglect or providing  
resources to youth in care,  
there's a cause you can  
impact with your donation.