



PARTNERSHIP FOR
**STRONG
FAMILIES**

Partnership Connection

APRIL - JUNE
2021

OFFICE LOCATION

PSF Headquarters
5950 NW 1st Place
Suite A
Gainesville, FL 32607

CONTACT US

P: 352.244.1500
F: 352.244.1647
www.pfsf.org

FOLLOW US

@PartnershipForStrongFamilies

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Featured Story

Learn how you can
support PSF during The
Amazing Give this year on
page 3!

NORTHSTAR FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER GRAND OPENING

By Deborah Rubin, Community Relations Assistant

On March 18, 2021, NorthStar Family Resource Center officially opened its doors to the community of Lake City. After over a year of planning, we were excited to have this monumental moment.

More than 70 people joined us at the Richardson Community Center to celebrate the grand opening. The Resource Center will occupy the Ferguson Building next door to the Richardson Community Center. This center, like our other four Resource Centers, will offer services for all ages in the community. These services range from summer enrichment activities and after school homework help to employment services and support for senior adults, as well as, copying, faxing and computer access. We believe that the NorthStar Resource Center will be a light to the Lake City community and strengthen the children and families who live there.

This Resource Center was made possible by the Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families federal grant we received in 2019 from the Administration for Children and Families' Children's Bureau. The grant not only covered the possibility to open a Resource Center in Lake City, but also covers research to do to improve upon the work we are already doing in Gainesville and Trenton. See photos below from the grand opening and ribbon cutting!



If you would like to learn more about our Resource Centers, please visit www.pfsf.org/resourcecenters.

NORTHSTAR
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



A year since the COVID-19 closures impacted our nation and world, many of us have turned to reflecting on the impacts of the past year. To say that the pandemic has been difficult is the understatement of the year. Employment uncertainty has ravaged many households while it is challenging to find a family that has not been impacted directly or indirectly by a family member being diagnosed with COVID-19. Likewise, many families are grieving the loss of loved ones, as the current death tolls stands at over 530,000.

While the impacts of the virus have been immense, the strength and resiliency of our society and our network of care specifically has been just as high. Our staff has transitioned smoothly to a largely remote way of working and maintained high levels of productivity. In addition, our staff have found creative and innovative ways to serve their families.

For example, our Resource Center managers have met with patrons virtually and have even gone door-to-door delivering supplies to families. Meanwhile, our licensing and adoption teams have conducted PRIDE training classes in a virtual setting. Between April 2020 and December 2020, the number of Partner Family homes increased from 112 to 120. This demonstrates not only the dedication and innovation of our staff, but the resiliency and dedication of our Partner Families as well. Through transitions to in-home learning, closed childcare facilities and limited in-person resources, our Partner Families have proven that they are more than committed to ensuring our children are supported and well taken care of.

Last month, our agency reached an important milestone in prevention by opening our fifth Resource Center and first in Lake City. The NorthStar Family Resource Center is the result of several years of planning, and was made possible thanks to funding from the Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families federal grant from the Administration of Children and Families as well as a great network of community support. The Resource Center resides in the second-largest of our counties, and as its name suggests, we hope it serves as a bright beacon of hope for families, providing resources and supports implemented to promote resiliency and self-sufficiency in families.

Stephen Pennypacker
President/CEO

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



I have been at PSF for nearly three months now, learning my new role and about the broad spectrum that is child welfare. I have found areas within the continuum of care that I am passionate about already and areas that I still want to learn more about. One goal of my team, and now a big mission of mine, is to cultivate more foster and adoptive families that will welcome sibling groups and teens into their home. This is an ongoing need locally, state-wide and nationally, and we

are diligently working on ways to meet these needs.

ribbon cutting in partnership with The Lake City Chamber of Commerce. This incredible resource to the community will officially open its doors on March 18th with a safe, socially distanced celebration. This ceremony is a culmination of hard work from a dedicated community and staff, and meets a need while extending our Resource Center Model to its 5th operation.

We have many new projects, media opportunities, social media campaigns, and special recognition happening in the upcoming months. Make sure you stay up to date on our social media pages, website, and newsletter. I am grateful to be at PSF with a hardworking, passionate team. You will not want to miss the work we are doing to further our mission of strengthening families. Thank you for supporting me these past couple of months and feel free to reach out with any ideas, big or small!

The NorthStar Family Resource Center Grand Opening has also been a top priority of mine since starting at PSF. By working with an incredible team, we have planned a grand opening and

Stevie Doyle
Director of Communications and Engagement

THE AMAZING GIVE

By Jacob Clore, Community Engagement Specialist

In just a few short weeks, you have the opportunity to do something simply amazing for the children in our care. On April 22nd from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Partnership for Strong Families is participating in The Community Foundation of North Central Florida's The Amazing Give: Workday Edition fundraiser to benefit normalcy initiatives for local youth in foster care. What does normalcy look like you may ask? Normalcy includes any resources and experiences our children can utilize in order to enjoy their childhood to the fullest potential like any other child. Examples range from resources like a laptop to complete school work and funds to pay for a school uniform to experiences like having a dress for prom or a ticket for a child's school field trip.

These experiences Foster Hope for the children in our care, as they allow them to experience the joys of childhood while much of their current situation is constantly shifting. That is why during this year's Amazing Give, we are encouraging our donors to remember their own memorable childhood experiences using the hashtag #RememberWhen and donate to give similar opportunities to local youth in foster care. We are also partnering once again with local restaurant Dick Mondell's for a great fundraiser to benefit our Amazing Give efforts. Starting 6 p.m. April 21st and all day April 22nd, Dick Mondell's is donating all sales of drinks to PSF. If you are looking for a great place to eat during or after work, this is the place to stop by!

We hope you will join us April 22nd as we aim to raise over \$10,000 for normalcy initiatives for children in our care. To learn more about our fundraising campaign, visit www.theamazinggive.org and search for Partnership for Strong Families.

The Amazing Give Workday Edition

Here are five ways you
can participate!

**Workday
Edition**

THE AMAZING GIVE

April 22, 2021

7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

#REMEMBERWHEN
#FOSTERHOPE

1

Dick Mondell's Fundraiser

April 21 - 22
Starting at 6 p.m.
on April 21, and all
day April 22

2

Lunch Power Hour for a chance to win \$500

April 22
12 p.m. - 1 p.m.

Every \$5 enters donors for a
chance to win a \$20 Gator's
Dockside gift card.



3

President's Match

April 22
12 p.m. - 1 p.m.

4

Friends of PSF Challenge

April 22
5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

5

Facebook Fundraiser Challenge

Start a Facebook
Fundraiser for PSF during
The Amazing Give. The
fundraiser with the most
donors wins a \$60 Gator's
Dockside gift card

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

By Jacob Clore, Community Engagement Specialist

The shine of a spinning blue pinwheel blowing in the breeze ushers in the fantastic month of advocacy known as Child Abuse Prevention Month. During this month, PSF will highlight the incredible prevention efforts happening in our local communities while demonstrating how we can all make great childhoods happen for local children.

It is nearly impossible to mention child abuse prevention efforts in North Central Florida without highlighting the incredible efforts of our community partners over at the Alachua County Child Abuse Prevention Task Force. As the COVID-19 pandemic has sidelined larger scale community events, the task force decided to band together to bring important resources and parenting/safety supplies directly in the hands of caregivers that need them. In March, task force members assembled dozens of bags to be delivered to the Alachua County Health Department and PSF's Resource Centers in Gainesville for distribution to patrons. Speaking of PSF's network of Resource Centers, the opening of our fifth Resource Center in Lake City back in March (more on the front page) will bring PSF's prevention efforts to a new region. With strategic services like career and financial assistance to concrete supports like clothing, rent and utility assistance, the network of family Resource Centers are promoting resiliency and self-sufficiency for local families. Throughout April, the Resource Centers are also distributing child safety items and family picnic baskets with safety information and resources. Each site will also do a bulletin board or window display as well as a blue pinwheel garden. If you are interested in donating to support PSF's Resource Centers, visit www.pfsf.org/donate.



Finally, we could not forget to mention the incredible Partner Families that foster the children in our care. Their efforts to advocate for reunification and strengthening families within PSF's continuum of care speak volumes to their dedication to prevent the cycle of abuse and neglect. As the need for foster parents continues, we encourage anyone interested in strengthening local families to consider becoming a foster parent. To learn more, contact Recruitment Specialist Samantha Cowan at Samantha.Cowan@pfsf.org or (352) 213-7219.



May is National Foster Care Month

By Sara Lind, Outreach Recruitment Specialist

It is one of our favorite times of the year very soon...National Foster Care Month! This May, we celebrate the beauty that comes from foster care and acknowledge the hard work to still be done in ensuring local children have safe, loving families. During National Foster Care Month, we will be (virtually or socially distantly) gathered as a community to celebrate the incredible work that our Partner families do on a daily basis! Partnership for Strong Families' has incredible recruitment partners that are joining us in celebrating National Foster Care Month this May. You may see us tabling at a local church or one of our #WeFosterCare yard signs in your neighborhood! We believe that everyone can do something to support foster care, so join us on social media to learn more about how your family can get plugged into support local families this May.



Do you know an organization, business, or faith based institution that could benefit from hearing more about National Foster Care Month? Contact Sara Lind, Outreach Recruitment Specialist at 352-318-7604 or Sara.Lind@pfsf.org.

A NEW YEAR AT THE RESOURCE CENTERS

By Stacy Merritt, Director of Resource Centers

In response to the many unique challenges faced in 2020, PSF's Resource Center team entered the new year with a renewed focus on providing a sense of normalcy for local families and community members. One positive step in this direction occurred as Library Partnership Resource Center hosted their first ever Outdoor Family Movie Night (photos below) in February 2021. Recognizing the potential social-emotional impact of the pandemic on families, Library Partnership Resource Center's staff brainstormed ideas for providing a fun, yet safe activity for caregivers and children to enjoy together. Family Movie Night was specifically designed to promote positive parent-child interactions, develop social connections and reduce some of the household stressors (e.g., school, employment, social isolation) intensified by the pandemic. The event was made possible through community collaborations, including the Alachua County Sheriff's Office, Health Promotion and Wellness Coalition and Bread of the Mighty Food Bank. With tickets sold out in advance, a total of 44 individuals (11 families) came together, sitting in their own family "bubble" as a way of ensuring social distancing, to watch a family-friendly film, "Trolls World Tour." Children danced to the music and families laughed together throughout the movie – hopefully picking up a few subtle and relevant, life lessons along the way.

Denying our differences is denying the truth of who we are. – King Quincy

Real harmony takes lots of voices. Different voices. – Poppy

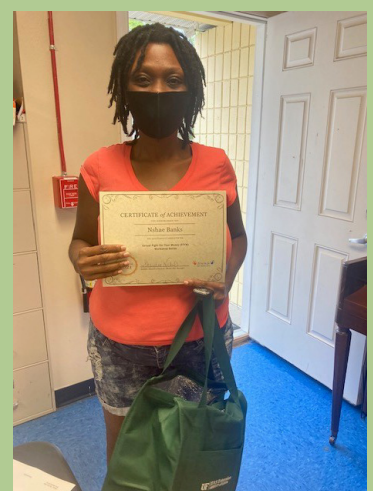
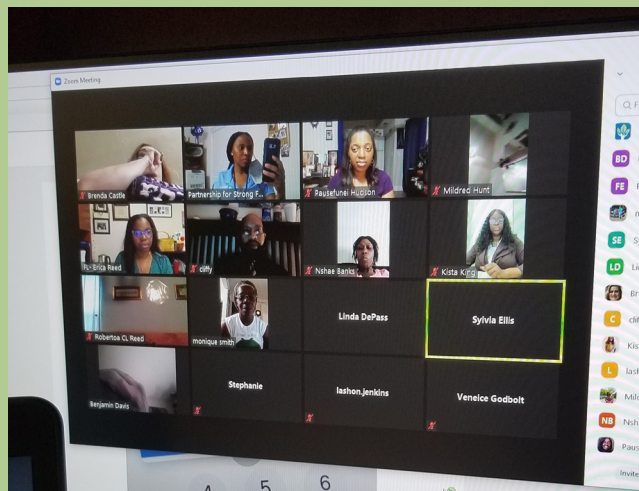
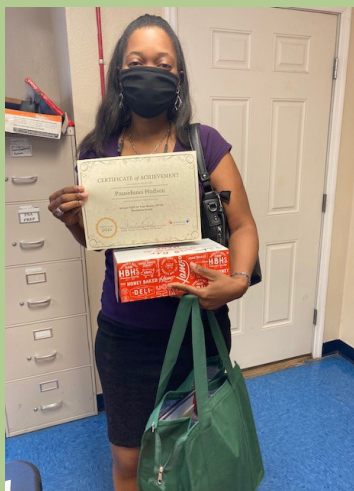


In recent months, the Resource Centers were also able to resume some more traditional programs, including our popular Fight for Your Money (FFYM) financial literacy program, funded by the Women's Giving Circle with additional financial support provided by Wells Fargo. FFYM was hosted by Cone Park Library Resource Center (CPLRC), using a virtual format in late-2020. Based on the success of this virtual format, CPLRC and SWAG Family Resource Center joined forces to co-host another virtual session of FFYM in March 2021. Some of the amazing partners who helped to make this year's program possible include: Catholic Charities, the Community Action Agency, University of Florida/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program, Wells Fargo and the Community Weatherization Coalition.

Some of the many, self-reported lessons learned by program participants include:

- "I don't make much money currently, [but] I can still implement a savings plan that'll work for me right now."
- "I knew a lot of the tips that were shared but I came away from class feeling smarter about my money."
-

See photos below from our FFYM program. An addition FFYM session will be hosted in-person at the Library Partnership Resource Center in April 2021.



Win Free Partnership for Strong Families' merch!

The first five people to email us will win Partnership for Strong Families' merchandise! Please email Stevie.Doyle@pfsf.org to participate.

#GetAttached

June is National Reunification Month! At Partnership for Strong Families, it is our hope that every child who comes into care can be safely reunified with their biological families. Prospective Partner Families often wonder, "how can I love a child who I know will eventually leave my home? Won't I get too attached?" The idea of getting attached to a child and them reunifying with their biological family can be hard for some families to imagine. While this can be difficult, our community needs foster parents that love the children in their home deeply even if for a short amount of time.

For a recent social media campaign, we asked some of our amazing Partner Families to share with us how they navigate getting attached.

"Getting attached to Foster care is the best thing we did. Working with the parents to help bring their family back together is always a wonderful thing... To watch a child go from scared to telling you thank you for all you have done is so heartwarming no other feeling feels that good. My heart is fulfilled by being a foster parent."

- Annette Blair O'Shell, Partner Family



"I treat each child that comes into my home as if they are my own & that means getting fully invested and attached. The heartache I feel when they leave means that I did my job well and loved that child with everything in me. Every child deserves to know that kind of love!"

- Stucky Family, Partner Family

"I've decided to get attached because I'm dedicated to helping families heal. I know by choosing to say 'yes' we can ultimately help change the course of a child's life, a family's life—and that's something I'm willing to do over & over & over again, even though I know I will always get too attached." - Robinson Family, Partner Family



"I never knew I could love someone else's child as much as I love my own. That was one of my internal fears of fostering. However, you can't help but to #GetAttached. These kiddos steal your heart and show you how to love unconditionally. The heartbreak that comes with saying goodbye also comes with joy of a family healing and reuniting." - Katie Chance, Partner Family

Children Partnership Council's Update

By Jacob Clore, Community Engagements Specialist

It is hard to believe it has been one year since the Children's Partnership Council meetings moved to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even from behind screens, Council members are determined to fill service gaps and strengthen their families amid the trials caused by the ongoing pandemic.

With Child Abuse Prevention Month upon us, Council members wanted to continue sponsoring safety items and other materials to encourage safe practices at home. However, many annual in-person events are still on-hold due to healthy safety guidelines. Fortunately, Council members have gotten creative to ensure events can still happen safely. During January's Baker-Bradford-Union meeting, one Council member from Baker County noted that the county's only OBGYN office had closed its doors. Noticing the gap in prenatal care for woman, Council members were determined to offer some way to help. In response, they voted in favor of sponsoring child safety items for Baker County Healthy Start's drive-thru community baby shower in April. The Suwannee-Lafayette-Hamilton Council also sponsored child safety items for drive-thru community baby showers in Suwannee and Lafayette counties.

During a time when many families are struggling to maintain employment, councils that have prioritized funding individual assistance requests for families have also provided much needed relief. These requests range from help with utility bills and rent to providing car seats and pack 'n' plays. For one family in Taylor County, assistance came right when they needed it as a mother had temporarily lost employment due to COVID quarantines and needed help paying her rent. Council funding helped her pay her rent and keep her home with her three children. There have been several requests just like this one, demonstrating the importance Council founding has on local families.

Heart Gallery

Meet Murphy - 12 years old



Murphy is a pleasant and playful young man who desires a forever family. Murphy has a sweet, gentle, and loving personality and a bright smile. His bright smile and infectious laugh always lights up any room. Murphy is an active child who enjoys outdoor activities such as running, dodge ball, and playing on the swings. He also likes to engage in younger style play such as tickling and chase. Murphy has the ability to play independently and has no issues playing with other children however he needs assistance in verbalizing his boundaries with other children. He is a very special child and would thrive with a family or individual that is able to offer him long term support, unconditional love, and stability while understanding his educational and developmental needs.

If you feel you or your family can meet the needs of Murphy, please do not hesitate to contact Seanetta Robinson at Seanetta.Robinson@pfsf.org or 386-243-8812.



PSF Headquarters
5950 NW 1st Place
Suite A
Gainesville, FL 32607
352.244.1500

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BACK TO SCHOOL

By Deborah Rubin, Community Relations Assistant

It's crazy to think we are already talking about Back to School, but it is right around the corner. Last year was different. We restructured our drive to plan for an unknown, upcoming school year amid Covid-19. Thankfully, this year is more predictable and we look forward to supplying school supplies for the children in our care for another year.

The Back to School Drive officially kicks off in July, but we begin planning as early as May. We wanted to start here by reaching out to our community early. If you would like to be involved in our Back to School Drive this year, we would love to partner with you as we make a difference in the lives of our local children educationally. It's important that each child goes back to school with exactly what they need to succeed.

If you would like to host a Back to School Drive bin at your business or organization, purchase school supplies or donate monetarily, please reach out to Jacob Clore, our Community Engagement Specialist at Jacob.Clore@pfsf.org to learn more about how you can help up prepare local youth in foster care in your community for the upcoming school year.

Thank you so much for choosing to partner with us and learn more about how you can make a difference!

