

# network news

Summer 2007

The Voice of the Network

## in this issue:

page **5** *Mentee Interview for Independent Living*

page **6** *Cleopatra Anderson-Wright*

▶ page 9 *Legal Services Initiative Paralegal Corner*

▶ page 17 *Governor's Awards for Excellence*

### network news

is published quarterly by the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network and Independent Living Program

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare  
Office of Children, Youth & Families  
P.O. Box 2675  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2675



## 15th Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference

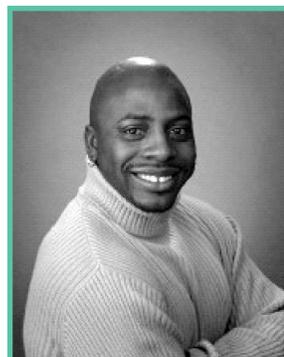
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the turning point of the Civil War, is home to the Gettysburg National Military Park, with over 1,000 monuments and cannons and a battlefield shrine to the Union and Confederate soldiers who fought here. It was the scene of the Gettysburg Address, Picket's Charge, General Robert E. Lee's Headquarters, Little Round Top and the Devil's Den. It will also be home to the 15th Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference, July 11 – 13, 2007, at the Eisenhower Hotel.

This year's conference, *United We Stand*, offers nearly 50 workshops and institutes to families and professionals throughout the child welfare system in an effort to help all children and youth find permanent connections.

We are proud to have two wonderful keynote speakers this year.

At the Opening session George Duvall, from the University of Kentucky: Kentucky Youth Connects and Kentucky Organization for Foster Youth, will present *Success*

*is a Journey*. As a child, George's own family told him he would be dead or in prison by the time he was 13. By the time he was six he was a thief, frequently truant from school and



involved with gangs. He spent 15 years in foster care and in facilities for boys. Often when children have experiences like these they continue to struggle long after they reach adulthood. Some even meet the fate that George's family predicted. But not George Duvall. Today he is a college graduate, the director of programs for youth in foster care and a nationally recognized speaker, comedian and trainer. Mr. Duvall will also present a workshop, *The Father Factor*, on Wednesday afternoon. The role of the father in the family has changed. Foster care gave George his first image of what a father should be.

The conference will conclude with Dr. Robert Brooks' presentation *Working with At-Risk Youth and Families: Strategies for Fostering Cooperation, Hope and Resilience*.

Using the concept of "mindsets," Dr. Brooks will describe the mindset of professionals who are effective in working with at-risk youth and families. Dr. Brooks will also present the workshop *"Are Unmotivated Youth Really Unmotivated?"* on Friday morning. Many youth with whom we work are labeled as "unmotivated."



(continued on top of page 7)

# statewide straight talk

*From the  
Department  
of Public Welfare  
by Lorrie Deck,  
Director,  
Statewide  
Adoption and  
Permanency  
Network*



Children in foster care often do not have much. They are often taken from their biological family under emergency situations, sometimes with just the clothes on their backs. Children in foster care lose those things that are familiar to them, their homes, their schools, their neighborhoods and their personal belongings. And sometimes, for reasons beyond their control, they even lose their family and we need to find someone who is willing to adopt them.

While we must address the issues the children we serve have experienced and help them deal with their grief and loss, we must also keep in mind the unlimited possibilities of every child we serve and do all that we can to help them realize their possibilities.

Recently, the Office of Children, Youth and Families held a press conference in the Capitol Rotunda to kick off the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pennsylvania Statewide Heart Gallery. Two adoptive families and the children they adopted from our foster care system were present for the event. In looking at those lovely children and all the beautiful portraits of the Heart Gallery, it was easy to see the possibilities; they were present in every smiling face.

As some of you know, my brother Luke did not come to our family through birth. After

my dad passed away and my mother had been widowed for several years, she became a foster parent. During her time as a foster parent, she had many children come and go from her home, and like all foster parents, she felt a profound sense of loss when the children left. And then one came to stay. Luke was a ten-month-old boy when he joined our family and five years later, it was official; his adoption was finalized and he was ours to keep. Like all children adopted from foster care, Luke was - and still is - full of possibilities.

Luke is all grown up now. He is a young man of 24, lives in North Carolina, owns his own business, plays African Rhythm Drums and has a steady girlfriend that I haven't met yet but who looks as cute as a button in the photographs he has sent. I am very proud of the person he has become and of how he continues to grow and realize his potential.

Since the inception of SWAN in 1992 more than 21,000 children have been adopted from foster care in Pennsylvania; 21,000 children who only needed a family who believed in them and to believe in them and their possibilities. The Pennsylvania Heart Gallery features older children in foster care who need the love and support of a family who can help them turn their possibilities into reality.

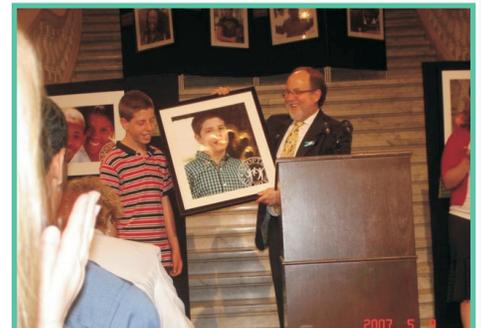
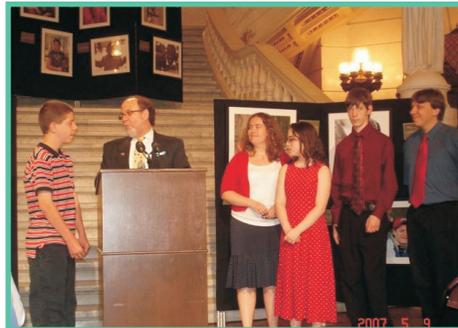
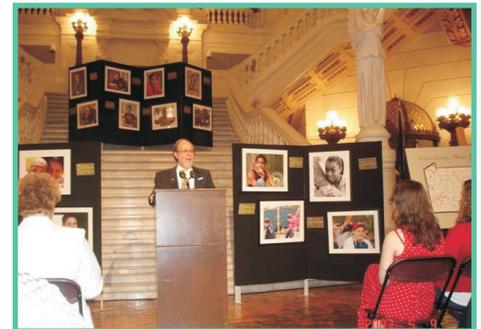
The Heart Gallery, through the innovative lenses of the professional photographers who volunteered their time and talent to this project, has helped us to show 19 families the possibilities; 19 families have already adopted 23 children featured in this traveling exhibit.

As we enter the second year of this project, an additional 25 portraits have been added to this traveling exhibit and it is my hope that each and every child is as fortunate as my brother was and finds the family who will see their possibilities and help them realize their potential.

The itinerary for where the Heart Gallery is being displayed is available at [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org). Please take the time to see when it will be visiting your area and encourage your waiting families to view it. Several agencies have boosted the effectiveness of the Heart Gallery by using it as a tool to recruit new families. Several agencies have opted to staff the exhibit to answer questions and provide print materials to potential adoptive families. Please help support this exhibit so that we can help all 49 children featured realize their possibilities. These children, and their legacy, are our future.

# Anniversary Celebration of the Pennsylvania Statewide Heart Gallery

*On May 8, 2007, 25 additional portraits were added to the Pennsylvania Statewide Heart Gallery. The celebration took place in the Capitol Rotunda in Harrisburg. Families adopting children featured in the gallery, their caseworkers and staff from the Department of Public Welfare attended to celebrate the success of the exhibit and launch the exhibit into a second year of travel around the Commonwealth. Below are pictures from the celebration.*



# INDEPENDENT LIVING AND SWAN TOGETHER: Climbing Maslow's Hierarchy of Need

by Deb Thomas, Preparation Technical Assistant and Pam Wagner, Best Practice Division Manager, Diakon/FDR

Abraham Maslow's explanation of basic human needs identifies safety and physical well-being as the most basic human needs. But once these requirements are met, people NEED human contact, to feel a connection with others, and to feel a sense of belonging. There is no more important work to be done in child welfare than to help youth develop and maintain positive, permanent relationships.

However, as we all know, that work can be complicated. Children raised in out-of-home placements deal with the CORE issues of grief/loss, abandonment, identity, control, loyalty, attachment and shame. These are relational injuries that can only be healed through relationships. Finding and maintaining healing relationships is a challenge for workers and youth.

SWAN offers two services that guide the work of preparing for, finding, and maintaining relationships. They are **Child Preparation** and **Child Specific Recruitment**.

One SWAN unit of service that is used to find connections is **Child Specific Recruitment (CSR)**. Successful CSR is a conduit between the youth and prospective families, a way for the youth to say "Here I am!" and not just wait for their worker to find the permanent connections. It is also a way for the youth to talk about what they think is important about themselves, which is not always what the worker thinks is important. The approach to CSR is helping youth identify their strengths

and work with their perception of who they are.

CSR can be as creative as the worker and the youth want to be. Some youth-driven ideas that have been successfully used to find permanent connections include flyers, video presentations, professional photo shoots and exposure through televised segments and newspaper articles.

Youth benefit from CSR by making connections from the past, making new connections for the future, speaking for themselves, making decisions about what they share with others, participating in the process and having some control over the outcome.

**Child Preparation:** This unit of service seeks to achieve five goals for children in care.

## 1. Gives the Child A Voice

In Child Preparation we recognize the importance of the child's voice. Encouraging a child to voice their feelings and emotions is part of the healing process. The optimum Child Preparation experience allows the child to use their voice to help define subjects that are important to them. It gives them the freedom and encouragement to express their emotions with their voice, and to recognize its power.

## 2. Honors Children's Pasts

Child Preparation practice must honor a child's history by acknowledging where they have come from—their heritage, culture,

and their family. Children need to appreciate all that has occurred in their lives and how those events have helped shape who they are today. They also need to be able to fill in, as much as possible, the holes of their lost self. As this happens, they begin to develop a more developmentally complete picture of themselves, develop a sense of identity and begin to integrate their experiences. In essence, they become healthier and more able to build attachments.

## 3. Answers the Questions

Child Preparation is designed to provide clear and truthful information in a way that does not hurt a child's self-esteem. Without answers to their questions, children cannot fully develop their self-identity or see themselves as whole and be accepted in society. By reviewing all the people connected to the child and all places where they have lived, children reflect on and remember those individuals who had meaning for them. Children in out-of-home care have experienced many disruptions in their relationships. Receiving quick, accurate information about events, asking questions and receiving honest answers increases their capacity to form new relationships.

## 4. Creates Connections

Often, children in care have lost most or all of the people who are important to them. Child Preparation can help identify those people who were part of the child's past and sometimes re-establish connections

(continued on bottom of page 7)

## Mentee Interview for Independent Living

by Natannya Martin, Mentor, Achieving Independence Center in Philadelphia

*What is your full name?* Sharon Jones

*What is your age?* Age 17

*How long have you been in care?*  
For 10 years

*How many siblings do you have?*  
Two; a sister and a brother

*Where do you go for high school?*  
I am a senior at Edward W. Bok Technical High School

*Since a senior, what colleges have you applied to?* IUP (#1 choice), LaSalle, Temple, Capital College (already accepted), Widener, Kutztown, Bloomsburg, East Stroudsburg, Lincoln, Cheyney

*What do you plan to major in?*  
Business Management

*What is your ultimate goal?*  
To become an entrepreneur

*Provide three words that describe you.* Three descriptive words include skillful, achiever and outreaching.

*How has your experience been in foster care?* Overall, it has been good. I have lived in one foster home for the last 10 years. I got to stay with my biological brother and sister.

*How has your experience been at the AIC?* Good! I made new friends, met a mentor who I have been matched with for over a year now.

*How has your experience been with the AIC Female Mentoring Program?* I got to do community service which I like. I like to “give back”. The blending activities are fun. I get to associate with good people. The program is a place where I feel surrounded by people who care about me.



*How has your experience with mentor, Natannya Martin been?* She gives me guidance and support. She encourages me. My mentor is someone that I can talk to. She is someone to have fun with. My mentor is a good listener.

*What message would you like to give to youth in care and/or who have been in care?* “The greatest gift is life.” Make the most out of it and never give up.

*What message would you like to give to the youth at the AIC?* Same answer given within the previous question.

*What message would you like to give youth about education?* Excel, achieve, and get good grades; never settle for anything less because you can always get more!

*What message would you like to give youth about the AIC Female Mentoring Program specifically and/or mentoring in general?* Appreciate your mentor because they are very special people. They are there to help you.

*How could the AIC do and/or be better?* Pay more attention to each member individually.

*How could the AIC Female Mentoring Program do and/or be better?* N/A

*What is your best experience in care with the Department of Human Services (Philadelphia DHS)?* I was able to stay with my brother and sister while in care.

*What is your best experience at the AIC?* The center is resourceful. You can go to staff for anything from education, mentoring, jobs, etc...

*What is your best experience within the AIC Female Mentoring Program?* Being matched with a mentor.

*What is your worst experience in care with the Department of Human Services (DHS)?* Sometimes you don't feel normal.

*What is your worst experience at the AIC?* Sometimes they don't pay attention to you.

*What is your worst experience at the AIC Female Mentoring Program?* Getting up early on a Saturday morning for community service projects.

*You have been named the top senior. What was the selection process?* A teacher had to nominate you. That same teacher also was asked to write a letter of recommendation for you which was sent to the school district. You had to submit a school resume and detail all activities from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I was selected amongst 10,000 applicants.

*Do you have any additional comments?* No!

---

# Cleopatra Anderson-Wright

*by Steve Eidson, Independent Living Specialist, University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program*

Cleopatra Anderson-Wright, a shining star in child welfare and Independent Living programs in Pennsylvania, is going to retire in June this year from the Department of Human Services (DHS) in Philadelphia.

Cleopatra is a dynamic force in child welfare and has been a powerful advocate for families, youth in substitute care and young adults who transition from care and into the community.

She has been active in child welfare in Philadelphia since 1973. She began her social services career working with teenage girls for DHS and spent eight years helping young women who were at-risk for involvement in gangs. From 1981 to 1994, she was a social worker at DHS and provided direct case management to families. Since 1994, she has been a social work supervisor at DHS and has supervised casework staff, managed the Adolescent Initiative Program and directed Independent Living services for the county. Currently, she is the Community Based Prevention Services (Community Based Family Support) Social Work supervisor and manages the Mobile Life Skills Training Unit (MLST). She provides supervision for social workers tasked with the primary responsibility of delivering mobile services to provider agencies in the surrounding Philadelphia region; acts as a liaison with DHS social workers and has limited responsibility for providing support services to the Achieving Independence Center (AIC).

A consultant and trainer for the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training

Program (CWTP), Cleopatra has been a participant in numerous projects resulting in positive changes in children and youth social services policy and programs in Philadelphia DHS and throughout the state. She was a participant in writing the Best Case Practice Manual for DHS and helped to write the Pennsylvania Standards for Child Welfare Practice and the proposed Pennsylvania IL Practice Standards.

She helped to develop and design the Achieving AIC, which is one of the first one-stop centers for at-risk youth in the country, and was instrumental in expanding the services available to youth aging out of foster care. She also wrote the proposal and developed the model for the DHS/AIC Mobile Life Skills Training program. Most recently, she is on the team that is developing the IL Overview Curriculum that will be piloted this summer and is part of the first group selected as statewide IL consultants and trainers for CWTP.

Everyone who meets Cleopatra comes away impressed by her

dedication to the successful transition of youth leaving the substitute care system. She has spent her career working to improve outcomes for youth and advocating for more resources, training and opportunities for young people.

At the end of June, Cleopatra plans to spend more time with her family, devoting time to travel and also mentoring the next generation of child welfare and Independent Living workers through her consulting and training efforts for the Independent Living Project and CWTP.

Cleopatra Anderson-Wright is a true visionary in the field of child welfare and especially in Independent Living and transition services for youth. When she retires this June, she will leave a tremendous legacy and large shoes to fill at Philadelphia DHS and throughout the state.

Congratulations on your retirement from Philadelphia DHS, Cleopatra!



(continued from page 1)

In his presentation, Dr. Brooks will examine whether these youth are unmotivated or if the strategies we are using to work with them are not the most effective strategies. He will describe interventions, rooted in a strength-based model, for increasing motivation in seemingly unmotivated youth.

In addition to these two great keynote speakers, the conference will offer 38 workshops and 11 institutes in six learning tracks. A few examples are: Principles of Effective Treatment for School Age Children Who Were Abused as Infants or Toddlers; Casey Family Programs' Independent Living Tools, Casey Life Skills, Chafee and Agency Self Assessments; Engaging Post-Permanency Families; The Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA); Navigating the Mental Health System; and The Education Rights of Youth in Substitute Care.

The Matching Room, which focuses on children waiting for families and families waiting for children, will be located in the Eisenhower II ballroom. The Matching Room is always a great success with several permanent matches made each year. The Matching Brunch will be held on Wednesday, July 12 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., with expanded space for exhibitors. For more information about the Matching Brunch or table reservations, please contact Denise Maxwell at 717-231-5385.

The conference is a great opportunity for families to meet other families and learn from experts. In an effort to defray the cost of registration, registration scholarships for families are still available. The scholarship application is available on the Diakon Web site, [www.diakon-swan.org](http://www.diakon-swan.org). We encourage you to print it out and distribute to all of your families.

Finally, don't forget about the awards banquet on Wednesday and the family picnic on Thursday evenings. Both events help remind us that the work we do does make a difference.

The conference registration brochure is available in the Events section of the Diakon Web site, [www.diakon-swan.org](http://www.diakon-swan.org), and online registration is now available.

For questions or further information regarding any of the events at the 15th Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference, contact Shelly Brown at [sbrown@diakon-swan.org](mailto:sbrown@diakon-swan.org) or 888-793-2512, extension 5371.

We look forward to seeing you in historic Gettysburg, Pennsylvania!



(continued from page 4)

with them. Youth who are aging out of the foster care system need to build a web of support in order to be successful. Some youth have no past connections and need to find ways to make new connections. Child Preparation helps children and youth find these connections, and it also helps them deal with issues that have stood in the way of building relationships with others.

##### 5. Looks to the Future

Child Preparation helps children weave the influence of past

relationships into current relationships. It gives them a context that allows them to remember but also permits them to move on. As children build relationships by establishing trust in a safe and secure environment, they begin to see that they really can belong to more than one family. Whether they move toward permanence through reunification, adoption, kinship care or permanent legal custodianship, they can visualize what it might be like to be a member of that family.

Assuring that the deepest needs of another person are met is a lofty goal. Combining Child Preparation and Child Specific Recruitment with Independent Living (IL) services provides the best opportunity to meet the physical and social needs of our youth. Just ask Luzerne County about utilizing SWAN services. Luzerne County has referred their IL youth for CSR, Child Preparation and child profile units of service and the CSR unit of services has been successfully used to find adoptive homes for four of their IL youth.

# Latest Results from the ABA Center on Children and the Law's Permanency Barriers Project

by Anne Marie Lancour, Esq., Director of State Projects, American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law Permanency Barriers Project

In 2003, DPW contracted with the ABA to conduct the Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Project. This project undertakes five major tasks in the counties:

1. Identifying and analyzing the cause of delays;
2. Interactively developing recommendations and implementing reforms;
3. Establishing written protocols, procedures and providing multidisciplinary training;
4. Monitoring reforms and changes; and
5. Sharing project results throughout the state.

Common problems identified have included: missing or unidentified parents; relatives entering case late; increase in adolescent population; lack of training on permanency planning issues and delays in court procedures.

The Permanency Barriers Project has focused on reforms such as: the early identification of children's needs; refining court procedures in permanency planning areas; training the child welfare agency and legal staff and sharing information with other counties and states.

The ABA has successfully completed its work in seven Pennsylvania counties with the following results:

County	Average Time Saved	Money Saved
Luzerne	22 months	\$660,000
Cumberland	7 months	\$621,600
Northumberland	5 months	\$240,000
Berks	5 months	\$420,000
Mifflin	5 months	\$222,000
Lancaster	7 months	\$386,400
Huntingdon	5 months	\$234,000
Northampton	15 months	\$468,000
York	12 months	\$446,400
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9.2 months avg.</b>	<b>\$3,698,400</b>

Currently the project is running in ten Pennsylvania counties. We look forward to continuing our work in helping children in foster care achieve permanency at the earliest age and stage in life as possible.

## Want More Information on the Permanency Barriers Project?

The ABA Permanency Barriers Project is looking for a few more counties to join the project. There is no cost to the counties as DPW has already funded this initiative. If you would like more information about the Permanency Barriers Project, please contact Anne Marie Lancour at (202)662-1756 or via email at [lancoura@staff.abanet.org](mailto:lancoura@staff.abanet.org).

## Second Annual Attorney Training Day a Success

On May 8, the ABA Center on Children and the Law conducted a full day legal training for Judges, Masters, Solicitors, GALs, Parents' Attorneys, county administrators and other professional in the child welfare field. The focus of the day was **Involving Children and Youth in Dependency Court**. The training included sessions on the following issues:

- Overview of Developmental Psychology: How Child Development Impacts Court Process
- Seen and Heard: Involving Children and Youth in Dependency Proceedings
- Using Evaluations and Mental Health Information to Make Good Decisions for Children
- *Overview of Know Your Rights* publication by Juvenile Law Center
- Youth Panel – Focus on Experience with Court
- Considerations in Court and Discussion including discussions on Aging Out, Disability, Education, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ), Parent, Mental Health
- Breakout Sessions for Judges, Attorneys and Agency Administrators

(continued on top of page 9)

(continued from page 8)

Approximately 100 attendees came to the training and the evaluations were very positive.

## Third Annual ABA Permanency Barriers County Day

On September 25, the Third Annual ABA Permanency Barriers County Day will be held in Mechanicsburg. Past, present and potential project counties will be

invited to this all day event. This day has historically provided an opportunity for project counties to share their experiences and learn about best practices across the state.

For information on any of the American Bar Association's work in Pennsylvania, please contact Anne Marie Lancour at (202) 662-1756 or via email at [lancoura@staff.abanet.org](mailto:lancoura@staff.abanet.org).

## Legal

# Legal Service Initiative Paralegal Corner

Prepared by Natalie Witt,  
Division Manager, LSI, Diakon/FDR

Welcome to the Paralegal Corner, where the Legal Service Initiative (LSI) paralegals will respond to issues presented by our readers. This new addition to the Network News will provide readers with responses to issues from a paralegal's perspective. If you have an issue or topic that you would like the paralegals to address, please e-mail your question to Natalie Witt at [nwitt@diakon-swan.org](mailto:nwitt@diakon-swan.org).

Please note that the LSI program does not provide legal opinions or advice. The materials and responses are provided for informational purposes only. No effort or intention

is made to solicit and or provide legal services of any kind. None of the responses are offered, nor should be construed, as legal advice.

This month's issue addresses the concerns caseworkers experience when testifying in court. LSI paralegals are providing readers with their top ten list of helpful tips in efforts to prepare caseworkers to testify professionally and effectively in court:

1. Pay attention to the question asked. Pause first and take your time when answering. Only answer the question asked.
2. Provide clear, concise answers. Do not elaborate unless asked to do so. Avoid the "um" factor. ("um, I went to the home on um May 1 and um...")
3. If you don't understand the question asked or the terminology used, ask the attorney to repeat or rephrase the question.
4. Be sure to project your voice so that everyone can hear you clearly.
5. Review the case file before taking the stand. Know the case file. Be prepared to answer questions about the details, such as a parent's criminal history (where applicable), what services were provided and parents' participation, what

attempts have been made to locate the father (diligent search efforts), etc.

6. Prepare an outline or timeline of the case that you can refer to on the stand. You can also make flashcards of important events so you are not flipping through the files trying to look for dates and details in the case notes. This will help refresh your memory.
7. Confidence. Have confidence in yourself and your testifying. If you don't know the answer, it's ok to say "I don't know" or "I don't recall." Ask to refer to the file. Do not become nervous if you need to refer to your notes; maintain your confidence and answer confidently.
8. Dress professionally. The way you dress will reflect upon your credibility.
9. Lose the gum or mint before taking the stand.
10. Tell the truth.

## Project STAR's Matching Event

by Jon Douglas, Permanency Specialist and Emily E. Lamison, Communications Specialist, Project STAR at The Children's Institute

On Thursday, March 29, Project STAR hosted its first annual "Growing Families Through Adoption" Matching & Adoption Awareness Event at The Children's Institute. Jon Douglas of Project STAR first presented his vision to his colleagues in the summer of 2006. His enthusiasm was contagious from the start. "I'm dedicated and passionate about the work I do and 'Growing Families Through Adoption' just takes it to the next level," says Jon. "The idea came about when I asked myself, 'What can we do to give these children the homes they need and deserve?'" From that initial sprout, his idea bloomed into one of the largest and most successful matching events in Pennsylvania.

The event was held in the Multi-purpose room at The Children's Institute's Squirrel Hill campus. "The Children's Institute gave me the opportunity to give these kids more exposure, increasing their chances of finding permanent homes," says Jon. "Without the generosity and support of The Children's Institute—as well as the assistance of those who helped coordinate the event—it couldn't have been pulled off so smoothly."

But staff and volunteers aren't the only ones who made the event a success. As Jon explains, "Agency and family participation can make or break a matching event. These events exist to connect these people."

Representatives from 20 agencies spanning the state of Pennsylvania were in attendance. Of the 56 families who registered, 42 attended, as did 10 walk-in guests who learned of the event through word-of-mouth promotion.

Since the event, agencies across the state have reported increased calls expressing interest in available children, and they have begun the matching process with several families. Based on evaluations, **nine potential matches** have been established; **six matches are currently in progress.**

The Pennsylvania Heart Gallery showcased the unique personalities of waiting children through custom portraits. Visiting western Pennsylvania for the first time in 2007, the Heart Gallery provided an element of interest to attract the general public and increase awareness of our state's waiting children.

Jon drew from his professional experience to establish "Growing Families Through Adoption." He realized that matching moments had begun to disappear from other matching events, but felt they were essential and made a point to highlight them. Having developed an excellent reputation within the statewide network of agencies and affiliates, Jon utilized his connections to spread the word. He also added a personal touch whenever possible. For example, the day before the event, event committee members telephoned families and agency representatives to confirm their attendance and throughout the event, guests participated in a raffle to win potted plants.

Jon's vision for future years is simple: the event will be "bigger and better." He hopes to provide more opportunities for matching moments and to encourage participation from more families, agencies and affiliates: "Without them, it can't happen, explains Jon. "The relationships forged between families and agencies are the key to success at any matching event, because matching is what it's all about."



From Left to Right – Stephanie McCarl, Diakon Adoption and Foster Care, Jon Douglas, Project STAR and Nancy Howard, Diakon Adoption and Foster Care

## Pennsylvania's Waiting Children

by Denise Maxwell,  
Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange  
Coordinator, Diakon/FDR



### Meet Paul!

Paul is a friendly and happy young man. He enjoys swimming, football, watching television and putting puzzles together. Paul is also good with computer skills but needs supervision in that area. Paul enjoys going to school, gets along well with his foster mother and is very helpful with the other children in his foster home. He loves animals, especially Millie, one of the family dogs.

All families will be considered for Paul. He is not yet legally free for adoption. Families who are interested in making Paul part of their family may contact the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange at 1-800-227-0225. When contacting the Exchange, please refer to Paul's PAE identification number, C39AA51.

## PSFPA

# PSFPA Receives National Recognition

by Kathy Ramper, Executive Director, PSFPA

The Pennsylvania State Foster Parent Association (PSFPA) was awarded *Foster Parent Association of the Year* by the National Foster Parent Association during their annual conference in Washington, D.C. in May. PSFPA was recognized for its long-standing commitment to helping foster and adopted children and the resource families who serve them.

PSFPA was founded in 1974 and is based in Harrisburg. PSFPA was originally designed to recruit new foster families and provide support to existing foster parents. Since that time, PSFPA and its membership has expanded. PSFPA now serves all resource families and boasts more than 600 foster, adoptive and kinship family members as well as 170 public and private agency members.

PSFPA serves foster children and youth from birth to age 21. Services are provided statewide regardless of whether the child's resource family belongs to the organization or not. Some of the services offered include scholarships, cash assistance to local foster parent associations and legislative advocacy.

PSFPA has awarded more than \$83,000 in college scholarships to foster children and children adopted from foster care since 1998. PSFPA also provides cash

assistance to local foster parent associations to help pay for items not usually covered by a foster family's per diem from the agency. Since 2002, PSFPA provided more than \$75,000 to foster children so they can participate in extra-curricular activities without causing a financial burden to their foster family.

In addition, PSFPA is a strong advocate for foster children. PSFPA drafted language for two bills that were signed into Pennsylvania law in 2005 – the Resource Family Care Act and the Foster Parent Consideration Act. PSFPA also hosts an annual legislative awareness event each May in recognition of National Foster Care Month, and an annual conference each October that offers training opportunities to resource families and agency staff.

PSFPA would like to take this time to thank all of you no matter what your capacity may be, for all the love and support you provide to the children of the Commonwealth who so desperately deserve it.

For more information about PSFPA, visit [www.psfpa.com](http://www.psfpa.com) or call us at 1-800-951-5151.

# Adoption Specific Mental Health Services at TRAC

by Bridget Clement, Director of Operations, Three Rivers Adoption Council

Three Rivers Adoption Council (TRAC) is excited to introduce its new mental health unit, Connections. Connections combines the efforts of TRAC's Child Preparation and Post Permanency Support departments, formerly known as Family Connections, with the new Adoption Specific Mental Health service. The new mental health unit employs credentialed therapists who can provide services to clients who subscribe to Community Care Behavioral Health's HealthChoices and UPMC health insurances - both in Allegheny County. The ability to accept medical assistance and private insurances now allows TRAC the flexibility to provide services to families during placement before finalization.

Dr. John McParlane has been tapped to head up this department and oversee the development of the Adoption Specific Mental Health Services. Dr. McParlane is a psychologist who was in private practice working with children with attachment issues before accepting the Director of Clinical Services position at TRAC. He earned his PhD. in Clinical Psychology from Duquesne University in the spring of 2001. "My vision," explains Dr. McParlane, "is to bring child and family services into the 21st century in terms of recent advances in our understanding of human development, and to empower families to be agents and architects of their own

development by providing support, education and advocacy. My goal at TRAC is to help develop the most humane, effective, and efficient services to serve kids and families and to set standards of practice that will be a model for others."

For those individuals who live either their personal or professional lives in the world of adoption, the concept of Adoption Specific Mental Health services is not new. But it is something that has been overlooked by conventional mental health professionals. Often when a family built by adoption enlists the help of a therapist to bring some stability back to their lives, their child ends up with a diagnosis and medication. In most cases, these are necessary for the child in care. But often these remedies neglect many issues that revolve around the child's time in the child welfare system, feelings of grief and loss, and identity issues that need support to be resolved. Unfortunately, many families buckle under the pressure of these unresolved issues leaving children who once had permanence back in the child welfare system. Connections' Adoption Specific Mental Health Services focus on the family as a whole. The work that is done will help the families understand their child's behaviors and how their early traumas have impacted the way their brain has developed. These traumas are a direct link to the behaviors the child exhibits.

Many of these practices and principals are taught by Caroline Archer and Christine Gordon. Both are adoptive parents as well as professionals who work in adoption in the United Kingdom. Caroline Archer has written several books about working with hurt children. Her most recent book, written with Christine Gordon, **New Families, Old Scripts** is a guide for parents who are coping with their child's behaviors. Ms. Archer works with families before they are even placed with a potential adoptive child to prepare them for placement. She helps the families to understand exactly what the abuse or neglect the child suffered was like and how it effected their development. Families who have a better understanding of their child's needs and past will be better able to provide the necessary care and long term commitment that will result in a successful adoption.

An adopted child's past is not just a collection of abuse and neglect. It is full of people who have been lost through their involvement with the child welfare system. Bringing openness and acceptance into the adoptive family about these early relationships can help to further the bonds of this new family. If every discussion about a child's family of origin is negative and vilifies the birth parent, the child may infer that they too must be "bad" since this is where they come from. The Connections' therapists will work with the adoptive family to bring about a

*(continued on top of page 13)*

*(continued on page 12)*

positive and open dialogue about the child's birth family.

Outside support is also a necessary element for success in adoption. The Connections' therapists will work with the family to help develop these supports so that there is always somewhere to turn. This work will be done through group therapy, support groups and mentor families. Mentor families are families who have been through extensive training on the Connections philosophy of healing the family and have been through the adoption process themselves. Mentor families will be sought who have experienced some of the same issues that the families in therapy will face. The expectation is that mentor families can reach out to the families during crisis and help them during the healing process. Mentor families will be available

to give advice or just be there to listen. The Connections team is in the process of cultivating and training these families to be a valuable resource.

The Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network has done a great deal to further the cause of Adoption Specific Mental Health Services through its post permanency services. TRAC will continue to refer families through the SWAN Helpline for these services.

Connections plans to begin providing services to adoptive and foster families and children who are awaiting permanency and are currently living in the child welfare system. Eventually, Connections will provide services to adult adoptees who may have unresolved issues that they would like to work through. If you would like to find out more

about the Adoption Specific Mental Health Services provided by Connections and you live in Allegheny County please contact 412-471-8722.

*Three Rivers Adoption Council will welcome Caroline Archer and Christine Gordon on June 6-7 for a two day conference. The first day is open to anyone who would like to learn more about their theories and principals. The second day is designed specifically for professionals and will allow for more of a one-on-one dialogue. This will be an incredible opportunity to interact with these two fascinating and insightful ladies. There are still spaces available for this conference. Visit [www.3riversadopt.org/speakers\\_series.asp](http://www.3riversadopt.org/speakers_series.asp) for more information.*

**tap**

## Promoting Permanency Through Support Groups

*by Phyllis J. Stevens, Executive Director, Together as Adoptive Parents, Inc*

One private agency in the Eastern part of PA requires their families to attend at least two support group meetings. The agency gives the family the names of several parent groups that they can pick from, TAP is one of the support groups.

We have a family that is now part of our group that came to TAP just that way. The couple knew that they wanted to adopt an older child but wasn't too sure about anything else. At one of the meetings they announced that they were thinking about adopting a 12 year old with Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) and wanted to know what to expect from families that are parenting children with RAD.

It was wonderful, none of the families told them not to adopt the child, they suggested books that they should

read, and asked them about what family members they could count on for support and respite. They gave them a list of questions to ask the child's adoption worker. The support and advice provided by the other members of the group was amazing.

The couple have been attending meetings faithfully ever since and have had two pre-placement visits with the child. They are still asking a lot of questions and that is good.

Maybe this couple would have adopted the 12 year old without being connected to any support group, but by being connected it sure has increased their chances for success.

# Connections

by Karen Oldham, Director, SWAN Helpline 1-800-585-7926

As resource families, we watch the children who come into our homes struggle to walk upright through the events of their daily lives. Some run away, some become oppositional, some recede into drugs, depression or some level of dysfunction. All develop the skills of survivors. They learn to walk through, not around. They learn how to face fear. They build walls of tolerance. They learn the skills of vigilance and endurance. They learn to survive but it is our goal to teach them how to thrive. To do that we must help them temper their traumas with their survivor skills and build resilient, not recoiling behaviors.

Tempering trauma is so very difficult. Building survivor skills happens as a result of it. Connections between the two are essential. Connections do not happen in a moment in time but are the result of a litany of efforts to match pain with the assets built out of it. Perhaps it happens by taking the strengths borne out of the traumas to the forefront. I recently watched the opening of the Oprah Winfrey South African University. It was not the pomp of the event that touched me, but the spark that remained in the eyes of

those girls who had suffered great loss and trauma. They were not running away, they were running towards. They spoke clearly of their pain but never lost the luster of their innocence. They were survivors who built other connections through hope. They spoke of their connections to community, to extended family, to cultural roots, to the legacy of their loss. They spoke of hope and connected with it to survive and thrive.

As resource families, we must connect the children in our care with hope. We must foster connections between their trauma and their survival by honoring the legacy of who they are. We must engage community supports of these connections through schools, churches, families, friends and anyone who will help hold them up by lifting them up and out. We cannot allow them or our families to be isolated. Isolation builds hopelessness. We must build hope by building bridges and connecting broken roads wherever we can. Connections are a process. They take years to build. They can be fragile and ever changing. But, we must build them in every way we can imagine.

## theideaexchange

# Pennsylvania's Waiting Children

by Karen Lollo, Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange Coordinator, Diakon/FDR

### Meet Brent!



Brent is an extremely happy young man. He always wears a big smile. Brent loves music and is easily soothed by listening to Barney videos. Brent enjoys attending school daily.

Brent has cerebral palsy and requires a feeding tube for nourishment. However, he has just started eating soft food by mouth and loves it! Brent requires fulltime care and is unable to provide for any of his own needs. Brent is legally blind, unable to walk and is nonverbal as well. Even with Brent's extensive needs, he always manages to brighten up the room with

his smile. Many love him and anyone would be lucky to be in his company. Brent enjoys the simple things in life. He feels happiness and recognizes when positive people are in his presence. He responds with boisterous laughter and huge smiles.

All families will be considered for Brent. He is legally free for adoption. Please contact the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange at 1-800-227-0225. When contacting the Exchange, please refer to Paul's PAE identification number, C15AA10.

# WANTED: Matching Events

by Jane Johnston, Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange Division Manager, Diakon/FDR

Matching events pay off dramatically, according to many in our network, but tracking the number of matches made at any one matching event can be complicated. Matching is the result of many interconnected activities, such as well-written flyers on families and children, TV spots, exposure on the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange Web site and relationships with other agency workers, to name a few. Well-done matching work also includes attending matching events.

Affiliates and counties reported a significant number of matches they attributed to matching events at summer 2006 and winter 2007 matching events. Not all matching events immediately result in matches, but they still contribute to that all important relationship-building, such as, between county children and youth worker to an affiliate worker, county children and youth worker to a family, and affiliate worker to family. Christina Meshey of Bethany Christian Services reported she had five matches that could, at least in part, be attributed to the 2006 Summer Statewide Matching Brunch. She pointed out that the nearness of the event to the families encouraged

more families to attend, and consequently more matches were made.

Lehigh County makes an effort to attend matching events regardless of where they are held in the state. They attend both state sponsored and locally sponsored events. Laurie Boucher of Lehigh County indicated that many factors impact a match but felt that they had matched 10 children that could be attributed in part to the statewide matching events.

The importance of developing relationships and obtaining valuable information about families was articulated by Danielle Stone of Catholic Charities in Erie. "We did not have any matches made at these events [Statewide Matching Events Summer 2006 and Winter 2007], but we did get information for Erie County Children and Youth for waiting families to help us work with them on CSR. Additionally, we had families attend both events who made some contacts which they felt were important even if this didn't result in a match for them. One family indicated they now have a better understanding of how SWAN and all the agencies work together."

In an informal survey of the county and affiliates attending both the Statewide Matching Events in summer 2006 and winter 2007, counties reported placing 17 children. Affiliates also reported 17 matches, and these are not the same 17 children, though some overlap is possible.

The network has embraced matching events, and many have been sponsored at the local level with the same high level of success. Jon Douglas of Project STAR states, "The 'Growing Families Through Adoption' matching event was successful because we made it a statewide event, displaying a wide variety of children and giving families the opportunity to explore a range of options. Due to the variety of children presented, there are six matches in progress and hopefully more to come!"

It is clear from the reports from around the state that matching events work! We encourage all county children and youth agencies and affiliates to take advantage of the local and state sponsored events to ensure that all children find a permanent family.

## Lackawanna County Independent Living Program

by Jim Pusateri, IL Coordinator

**Profile: Jovana** (former foster youth)  
Age 19 Asian-Indian/ Caucasian  
I. L. Participant Lackawanna County  
09-05 through 07-06  
Receiving: *After Care Services* started 07-06;  
ongoing services on an as needed basis.

Like most foster youth, Jovana experienced events in her life that upset her normal daily world; separation from family and friends and the "familiar" to quote her. She found herself wondering how she would be able to maintain any stable relationships as she moved from one foster placement to another. In her time in foster

(continued on bottom of page 16)

# Diary of a “Val’s Kids” TV Segment

by Karen Lollo, Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange Coordinator, Diakon/FDR

**June 1** - I called Robert’s social worker, Kate, to discuss the possibility of bringing him to the Harrisburg area to do a Val’s Kids taping. We talked about the activities he enjoys. He loves animals, but his passion is baseball. His favorite team is the Pittsburgh Pirates.

I contacted Valerie Pritchett to schedule a taping session with the Harrisburg Senators professional baseball team.

**June 2** – Kate met with Robert to talk about him doing the Val’s Kids taping with the baseball team. He is so excited! Kate made arrangements with Robert’s foster mom to pick him up at 10 a.m. on June 12, the day of the taping.

**June 12** – Excitement is the word of the day. On the drive to Harrisburg, Kate and Robert talk about what might happen at the baseball field. Robert is eager to tell Valerie about himself and the family he hopes to find. But mostly he wants to meet the baseball players and have a practice session with them.

The videographer and photographer play key roles in the day’s activities and take care to establish an easy friendship with Robert. They help Robert feel comfortable, and their efforts result in good film and photos to record the day.

At the field, the players are interested in meeting Robert and ask about his experience with baseball. He’s been playing since T-ball days and has an excellent understanding of the game. The team manager starts Robert’s day with some pitching

practice. Robert is a pretty good pitcher! They move on to batting practice where he excels. Team members position themselves in the outfield, and Robert surprises everybody with his ability to whack the ball out to them. After the practice session ends, Robert helps to retrieve equipment. Then the ultimate in a young man’s life happens. Robert gets to go into the team’s locker room. A few minutes later, a beaming Robert emerges carrying an autographed baseball, a cap, and a shirt. What an outstanding day in the life of Robert that he will remember for a lifetime.

The drive home is filled with Robert’s animated recollection of *everything* that happened. Kate reminded him that many families will see his video of Val’s Kids that evening. Our hope for Robert is that his forever family will see him, call the SWAN Helpline and follow up with Kate.

**June 12** – Valerie airs Robert’s Val’s Kids segment on the 7:00 p.m. news on WHTM in Harrisburg. It’s a great piece, showcasing Robert at his best.

**June 13** – A family calls the SWAN Helpline to express their interest in Robert. Because this family has not had a Family Profile completed, Helpline provides the information they need to contact a local SWAN affiliate agency to begin. Throughout the process, they continue to express their interest in Robert. Their social worker is cautious but encouraging since Robert may find another family before their profile is approved.

(continued from bottom of page 15)

care she was placed in three different settings with contrasting cultural situations, social settings and schools. According to Jovana, “these events did not break me.” She maintained a positive attitude about school and her future.

So, she applied herself to her school studies, kept in contact with some family members and tried to continue friendships as well as make new ones during her high school years.

When she started Independent Living Services in September of 2006 she was already well on her way to graduating from high school with high marks. However, she was in need of someone to assist her in coordinating her transition from high school to college.

She had no aspirations concerning attending a prestigious college. She was unsure she would even be accepted at local junior colleges. As her IL program worker, I assisted her in planning for her potential

(continued to top of page 17)

(continued from bottom of page 16)

college choices and discussing all educational options available to her. Jovana started to look beyond simply attending just any college and focused on three choices. Her dream choice was Temple, but she was uncertain about applying fearing they would not accept her. She was encouraged to apply and she did. She had an interview at Temple soon after applying.

There was a gleam in her eyes and some soft gentle tears as she told me that she was accepted at Temple. I remarked that “every once in a while when you least expect it - everything clicks into place and one of our foster youth finds that her dream becomes reality.”

Although she left for Temple in the fall of 2006, she keeps in touch with me. She is still to this day receiving after care services. At the end of her first semester at Temple she called to let me know that she had made the Dean’s list.

Kudos Jovana!

## aroundthestate

compiled by Carrie Keiser, Program Specialist, SWAN/OCYF

### Governor’s Awards for Excellence



Congratulations to Lorrie Deck, Director of the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network and Angelo Santore, former Program Specialist for the Office of Children, Youth and Families, for receiving the first annual Governor’s Awards for Excellence for their collaborative initiative work with the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network and the Independent Living Program.

The Governor’s Awards for Excellence Program was created to recognize the exemplary accomplishments of Commonwealth employees for their initiative, leadership and strong commitment to service.

The award winners attended an inaugural awards ceremony at the Governor’s Residence on May 7, 2007 where they were presented with their awards by Governor Rendell and then invited to attend a dessert reception.

Be sure to congratulate both Lorrie and Angelo on the outstanding work they do on behalf of the children and youth waiting to achieve permanency and find permanent connections.

## A Little Love

The Department of Public Welfare (DPW) now has three waiting child television segments that are available through the SWAN contract at **no cost** to agencies. The newest segment is called **A Little Love** and it airs in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area on WBRE Channel 28 on Wednesday evenings at 5:00 P.M. This segment began on February 14, 2007 and has produced some extraordinary videos of the children featured. The host of the segment, Dia Wallace, gives the children an opportunity to participate in an activity/event that normally they would not be able to attend. Some of the creative activities/events that the children have participated in so far have been: singing lessons, minor league hockey, baseball and football games, jewelry making and pro-wrestling lessons. This wonderful recruitment tool is available on an ongoing basis and children can be referred to participate at any time. To view the wonderful children who have already been featured on **A Little Love**, visit <http://www.pahomepage.com> and click the link for **A Little Love**. To refer a child you are working with for this waiting child segment, contact Desiree Weisser at DPW's Office of Children, Youth and Families at 717-772-7011 or [dweisser@state.pa.us](mailto:dweisser@state.pa.us). If you are not using this dynamic recruitment tool, you should be!

## Foster Youth Exempted from Medicaid Citizenship Documentation Requirements

This summer Congress ordered that individuals receiving Medicaid prove their citizenship by providing records such as birth certificates, passports, or driver's licenses. Since many foster youth do not have a passport, are unable to obtain a driver's license, or have lost their birth certificate through placement changes this could present a unique obstacle to speedy medical attention. Fortunately, on December 9, 2007, just before the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress came to a close, the Senate and House agreed to exempt foster youth from this requirement.

For more information regarding this success stay tuned to the [Child Welfare League of America website](#) for future updates.

2007

## Pennsylvania Community on Transition Forum: Achieving Outcomes through a Shared Agenda

The Pennsylvania Community on Transition State Leadership Team is hosting their 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Pennsylvania Community on Transition Forum from July 18-20 at the Penn Stater Conference Center. The primary purpose of this forum is to expand the capacity of schools and community partners to promote the successful transition of youth/young adults with disabilities, whether they are physical, mental or emotional, to post-school outcomes. The forum allows youth/young adults with disabilities to be empowered to recognize their unique talents, focuses on their strengths and allows them to use their voices to be seen as viable, productive adults. For professionals and caretakers, the forum allows opportunities for networking with various resources for the children they work with and to participate in workshops focused on transitioning topics for youth/young adults with disabilities. For more information about the forum, please contact Joan Kester at the Office of Vocation Rehabilitation (OVR) at [joakester@state.pa.us](mailto:joakester@state.pa.us) or 717-787-6695.

## Thank you to one of SWAN's own Technical Assistants

Good Morning Roberta,

I wanted to take just a few minutes to say "thanks". "Thank you from all of the waiting children, both past and present, at Wayne County CYS." You have played a much bigger role than you know, or give yourself credit for, in achieving permanency for twelve children (9 finalizations and 3 PLC's) since July 2006. In the bigger scope of numbers twelve may seem small, but to each one of those twelve, they are "the one" that counts. Permanency is never achieved by one person, and we certainly know that the affiliates and all of the hard work they have done on behalf of "our kids", and they are "our kids", has been vital in helping them find their forever families. I don't know however, if you realize how much your guidance, encouragement, support, and endless patience with me has helped these children. I will be the first to admit that when I assumed the supervisor position of what was then known as the "foster care unit" I had minimal understanding of SWAN and the tireless efforts they put forth to achieve permanency for waiting children. In the course of just a short period of time I have embraced permanency and have become a voice for the children here at CYS who need and deserve permanency. So much so, that what was once known as the "foster care unit" has now become the "permanency unit" and has eagerly accepted the additional responsibility of case managing all children with goals of adoption or PLC to be sure that their permanency is achieved in a timely manner. Your passion for waiting children and enthusiasm for the work that you do has been a huge inspiration to me and has given me a renewed perspective for the work that I have been entrusted with. If there was a nomination for an outstanding TA, I would certainly nominate you. I say this not to give you a pat on the back, although it is greatly deserved, but because I want you to know that what you do everyday is having an impact, one child at a time. If there is ever a day when you are weary, and we all have them, please be reminded of Wayne County CYS and our appreciation for your efforts on behalf of children in need of connections.

With Sincere Thanks,

Cindy Batzel  
Permanency Supervisor, Wayne County Children and Youth Services

So often the efforts of those in our system go un-noticed, it was wonderful that Cindy Batzel took the time to recognize Roberta's efforts to help Wayne County kids achieve permanency.

**Thanks Cindy and Great Work Roberta!**

## Together as Adoptive Parents – Plans for National Adoption Month

To celebrate National Adoption Awareness Month in November, TAP will host a 5K AdoptWalk™ inside beautiful Girard College in Philadelphia on October 13, 2007 from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM,

followed by a picnic. We are walking to raise awareness of the 3,300 youth in Pennsylvania foster care who have a goal of adoption.

We hope you can join us.

Keep on the look out for more details.

## Luzerne County Adoption Celebration

by Gerry Lynn Pizano, Luzerne Children and Youth Services

Luzerne County Children and Youth Services held their annual adoption celebration on November 16, 2006. Adoptive parents, service providers, agency staff, court staff, and county officials were in attendance to celebrate the 75 adoptions finalized throughout the year. The event included comments from the agency director, Frank Castano, as well as agency Social Service Coordinator, Joan Salla. Guest speaker was Neil Oberto from Catholic Social Services.

All in attendance were especially inspired when a 13 year old boy, John E., read an essay that he had written about his journey through foster care and adoption. John described that he and his brother had

been placed in foster care when John was four and his brother was two. John explained that he had lived in four different foster homes and wanted to be part of a family, "to have a mommy and daddy in [his] life everyday." John concluded his essay with the following passage that reminds us of how truly essential and important our roles are in helping children achieve permanency:

"It's really great to be part of a family. I may be young but I know how happy I am and how I feel inside. I know my parents are very happy also. I just hope that I make my parents very proud of me. I just want to say thank you to my Mom and Dad and tell them I love them very much."

## Orphan Foundation Scholarships for Foster Youth

The Orphan Foundation of America is now accepting applications for scholarships for the 2007-2008 academic years. Former foster youth who are pursuing postsecondary education may submit applications prior to the March 31 deadline. Awards will be announced in mid-June 2007.

To qualify, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Have been in foster care for one consecutive year at the time of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or high school graduation OR have been adopted or taken into legal guardianship out of foster care after their 16th birthday OR have lost both parents to death before age 18 and not been subsequently adopted

- Be accepted into or enrolled in an accredited postsecondary program (university, college, community college or vocational/technical institute)
- Be under age 25 on March 31, 2007

To learn more about the Orphan Foundation of America and their scholarships, visit their Web site at [www.orphan.org/scholarships.html](http://www.orphan.org/scholarships.html).

## Coming Soon! July 6, 2007

Adoption Night at Williams Grove Speedway in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. This event is sponsored by Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, in Partnership with Dauphin and Montgomery County Children and Youth, Project Star, Bethanna, Jewish Family Services/AdoptionLinks and NHS Northwestern Human Services. You won't want to miss it! More than 60 children available for adoption will be featured on sprint cars as they race with more than 10,000 in attendance. A matching event open to all affiliate and county agencies and waiting families in Pennsylvania will be held from 4 – 7:30 pm. Tickets to the race are on a first come first serve basis for waiting families. For info on how to place your waiting child on a car or how to register for a display table or get your families signed up for this wonderful matching event, please contact Stephanie McCarl, Diakon Adoption and Foster Care, at 717-795-0322.

## SWAN Prime Contracts New IT Services Provider

The SWAN Prime Contractor has successfully completed the conversion to our new Information Technology service provider, Prelude Services. We are working closely with Prelude to evaluate the existing systems and to identify any potential opportunities for implementing system enhancements to better serve our network. We appreciate all of your support during the conversion and look forward to delivering optimized services to support your needs.

## Pennsylvania's Safe Haven Program

Pennsylvania's Safe Haven program allows parents to relinquish newborns up to 28 days old at any hospital in the state of Pennsylvania without the fear of criminal prosecution as long as the baby has not been harmed. Education materials include brochures, posters and crisis cards in both English and Spanish. The Department of Public Welfare is getting ready to do a mass mailing of all materials currently in inventory. If you want materials for your agency, please contact Carrie Keiser, program specialist, at 717-705-4401 or [ckeiser@state.pa.us](mailto:ckeiser@state.pa.us). Additionally, all materials can be downloaded from the Safe Haven web site at: [www.secretSAFE.org](http://www.secretSAFE.org).

## Mandated Reporter Training

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance's (PFSA) mandated reporter training uses interactive workshops provided by experts in the field of child welfare, provides quality resources and effective training materials. All participants of PFSA's training programs receive a complete package of resource and reference material and up-to-date training on the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), including the most recent changes created by Act 179.

PFSA offers a variety of on-site training opportunities. "Reporting and Recognizing Child Abuse" can be provided in both a three- and six-hour format. Additional three-hour sessions are offered in "Recognizing and Responding to Neglect" and "Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse." All training sessions are designed for mandated reporters and cover key points of the CPSL.

For information about PFSA's training programs, including scheduling a session, visit [www.pennsylvaniafamilysupportalliance.org](http://www.pennsylvaniafamilysupportalliance.org) or call (717) 238-0937 or (800) 448-4906.

## National Adoption Excellence Awards – Pictures from Ceremony!



Pennsylvania's Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) and Pennsylvania Independent Living (IL) Services accepted two National Awards on November 28<sup>th</sup> in Washington D.C. in celebration of National Adoption Month. SWAN and IL were nominated and selected to receive a 2006 Adoption Excellence Award in the category **Increased Adoptions of Older Children**. SWAN was also nominated and selected to receive an award in the category **Support for Adoptive Families**. These awards are presented by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and were established to recognize outstanding accomplishments in achieving permanency for America's children waiting in foster care.

# Governor Newsletter

The Rendell Administration is committed to creating a first-rate public education system, protecting our most vulnerable citizens and continuing economic investment to support our communities and businesses. To find out more about Governor Rendell's initiatives and to sign up for his weekly newsletter, visit his Web site at:

[www.governor.state.pa.us](http://www.governor.state.pa.us).

---

## Savethedate

### 2007 SWAN/IL Summer Statewide Meeting

July 10, 2007

Eisenhower Hotels and Conference Center, Gettysburg, Pa.

### "United We Stand"

### 15th Annual Permanency Conference

July 11 – 13, 2007

Eisenhower Hotels and Conference Center, Gettysburg, Pa.

### SWAN/IL Winter Statewide Meeting

January 30 – 31, 2007

Penn Stater, State College, Pa.

### SWAN/IL Fall Quarterly Meetings

### **Specific meeting sites – To Be Announced**

October 11, 2007

Wilkes Barre

October 16, 2007

Monroeville

October 17, 2007

Beaver Falls

October 23, 2007

New Cumberland

October 30, 2007

Fort Washington

October 31, 2007

Philadelphia