

network news

Winter 2008

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network news

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Southeast Region Successes

by Yvette Lassiter, SWAN Division Manager, Southeast Region

Counties in the southeast region have been busy hosting matching events and training sessions while they continue planning additional events. We hope their successes will inspire your county or agency to host an event in the future.

Montgomery County had a wonderful annual matching event in November. The event received press coverage from NBC10 News. The Pennsylvania Heart Gallery was displayed in the large hallway leading into the event. This was Montgomery County's third annual matching event and each year the number of people attending has increased. In 2007, 29 agencies and about 30 families were represented. It was warm and inviting with a musician playing an acoustic guitar softly under the atrium among the holiday decorations. The atmosphere, engaging approaches and welcoming smiles of county and affiliate staff interacting with families in a really comfortable environment was very pleasant. If you are interested in participating in Montgomery County's 2008 event, please contact Pam Hartman at phartman@montcopa.org for more information.

Berks County hosted the southeast regional training day called, "Disruption

and Dissolution" at their Reading office in December. Nearly 75 people attended. We have found that moving the regional meeting around to different sites within the region has increased our regional meeting participation by 30 percent in the last year. As a result, we are always looking for different venues to hold our meetings. If your agency is interested in hosting a meeting, please contact your technical assistant.

Some of the southeast region's affiliate agencies are collaborating on building a training coalition to support recruitment of resource families. The first meeting of this fledgling coalition was held in December. A survey was developed to identify additional interests, and a consensus was reached to continue these planning meetings. The meetings will continue monthly until March 2008. Bethany Christian of Fort Washington hosted the first couple of meetings at the Calvary Church in Willow Grove. Additional meetings will be held this winter. If your agency is interested in participating, please contact your regional technical assistant.

Congratulations to the southeast region for doing extraordinary work to promote permanency for the children in foster care! 🎉

statewide straight talk

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



The children and youth we serve have faced much opposition in their young lives. They faced hostile opposition including abuse and neglect from their biological families which caused them to be placed into the child welfare system, a placement deemed necessary by the court for their safety and well-being, only to find that opposition continued. The opposition, while different from the abuse and neglect they may have experienced at home, was nonetheless hostile.

Opposition to foster children comes from many sources. Sometimes it comes from schools that are hesitant to enroll foster children and who often believe, albeit wrongly, that such children are “trouble makers.” Sometimes it comes from their classmates who treat foster children as different; from the mental health system which is often under staffed and ill equipped to deal with the multitude of issues foster children present; from the resource families who, although meaning well, sometimes find that the children in their homes have more issues than they are prepared to deal with. Most importantly, they face opposition from the child welfare system itself, a large system that sometimes falls short of providing adequate training and funding to support both the providers of services and the needs of the children themselves.

We have done much to try and educate others who serve foster children. We have devoted time, energy and resources to ensure that our cross-systems partners are aware of the issues that face the children in our custody and we have worked very hard to recruit and train resource families who understand the varied needs of the youth we serve. But it has not been enough because there continue to be children in the foster

care system in need of services, particularly children in foster care who have a goal of adoption or older youth in danger of aging out of foster care without a permanent resource. We strived to provide those youth with the services needed by implementing changes to the SWAN program in 2003. We changed the population we serve from children in foster care with a goal of adoption to any child in foster care, regardless of their court-ordered goal. We changed the services we offer and added new services, including Child Preparation and Post-permanency Services. But still, it was not enough because the demand for services exceeded the amount of funding available. We became our own worst opposition.

The new fiscal year, which takes effect on July 1, 2008, promises to be a better year for the children and families SWAN serves. To meet the increased demand for SWAN services, the Office of Children, Youth and Families has decided to fully fund all adoption services requested by counties through the SWAN prime contract. This represents a significant change in how permanency services will be funded in Pennsylvania as all funds that were previously used to pay for privately contracted adoption services are being shifted to support the SWAN prime contract. As a result, all counties, including Philadelphia, will either provide their own permanency services directly with county staff or will make referrals to the SWAN prime contractor. By providing funding consistent with the demand for services needed, we hope to lessen the opposition we all face in finding timely permanency for children in foster care.

Although not final until approved by the Pennsylvania General Assembly and signed by Governor Edward G.

Rendell, the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) has budgeted \$29,731,000 for SWAN Direct Services in SFY 2008-2009. That is almost triple the \$10,299,000 we currently have available. The breakdown of the \$29,731,000 for SWAN Direct Services is:

- \$25,131,000 for County Requested Direct Services (Child Profile, Child Preparation, Child Specific Recruitment, Family Profile, Placement and Finalization services).
- \$1,000,000 for Affiliate Referred Family Profiles, for those families recruited through the SWAN media campaign or by affiliates; and
- \$3,600,000 for Post-permanency services.

This is a wonderful opportunity for us to serve all youth in transition, regardless of their court-ordered permanency goal, with the best possible services. Children in a pre-adoptive home with no intent to adopt filed should be referred for Finalization services. Children with no identified adoptive resource should be referred for Child Specific Recruitment, even if they received the service in the past. Older youth in danger of aging out of care without a permanent connection should be referred for Child Profile and Child Preparation services. Fiscal Year 2008-2009 begins a new era for SWAN, an era that will not accept opposition from any front, an era that will focus on helping all youth in foster care transition without opposition to a permanent and loving home. ☘

Who are *Pennsylvania's* Kinship Families?

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

How do Pennsylvania's kinship resources differ from our other foster and adoptive resources? The Resource Family Registry (RFR) now reports over 4,600 kinship families have been studied since the start of the registry.

Approximately 2,800 kinship families are currently active in the state compared to the 14,000 active non-kinship families. The 2,800 kinship families represent 17 percent of all of our active resource families. They are a significant group and deserve our attention.

Kinship families are not significantly different from non-kinship families in general demographics (specific comparisons are provided below). Information provided to the RFR does not identify income or address parenting skills, but the numbers of kinship families who are disapproved and the reasons for their disapproval are very similar to non-kinship foster families.

Of the 4,610 kinship families studied, 232 (5 percent) were disapproved compared to the 1,206 (3 percent) of the 38,672 non-kinship families who were disapproved.

Generally, kinship families are disapproved at a rate consistent with non-kinship families. Additionally, the reasons for disapproval are very similar. The most frequently occurring reason for disapproval for both groups was the less clear classifications of unfavorable profile or other, which represented 64 percent of the reasons for disapproval for both groups.

Reasons for Disapproval	Kinship Family 232	Non-Kinship Family 1,206
Child Abuse History	2%	2%
Criminal History	9.5%	9%
Unfavorable Profile	25%	36%
Failure to Complete Training	9%	4%
Failure to Follow Agency Policy	8%	3.2%
Other	39%	28%

The kinship families approved to care for children also look very similar to approved foster and adoptive families. Generally, kinship families tend to be slightly younger than non-kinship families but not significantly.

One significant difference between the two groups is that kinship families (62 percent) are somewhat more likely to

be single parents or adopt alone than are non-kinship families (52 percent). Kinship families (71 percent) are also more likely to accept older children than non-kinship families (64 percent).

Age Category	Kinship family 2,776*	Non-kinship family 8,706 *
24 and younger	2.3%	0.6%
25 – 35	17%	12%
36 – 45	26%	30%
46 – 55	29%	29%
56 – 65	17%	17%
65 and older	7%	9.6%

* Although the total number of active families for Kinship is 2,800 and non-kinship is 14,000, information about the top age range is available for only 2,776 and 8,706, respectively.

Best practice standards state that kinship families should be considered first as resources to children entering the foster care system. These standards are supported by Act 25 of 2003, which requires relatives be given first consideration as a placement resource when a child cannot safely remain with his or her legal family and is placed in the legal custody of an agency. Kinship Care is further defined in the Children, Youth and Families Bulletin #00-03-03, the Kinship Care Policy, which defines formal and informal kinship care and establishes policies and procedures for county agencies to follow when considering kin as potential placement resources. Given that our data shows that kinship families have many of the same characteristics of non-relative foster and adoptive families, and that kinship families are more likely to accept the placement of an older child than a non-relative foster or adoptive home, we must do all we can to nurture and support those families who step forward to provide permanency to children in foster care. We must provide the supports needed to ensure that the bonds that exist between foster children and their kin are not broken. Kin is not only a foster child's greatest resource, they are the system's greatest resource as well.

Child Abuse Prevention Month 2008

“Parenting: One Tough Job”

by Beth Bitler, Program Director, Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) has partnered with various organizations concerned with family strengthening to plan for the observance of this month. This partnership has planned for several unique projects to occur throughout April with the general theme being “Parenting: One Tough Job.”

Murals will be created in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Scranton. PFSA is working with *Heart to Art*, an arts education organization, to paint portable murals depicting the “One Tough Job” theme. The first of these murals was created at our Child Abuse Prevention Month kickoff event on April 2, 2008, in Harrisburg in the Capitol Rotunda, East Wing. Families who attend family support programs or other parent education and support programs will work with professionals and legislators to paint portable murals, which can then be displayed as an ongoing reminder of the importance of child abuse prevention.

Awareness events are planned in connection with the mural painting, where parents can learn about child abuse prevention and resources available to families in their

community. **Blue ribbon pins** will be available at all awareness events.

Publication of new parent tip cards, adapted from an award-winning publication of the Massachusetts Children’s Trust Fund, will be available for distribution at a nominal cost. These informational cards highlight simple ways we can all be more effective at parenting and will list co-sponsors of the month’s observance. An example of these cards is shown below.

PSFA Web site (www.pa-fsa.org) will list events being held across the state, offer opportunities to order blue ribbon pins and other materials, link visitors with the “One Tough Job” Web site for additional parenting information and reinforce the statewide child abuse prevention message. Links to each of the co-sponsoring organizations will also be included in our April page on the Web site.

If you would like additional information about Child Abuse Prevention Month events or to order blue ribbon pins, contact PSFA at 1-800-448-4906 or info@pa-fsa.org.



Being a parent is one tough job.

Full of many rewards, with beautiful moments, laughs, and love. But the reality of raising children today is that parents become stressed and overwhelmed.

We get it. We know how hectic your life is. Turn this card over for some ideas to help you be the best parent you can be.

Courtesy of pa-fsa.org and onetoughjob.org

The Gift of Hope Guiding Children/Youth/Families through Transitions

by Darla L. Henry, Family Design Resources, Inc.,
Co-director and SWAN Specialist: Best Practice, Training and Policy

As we reflect upon the 2007 holiday season and move on to a new year, many of us pause to reflect on the gifts we have received. We might also have created resolutions or new goals that we want to achieve in this coming year. In reflecting on our children, youth and families, do we wonder what gifts were valued most? Did they get that special toy, cell phone, newest style of jeans, new washer or computer? What other non-material gifts might they have hoped for?

What gifts of the heart, to the heart, for the heart are there for them? What dreams within their hearts do they hope for, not just in 2008, but life long?

A former foster youth, now an adult, wrote this poem:

Hopeless Hope

*My pilot light of hope
Has dimmed like the sunset.*

*How can I find that innocent
Array of hope again amongst
The bewildered faces.*

*Stained curtains,
Unleveled sofa,
Unfilled plates,
Tape legged chair,
Father's poignant breath,
Her ash-cracked lips.*

*I guess I can always
Hope for Hope.*

What is required of us to provide this hope? Placement plans for our children and youth are determined out of the crises that bring them into our world. We need to find a family — we make the call — the family agrees — we place the child and, hope it works! So often families believe they are ready to respond to and provide all that a child may need. And many are. They believe that they are ready, and we need them to have all the

strength and magical answers at this stage of their parenting skills.

How then can we evolve our practices to meet the challenge of the “hope it works” method to giving hope to our children and families? In our decision-making process, do we look at the child through the Clarification, Integration, Actualization lens? Is she/he ready for the next or new relationship building process? How experientially has the family been prepared to react to and cope with the many difficult behaviors that children in pain might present? Are we prepared to support both child and family through the attachment crises and dilemmas that can jeopardize permanency?

Many of you in the SWAN family have already committed to this preparation work and the wonderful successes of your work are evident. And yet, we know that we can provide more continuity and more stability, as we help them clarify their losses and integrate their relationships, before we ask children and families to commit to a family building process. Let us not rely on “hope for” decision making to assure permanency but challenge ourselves and each other to continue advancing our practices with children, youth and families so that they can realize the life they have always dreamed of...a secure connectedness with others.

Let's give every child the gift of one less move/placement/parent/family. Let's give every family one less traumatized child bringing a crisis into their family. Let's give ourselves one less planning meeting to decide the next transition. We are too good in this network of child care professionals and families, too knowing in 2008, to be resolved to do “hoped for” placements. The hope to realize the dreams that live in their hearts is the gift we do and can give to our children, youth and families. ☘

“Friends of Adoption” Matching Event

by Kim Deiter, SWAN South Central Regional Technical Assistant, Diakon/FDR

The SWAN South Central Region of Pennsylvania joined forces to celebrate National Adoption Month in November as members of the Capital Region Adoption Coalition, Adoption Coalition of Lancaster County and York Area Adoption Coalition worked together to sponsor a “Friends of Adoption” celebration and matching event at the Cardinal Keeler Diocesan Center on Union Deposit Road in Harrisburg.

The coalitions gathered to honor Valerie Pritchett, local abc27 TV news anchorwoman, for her work on behalf of children waiting for adoption. Valerie participates in a regularly aired news segment entitled “Val’s Kids,” which features children from the foster care system who are waiting for a permanent family resource. The segment has aired since the year 2000 and has featured over 173 children, 55 of whom have been adopted and 58 more of whom have found families. That’s a 66 percent success rate!

More than 20 families attended the matching event and the “word on the street” is that some potential matches took place! An additional “Friends of Adoption” ceremony was held to honor several adoption professionals as well as adoptive families. The professionals who were honored were: the Honorable

Judge Hoberg (Lancaster), the Honorable Judge Hoover (Dauphin) and attorneys Scott Beaverson and Andrea Marceca. The adoptive families who were honored were Charlene and Rose Zink, a mother-daughter adoptive team; Lynn Maines, an adoptive father; and Jim and Brenda Wooding, adoptive parents.

It was a wonderful evening that was enjoyed by all who attended. Several agencies either attended as members of the coalitions or as participants of the matching event. These agencies include: York County Children and Youth, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, Children’s Home of York, COBYS, Families United Network, Family and Children Services of Central Pennsylvania, Lancaster County Children and Youth, Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange, Northwestern Human Services (NHS), Jewish Family Services/Adoptionlinks, Catholic Charities of Harrisburg, Bethany Christian Services, Bethanna, and representatives from the Department of Public Welfare’s Office of Children, Youth and Families.

Special thanks to Sandra Bennett of NHS for being the mistress of ceremonies for the “Friends of Adoption” ceremony and to Jen Garlin of Lancaster County Children and Youth for creating the beautiful awards that were given to the professionals and families. 



Karen Lollo, PAE Coordinator, poses with Valerie Pritchett, host of Val’s Kids waiting child segment



Friends of Adoption Award Winners

Federal Law Changes To Give Foster Parents the Right to Testify

by Kathy Ramper, Executive Director, Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association

Did you know that new federal law now allows foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers the right to be notified about and heard in any court proceedings regarding a child in their care? The new legislation went into effect in August 2007.

Pennsylvania also passed legislation to amend the Juvenile Act (42 Pa.C.S. Sec 6301 et seq) in order to become compliant with the Federal law. Senate Bill 1156, Printer's Number 1576 was signed into law by Governor Rendell on December 18, 2007 and became known as Act 76 of 2007. Act 76 of 2007 became effective January 1, 2008. More information is available from the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association office at 1-800-951-5151. You may also visit the association's Web site at www.psfpa.com.

Social Security Act section 438(b)(1), 475(5)(G), 42 U.S.C. §629g(b)(1), 675(5)(G)

- To be eligible to receive a Court Improvement Program (CIP) grant under this section, the highest state court must have a rule that requires:
 - o State courts to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers of children in foster care are notified of any proceeding regarding a child.
 - o State agencies to ensure that foster parents of a child and any pre-adoptive parent or relative providing care for the child are provided with notice of, and a right to be heard in, any [review or hearing] proceeding to be held with respect to the child.
 - o Foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers need not be made a party to such a [review or hearing] proceeding solely on the basis of such notice and opportunity and right to be heard.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau, the requirements of notice and the right to participate in hearings apply to review and permanency hearings and not other hearings.

- Verbatim language from the federal online Child Welfare Policy Manual §8.3C.2b, question 2, appears at page 4-5 of your federal policy handout.

It can be found online at:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/j2ee/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/policy_dsp.jsp?citID=1.

- The Web site address for the table of contents of the Child Welfare Policy Manual is:
http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/index.htm#cwpm.

Why was this amendment enacted concerning the right of foster parents to participate in hearings?

- Congress found that many agencies are not reliably providing this notice as previously required by federal law.
- Congress wanted courts to ensure that the foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caretakers actually receive notice.

Possible ways to ensure notice is provided to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caretakers.

Courts can:

- Provide the notice directly, requiring the agency to provide names and addresses.
- Require the agency to submit proof, such as a sworn written statement or swear in open court, that the notice was sent.
- Require documentation of such statement in court orders.
- Allow exceptions showing likelihood of harm to the child.

Courts allow the agency to file a motion and affidavit requesting that names of foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caretakers be obscured on copies of the notice going to parents or their attorneys.

Such affidavits would have to describe case-specific reasons why, if the biological parents or other parties learn the whereabouts of the home in which the child lives, the child may be harmed. 

Evening at Bethany Christian in Fort Washington

by Pat Hostetter, SWAN Southeast Regional Technical Assistant, Diakon/FDR

Bethany Christian in Fort Washington hosted its first ever Older and Special Needs Adoption Reception for their resource families on August 30, 2007. In addition to families from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, local children and youth agencies and SWAN staff were invited to attend. The event was held at a local church and provided both a relaxed and comfortable setting for families and agencies to meet and learn more about the services that are offered and to inform families about the child welfare system and SWAN. The event was hosted by Bethany Christian's Director of Adoption Services, Jenny Chantz, and Coordinator of Adoption Services, Larry Smith. Both Jenny and Larry have recently accepted their new positions at Bethany Christian and decided that the best way to get to know both their families and area agencies was to bring everyone together for an informative and fun evening.

The Philadelphia, Montgomery and Bucks children and youth agencies, as well as the state of Delaware's Children and Youth Agency attended the event and provided families with an opportunity to meet the workers who are looking to match some of their waiting children. In addition, the SWAN Southeast Regional Division Manager, Yvette Lassiter, and SWAN Southeast Regional Technical Assistant, Pat Hostetter, were present to provide information about waiting children through the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange.

Bethany Christian staff began the evening by providing food and refreshments along with an opportunity for

everyone to mingle in an informal setting. They then moved to a more structured portion of the evening by forming a panel of county workers, Delaware state's children and youth worker and SWAN representatives. Larry Smith facilitated the panel discussion by asking questions that families frequently have before, during, and after the adoption process. He then encouraged families to follow up with their own questions and concerns regarding how this unique system works. Approximately 15-20 families attended the event, all of whom seemed to be very enthusiastic to take part in this opportunity to learn as much as they could about the adoption process.

Following the panel discussion, families and professionals mingled and answered additional questions and concerns. At the end of the evening it seemed very apparent that families were left with a much stronger understanding of what to expect when moving through the adoption process, and felt much more connected to the network in which they belong. In fact, most families stayed until the end of the evening.

Due to the tremendous success of this event, Bethany Christian plans to have another event sometime in the spring of 2008. According to Larry Smith, the next event "will have a little different twist" than this initial effort. Given the good feelings generated from this evening, look forward to an event better follow-up event! 

Reflections with Val

by Nakiba Givens, Youth Ambassador at the Child Welfare Training Program



Last November, I had the opportunity to be interviewed by Valerie Pritchett, anchor of abc27 News and the host of the *Val's Kids* segment. I participated in the interview because I wanted to inform the community about older youth like myself in the child welfare system. In my opinion there seems to be far greater focus on younger children than older youth while in care. As a result, older youth find it very difficult or impossible to successfully transition from care. I believe that if we had more support from the community we might have a higher success rate when transitioning into adulthood.

One way that the community could be involved is to become a permanent connection for an older youth – whether through being an adoptive resource, foster parent or mentor. From my experience, it seems that many people do not want to take on the responsibility of raising another child, let alone someone who will soon be an adult. At the same time, many older youth despise having to move to another home due to past experiences while in care. Encouraging the community to consider mentoring opportunities seems to be a win-win situation for everyone.

This was a wonderful experience for me because it helped to shed light on older youth like myself who will not be adopted, but still need those permanent connections after leaving the child welfare system. The complete segment

of the interview aired twice in the middle of November, once on the 6 p.m. broadcast and once on the 11 p.m. broadcast.

Sandy Gallagher, my mentor and permanent connection, participated in the segment with me to demonstrate the need for permanent connections for older youth. Sandy understands what a permanent connection and mentor can bring to a youth's life. Young adults who cannot return to their birth families like me and who do not have permanent connections with other significant adults in their lives continue to have many challenges.

Some of the things young adults need a mentor for are: to nurture them when they are sick and living alone in their apartment; someone to call when they have a car problem or a boyfriend or girlfriend issue; support and guidance with budgeting so they can finish their schooling yet work enough hours to support themselves; help in planning their courses to maximize their credits and financial aid while they get older and the clock keeps ticking; help with child care so they can attend night classes after day care is closed, etc. These are just a few of the things that Sandy and her husband have taken on to support and care for young adults so that they may reach their full potential. Life goes on after age 18 and 21 and for some youth it can be a very scary and lonely journey. Sandy believes that a personal commitment to a young person is the least that can be done, especially for professionals in the field of permanency work. Being a friend to a youth leaving the foster care system may be the only life line we need to move forward into adulthood and to become successful. Sandy knows that we are resilient because we have overcome so much already.

Our permanent connection with an adult enhances our lives. Maybe you could consider what you can do to enhance the life of an older youth by just being there for them, by being their permanent connection or mentor! ✨

Pennsylvania's Waiting Children

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



Meet Josh!

Josh is a friendly 17-year old young man who enjoys going to the movies, playing video games and shooting pool. His favorite sports are hockey and basketball.

Josh is polite and soft-spoken. He is respectful of authority figures, is motivated to succeed and is able to express his feelings. Josh works hard in school and earns good grades. He would like to join the military after graduation. Josh is in need of a loving and supportive forever family to call his own.

All families will be considered for Josh. He is legally free for adoption. Families who are interested in making Josh part of their family may contact the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange at 1-800-227-0225. When contacting the exchange, please refer to Josh's PAE identification number, C3908522. ✨

SWAN Commercials Wins an Emmy

by Carrie Keiser, Program Specialist, DPW/OCYF



In 2006, the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network, designed and launched a new media campaign designed to recruit resource families (foster and adoptive families). The campaign, designed to be reflective of the children in care in need of foster and adoptive homes, consists of three new television commercials: one featuring an African American sibling group, the oldest sibling being a 16-year-old boy and the youngest a nine-year-old girl; one featuring a 13-year-old Caucasian girl; and one featuring a nine-year-old African American boy. Each commercial provides the SWAN Helpline telephone number and the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange's Web site address.

In 2007, the commercial featuring the African American sibling group won a Mid-Atlantic Emmy Award in the Public Service Announcement (PSA) Category. Pennsylvania's Commonwealth Media Services, who helped produce the commercial, nominated it in the PSA category. The commercial was up against multiple media markets in the Mid-Atlantic Region, including New Jersey and New York City. 



Cathy Utz, Bureau Director of the Office of Children, Youth and Families Bureau of Policy and Program Development shows her enthusiasm about SWAN's accomplishment while posing with the Emmy.



The Bureau of Policy and Program Development get together for a photo op with the Emmy.



Linda Ciampi, Senior Vice-President of Diakon Family and Community Ministries celebrates SWAN's success with the Emmy!

It's Off To School They Go . . . *Job Corps' Students* Assist Foster Care Youth As They Invest In Their Futures!

by Anne Foster-Rosenkranz, Proposal Manager/Writer, Arbor Education and Training, LLC

Traditionally, September is the time of year when students head back to school or off to college. For many, this journey is supported by parents who make sure that their kids have what they need to be successful in school, whether it's pencils and pens, notebooks and paper or a computer. For youth aging out of foster care at Philadelphia's Achieving Independence Center (AI Center), this transition to school is supported by literally hundreds of students at Job Corps Centers managed by ResCare, who, as part of the Back Pack Challenge, donated backpacks filled with such items as food and life style items, school supplies, personal care products, music players and gift cards. At the end of every summer, Arbor Education & Training's Regional Director, Ron Spangler, and AI Center Director, Evelyn Busby, coordinate the challenge.

The AI Center is funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide a *holistic* environment where assistance and support can be offered to prepare Philadelphia youth aging out of foster care to live independently. Even in the best of circumstance, striking out on one's own for the first time is challenging, but for youth who have had few role models, it can be overwhelming. Without a great deal of support, a significant number of youth leaving foster care can experience homelessness, victimization, unemployment, and dependency on various types of public assistance. DHS's guiding principle in modeling the AI Center is *youth come first*.

Since 2002, Arbor Education & Training in partnership with DHS has led a multi-agency consortium that provides diverse services to youth ages 16-21 that are transitioning from foster care to independent living. Using a One-Stop Center model, the AI Center brings together numerous local service agencies at one convenient, youth-friendly location, in a mall, in downtown Philadelphia. This single *gateway* provides collaborative and comprehensive services to meet the individual needs of transitioning youth.

The AI Center offers non-traditional hours and flexible scheduling to accommodate those members who are in school or doing on-the-job training. It's dedicated to providing support and real life tools for youth who want to make an investment in their future.

As the lead agency, Arbor manages the AI Center, provides core customer services to center members (including orientation, life skills, job readiness training, and case management), and coordinates the services provided by other partner agencies.

In recent years, all AI Center participating partners, including DHS, Arbor and its parent company ResCare, have made sure that youth attending school or college in the fall have the supports and supplies they need to excel. This year ResCare's Job Corps students responded to the Back Pack Challenge by donating back packs to the AI Center.

Youth who are returning to high school or going on to higher education were recognized at Back Pack Challenge Education Recognition festivities held in August 2007 at Temple University.

"We are so proud that so many of our members are headed off to college," says AI Center Director Evelyn Busby. "Their accomplishments demonstrate that with access to role models and support, all foster youth can achieve their potential."

For more information, please contact Evelyn Busby, Program Director, at 267-514-3554 or ebusby@aicenter.us or visit www.aiphilly.com. 



From left to right, Javel Gary, AI Center member; Evelyn Busby, AI Center Director; Vince Doran, President of ResCare's Employment Training Services Group and Donte Turner, AI Center member; enjoy the sights in Washington, D.C. at the ResCare/Arbor 2007 Conference).

Sharon Jones, Achieving Independence Center Member Awarded Four year Scholarship to Widener University

by Evelyn Busby, Program Director, Achieving Independence Center

Sharon Jones, a student and member of the Achieving Independence Center (AI Center), recently received an opportunity of a lifetime. Sharon was awarded a four-year scholarship to attend Widener University in Chester. Sharon was selected from a competitive process that started in December 2006, when Cecilia M. McCormick, Executive Director, Office of the President, Widener University, announced that Widener University wanted to present a four year scholarship to a Philadelphia foster youth.

Ms. McCormick had been involved with the AI Center as part of Leadership Philadelphia. For over 47 years Leadership Philadelphia has been mobilizing the talent of the private sector to work on behalf of the community and serving as the hub of a diverse professional network.

AI Center staff screened and submitted applicants to the Leadership Philadelphia team. Members were invited to Widener's campus for an informational session, tour, interview and luncheon. The members were invited to participate in a second round of interviews over dinner. Other factors considered included Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and high school grade point average.

During the process, Widener became Sharon's first choice. In the beginning it was a mere consideration. In fact, Sharon missed the first tour and interview process. However, she was invited to go to the campus for a tour and meetings with the President and Dean of the School of Business. Additionally, Sharon had lunch with the student government past and current presidents. This day sent Widener to the top of her list.

Sharon graduated from Edward W. Bok Technical High School with honors and was the recipient of several awards during the year. She was named the top senior in the Philadelphia public schools. Sharon was selected from 10,000 applicants.

In Jan. 2007, Sharon was named the outstanding AI Center Mentee. A member since 2005, Sharon had immediately connected with an adult mentor. The two have been matched for 1.5 years; Sharon states that she

gives her guidance, support and encouragement. She is also someone with whom Sharon has fun.

In March 2007, Sharon was recognizing by "Women Encouraging Women," as an outstanding young women in Philadelphia. Sharon has a passion for children, business and learning. She highly values education and plans to major in business management. Her ultimate goal is to become an entrepreneur. Sharon states that "The greatest gift is life, make the most out of it and never give up." Her advice to other youth in regards to education is "Excel, achieve, and get good grades; never settle for anything less because you can always get more!"

Sharon's foster parents are supportive of her educational goals and while in college she will continue to return to the foster placement during school breaks and the foster parents will continue to support her emotionally. This is very important to Sharon; it allows her to remain connected to her siblings in a supportive consistent environment.

Sharon applied to nine other universities including Indiana University of Pennsylvania, LaSalle, Temple, Capital College, Kutztown, Bloomsburg, East Stroudsburg, Lincoln and Cheyney. Sharon credits the AI Center with providing her with multiple resources. The AI Center is a "one-stop" model designed to help young people who are aging out of the system of foster care achieve their future goals of self sufficiency. For many of these young people, there is no family or support network awaiting them. With the help of the AI Center, young people are able to acquire linkages to post-secondary education as well as life skills, employment training, job opportunities and even a place to live. It provides them with guidance and a helping hand as they transition from adolescence to adulthood and a life of self-sufficiency.

The AI Center is a program of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services. For more information regarding the AI Center, please contact Evelyn Busby, Program Director, at 267-514-3554 or ebusby@aicenter.us or visit www.aiphilly.com. 

Paralegal Corner

by Natalie Witt,
LSI Division Manager, Diakon/FDR

The LSI Paralegal Corner usually features our staff answering questions submitted by the network. In the new year we believe it would be nice to recognize some of the special efforts made last year by the paralegals in their counties throughout Pennsylvania. Hopefully, some of these stories will warm your hearts as we cope with the cold weather and look ahead in the new year.

LSI received national recognition in December's issue of *Findings & Facts* magazine, published by the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA). The article's focus was on the outstanding efforts made by the LSI paralegals to promote permanency in Pennsylvania. NALA indicated that they have never before published an article focusing on one particular state's initiative. However, they were extremely impressed with Pennsylvania's LSI paralegal program and the difference the paralegals have made in county agencies, so they made an exception to highlight their achievements. If you are interested in reading this editorial, please visit NALA's Web site at www.nala.org.

This past year has included many changes to LSI. We had several staff changes and an additional paralegal position added in Lancaster County. I also wish to recognize a few new staff members and the counties where they are now working: Troy Miller, Montgomery County; Meghan Belcher, Montgomery County; John Porreca, Delaware County; Traci Erisman, Lancaster County; and Barbara Stockton, Lehigh County. We are

currently interviewing for the additional vacant position in Lehigh and we hope to have that position filled by the time you read this. We are thrilled to welcome all our new staff and look forward to working with them this year and highlighting their achievements.

November is National Adoption Month, and many counties across the state undertake great responsibility in making this month special for the children in their care. Westmoreland County has received national recognition in past years for their wonderful Adoption Day activities. This past year was no exception. Westmoreland County finalized 42 adoptions in 2007, 18 of which occurred on their annual Adoption Day on Nov. 18. Although the event did not take place until November, the paralegals began preparing for the big day back in June. Through all of their hard work, the children who were recognized received an overwhelming reception. This year's theme was "Finding Nemo" because they had so many younger children adopted this year. They strung fish from the ceilings and placed a huge "Nemo" fish in the main entrance. It was a very festive occasion, and the children had a wonderful day.

Lehigh County hosted its annual adoption award event and recognized a single mother who adopted a medically handicapped child, a brother and sister who were adopted by a same sex couple, a caseworker from Pinebrook Services who did an outstanding job with child specific recruitment and a local attorney who has been involved with 100 adoptions through Lehigh County.

Lancaster County hosted its Adoption Day on Nov. 15. The event was held at the Lancaster County Courthouse. Seventeen children were adopted on their "special day." Each adoption was a celebration in itself. The agency provided balloons, badges and a goodie bag that included a disposable camera for photos. Judge Jay Hoberg was wonderful with the kids. Other counties hosted smaller events at local area malls throughout the state.

In addition to Adoption Day events, other counties had some pretty exciting and heartwarming events take place. Montgomery County organized a suitcase donation, answering a call for assistance that affects so many of our counties. When our children are transported from foster care homes, they usually arrive with their personal belongings and clothes in large trash bags. Troy Miller, LSI paralegal noted, "While the contents of the bags remain the same through such circumstances, maintaining the emotional health and personal dignity of a child going through such a transition can prove more challenging." Troy volunteered to help Fred Blankenburg, the agency worker who oversaw this initiative. During the afternoon, they inspected and sorted through over 100 suitcases. Then, they systematically stored the suitcases for future use. Troy hopes that their efforts will help make an abrupt or unexpected transition that a child faces a little easier.

November shattered a few records in Centre County when the parental rights to seven siblings were terminated, thereby freeing the children for adoption. What is even more impressive is that Centre County Children and Youth Services placed the four youngest siblings in one pre-adoptive home! Congratulations to the agency workers who worked tirelessly to bring permanency to the lives of these children. And kudos to the agency's paralegal Lori Hall, whose passion and determination to free these siblings for adoption expedited this process.

John Porreca, our paralegal who started in Delaware County in October, jumped in right away and wrote a very empowering brief for the county that is dealing with a termination issue involving incapacity for an incarcerated parent.

Dauphin County ended the year by completing a huge termination for eight siblings. The parties included the mother, six fathers and five attorneys. The termination required five hearings. The paralegals were responsible for preparing the legal documents, flow

(continued on page 14)

(continued from page 13)

charts, exhibits and exhibit packets. The final hearing took place in January, which started preparations for kinship adoptions for these children.

Jamie Barrick, one of the two paralegals in Dauphin County, was able to save the county money by researching alternate publication solutions. In addition to the cost savings, by using “joint publication,” this approach saved even more costs in court time, solicitor time, staff time and

supplies. In one day, Jamie saved the county \$293.54. This is a different kind of diligent search and just another example of the value that a LSI paralegal makes in each county throughout Pennsylvania.

To learn how your county can benefit from a LSI paralegal, please feel free to contact me at nwitt@diakon-swan.org or 888-793-2512 ext. 6449.

Congratulations and thank you again to all of my staff for their dedication and hard work this past year. May 2008 bring more stories of success for the children we serve. ✝

SuccessStory

One Family’s Second Miracle

by Jon Douglas, Permanency Specialist, Project STAR

Susan and Steve Johnson* have what most would consider to be the perfect family in a home filled with love, laughter and gratitude. They have two beautiful adopted daughters. The youngest and newest member of the family, baby Sarah, came to them through a chance encounter by their adoption matching specialist, Renee Marasco, at the *Growing Families through Adoption* matching event in the spring of 2007.

“It’s very unusual to place newborns in homes through the county’s services,” notes Renee, who has attended matching events for more than 15 years. “When a newborn becomes available, the county typically does not register the child because they get inundated with calls from parents who want to adopt.”

But at the *Growing Families through Adoption* event, one county agency had two babies listed. Renee excitedly picked up information knowing that one of the newborns would be perfect for the Johnson family. When she shared the information with Susan and Steve, they were ecstatic.

As one of several families interested in adopting Sarah, they underwent interviews, filed papers for placement in their home and then waited. They were told they would know the results in seven days. Throughout the wait, the family prayed “for God’s will for the child to come to their home so they could raise her for His good,” explains Susan.

During the wait for word on the placement, Steve, who is the director of a counseling center at the family’s church, began preparing for a previously planned mission trip

overseas. The Johnson’s still had not heard word of the results of the adoption proceedings on the day he was to leave. So they prayed for an answer, one way or the other, that day. As Steve was walking out the door, the fateful call with the good news came from Renee. Steve and Susan were going to be new parents once again!

Steve rushed out the door to the airport, stopping along the way to send his wife flowers to tell her he loved her and the new baby that was going to join their lives while he was away. While Steve was away, Susan frantically began preparations for bringing Sarah home – pulling out baby clothes, furniture and car seats from storage. Six days later, baby Sarah came home to her big sister, her mom and her grandmother. And to a Webcam that allowed her proud father to see his new daughter for the very first time.

Three days later, Steve returned from his long trip in the middle of the night and held the tiny infant in his arms. Steve and Susan got down on their knees and thanked God for the second miracle that had joined their wonderful lives.

“The fact that Renee attended the matching event and had the chance to pick up Sarah’s profile is a miracle,” says Susan. “Only by the grace of God did both of our two miracles come into our lives.” ✝

**Note: the names of the family members have been changed for this article to protect the identity of the child during the adoption proceedings.*

Continuing the Work of the American Bar Association *Barriers to Permanency Project*

by Jennifer Caruso, Practice Improvement Specialist, Child Welfare Training Program

The American Bar Association (ABA) Center on Children and the Law directs the *Barriers to Permanency Project*. The project is designed to facilitate systemic change within a county's child welfare system and includes the cooperation of the President Judge, county solicitor and the child welfare administrator. With the assistance of a multidisciplinary advisory board and subcommittees, the project seeks to improve permanency outcomes for children and reduce the amount of time children spend in foster care. Each county identifies barriers that exist within their own system that negatively impacts permanency and works toward resolving those issues.

The *Barriers to Permanency Project* was active in McKean County from 2004-2007. The Advisory Board in McKean County met monthly and its members included: the agency administrator and numerous staff members, the county solicitor, school administrators and representatives from various service providers. McKean County's goals centered on barriers related to termination of parental rights. Work began to educate the Advisory Board on the legal boundaries and permanency mandates of child welfare. A case review process was initiated to analyze Family Service Plans and an Education/Child Welfare workgroup was formed.

As a result of the project, many training opportunities were provided to agency staff, the community and providers. Topics included *Permanency Hierarchy*, *Concurrent Planning* and *CYS and the Community*.

Opportunities for support and collaboration were provided during the project. For example, the ABA, the University of Pittsburgh Child Welfare Training Program (CWTP) and McKean County Children and Youth worked together to educate service providers in the community. At an event held in October 2007, there were approximately 90 social service providers, school personnel and medical staff in attendance. The session was designed to facilitate better communication and collaboration between the county agency and community providers. The goal was to assist teachers, school administrators, medical, behavioral health and other service professionals to learn what they need to know about how, when and why county children and youth service agencies investigate and respond to reports of child abuse and neglect. Mandated reporting was also reviewed, including some of the recent changes in law.

Counties participating in the project have an opportunity to involve CWTP in their Advisory Board and county work groups during their time with the project. Each county is unique and receives support that addresses their distinctive needs. Once the project has officially come to an end the work in the county can continue. As an example, recommendations were made by ABA staff for CWTP to continue to provide technical assistance in McKean County to maintain the positive momentum. As a result, CWTP will continue to support McKean County's community education efforts and refine orientation for new staff members. 

Pennsylvania's Waiting Children

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



Meet Latifah!

Latifah is an attractive, intelligent and mature 17-year old young lady who is initially shy when meeting new people but warms up quickly. Others describe her as a very special person who is caring, respectful and compassionate.

Latifah enjoys acting and would like to be a member of a drama club. She has played field hockey and competed on her school's track team. She enjoys poetry and reading many different genres of books such as romance, mystery, action and biographies. Latifah appreciates all types of music and looks for lyrics with meaning. Family activities are among her favorite pastimes.

Latifah wants to one day graduate from college and become a pediatric nurse. She is very eager to find her forever family. She hopes to find supportive parents who will participate in her life and help her explore life choices as she approaches adulthood. Latifah wants to maintain contact with her biological siblings, as they have been a source of support for her.

All families will be considered for Latifah. Parental rights will be terminated when a permanent resource is identified. Families

who are interested in making Latifah part of their family may contact the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange at 1-800-227-0225. When contacting the exchange, please refer to Latifah's PAE identification number, C06AC19. ☘



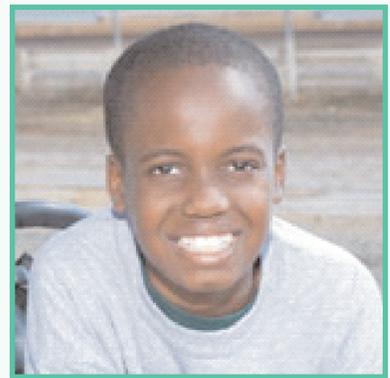
Meet Courtney!

Courtney is a friendly, polite, respectful and outgoing 14-year old girl. Her interests include spending time with others, dancing, art, reading, singing, watching television and listening to her favorite CD's. She enjoys attending dances at her school and has just started taking violin lessons. She also loves swimming, riding her bike and playing games, such as kickball. Courtney's favorite holiday is Christmas.

Courtney enjoys school and is proud of the A's and B's she earns in all her classes. Her teachers have very positive things to say about her, and Courtney has earned various weekly awards for her behavior in school. Her favorite class is social studies, and she really enjoys learning about ancient cultures.

Courtney has developed a very positive relationship with her foster family and gets along with her peers. She wants to be accepted by a family that will love her and provide consistency for her. Courtney is looking forward to finding her forever family and a home she can call her own. Courtney will be an asset to any family.

All families will be considered for Courtney. She is legally free for adoption. Families who are interested in making Courtney a part of their family may contact the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) at 1-800-227-0225. When contacting the exchange, please refer to Courtney's PAE identification number, C09AA55. ☘



Meet Michael!

Michael is a handsome and charming 13 year old young man with a big smile. He is loving and affectionate but is shy around people he does not know and is sometimes anxious when asked a lot of questions. He is described as bright and intelligent and makes friends easily.

Michael likes school, and his favorite subject is math. He also enjoys spelling and usually receives a perfect score on his spelling tests. Michael also finds satisfaction in completing his homework.

Michael enjoys reading, watching television and going to the movies. He especially likes reading sports books and watching "The Disney Channel" and "BET." Michael also likes to playing soccer and tag and helping with household chores.

When Michael grows up, he would like to be either a veterinarian or a doctor. He particularly likes dogs and cheetahs. Michael's two greatest wishes include finding his forever family and going to Great Adventure Amusement Park.

Michael wants to be adopted by a loving family who will show him plenty of love and attention. He is happy when he thinks about being adopted and says he would like a family with two parents, a grandmother, siblings and dogs.

All families will be considered for Michael. He is legally free for adoption. Families who are interested in making Michael part of their family may contact the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange at 1-800-227-0225. When contacting the exchange, please refer to Michael's PAE identification number, C5106879. ☘

Karey McIntyre: Adding to her Brood of Boys

by Jon Douglas, Permanency Specialist, Project STAR

The *Growing Families through Adoption* matching event was high on Robin Kline's list of must-attend activities in the March 2007. As an adoption case manager for Crawford County Children and Youth Services, Robin had five children for whom she was hoping to find homes at the event. She knew she would have the hardest time placing two older boys with mental and social issues who had been bounced from one foster home to another. The prospect for finding them a family at the event was bleak ... until Karey McIntyre arrived.

Karey was invited to attend the matching event by an agency worker at Project STAR. Many of the parents at the event were looking for babies or toddlers to adopt. Karey had something different in mind, an adolescent or teenage boy to join her family at home, which consisted of her and three adopted boys, age 6 to 16.

Karey visited every table at the event, looking closely at each photo trying to find the right child who would fit into her unconventional home. Five minutes before the event ended, she came across Robin Kline's table where she saw the profiles of two adolescent boys. Karey's interest was piqued.

After meeting the two boys, she decided she wanted to get to know David, age 9, a little better. Arrangements were made for visits, including a Fourth of July celebration with her family to see how everyone would get along. The visit went very well. Shortly thereafter, David moved in with the family for a test run to determine if adoption would be a viable option.

Since that time, Karey and David have been getting to know each other and working through some of the issues in his life. With a father who signed away rights to his son and a mother who was absent from birth, David has led a life filled with foster homes and residential treatment facilities. He exhibits high-functioning mental retardation, is bipolar and has the classic symptoms of Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD), which is often seen in children who do not grow up in caring, stable homes. This disorder often results in learning, social and psychological problems and failed personal and interpersonal relationships. For David, his RAD sparked

violent tendencies that deterred other foster families from adopting. While these are major issues, Karey is willing to invest the time in David to work through his problems so he can better understand how to trust others and not hurt his siblings.

"David's a neat kid, he has a great wit," notes Karey when she talks about the newest addition to her family. "I love David, and I am willing to make it work. I want him to know he is worth something. I am not going to be able to make him better, but I can make him want to be better and to hang in there ... so few people are willing to give this to kids."

David is not the first child that Karey has sought to adopt. As a matter of fact, she is a fixture on the Project STAR scene and is well known for fostering or adopting some of the children who are more difficult to place. In the past 18 years, she has taken 179 children into her home. Of those, she has adopted six boys, two from Project STAR. All of the boys have had attention deficit disorders and discipline problems. Some have had mental health issues, but all have been in search of a loving family.

The boys she has taken in have managed to overcome adversities in their young lives and are now productive members of society, thanks to the care and love Karey has shown them. In addition to David and the three other boys currently living with her, she also has three grown boys who are out on their own. And she has one grown girl – her biological daughter who loves each and every child her mother brings into her home like he was her own biological brother.

Karey vows to continue to foster and adopt kids for as long as she is able to do so with the aid of the caring staff at Project STAR. She plans on attending more matching events like *Growing Families through Adoption* held by Project STAR at The Children's Institute.

"Project STAR will do anything to help me, they know I am not going to give up on these kids," notes Karey. "I am such a blessed woman to have the opportunity to care for my boys." 🌱

Adoption Race at Williams Grove Speedway

by Elisa Esh, Director of Recruitment and Family Development, Diakon Adoption and Foster Care

In celebration of the fifth running of Adoption Night at Williams Grove Speedway, track promoters have dedicated racing on August 1, 2008 entirely to the cause of adoption, naming it “Diakon Adoption and Foster Care Adoption Night Race.” This event is sponsored in collaboration with Dauphin, York and Montgomery County Children and Youth agencies, Bethanna, Jewish Family Services/AdoptionLinks, NHS Services, Families United Network and Project STAR of Pittsburgh.

For the last four years, Adoption Night has coincided with the Mitch Smith Memorial Race during Speed Week at Williams Grove. Diakon staff is thrilled to have an entire evening of racing devoted to finding homes for children. The races will feature events from both 410 and 358 division sprint cars. To promote adoption, the sprint cars will display

a temporary vinyl covering on the top wing boards of each car featuring individual photos of children seeking adoption. Last year 63 children were featured on the sprint cars. As this year’s entire evening of racing is devoted to adoption, the potential exists to feature more than 80 children on the cars in both categories. Featured youth will attend the race and meet drivers and teams of the car on which their respective photos are featured. The



2007 event was a huge success with over 10,000 spectators attending the event and at least three children being matched with families who attended the races. One of those families had their adoptive child placed in their home before Christmas!

Corresponding with the Adoption Night races, an adoption fair and hospitality event will be held at the pit entrance parking area the afternoon of the event. The fair will provide information about children available for adoption and allow county and affiliate agencies to network with families wanting to adopt.

If you would like your waiting child to participate in the event or need more information about reserving a display table or attending the event, please contact Jennifer Bircher at bircherj@diaakon.org or by phone at 717-795-0320. ☘

2008 Independent Living Youth Retreat

The 2008 Independent Living (IL) Youth Retreat will be held June 23-27, 2008, at Penn State Mont Alto Campus. The IL Youth Retreat provides youth and staff with the opportunity to come together in one location to share experiences, learn from one another and gather information and resources to aid with the challenges youth face while transitioning to adulthood.

Counties will begin to get registration materials in May. The Office of Children, Youth and Families would like to encourage caseworkers to reach out to youth that have never had the opportunity to attend the retreat in past years.

For further information about the IL Youth Retreat, contact Lori Habermehl, IL Youth Retreat Coordinator, at 610-317-0721 ext. 312. ☘

Three Rivers Adoption Council Expands their Services to the Central and Eastern Parts of Pennsylvania

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

Three Rivers Adoption Council's (TRAC) mission is to improve the permanency opportunities for all children growing up without families. For nearly 30 years, TRAC has worked to find placements for many of Pennsylvania's toughest kids. Over the past year, TRAC has been planning to expand its services to the central and eastern regions of the state. A new TRAC East office was opened in Conshohocken in November to bring TRAC services to the Philadelphia Metro area. TRAC East has begun recruitment and networking efforts.

Along with community education and recruitment of adoptive resources, TRAC will provide parent training, home study preparation, matching and placement services for potential adoptive families. The new location will be available to provide a myriad of SWAN referred

services including child profile, child preparation and family profiles to the counties in the Philadelphia metro area. TRAC East will also run a foster care component that will operate emergency and temporary shelter for Philadelphia's most vulnerable victims.

Also on the agenda for 2008, TRAC plans to open a third office in the Harrisburg area. This office, housed within the First Baptist Church of Steelton will directly support the Older Child Initiative Grant that is currently in its second year. TRAC has been recruiting in the area for over a year and has had great success spreading the message of permanence to the communities in that region. TRAC's Central location is scheduled to open this winter.

Julie Marks was tapped to provide leadership at both of these new

locations. Ms. Marks has more than 20 years of experience in the child welfare field. She spent 14 years working with the National Adoption Center and has spent the last 8 years providing contract services to several agencies in the Philadelphia area. TRAC is very excited to welcome Ms. Marks to the team.

TRAC hosted two Welcome to Adoption meetings in February. These events are the first step on the road to providing permanency for a waiting child.

TRAC is very excited to work with the excellent child welfare agencies, both public and private, in the central and eastern region. Through future partnerships with these agencies we will be able to place many more of Pennsylvania's waiting children...

Because every child needs a family! 

Children's Aid Society of Mercer County Matching Event

The Children's Aid Society of Mercer County is hosting a matching event on May 8, 2008, at their office located at 350 West Market Street in Mercer. The event will run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Agencies that are planning to participate in this event must set-up their display tables between 1:30 p.m. and 2 p.m. on the day of the event. Agencies should contact Heather Alt at 724-662-4730 ext. 19 or email her at h malt@zoominternet.net by April 8, 2008, to register for this event. Families that are interested in attending this event should also contact Heather Alt by April 24, 2008, for registration information. 

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.

Savethedate



2008 SWAN/IL Spring Quarterly Meetings

April 1 - Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel, Scranton

April 8 - Holiday Inn, Clarion

April 9 - Radisson Hotel Pittsburgh, Monroeville

April 16 - Central Pennsylvania College Conference Center, Enola

April 28 - Embassy Suites Hotel, Philadelphia Airport, Philadelphia

April 29 - Desmond Hotel, Malvern

2008 IL Youth Retreat

June 23-27 - Penn State Mont Alto Campus, Mont Alto

2008 SWAN/IL Summer Statewide Meeting

July 8-9 - Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center, Lancaster

16th Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference

July 9-11 - Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center, Lancaster