

REGION 2 FASU NEWS

FOSTER AND ADOPTION SERVICES Milford and New Haven Offices

Issue 1

Teresa Fazio-Winters, Publisher

Fall 2012



Joette Katz
Commissioner

September 2012

Dear Caretakers:

I want to formally introduce myself as I have recently entered into the role of Program Manager for the Foster Care and Adoption Unit (FASU) for the New Haven and Milford DCF offices. I want to thank each of you for collaborating with Department of Children and Families (DCF), as we embark on caring for children who are either temporarily or in some cases permanently not able to remain with their biological parents.

The Department of Children and Families has taken on several new and exciting state wide initiatives since Commissioner Katz has joined the Department. Our agency's first and foremost goal is to help children we serve grow up healthy, safe and learning and will experience success in and out of school. We want to help children advance in their strengths so they can grow to give back within their communities as our future adults.

The South Central Region of Connecticut which is covered by the New Haven and Milford DCF office re-evaluates its annual achievements every September and outlines new goals and objectives for the upcoming year as it relates to servicing some of the most vulnerable families within our community as well as including the state wide initiatives.

The Foster Care and Adoption Unit evaluates statistics, resources, and establishes goals for the upcoming year which coincides with the needs of the region. We want to share with each of you what our goals are as we believe partnering with you will ultimately help us serve our children more effectively.

Because there are so many exciting plans and initiatives our FASU team are embarking on we wanted to keep each of you in the loop. It can not simply be done in one letter. Therefore, we are bringing back a quarterly newsletter as one form to improve communication. We hope you will find this helpful and informative.

Please feel free to visit our website at <http://www.ctfosteradopt.com>, our face book page at: <http://www.facebook.com/CTFosterAdopt>, or follow us on twitter at: <https://twitter.com/CTFosterAdopt1>

Thank you again and I look forward to working together with you through out this upcoming year.



Sincerely,
Teresa Fazio-Winters

Teresa Fazio Winters, MSW
Milford/New Haven FASU Program Manager
203-306-5319 or 203-786-0615

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Dannel P. Malloy
Governor



A Glimpse at the Department of Children and Families

DCF's Mission Statement:

All children the Department serves will grow-up healthy, safe and learning, and will experience success in and out of school. The Department will advance children's special talents so they can give back to the community. Below are a few glimpses of initiatives the agency is experiencing. The Practice Model noted below is a really exciting one. This initiative speaks to how everyone at DCF can be more family friendly and be more supportive through our involvement in family and children's lives. We at DCF are all committed to trying to live by these six principles even in our interactions with foster parents. They include: Everyone deserves to be heard, everyone deserves respect, everyone has strengths, judgments can wait, partners share power and partnership is a process.

Six -Cross Cutting Themes:

1. Family Centered
2. Trauma informed
3. Application of neuroscience and adolescent development.
4. Stronger community partnerships.
5. Improved leadership, management, supervision and accountability.
6. Becoming learning organization.

Practice Model

- Family engagement
- Purposeful visits
- Family Centered Assessment
- Supervision and Management
- Initial and Ongoing Assessment of Safety and Risk
- Effective Case Planning
- Individualizing Services

Protective Factors

- Parent is nurturing and attached.
- Knowledge of parenting and development
- Parent Resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete supports for parents.

Trauma Toolkit When Working with Youths

- Maximize child's sense of safety
- Help reduce the overwhelming feelings
- Acknowledge the trauma and how it may impact behaviors.
- Get trauma informed providers involved
- Promote stable and healthy relationships for child.
- Educate and support youth's caretakers and loved ones
- Ensure a trauma informed assessment is done to determine the impact on youth's development and behaviors.





IN RECOGNITION OF

"SUPPORT IS EVERYONE'S JOB"

THE MILFORD DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2012 "HONORARY FOSTER PARENT OF THE MONTH

IS HEREBY GRANTED TO:

JEN AND BILL MITCHELL



FOSTER PARENT TIP OF THE MONTH:

*JEN AND BILL BELIEVE TEAM WORK
IS ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESS.
"WE LOVE TO BE INCLUDED
AS PART OF THE TEAM"*

Honoring Licensed Caregivers

The Milford and New Haven offices have committed to honoring one licensed caretaker every month.

This is just another way we want to honor and stay reminded of the important role licensed caregivers have collaborating with us as a social service agency helping families and assisting in the temporary care of children.

Honoring them will include a personal thank you and developing a plaque with the licensed caregivers name and picture as well as a tip from them on how we can improve our work. This plaque will be hung in the DCF office for social workers and administrators to view, be reminded of and celebrate throughout the month.

Milford kicked off the event in September by honoring the Mitchell family. We'll continue to share in upcoming newsletters the nominated caretakers for both offices.

Be a Hero—Refer a Friend to be a Foster Parent!

Call 1-800-KID-HERO

"The Matchers Corner"

MEET MARK HAYRE

Mark Hayre is Milford's FASU Matcher. He has been with the Department a very long time and has been in FASU serving Middletown, Meriden, New Haven, and Milford for just as long. He is notorious for his phone calls asking for assistance with placements (i.e. "situations") during the office's most desperate times of need. He is famous for always being available by phone, always willing to listen and being extremely supportive to our foster parents. He encourages all families, but especially newly licensed foster/adoptive parents to attend support groups and other DCF sponsored events. This will allow you to meet and get to know some of our experienced foster families who can share their knowledge and offer additional support and guidance. Mark is always a reliable and dedicated attendee at foster care events and willing to go the extra mile to express the agency's appreciation for all the hard work foster parents do for the children in our care. Dressing up as Santa Claus during our annual holiday party is one of his most famous appearances.



is

Mark has watched the agency evolve over the years. He's most excited about the really good work the agency is doing with trying to keep kids connected to their family, community, and natural support networks. This is extremely challenging work but also very rewarding because children are really experiencing the least amount of disruption in their lives. Children are able to continue to focus on being kids, stay connected to their schools and most importantly feel like they belong.

This hasn't changed the amount of work Mark still has to do matching children to traditional foster homes. He sees his job only getting more complicated because it includes trying to place the neediest children into foster homes. The Department is moving in a direction to get as many children out of congregate care and into family settings. Most of these children are older and have specialized needs; but would greatly benefit from living in traditional family settings. With this in mind, Mark may be calling various foster parents to consider expanding their age range. Mark is committed to helping traditional foster parents through the journey of meeting our most vulnerable children's needs, including teens, children with medically complex needs, young teen mothers who are trying to raise children as well as babies. Mark expresses his deepest appreciation and respect for all that you do, and he looks forward to working with each one of you.

MEET MICHELLE LOWMAN



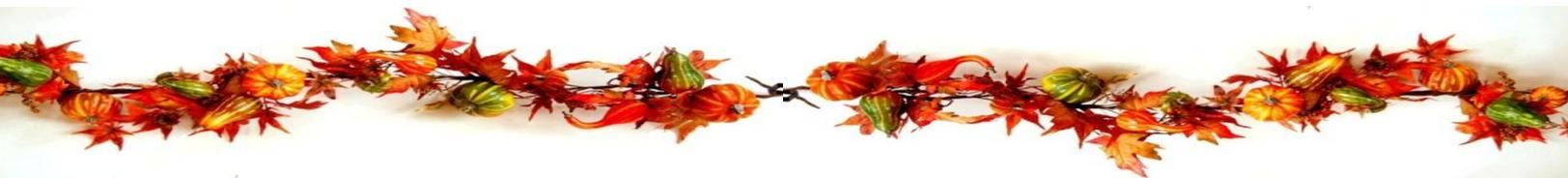
Hello, my name is Michelle Lowman and I have worked for the Department of Children and Families for 21 years. I have been with the Foster Care and Adoption Unit for 10 years and in the capacity of primary matcher for 2 years having 3 years of back up matcher experience. My role entails receiving requests about placement needs. I try to gather as much information as possible by meeting the child (if in the office), talking with CPS or Investigations and reading documented information. I then contact possible foster family candidates that are compatible with the child being placed. The goal is to match the foster parent that is able most to meet the needs of the child being placed.

Over the years I have had the privilege to work and talk with many of the foster families within our region. I have also had the rewarding opportunity to match children to caring and welcoming homes. For a child who has just experienced being separated from the only family they know this can be extremely scary and traumatic. It is always

a good feeling when a family is excited about a perspective match, talks about ways we can partner to make the child transition smooth and offer suggestions to help the continued stay be a positive experience while being away from their bio-family.

Our agency is going through exciting times. As we evolve as an agency we are also talking about exciting ways to help our foster parents strengthen their skills as well. Our work in partnership will allow the provide foster and adoptive services conducive to a good alternative care experience.

Partnership is a Process



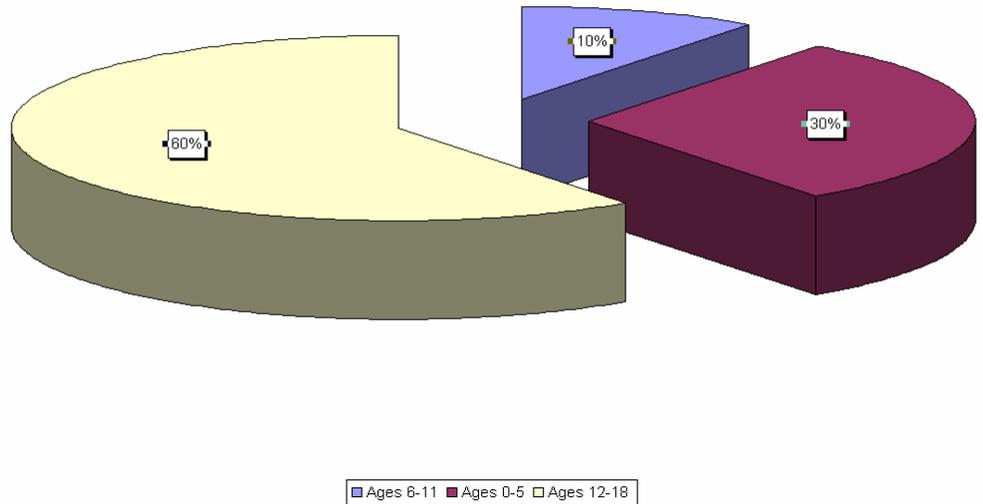
Percentages of the Ages of Children coming into DCF Care

This past year the Department has experienced a decrease in children coming into foster care with all of the intensive efforts the Department along with the community has made to preserve families. This is something the Department is very proud of because children's needs are best met if they have healthy viable parents to meet them. Of those children that due enter into care the Department is making more efforts to locate family and engage in kinship foster care plans for children so they can stay with their blood families. As a result of those two initiatives, the Department

has experienced a slight decrease in the need to place children into non relative traditional foster homes. There are still children coming into care and of those children we have a very clear trend which includes some babies 0-5 and a large growing number of teens. We have fewer children coming into care between the ages of 5-11. We will try to take a more proactive role of conducting permanency team meetings for children between the ages of 0-5 to locate "legal risk" pre adoptive placements sooner or try to utilize families that are willing to " foster while they wait". We are hoping this will decrease the number of moves a child will experience. That still leaves us with a significant need to have foster homes for children that are in their teens. Also most of our placement requests include multiple siblings. We are aggressively trying to keep siblings together. Our biggest goals this year will be to increase our resources of foster parents that will take teens. We will be gearing a lot of our support groups and post pride trainings around supporting foster parents in caring for teens. We want to enhance how we approach matching so we can help each of our foster parents feel comfortable with this age category, have successful placements and really feel like they are making a difference in a youth's life. We understand and also value the knowledge and feedback from each of our existing foster parents who have already taken teens or are willing to take teens with regards making this a successfully met goal.

If you would like to provide direct feedback to the Region 2 FASU Program Manager, please either email me at: teresa.fazio-winters@ct.gov or call me at 203-687-2441.

Ages of Children coming into DCF Care





Stepping into the SUNLIGHT

Do You Care About a Teenager?

Are you the parent of a teen, or a professional dedicated to helping teenagers navigate the pitfalls of life? If so, you know how hard it can be to talk with teens about the life-threatening risks of substance abuse. But having that conversation is critically important – and could save the life of someone you care about.

Who

Ginger and Larry Katz founded The Courage to Speak® Foundation, Inc. in an effort to foster open communication between teens and parents, so that parents may keep their children safe and help their teens make healthy decisions. Since 1996, Ginger and Larry have shared their story and insights with hundreds of thousands of people.

What

DCF's Office of Foster Care & Adoptive Services, and the foster care and adoption community collaboratives FAM (Foster Adoptive Mission) and HHH (Hearts, Hands and Homes) will host "**Stepping into the Sunlight**" – a candid presentation by Ginger, who has pledged to do all she can to help prevent tragedy from befalling another family.

Where

Amarante's Sea Cliff
62 Cove Street, New Haven

When

Thursday, Nov. 15, 6 to 9 p.m.
(Formal presentation begins at 6:30 p.m.)

Emcee:

Jocelyn Maminta

Award-winning Channel 8 newscaster

Keynote:

Ginger Katz

Founder, The Courage to Speak® Foundation
Author, "Sunny's Story: How to Save a Young Life from Drugs"

COST: \$25 per person or \$225 for a table of 10
This adult-only presentation includes refreshments

RSVP: Call Alana Jones at (860) 710-1593, email alana@heartshandsandhomes.org
or register online by Nov. 7 at www.hhhct.org



Connecticut
Foster / Adopt
we all have love to give.





*The New Haven & Milford
Department of Children and families
Foster and Adoptive Services Units
want to honor you in celebration of
Adoption Month*

Mingle, meet with our staff, meet important guest speakers and celebrate
You will enjoy a light dinner, coffee and dessert

Wednesday, November 7, 2012

6:00pm - 8:00pm

Milford DCF Office

88 Wellington Rd. Milford

RSVP to support worker:

Natalie Caban 203-806-5278, Lizette Flores-Gregory 203-786-2515,
or Carlos Yrata 203-786-0686

Adults only

Bells of Hope is one of Connecticut's statewide National Adoption Month initiatives. It is a weekend where faith communities partner with the Child Welfare System by raising their voices in prayer and ringing bells, when available, for all the Connecticut children waiting for permanent homes.

We are asking faith communities to offer prayers anytime they hold services during the weekend of **November 2-4th** and ring their bells (if they have bells) on **November 4 at 6p.m.**

Justin's* Story

By: Deb Kelleher

Justin* is the inspiration for **Bells of Hope: Ringing in a Brighter Tomorrow for CT's Waiting Children**, now in its fourth year. During the weekend of November 2-4th, faith communities will once again offer prayers and ring bells to raise awareness of the need for adoptive homes for children and youth in Connecticut. Last year close to 200 faith communities across CT agreed to offer prayer and/or ring their bells to bring attention to the children in the CT foster care system waiting for permanent homes.

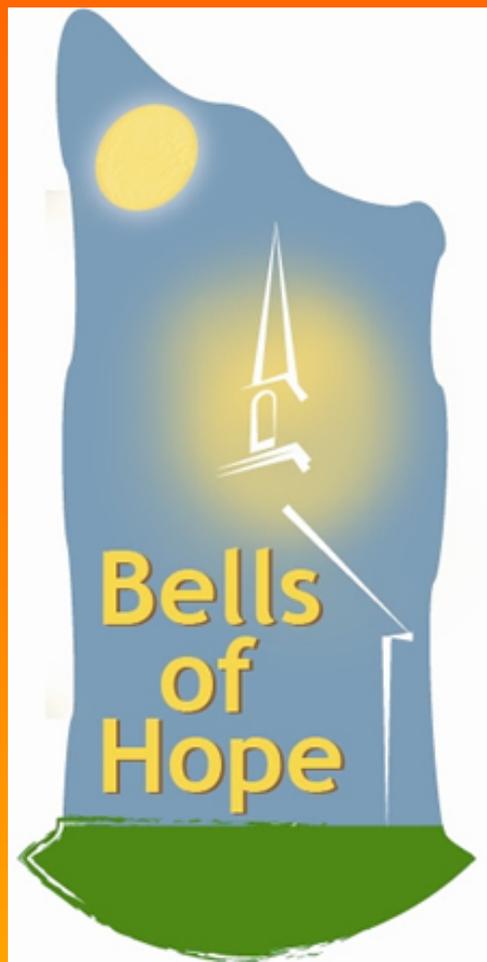
The idea for this event began germinating in 2009. National Adoption Month (November) was approaching and my mind returned again and again to thoughts of my son's brother, now 22, who had never been adopted. For purposes of confidentiality I call him Justin.

Justin is one of my son's biological older brothers. I am the adoptive mom of three boys, all of whom were adopted through the CT foster care system, and one biological son. I had tried to adopt Justin, but, as a single parent of four boys, I was not considered an appropriate resource for him. He needed more than social workers

felt I could give to another special needs child. Truth be told, I secretly shared their fears, and although I did come forward and offer to be a resource for him I knew their decision was the right one for my family and for Justin.

I met Justin when he was 9. He was a handsome young man living in a group setting. I would often bring my son, his brother, to visit him. And we also frequently had him to our home for the day. Our whole family came to love him and consider him a member of our extended family.

Want to help? Contact us through the Bells of Hope website or call 203.706.0101 and you will be referred to one of our regional organizers so you can volunteer or sign up your faith community. If everyone does just a little, fewer kids will wait in foster care who just need a place to call home.





We are holding our
Second Annual Halloween Party

for foster families
Thursday, October 25, 2012,
starting at 6 p.m.-8 p.m.
100 Long Wharf in New Haven
Rsvp to your support worker



2012
Holiday Foster Parent Party



(date to be determined.)

Region 2 - Fall Events Calendar

TE/TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	SPECIFICS
Second Wednesdays - 6-8 (10/10; 11/7; 12/5)	Relative Support Group	New Haven DCF	Rsvp to: Doris Cruthird and Lafreda Samuel
Oct 16 6:00-8:00	Adoption Resource Exchange While You Wait Event	Milford DCF	ARE Matching Process Presentation
Oct 25 8pm-8pm	Halloween Party	New Haven DCF	Trick or treat costume party all ages welcome. Invites to follow
Oct 16 & 23 6:00-9:00	Module 9: Managing Your foster Care Experience	New Haven: call for location	Please call CAFAP to register: 860-258-3400 or CAFAP Liaison 203 306 5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Oct 9 6:30- 8:30	Relative Support Group Round 2	Milford YMCA	To register call Maryellen 203-701-8411 or CAFAP Liaison 203-306-5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Oct 20 9am-12:00noon	Module 13 CPR	Milford DCF	Please call CAFAP to register: 860-258-3400 or CAFAP Liaison 203 306 5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Oct 23 5:30-8:00	Empowerment & support group Topic: Foster Parent Grief & Loss	Milford DCF	Please pre-register with CAFAP liaison 203 306 5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Oct 15 6:00-8:00	Support Group: Topic: Open Discussion, peer support	New Haven DCF	To register call: CAFAP Liaison 203 786-0681 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Oct 26 6:00-8:00	CAFAP Conference	Hartford Ramada Inn	Register online @ CAFAP.com
Oct 23 6:00-9:00	Spanish Speaking Support Group Topic; module 10, 4 of 4 Understanding the effect of chemical dependence on children and families, Session	New Haven DCF	Rsvp to DCF SW, Lillian 203-701-8411 or Marisol 203-306-5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Nov 7 6pm - 8pm	Adoption Event	Milford DCF	Adoption Awareness Month Celebration Invites to adoptive licensed
Nov 6 & 13 6:00-8:45	Module 7 Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity	Milford DCF	Please call CAFAP to register: 860-258-3400 or CAFAP Liaison 203 306 5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Nov 13 6:30-8:30	Relative support group Round 2	Milford YMCA	To register call Maryellen 203-701-8411 or CAFAP Liaison 203-306-5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Nov 20 5:30-8:00	Empowerment & support group. Topic: Foster care and the holidays	Milford DCF	Please pre-register with CAFAP liaison 203 306 5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Nov 20 6:00-9:00	Spanish Speaking Support Group. Topic: Module 17 The Oppositional Defiant Child	New Haven DCF	RSVP to DCF SW, Lillian 203-701-8411 or Marisol 203-306-5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Dec 11 6:30-8:30	Relative Support Round 2	Milford YMCA	To register call Maryellen 203-701-8411 or CAFAP Liaison 203-306-5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Dec 3 & 10 6:00-8:45	Module 9 Managing your foster care experience	Milford DCF	Please call CAFAP to register: 860-258-3400 or CAFAP Liaison 203 306 5254 Childcare is available on site - you must pre register
Dec	Holiday Celebration	TBD	Invites to follow

Who you gonna call??

Michael Steers, Regional Administrator for Region 2 New Haven and Milford: 203-306-5442
Janice Currier-Ezepchik, Area Director for New Haven: 203-786-0603
Rita Pelaggi, Area Director for Milford: 203-306-5393
Teresa Fazio-Winters, Program Manager for FASU in Milford and New Haven: 203-687-2441
Kathy Sneed, FASU Milford Supervisor: 203-306-5321
Toni Ligon, FASU New Haven Supervisor: 203-786-0614
Mary Ann Townley, FASU New Haven Supervisor: 203-786-0615