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Sent: Wednesday, March 07, 2012 2:09 AM
To: scott@pogysoft.com
Subject: AFFEC Family Finding March 2012



Family Finding Program

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A Family For Every Child

March 2012

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Family Finding is Moving on Up...Literally!

A Family for Every Child's "Family Finding" program is expanding to Washington! While we haven't begun any cases in the great state yet, we have started a pilot program and recently trained a number of Child Welfare interns on the Family Finding process!

The Washington interns were very excited to learn about the program.

Family Finding Success Story

Twelve-year-old John had been in foster care for seven years before his case was referred to Family Finding. John's case-worker wanted to find meaningful family connections for John. He had very little contact with his relatives, and had moved from foster home to foster home since his time in care. In the Family Finding process, eighteen connections were discovered for young John.

A family meeting was held in which individuals discussed how they wished to support John, including family reunions, visits with his siblings, and more. At the meeting, it was decided that a second family meeting would be held. John attended the second meeting so that he could meet his relatives.

The meeting was very emotional. John's mother, who thought he had been adopted, was in tears. John had not seen her since he was five years old. She and other relatives were ecstatic to see John again, and much had changed since John had been taken from his family's home. His mother was working, and able to take time off to see John. His grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins from both sides of the family were reunited with John. Afterwards, the family gathered to take pictures. Everyone had a plan to stay in touch through letters, phone calls, visits, and of course Facebook.

John began to form meaningful relationships with his family. He visited regularly with his grandparents and spoke on the phone with his mother every night. He attended family events such as an Easter picnic thrown by his father's side of the family, and was able to reconnect with his brother, Anthony. John began visiting his mother and her parents regularly.

Now, John lives with his mother and grandparents. He is still a part of the foster care system, but gets to live with his family. He is doing fairly well in school and enjoys football, Mexican food, and owls.

Special Report: Fixing the Flaws in Foster Care

Reported by Angela Brauer

LANE COUNTY, Ore. (KMTR) - The success of the Department of Human Services and other local agencies dealing with abused and neglected children has some people disagreeing and

about this innovative program that connects children with lost loved ones. They learned about the numerous roles of family finders, which includes file mining, researching the Internet, and calling relatives. It was not just an exciting experience for them, but for us here at AFFEC as well.

The more individuals we teach about this fabulous tool, the more it will be implemented, and the more we are able to positively change children's lives!

Family Finding and CASA Partners

Family Finding is reaching other communities besides Washington. Since our successful pilot program began in the Coos Bay area, we have spread our wings by getting in touch with other groups conducting Family Finding and learning from each other how we can best improve and grow this program.

One important advocate group we have started partnerships with are Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) around the state of Oregon. CASAs work closely with individual foster children, and therefore are aptly able to gauge if children want to be reconnected with lost loved ones from their past, and exactly who the children are looking for. Through building such relationships with CASAs and other similar groups, we are able to help more foster children in more places.

If you are a CASA or know of CASAs who may be interested in Family Finding, please email the Family Finding Director at: caitlin@familyforeverychild.org

Bringing Family Finding to the Next Level

wondering what is going wrong since the number of parentless children is among the country's highest.

NewsSource 16 receives phone calls from community members nearly every month detailing DHS' failures or shortcomings in a given situation.

While a lot of people believe DHS is a system that needs a lot of fixing, they somewhat disagree. They admit there have been cases that could have been handled better, but under some tough circumstances and in working with limited resources, DHS actually feels like they're doing fairly well. "It's not a perfect system, but we're pretty close," said DHS director Gene Evans.

"We strive everyday to get better at it."

With a tough economy, DHS said it was glad to see their foster care numbers stabilize rather than increase. Of course, they said, they'd rather see the number of parentless children decrease.

According to DHS, those who are unemployed or underemployed can sometimes take their stress out on the family. Others who feel they cannot provide and be successful sometimes mask depression and disappointment in drugs and alcohol.

"Cases that really stand out are pieces around drugs and alcohol abuse and domestic violence, but there are a lot of other ones like when you get into neglect, for example. A lot of it surrounds poverty and not having enough food or having a clean household," said Evans.

The economy has a direct effect on the foster care system. The worse the economy gets and the fewer jobs there are, the fewer choices a lot of families have. It all increases individual stress and correlates with close relationships more often than not, diminishing them.

More than 500,000 children across the United States are without parents. A quarter of those children are awaiting a family. Many of those children end up returning home to their native family, but it does take time for the family or one individual to improve and meet the qualifications necessary to retain the child.

The number of foster kids in Oregon is among some of the nation's highest. More than 11,000 of about 873,000 children are in foster care, 950 of which are in Lane County. There are far less foster families.

The latest statistics by the children's defense fund (<http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/statedata-repository/cits/2011/children-in-the-states-2011-oregon.pdf>) show reported or not, a child is abused or neglected every 45 minutes.

DHS receives about 900 phone calls a month reporting child abuse or neglect.

After certain screenings, they respond to about a third of those.

Oregon's system of social work has shifted its focus a bit to rely on prevention more-so than rehabilitation. The state refined the process procedures to become more consistent in its response rate.

"In looking at the safety of the child and what the parent can provide, the environment, things like that, their age, it's helped us become more consistent with fewer kids coming into the system," explained Evans.

Oregon has something called 'threat of harm,' which others states do not have.

"Those fall more on a kind of pattern that has been established by the family.

There's been a number of calls made to the agency and because of the inability of inability to parent or provide for the child correctly, sometimes we project this child as a kind of risk," said Evans. "Some states that have lower foster care rates do not have threat of harm, so they really deal with after a child has been abused."

In some of those cases, DHS steps in and takes the child as a preventative measure. Now, though, they are beginning to offer more in-home services before tearing a family apart.

"If we bring in some assistance to help coach and mentor the parents of what they should do, how they should set up their

Family Finding is a fairly new and innovative program that began with the creative mind of Kevin Campbell. At A Family for Every Child we have found that it is such a helpful tool, we plan implementing a program that would involve Family Finding combined with other amazing aspects of other programs (such as our mentor program) called Extreme Recruitment.

While Family Finding focuses on locating lost loved ones in a foster child's life, it does not always focus on the placement of a child. Extreme Recruitment would use Family Finding as tool to help find a "forever family" for a child. This model would use Family Finding and our mentor program to find adequate placement resources and fully prepare a child for placement. By doing this, we will not only be aiding more foster children in need of "forever families" but we will be doing so to the best of our capacity.

Family Finding Needs Family Finders!

As you can see, our Family Finding program is growing rapidly, and so we are in need of more volunteers! Volunteers are the heart of our Family Finding program. Without the dedication and compassion of our amazing volunteers, we would not be able to do the excellent, life-changing work we do. Our current volunteers are amazing, hard working, caring people, but our case load is getting bigger and bigger. Our volunteers are what make us great! Share your most valuable qualities by becoming a Family Finder!

Our volunteer opportunities include:

- File Mining (4 - 8 hours total): Search through foster children's case files looking for the names and contact information of lost loved ones. This position requires someone who is

house, how they should interact with their child, cues, boundaries they need to set, what is appropriate, our hope with those in-home cases is that we can leave a child at home and get out of the families lives," said Evans.

One in-home service DHS mentioned is a new program that allows drug addicts to recover while still caring for the child. It seems risky to a lot of parents out there, but DHS told NewsSource 16 it helps the situation more than it hurts.

"If a child is not taken away, sometimes it motivates the parent to improve the situation," Evans said. "If you agree to work on your addiction and your child is there you have much more motivation to complete your treatment and a reason for doing it because you have a child."

Evans said it depends on the person, but a lot of people agree with this theory.

"There is always a risk; it's about human beings and their choices and what is available to them. I don't think any of us can predict maybe even our own behaviors at certain times.

"More times than not, I think we're pretty accurate," he explained talking about DHS.

Prevention of abuse or neglect falls on a thin line, though, for a lot of people.

Many have called NewsSource 16 before complaining about DHS and how they should have done more in a given situation.

"If you interviewed 10 people off the street you'd probably have a different definition of what level of abuse and neglect the state should go out on. Some would have it that you should go out on everything and others would say no, that's too intrusive."

DHS explained that the most difficult cases are those that involve children under a 'school' age. At four or five years old, children begin talking and they have teachers and peers to look out for them. Below that age, children are scared regardless of the situation and rarely talk or admit that something has happened.

Unfortunately, children of those young ages make up nearly half of the kids in foster care.

One may put together than preventative measures outweighing rehabilitation measures could correlate to the high number of foster kids and in some ways, it's true. A lot of foster kids have a difficult time finding a family either because of the lack of treatment, anger issues, distrust and etcetera.

"You have to realize these children come in because they witnessed something or were abused in some way and some kids are very traumatized by that or they're traumatized by the situation. To me, it takes a real special foster parent to support that child," said Evans.

Part of the trauma for some kids is that fact that often times they are not allowed to take any of their belongings with them, just the clothes on their backs. This especially applies to those being taken away from homes where there was drug use.

Foster kids jump from home to home trying to find a match. With fewer foster families than there are foster kids, it can be difficult to do so. One child moved homes 33 times before he found a placement with a shelter called Jasper Mountain. Jasper Mountain is a one-of-a-kind facility based out of Jasper, Oregon that deals with the most challenged and the most violent of foster children. The program takes those who have not found a family or didn't work well in the family setting.

"They are damaged, they damage other people, they are kids that other programs fail with," said Dave Ziegler, executive director of Jasper Mountain.

Ziegler and his wife built Jasper Mountain thirty years ago and have worked there since. They offer what they call a treatment family where everyone lives on the property. Security is high - bedrooms are locked down to prevent runaways and the amount of people in one room is limited to three to prevent sexual assault but must be more than one to avoid personal harm - and schooling is integrated where programs are interactive but strict.

"Number one is that kids have to feel success. Families are where a child will grow, heal and learn. School is the second place they'll find hope or a real chance at that success," said

diligent, perceptive, and has a desire for helping a child in need. File mining is performed at the Department of Human Services' offices, and usually requires appointments lasting from 2 to 4 hours. Sometimes, more than one file mining appointment is needed, depending on the case.

- Internet search (4 or more hours total): Be a sleuth and search the Internet for valid contact information and more relatives and connections for a child in foster care. This role uses the notes compiled from file mining to find the contact information of some names found in the child's files, if there are other relatives that were not found in file mining, and if contact information found in the files is current. This portion is often performed in conjunction with our third volunteer role, "calling and engagement", or this volunteer works closely with our calling and engagement volunteer.

- Calling and Engagement (6 or more hours total): This volunteer role centers around calling the connections found through file mining and Internet research in order to create a stable support network for the child. The caller gathers more information and connection from people that he or she speaks to, notes important aspects of conversations, and reports back to AFFEC's Family Finding Director and the child's case worker. This volunteer also shares the privilege of attending the family meeting at which the case worker, Family Finding Director, and connections made create a plan to support the child in care.

We are in need of volunteers interested in any or all of these roles! To become a family finding volunteer, visit our [website](#) and fill out our volunteer form. Don't forget to check "family finding" in order to become a family finder!

Ziegler.

On a tour around the facility, Ziegler explained to NewsSource 16's Angela Brauer that a lot of children act out on campus. The teachers are staff are welltrained to handle the situation, and often take the kids outside to calm down, scream it off or talk it out. The children, according to Ziegler, need to be able to express themselves in order to recover. Keeping emotions in can be extremely harmful. Jasper Mountain receives kids from all over the world. Ziegler is very involved with international programs and has done notable work in parts of Australia. He has compared our foster care system with Australia's and has found that we take children much quicker and therefore have double the number of parentless kids.

"A child is going to be removed much quicker in Lane County than they're going to be removed in Melbourne, Australia," he explained. "We need to give families more resources before we just remove the child from their home. There is a lot of attention in the system to safety and I agree with that but we must pay attention too, to stability and a predictable environment where the child can stay long enough." Ziegler said he feels there can be a lot of improvement at the state and federal level as far as cooperation. On the lower tiers, though, there is success.

"It's a big job but we have one of the best systems in Lane County that you'll find anywhere. We have a very integrated community in terms of spotting abuse and getting the word out, we respond to it and we take action," explained Ziegler. In his opinion, though, the shortfall is in the aftermath of that action.

"We have to assess what they need. We have to provide them with stability.

That's difficult in a foster care system!"

Stability can only be found in real parents and real people. Undoubtedly, DHS said it cannot afford to keep every foster child in the foster care system. A lot of those children end up in a shelter.

Reports from 2007, however, show the minimum amount for a foster family to care for a 2-year old foster child was \$642 dollars a month. Oregon's monthly foster care rate at the time was \$387. The amounts increased respectively with age.

At age 18, family or not, they are released as an adult and are no longer a 'ward of the state.' Many of them end up homeless or in jail and not many of them graduate from college with a degree, showing that those individuals may lack the feeling of opportunity.

"Give them an opportunity to find out who they could be, find some success, be successful in the placement and in the school. Find their skill level. If we can change children from the inside out and early, we'll make a difference," said Ziegler.

All in all, the flaws of foster care lay in the fact that there are not enough families willing to take a potentially hurting child in. The families who do take on a foster child must retain patience and drive to rehabilitate the individual.

Of course, not all foster children come into the system harmed and hurting. There is an increasing rate of children returning to their families or living with relatives.

There is also a good amount of children succeeding in life and graduating from college. With a new law passed by the state of Oregon stating foster care children can receive free tuition at in-state universities and colleges, legislators hope the success stories will increase too.

Still, DHS, Jasper Mountain and other local agencies continue to ask for those even considering becoming a foster family, to do the research and get the support needed to take action.

"You want to make a difference in yourself? Make a difference in a child's life.

Become a foster parent," said Ziegler. "They have a hard job but with the support we provide them, they love what they do! There's nothing greater you could possibly do."

Others simply insist to keep a lookout for things that don't look right. Prevention is in fact key to avoiding the obligation of having to focus on rehabilitating.

2012 Volunteer Training Schedule

All trainings take place from 9AM until 12PM. Hope to see you there!

- March 17
- April 21
- May 19
- June 16
- July 21
- August 18
- September 15
- October 20
- November 17
- December 15

It Takes a Village and We Need You!

**We want and need your help to spread the word!
Here are ways you can help us recruit for kids:**

- Link us on your website. Contact: Dennis@afamilyforeverychild.org
 - Email us any supports, training's, activities, blogs, anything that could help. Contact: Christy@afamilyforeverychild.org
 - Become a [volunteer](#)
 - Donate, attend, or become a sponsor at our [event](#)
 - Host a Heart Gallery. Contact: Heather@afamilyforeverychild.org
 - Become a mentor. Heather@afamilyforeverychild.org
- Questions? Ideas? Christy@afamilyforeverychild.org

How can you contact A Family For Every Child?

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