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Sent: Friday, July 20, 2012 2:03 AM
To: scott@afamilyforeverychild.org
Subject: AFFEC Family Finding July 2012



Family Finding Program

A Family For Every Child

July 2012

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Extensive Team Recruitment - A New Program From AFFEC!

A Family for Every Child is ready to launch an exciting new program, Extensive Team Recruitment!

Extensive Team Recruitment is based on the successful Family Finding model started by Kevin Campbell, and involves different permanency tools in order to help foster children find "forever families." Extensive Team Recruitment will utilize Family Finding services,

Family Finding Success Story

Family Finding works to find lifelong connections and emotional permanency for foster kids by discovering and engaging their relatives and lost loved ones. This is done through mining a child's case files, Internet research, and contacting extended family and other connections. Read about Randall* and Mary* to see how Family Finding works, and how it achieves connections for children in foster care! (* indicates names have been changed).

Randall and Mary

Randall and Mary had been in foster care for thirteen years before Family Finding services were provided. They were in touch with some family, such as their paternal grandparents, but were interested in finding other supportive connections. They were both happy in their foster homes, but after losing their grandmother, they were yearning to find other loved ones.

The Family Finding volunteer mined both children's files, performed Internet searches on the names that were found, and called relatives in order to find more information and determine who would be a good influence on the kids. Afterwards a meeting was held by the Family Finding team, at which it was determined what family members and other loved ones would be invited to the Family Meeting.

The meeting consisted of their aunt, Mary's former mentor and the grandmother of their half sister, Anna*. The children had never met their half sister, and they had not seen their aunt or mentor since they were little children. At the meeting, family members discussed what they could do to help the children, and what kind of contact would be appropriate. Since no one had seen or spoken to the siblings since they were very young, and both of the kids were happy in their current situations, gradual communication was recommended.

It did not take long, however, for visits, phone calls, and real relationships were forged between the children and the contacts found. Now both children have regular visits with their aunt and other family members, and are starting to learn about their half sister whom they had never met.

Family Finding often works with teens whom struggle due to lack of permanent resources in their lives. Having lifelong connections gives teenagers a higher chance at success in the future. The following article by Michele Cole of the Oregonian explains the barriers that many adolescents in foster care face, and how stable, loving adults make positive impacts in their

mentor services, child preparation exercises, and recruitment tools, that will establish emotional permanency for participating foster kids!

Please support this growing program by attending our Extensive Team Recruitment Community Symposium!

30 Days to Family

In addition to our new Extensive Team Recruitment Program, A Family For Every Child will be launching another new program called 30 Days to Family. The goal of this new program is to place children entering care with a kinship caregiver within the first thirty days of entering care.

The Foster and Adoptive Coalition in Missouri, the same great organization that started Extreme Recruitment from which our Extensive Team Recruitment Program is based, have exercised this practice. By placing children with a relative or other adult that they know well, they are more likely to feel loved, less likely to have behavioral issues, and are far less likely to grow up in foster care.

This program is also related to the Family Finding process, giving A Family For Every Child the perfect foundation for taking this initiative. By looking for family members within the first thirty days of a child entering care, we are more likely to find more family members, and supportive connections who can provide a home for the child immediately.

Community Symposium

A Family For Every Child is starting an exciting new program called Extensive Team Recruitment, which we'll be introducing to the community on August 2nd! We encourage Lane County caseworkers, CASAs, foster parents, or anyone actively involved in a foster child's life to attend.

lives.

Teens in Oregon Foster Care Struggle to Gain Footing as Adults

July 5th, 2012

By Michelle Cole, *The Oregonian*

Studies show that teens in foster care need the support of a stable adult. Without that support, they are more likely to drop out of school and have difficulty in their lives. Sitting there that graduation day, in the white folding chair and wearing the golden yellow gown, Juanitha Elliott couldn't help but repeat to herself: "I really did it!"

Others in the Jefferson High School gymnasium on June 3 were also thrilled that the beautiful, strong-willed young woman had overcome the odds. The principal hugged Elliott so hard that she knocked the teen's cap off. Her lawyer sat in the bleachers and cried.

Following a disastrous freshman year in high school, Elliott had entered Oregon's foster care system for the second time. She'd had a tumultuous childhood, going to live with her dad at age 2, then in foster homes from age 7 to 12 1/2. She lived with her mother for a while, but after problems there, went back into foster care at age 15. That meant security in some ways, but also an uncertain future.

National studies find teens who spend time in foster care are more likely to drop out of school. Left to launch into life without the support of a caring adult, many foster youths also struggle to find housing or a decent job.

Here in Oregon, there has been lots of talk about making sure teens in foster care get what they need to go onto successful lives. And there's some evidence that the right support can make the difference between getting through college or dropping off the radar screen.

But there's also a constant need for more foster families willing to take teens. School policies can still stand between a student and her diploma. And the state agency responsible for watching after youth in foster care is only beginning to count how many kids earn that diploma. In fact, [ongoing problems with a computer upgrade](#) at the Department of Human Services has made it impossible for the state to say exactly how many teens are in state foster care, or even offer an accurate count of how many have run away.

For kids, foster care means getting used to change. Elliott lived in five homes during high school, not counting nights spent in temporary shelters.

Sometimes she asked to be moved because the home wasn't a good fit. One time she ran away to a relative.

"I kept in touch with my caseworker," she says. "I told her I'm staying here until you figure this out."

She finally landed with foster mom, Sonya DeAngelo, whom she already knew and adored.

But that placement wasn't secure at first; the state had to certify DeAngelo as a foster parent and arrange payments. Meanwhile, Elliott remembers: "I was having anxiety attacks. I was so stressed. Where am I going to be? I felt like nobody was listening."

In the end, and with much prodding from Elliott's lawyer, Lynn Haxton, she was allowed to remain.

Kevin George, state foster care manager, didn't know the details of Elliott's case. But he acknowledges that finding the right home for a teen is difficult.

"The mere fact that they're teenagers is in and of itself a challenge," he says. "We're asking foster families to attach to a child at a time when the youngster developmentally is trying to detach from parents. It's always been easier to find people who want to raise little kids."

A 2008 change in federal law made it possible for youths to stay in foster care until age 21. That's been both a blessing and a curse in Oregon.

George estimates there are more than 400 kids older than 18 in

The symposium will cover why there is a need for Extensive Team Recruitment, what the program has to offer, and how this program will help foster youth!

Extensive Team Recruitment Community Symposium

Where: United Way in Lane County, 3171 Gateway Loop, Springfield, OR 97477

When: August 2nd, 9AM to 11AM

Why: To learn about Extensive Team Recruitment, a great new program that will help foster youth in Lane County find their "forever families."

Space is limited, so to reserve your space please contact the Family Finding Director, Caitlin Baird, at caitlin@afamilyforeverchild.org

George estimates there are more than 400 kids older than 18 in the state foster care system. In 2010, 3,866 youths who were 13 or older spent at least one day in Oregon foster care, about 30 percent of the total number of kids in care.

Meanwhile, Oregon has roughly the same number of foster homes today that it had in 2009.

In practice, older kids are being forced out to live on their own before they are ready, says Pamela Butler, child welfare policy manager for [Children First for Oregon](#).

"I work with those kids who are trying to stay in care until they're 21 and I often hear, 'Nobody wants me,'" says Butler, who spent 11 years in Oregon foster care.

"I've also talked to youths who want to stay past 19 and are told 'no.' The caseworkers are being pressured to get that case closed up."

Elliott, now 19, beat the odds here, too. She chose to remain in the foster care system and still lives in DeAngelo's home.

Even though she finally had a secure living arrangement, there were times when Elliott felt like giving up on school.

Juanitha Elliott, an Oregon foster youth, couldn't believe she'd finally made it to graduation day.

The first day of her junior year, she arrived at Jefferson High School full of expectation. She'd already attended three other schools. But she really wanted to be at Jefferson and she really wanted to succeed.

"I planned my outfit out for that day," she says. "I had my hair done."

Yet that first morning she was told: "You're not enrolled here. Go home."

She immediately called her attorney.

Haxton's non-profit firm, Youth Rights and Justice, operates ["School Works"](#) - a program designed to ensure that kids in foster care and in Oregon's juvenile justice system get what they need to stay in school.

Launched in 2002, School Works is only open to kids who are clients of the Portland-based firm. A decade of data shows kids who participate have fewer school moves and better attendance.

Of the 580 students who were academically behind when they started, data collected through December 2011 showed 497 School Works students had made progress.

Elliott's chances of graduating "were low," Haxton acknowledges. "But every step of the way they increased." Haxton cleared the confusion over Elliott's Jefferson High School enrollment. She rushed to her rescue again in senior year, when a school counselor told Elliott the graduation requirements had changed since she'd first enrolled at the district. She not only was back for a fifth year, but she had to meet new math, English and science standards.

"What do you mean?" Elliott remembers asking that day.

While the [Oregon Department of Human Services](#) has no data telling how many kids in foster care earn a high school diploma, or GED, a 2009 study led by the John Hopkins Institute found that only 60 percent of the youths in the child welfare system receive a high school diploma by age 19. Other research shows a fraction go on to get a four-year degree. A survey by Portland State University education professor Janine Allen found about 5 percent of the students at PSU were former foster youths. But there is no outreach to this "very high risk population," she said.

Last fall PCC launched, a mentoring program, called "Fostering Success," for former foster youths attending classes on the Cascade campus. Early results show participants completed more credits and were more likely to return for the winter and spring terms.

Linda Reisser, dean of student development on the PCC Cascade campus, compares the former foster youth students to veterans.

"There's a lot of low trust," she says. "They need to feel safe in order to support each other."

While the results from the pilot program are encouraging, Reisser says PCC may not have the money to continue the mentorship program next year.

Elliott says her future plans definitely include "more graduations."

She intends to enroll at PCC this fall and says she's interested in a career in the health care field. Or journalism. Or... She smiles and keeps talking. Maybe she'll have an apartment building someday where young women coming out of foster care could live. A pink apartment building. "I feel like I have to pave the way for someone else," she says. "I am a lucky seed."

Volunteer of the Month: Tiffany Wong



Tiffany (aka Tiff) has been volunteering with A Family For Every Child's Family Finding program since March, and in a few short months has already shown what a fabulous volunteer she is! Tiff dedicates much time and effort to every case, and has offered many great suggestions to improve the Family Finding process, from reworking the training manuals to suggestions for Family Meetings! She is always open to learning new things about Family Finding, and always ready to help on a new case.

"My name is Tiff and I have worked with AFFEC as a Family Finding volunteer since March and have had really positive experiences with everyone. As an international adoptee, all of the work that AFFEC does is amazing and I'm glad to be a part of the team. I'm interested in pursuing a master's degree in social work and hope to one day work as a therapist for adoptees and their families. Aside from work and volunteering, I enjoy reading, hanging out with my cat, and making food. I'm very happy to volunteer with AFFEC and look forward to helping more people find their families." - Tiff

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:**

- 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. christina.para@afamilyforeverychild.org
 - Become a mentor. christina.para@afamilyforeverychild.org
- Questions? Ideas? Christy@afamilyforeverychild.org

How can you contact A Family For Every Child?
Call, email, or visit us online or in person!

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Executive Director--Christv Obie-Barrett

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