

In The News

On-Site Fee For Service Programs Now Available

CHILDSPAN's Education Specialists are now available to help early childhood, school-age and youth practitioners and administrators meet their individual and program goals toward quality improvement on-site. CHILDSPAN's team of consultants offer professional development and technical assistance for family child care providers, early childhood centers and school-age and youth programs. Professional development is key for individuals working with children and youth, birth through 16 years.

CHILDSPAN's staff are committed to ongoing study and research in order to share the most current information on developmental, social/emotional and educational practices with others in the field.

For more information, contact Shevaun Keogh-Walker at 721.6400

Spotlight On...



YWCA employees Nilda Vega, Aurora Cortinas, Maria DeAndrade, Erin Combs celebrate the new look at their day care center.

Although the Foundations for Learning funding cycle is almost over, this project has made overwhelming changes to many local agencies. The YWCA in Central Falls is one such agency.

Working with Director Erin Combs and her staff, CHILDSPAN helped them improve the quality of the program environment, increase teacher skills through many on-site professional development opportunities, and implement research-based best teaching practices for children's learning and development. When several Central Falls families were recently affected by a series of violent events, Children's Friend's Family Counseling staff provided on-site support to teachers and counseling to the families impacted by these traumatic events.



on the calendar

• Social and Emotional Development of Preschoolers Institute

February 27–May 24, 4:00–7:00 p.m.—CHILDSPAN

This institute, developed with funding from the United Way of RI, will address current research on brain development, typical and disrupted development, intentional teaching practices, developmental risk factors, and mental health assessment tools.

• Statewide After School Conference

May 30, 7:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m.—Bryant University
Keynote speaker: Sandra McBrayer
CEO, Children's Initiative, San Diego, California

A partnership between the RI After School Plus Alliance and CHILDSPAN, this free professional development opportunity will include best practice strategies for school-age and youth practitioners and administrators.

• Summer Health Series: Health, Nutrition, and Safe Environments

June 16, 7:45 a.m.–1 p.m.—CCRI, Providence Campus

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Rhode Island are proud to sponsor this series focusing on childhood obesity, nutrition and safe learning environments for children and youth. CHILDSPAN will be partnering with the RI Department of Health and the RI Department of Children, Youth and Families for this bi-lingual workshop.

CHILDSPAN hosts hundreds of workshops and conferences each year. For more information or to register for these conferences, contact Shevaun at 721-6400.

CHILDSPAN a program of Children's Friend

Rhode Island's Child Development and Education Training System
500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860
401.721.6400 www.childspan.net
email:childspan@childspan.net

Making a difference is what it's all about!

Your gift has a significant impact on Children's Friend's ability to support children and families in need. Here are just a few examples of how your donation can help:

- ☀ Craft supplies, crayons, and paint for child care activities (\$100).
- ☀ Emergency heating assistance for three families in need (\$250).
- ☀ Smoke detectors to make 63 homes safer for children (\$500).
- ☀ Emergency grocery assistance for 40 families (\$1000).

Yes, I would like to help families in need with a contribution of:

\$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000 \$

Payment method:

Check enclosed Circle one: MC Visa Amex Discover

Card number: Exp.

Name on card:

Signature:

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip Code:

Email:

Home Phone: Business Phone:



Every dollar contributed to Children's Friend goes directly towards helping children and families thanks to an endowment that covers administrative expenses.

Please complete and return to:
Children's Friend
153 Summer Street, Providence, RI 02903
Thank you!

REQUESTED
CHANGE SERVICE

153 Summer Street
Providence, RI 02903



NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 1287
PROVIDENCE, RI



Children's Friend

Serving Rhode Island's Most Vulnerable Children Since 1834

www.childrensfriendri.org

Spring 2007

My Secret

A Young Woman's Journey in Choosing an Open Adoption Plan For Her Baby

More and more birth parents and adoptive parents are favoring open adoptions at Children's Friend. Open adoption is a term generally used to describe a variety of arrangements allowing for ongoing contact between members of the adoptive family, biological family, and adopted child.

On a cold day in January, a young woman arrived at Women and Infants Hospital to give birth. A single mother with three young children already at home, she had known in her heart for her entire pregnancy that she was not going to keep this child. "I continued to be in denial until my fourth month of pregnancy then I went into my panic phase." Despite how she was feeling inside, she kept her pregnancy a secret for the entire nine months from everybody but four close friends. Her days were long and busy, but she never lost a day of work, kept her weight down to be less noticeable and used clothing to hide her secret from the world. "I would lay in bed at night, awake for what seemed like endless hours wondering...could I really do this? Could I really give my child to someone I didn't know? When I showered in the morning I would wash my belly and cry silent tears, still wondering could I really give my child up for adoption?"

At 10 a.m. on January 22, she came face to face with her seven pound secret, a sweet little boy she quickly named and bonded with. Luckily a snowstorm allowed her to stay in the hospital for four days, giving her even more time with her son and to reflect on their future. Right after his birth, she told hospital officials that she needed to place him for adoption. A day later she met Amanda, a Children's Friend social worker. "I felt so embarrassed that I never went ahead and made plans for the adoption. A total of three agencies called me, and I just felt Amanda treated me with such respect and sincerity that I felt very comfortable with my decision to turn to Children's Friend." Her secret little boy was placed in a loving foster home in the next town over from hers. She visited her son every two weeks and began to create a very special bond between her son and his new foster parents. Over the course of eight months, Children's Friend located the birth father, and with his parental rights terminated, she was able to officially place her son for adoption.

After many meetings at Children's Friend with both Amanda and then Carey, where she admits to asking a lot of questions and doing a lot of crying, she chose an open adoption. She would be involved in the selection of his new permanent family and with that felt a great sense of relief. When she discovered that his foster parents expressed a desire to adopt him, she



Carey Finnerty
Permanency Planning Worker

couldn't have been happier. After it became final, her son's now adoptive parents offered to her to continue with bi-weekly visits, which she still maintains today. Any special requests she makes to his family, like wanting to see him around his birthday and Christmas, or receiving milestone

photos, are always greeted with understanding and approval. "I understand that it takes a whole team of people to provide the services that all of you provided, but both Amanda and Carey were such an important part of my life for the last two years. The adoptive parents, my son and I are all building a wonderful relationship. I never in a million years thought that I would have to make such a difficult decision. I didn't lose a son, I gained an extended family. I am so blessed by the entire Children's Friend staff for being there for me."

For more information about adoption, birth parent counseling, or foster care, contact Dana Mullen, Manager of Permanency Services at 401.276.4335.



From David *introducing our new executive director*



2007 began a new year and also a new chapter in leadership for Children's Friend. As I transition into my new role as Executive Director, I have much to learn and many people to meet. As someone who has been involved with the agency for over seven years, I am already acutely aware of the importance of our work.

One thing that will stand firm during this period of transition—and into the future—is our faithfulness to the agency's mission. Promoting the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable children will remain at the heart of the decisions we make.

Children's Friend will continue to provide culturally competent, innovative, and effective services. Our services will remain comprehensive, flexible, and family centered. We know that families in crisis often have several areas of need, and addressing just one of those needs does not produce long term benefits. We will

continue the rigorous independent evaluations of our programs to ensure that we are having a positive effect on children's lives and adjusting services when needed.

We will strengthen our work in advocating for the necessary investments in preventative programs designed to keep our children on a path to becoming productive members of society. Preventative programs are less costly and more successful than treatment and corrective programs. We need to educate our leaders about the importance and urgency in making an investment in our youngest and most vulnerable children today. The investment that we make today will more than pay for itself financially in the long run, but more importantly it will significantly increase the number of children who are given the opportunity to lead productive and successful lives.

Thank you for your support of Children's Friend. I look forward to working with you to promote the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable children.

David

FRIENDS—*Making a Difference*

The mission of Children's Friend is to promote the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable children by providing flexible, effective and culturally relevant services that support and strengthen families and communities.



Francesgrace Ferland

Francesgrace Ferland, an eleventh grade student at Lincoln School in Providence, donated over 50 duffel bags to the children in our Foster Care Program. Francesgrace was saddened to learn that some children have to leave their homes rather suddenly with a stranger with all their treasured possessions in a trash bag when being placed into foster care. Francesgrace decided that only trash should go into trash bags, and she put her creative imagination, energy and philanthropic spirit into action. Over the course of many weeks, she purchased and painted each bag with a unique design for both boys and girls. Now Children's Friend's social workers have these wonderful duffel bags with them to give to the children to help ease their transition into foster care. *We thank you so much Francesgrace!*

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge and Roger Williams University



Pictured L-R are Aram Bloom from Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge, Nina Sa from Roger Williams University Law School and Bob Baute from Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge.

Attorneys from the firm of Edwards Angell Palmer and Dodge teamed up with Roger Williams University Law School and presented informative workshops to our clients on the subjects of housing and immigration rights.



Julie Casimiro

Children's Friend received a \$1,000 Volunteers Ventures grant from MetLife Foundation in honor of our board member, Julie Casimiro's volunteer work at the agency. MetLife's unique Volunteers Ventures program encourages and supports employee's involvement at the local level in non-profit organizations that work to improve the quality of life for all. Children's Friend will be using these funds for its [Reading Is Fundamental](#) program.

Operation DOUGH-nation



Foster Care Recruitment Days at Panera Bread Cafés

In celebration of Foster Care Month, Children's Friend will be conducting information sessions at several Panera Bread Cafés.

This is an excellent opportunity for people considering sharing their heart and home to young children in need to talk to a foster care recruiter.

Sessions are from 10:30 am–12:30 pm:

- 5/1 Smithfield
- 5/3 Cranston
- 5/8 Seekonk
- 5/10 Route 2, Warwick
- 5/15 Wakefield
- 5/17 East Greenwich



For more information or to schedule a private interview, contact our Foster Care Recruiter, Joyce Tormey, 276.4318.

Panera Bread Opens Sixth Store in Rhode Island!



Doris Stearn Donovan, Children's Friend Board President, Tonya Harms, Marketing Director for Panera Bread and Ruth Devitt, General Manager of Panera's Warwick café.

Panera Bread opened their sixth store in Rhode Island on February 26. Panera lovers gathered for the traditional Baguette Cutting ceremony. Children's Friend received \$2000 from its Preview Parties held the week earlier. Panera Bread has been partnering with Children's Friend for over six years and has donated over \$120,000 to help support very vulnerable children living in Rhode Island. *Congratulations and thank you Panera Bread!*

Fourth Annual Investing In Our Children Luncheon

Rhode Island business leaders, officials and other champions for children gathered for our Investing In Our Children Luncheon on October 3 at the Westin Hotel. Amica's Robert DiMuccio received the 2006 Friend of Children Award for Amica's extraordinary support in recent years.



Robert DiMuccio

Many thanks to our sponsors:

The Washington Trust Company, Coast to Coast Promotional Products, the Providence Journal, GTECH, Paramount Properties, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of RI, NBC 10, Credit Union Central Falls, Amica, MetLife Auto & Home, Cavanaugh Company, Gilbane, Textron, Hasbro, First South-west Company, Panera Bread with underwriting provided by Citizens Bank Foundation. Special thanks to board members Mary Cram and Julie Casimiro who co-chaired this luncheon.



URI Vice President Bob Weygand, Beth Sousa, Children's Friend's Development Director and URI President Robert Carothers at URI's Toy Drive.



Linda Landolfi, the Bus Driver for Children's Friend, dresses up like Mrs. Claus to deliver gifts during the Holiday Drive.

Another Banner Year for the Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive

The 2006 Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive was yet another overwhelming success. Over 530 families (2,000+ children!) were sponsored and close to \$18,000 was raised for the Emergency Crisis Fund. New England Pest Control's Big Blue Bug helped us announce the drive this year. For the second year in a row, Bank of America was the top corporate sponsor of families, sponsoring 94 families!

Panera Bread, the University of Rhode Island Administrative Department, Toys for Tots and East Providence resident Joseph Silva all conducted toy drives on our behalf, which resulted in 1,000 extra toys and gifts for our clients. Kelley Fraser, a school teacher in Exeter, conducted a children's book drive in lieu of exchanging family gifts. Over 289 books were donated to the professional development library at CHILDSPAN, which lends its resources to childcare centers and pre-schools throughout the state. **Thank you all!**



Children's Friend Board Member Maureen Gurghigian and her family.

The Discount Mart for two decades and connected deeply with the children and neighbors on Dexter Street. His memory will live on in the community when area residents visit the Family Support Center for guidance and direction, a fact that his family members overwhelmingly agreed would have made him very happy.

John Massiwer, Sr. Memorialized

Children's Friend hosted the Gurghigian and Massiwer families for a dedication ceremony on January 9 in Central Falls to name the Family Support Center's Community Training Room in memory of their father and grandfather John Massiwer, Sr. Mr. Massiwer was the founder and charismatic owner of



Senator Reed Helps Announce Federal Grant to Children's Friend



Carl Neal, Doris Stearn Donovan, Senator Reed, David Caprio, Nicole Hebert and Allen Akinola

A joint press conference was held on January 29 by Senator Jack Reed and Children's Friend to announce a \$1.25 million dollar grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services enabling the agency to expand its Male Involvement Initiative, *Dad's Making A Difference*. This five year grant will allow Children's Friend to gain a better understanding of the research involving the role of fathers in child development, increase our skills regarding the most effective ways to engage and work with fathers, and develop and implement strategies to strengthen the capacity of fathers.



Senator Jack Reed

"I commend Children's Friend for their outstanding work in our community, and I am pleased they received this important federal grant because the challenges of parenting can be daunting. The Male Involvement Initiative will help more fathers make a positive impact on their kid's lives."

—Senator Jack Reed,
Member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee



Save the Date!



Saturday, June 9 Walk for Children

Our Fifth Annual Walk for Children will take place on Saturday, June 9 at Roger Williams Park. The 5k fun run/walk will step off at 9 a.m. with fun activities; food and refreshments to follow inside the carousel. A special kids race will also take place. The first 200 registrants will receive a free t-shirt. Our loyal partner in philanthropy, Panera Bread, will once again sponsor this year's Walk.

We are seeking participants, teams, pledges, corporate sponsors and volunteers. Family pets are invited too! For more details, call the Development Office at (401) 276.4336.

CHILDREN'S FRIEND

Board of Directors

<i>President</i> Doris Stearn Donovan	Michael Dooley
<i>Vice President</i> Kimberly I. McCarthy, Esq.	Marie Ganim
<i>Treasurer</i> Carl R. Neal	Eva Hulce-Avila
<i>Assistant Treasurer</i> Maureen Gurghigian	Leonard L. Lopes, Esq.
<i>Secretary</i> Martha Newcomb, Esq.	Carmen Mirabal
	Eduardo E. Naya
	Leeann Noonan-Watts
	Kathy O'Donnell
	Alfred K. Potter, II
	Mike Spirdione
Julie Casimiro	<i>Executive Director</i>
Mary Cram	David Caprio
John D. Cregan	
Michael DiSandro	

Family Support Center
153 Summer Street Providence, RI 02903
401.276.4300
email cfs@cfsri.org

CHILDSPAN
500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, RI 02860
401.721.6400
email:childspan@childspan.net

Family Support Center
621 Dexter Street Central Falls, RI 02863
401.721.9200 TDD 401.729.5899

The Children's Friend newsletter is published by Beth Sousa, Development Director. Forward your comments to bsousa@cfsri.org