



DCFS

Connections

Valentines 2015

Care * Commit * Connect



DCFS Connections
Valentines 2015

Danielle House-Barlow- Editor

Director's Note... from Cecile Blucker

Why do we do the job that we do? I am sure we ask ourselves this question periodically especially in those trying times! The answer - we have a heart for children and families. We care about the families we serve. I often tell my friends and family when asked why I do what I do that it's because there is such a need to help so many people. Once you experience it - it sticks with you.

I have been traveling the state and have asked the question why new staff sought out to work at DCFS and then asked those senior staff why they were still here. The consistent message I continue to hear from both is we want to make a difference in the life of a child, in a family and we want to be a part of having an impact in their lives. The work we do every day is more than a job - it is a calling. Not everyone can do the work of child welfare - it takes a special person to do this work. We see and deal with so many things that most people across the state can't even fathom.

As we continue to work with the children and families let us keep in mind the decisions we make today with families will have a lasting impact on them. Thank you for having the heart to work with the children and families across the state. I appreciate each one of you. Together we are making a difference.....



PERMANENCY ROUNDTABLE CORNER

BY SALETHIA WEATHERSPOON



The last quarter of 2014 was great as we continue our quest of permanency for youth in our State. There were a total of 62 permanency roundtable meetings held to discuss ways of finding permanency for the youth of Arkansas. As a result of these PRT meetings 62 youth have a better chance of moving to permanency and out of Foster Care.

We have already begun the process of scheduling Permanency Roundtable meetings for the upcoming year. Together we can find some form of PERMANENCY for the youth of Arkansas

JANUARY IS NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH!

BY: STEPHANIE STONE, FASD SPECIALIST

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network is asking state agencies to spread the word of the importance of making healthy choices during pregnancy to prevent birth defects. Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol is one of the leading preventable causes of birth defects, mental retardation, & neurodevelopmental disorders.



Please share this with anyone you know who is pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant. Make a PACT for prevention!

P-plan ahead

A-avoid harmful substances including alcohol or products containing alcohol

C-choose a healthy lifestyle

T-talk to your doctor

(Information retrieved from www.nbdpn.org)

Additional information & resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics~www.aap.org or www.healthychildren.org

www.cdc.gov

www.nofas.org

www.genesinlife.org

For listings of substance abuse providers and mental health providers in your area go to www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov and type in your zip code.

N.A.S.A.P ELECTS MARILYN COUNTS AS MEMBER-AT-LARGE

The National Association of State Adoption Program's (NASAP) 2014 Executive Committee elections concluded November 24, 2014. Marilyn Counts, Arkansas Adoption Manager, has been elected to fill a term as Member-at-Large, effective January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2016.

The purpose of NASAP is to provide a forum in which State Adoption Program Managers can pool their expertise, and to promote networking activities as an association with other direct child welfare entities and individual professionals, so that each state can develop and maintain an efficient, state-of-the-art adoption program.

NASAP was formed in 1998, with the knowledge of and encouragement from the Children's Bureau. NASAP is a professional peer organization. Membership is automatic for all who are identified by their respective States as the statewide adoption manager, adoption specialist, or state equivalent. Some topics suggested for review are full disclosure, policies and practices around determining matching process, and Sex Trafficking.



Craig O'Neill on Twitter
twitter.com

"Arkansan of the Day: Marilyn Counts, head of adoptions for DHS, whose tireless efforts to find homes for children inspires us all."

A rectangular box with a pink border containing a photo of a man holding a red heart-shaped object, a Twitter profile name and URL, and a quote praising Marilyn Counts.

DCFS' WHO'S WHO AND WHO'S NEW!



MEET BROOKE HARRIS – CANS/FAST PROGRAM MANAGER

Brooke graduated in 2009 from ASU- Jonesboro with a bachelor's in Social Work. She began her career as a MHPP for Youth Home House working with girls in DHS custody and still works there from time to time on the sub-pool. In September 2010 she was hired as a FSW in Saline County and that is where she learned the ropes of being a social worker. In September 2014, after four years in the field, she transferred to Central Office in Little Rock to work in the Specialized Services Unit. This January she was promoted to Program Manager for the new CANS/FAST program.

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: 03/28/1987, Little Rock, Arkansas

LAST BOOK I READ: Leaving Time by Jodi Picoult

FAVORITE QUOTE: "I think we like to complicate things when really it's quite simple; find what it is and who it is that makes you happy and you're set. Promise."

ON THE WEEKEND YOU CAN FIND ME: Relaxing with my two dogs, hanging out with family or friends.

THE BEST ADVICE I EVER RECEIVED WAS: "Do not worry about for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" –Mathew 6:34

FAVORITE JUNK FOOD: White cheese dip & chips from Senor Tequila.

IF I COULD DO IT OVER AGAIN, I'd: Do it all the same.

ONE THING PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT ME: There's not much... I'm an open book!

FAVORITE CHILDHOOD MEMORY: Summers at the beach with family.

ONE WORD TO SUM ME UP: Ambitious

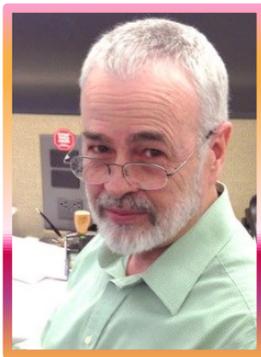
WELCOME OUR NEWEST DCFS TEAM MEMBERS!

- ★ Tracy Dickinson – Adoption Reg. Coord.
- ★ Tonya Whitfield - HZA
- ★ Lecole White - ARCCC Program Manager
- ★ Danielle Kimbrough - ARCCC Lead
- ★ Maegan Gentry - Comm. Engmnt Specialist Area 4
- ★ Lorrie Ellis – Comm. Engmnt Specialist Area 5
- ★ Candy Ladd - Comm. Engmnt Specialist Area 7
- ★ Lisa Turner - Comm. Engmnt Specialist Area 9
- ★ Doris Clark - Comm. Engmnt Specialist Area 10
- ★ Brooke Harris - CANS Program Manager
- ★ Heidi Rutledge FSW - Centralized Inquiry
- ★ Shirley Vaughn - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Quinette Burnette - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Ora Barton - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Lora Spencer - Prmncy Spec. Subsdzd Guardianship
- ★ Brenda Brewer - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Amber Lanes - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Onika Woodley - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Christian Hulse - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Michelle Rankin - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Angie Manley - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Sarah Jones - DCFS Notification Unit
- ★ Donna Nevin – Registry/Backgrounds
- ★ Clorid Lorita – Central Registry
- ★ Monica Pierson – Central Registry
- ★ Shenetta Jimmerson - Registry/Backgrounds
- ★ Jerry Awbrey - FSW Specialist
- ★ Terri Stephens - FSW Specialist
- ★ Monique Jones - Financial Support Unit
- ★ Natasha Stewart - Financial Support Unit
- ★ Patty Hibbs – FSW Specialist
- ★ Valerie McDermott - FSW Specialist
- ★ Ebony Mance - FSW Specialist
- ★ Lindsay Stewart - FSW Specialist

*"The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life. Rarely do members of one family grow up under the same roof."
—Richard Bach*



DENNIS ROBINS NAMED DHS FIELD MANAGER



This past December Dennis Robins was named the DHS Field Manager. In this new position he will be managing the DCFS Central Registry, Criminal Backgrounds and newly formed Notification Unit. Dennis has been the Program Manager for Central Registry since 2010 and in 2012 was given the Criminal Backgrounds Unit. Dennis started his state career in 2001 and became a part of the DCFS team in 2006. Join us in congratulating Dennis!

I.M.P.A.C.T. - IMPROVING MEANINGFUL PRACTICE WITH ARKANSAS CHILDREN TOGETHER

BY: MONA DAVIS

Evaluation activities are being completed in the month of January 2015 by HZA for most of the interventions!

CANS/FAST

- Brooke Harris has been hired as the Program Manager
- Training is currently being conducted
- Statewide Implementation will begin 2/17/15

Team Decision Making

- Facilitators hired:
 - Jerry Aubrey Sebastian County **Area 2**
 - Ebony Mance Saline County **Area 3**-still to be implemented Perry, Garland, and Hot Springs
 - **Vacant Area 4** Miller, Columbia, Lafayette, and Union
 - Patty Hibbs Faulkner, and Conway County **Area 5** -still to be implemented Pope
 - Valerie McDermott Pulaski County **Area 6**
 - Lindsay Stewart Craighead Randolph and Lawrence Counties **Area 8**-still to be implemented Greene
- Orientations for staff and stakeholders are in the process of being scheduled for : Area 2, Area 3, Area 8, and Area 5
- Coaching sessions are conducted monthly with facilitators
- Training with CACD is being scheduled
- Considerations of additional triggers are being discussed

Nurturing Families of Arkansas (aka Nurturing Parents Program-NPP)

- Statewide Contract has been awarded to MidSOUTH
- Training of Trainers scheduled 3rd week of January
- Orientations scheduled across the state last week of January and first week of February 2015

Differential Response

- Full implementation status
- CHRIS enhancement continue
- DR training schedule Russellville 2/10/15

Permanency Round Tables

- CHRIS current with action plans for youth who have had a PRT
- Coordination of monthly phone conferences with Area coordinators in progress
- Area 1 has scheduled dates for the 2015 year
- Area 5 and Area 8 are scheduled for PRT in February 2015
- Permanency Round Table Guide set to be complete in February 2015
- From October 2014-December 2014 62 PRT were conducted



TARGETED RECRUITMENT----AR CREATING CONNECTIONS FOR CHILDREN PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

BY: MONA DAVIS

As we discussed in the Centralized Inquiry implementation meetings, the recruitment and retention activities that are currently taking place in the field (or the activities that the Resource Teams and other DCFS staff were conducting) need to continue as this is recruitment that is needed. The ARCCC activities (Family to Family model implementation) will be in addition to the recruitment that is already taking place. It is not our intent to “replace” any recruitment activities but add to and be more intentional about the *who and where and how*. We have asked that you communicate and coordinate with the Community Engagement Specialist when hired in your area. As we discussed in the meetings, this is not necessarily a “person to person” recruitment approach but more about data mining for the need, educating communities about the need, and then targeting audiences based on the data. We are developing new tools that we will be sharing with everyone and the recruitment tools will continue to be developed and shared for **all** of us to use.

Also, as we discussed during the previous meetings and the Quarterly Supervisors meeting, the Family to Family model is an approach to how we recruit and support resource families (foster, adoptive, relative) as well as volunteers in our system. If families contact your office or walk in and inquire about becoming a foster or adoptive home, the **expectation** is that **you or any staff** discusses with them the need, the basic requirements, expectations, etc. You may want to utilize the talking points that the Centralized Inquiry staff is using. Regardless, you still need to have a conversation with them, engage them, let them know the need, but ultimately direct them to the website www.fosterarkansas.org so that they can begin the screening and assessment process to determine if they meet the criteria and would be a good “fit” to foster or adopt.

Many of you have been doing this, but there seems to be some confusion about whether you can “talk” to the people who inquire—we **expect** you too----we just need to also be sure that they apply on line so we can initiate the formal screening process and get the background check processing going.

ARCCC Updates (not everything just a few highlights!):

- ARCCC Program Manager hired: Lecole White
- Community Engagement Specialist hired:
 - Area 1-pending-interviews being scheduled
 - Area 2-Jessica Schooley –housed in Sebastian County
 - Area 3-pending-interviews being scheduled
 - Area 4-Maegan Gentry-housed in Miller County-start date 12/29/14
 - Area 5-Lorrie Ellis-housed in Pope County
 - Area 6-Michelle Hood-housed in Pulaski Southwest
 - Area 7-Candy Ladd -housed in Jefferson County-start date 1/5/15
 - Area 8-Hannah Roach-housed in Craighead County
 - Area 9-Lisa Turner -housed in Woodruff County-start date-1/6/15
 - Area 10-Doris Clark-housed in St. Francis County-start date 12/29/14
- **December**-Established the Resource Family Review Committee (will be hearing more about this but a committee to review background check hits, re-opens, resource family appeals of closures, etc.)
- **December**-Initial tools for Family to Family model approved
- **December**-Finalized the Centralized Inquiry process and tools
- **December**-CHRIS enhanced Inquiry Website!
- **January**-Establish Monthly Resource Supervisor phone conferences
- **January**-Community Engagement Specialists will be scheduling and conducting the first local recruitment and retention community meeting
- **January- February**-Establish a small workgroup to review and revise the Alternate Care policy (open to volunteers ☺)
- **January-March**-Coordinating dates and times with each Area to come back around and train on the final forms and processes of Centralized Inquiry, gather feedback for how things are going, and brainstorm around strategies for recruitment and retention
- **January-April**-Schedule the staff training on Family to Family Model in each area



| Arkansas Practice Model Principles | Family to Family Model Principles |
|--|--|
| Behavior change and the work of change is part of our daily challenge | Recruitment is everyone’s business; Staff support resource families; Bridge the gap between birth families and resource families; Bridge the gap between agencies and neighborhoods |
| Safety for children is achieved through positive protective relationships with caring family and community members | Develop a network of family foster care that’s focused on safety, neighborhood-based, culturally sensitive, and located primarily in communities in which children currently live; Ensure all children who come into foster care, including teens and sibling groups are routinely placed within families |
| Meaningful decisions require close family participation in decision making | Involving birth parents, resource families, and kinship families as team members with our agency and with one another |
| Strengths of families and supporting these strengths contribute to life-long permanent relationships for children | Screening children being considered for removal from home to determine what help their family needs to keep them safe, to make them available when it’s most needed, and to better support the children who must be placed |
| Families’ success depends on community involvement and shared problem solving | Becoming a neighborhood resource for children and families by investing in the capacity of communities where large numbers of families involved in the child welfare system live |
| Practice with families is interrelated at every step of the casework process | Providing the services birth families and children need in a timely enough manner that they can safely be reunited as soon as possible |
| Sustainable success with families is the work of the team | Increasing the number and quality of resource families to meet projected needs |
| The entire system must support frontline practice to achieve positive outcomes with families | Confront burnout and build resilience among child protections staff; Partnership between public and private agencies; Move children back home or to other permanent families when possible |
| Every staff position, role, and activity of the Division shows continuous effort to build and maintain professionalism | Have a sense of urgency; Have Respect; Keep constant contact with families; Support both resource and biological families |
| Skill based training and consultation forms the foundation for successful practice with families | Reduce the reliance on institutional care (hospitals, correctional facilities, residential treatment programs and group homes); Provide training to resource families on how to work with children with behavioral and/or emotional needs |
| Quality improvement and accountability guide all our work | Reduce the length of children’s stay in out-of-home care; Decrease the overall amount of children coming into out-of-home care |
| How we do the work is as important as the work we do | Positive/Strength based and leads to retention; Leaders in the communities will step up and communities will take care of its own and decrease the number of children entering out-of-home placements |

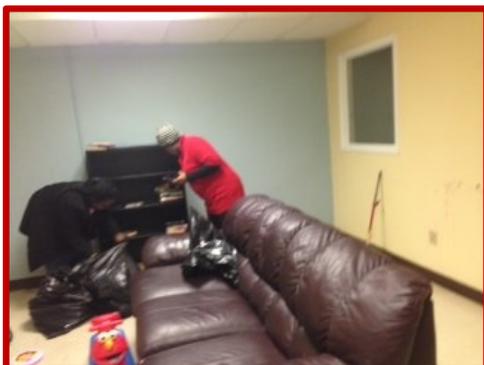
THE LIGHTER SIDE OF DCFS

This year Steve Sorrows' unit was transformed into Whoville by the very talented Maxine Gilbert! Look at the photos below to see how the Grinch tried to steal Christmas at DCFS!



STUDENT INTERNS GIVE COUNTY VISITATION ROOM A NEW LOOK

UALR/MIDSOUTH student interns Sydney Sample, Stacie Chalupka and members of Stacie's church volunteered their time to give back to their community by painting and redecorating the visitation room at the Pulaski North office. MidSOUTH has decided to help with toys and supplies for the room. As we all know the visitation room is where parents meet to reconnect with their children and hopefully heal their relationships! A big thank you to Sydney and Stacie for pulling together their resources and giving back to the families of Pulaski County!



MILLER COUNTY RECEIVED A VISIT FROM MR. AND MRS. CLAUS

Miller County DCFS foster children received a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Claus for Christmas! Miller County's very own Roberta Fooks and her husband served as Mr. & Mrs. Claus for the Miller County Christmas party and did a wonderful job making each of the more than 20 foster kids feel special. Roberta Fooks is the Miller County Administrator.



DAVE THOMAS FOUNDATION WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS

BY LILLIE OWENS



A signature program of the Dave Thomas Foundation, Wendy's Wonderful Kids is the first nationwide program that partners a major corporation with a national foundation to place children in foster care in permanent adoptive home. The foundation awards grants to local adoption agencies, which in turn hire adoption recruiter. The recruiters execute a very specific process for each child on their caseload, focusing on their individual histories, experiences and needs in order to find the appropriate adoptive family for them.

At the end of December four children from the Wendy's Wonderful Kids caseload were placed in a pre-adoptive home and all parties are adjusting to the placement very well. A family has been identified for two other children on the Wendy's Wonderful Kids caseload who have been in care for 10 years. By law, children must reside in the family's home for at least six months before the adoption can be legalized.

DAWN SCOTT HOSTS THIRD ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Dawn Scott with THV11 hosted the third annual Holiday Adoption Christmas party December 12, 2014 at the Museum of Discovery. Santa and Mrs. Claus showed up to take photos with the children and hand out gifts. Mrs. Beebe made an appearance as well! Gifts were donated from local attorneys and the Knowledge Tree. Golden Corral catered the event and Community Bakery donated cookies! Foster children from all over the state were there for a special night of fun, gifts and amazing stories.



HELPFUL LINKS



www.fosterparentcollege.com/info/connections
www.midsouth.uar.edu
www.americanhumane.org/protecting-children
www.arkansas.gov/reportARchildabuse
www.fosterarkansas.org
www.dhsshare.arkansas.gov/pages/default.aspx
www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly
www.nctsn.net
www.fema.gov/kids
www.childrendefense.org
www.fosterclub.com
www.ppcwg.org/communications-overview.html
www.fosteringconnections.org
http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com/index.html
www.childwelfare.gov

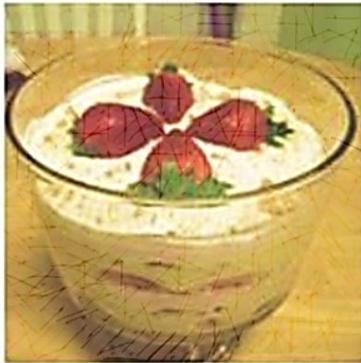
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Easy Valentine's Day Trifle

allrecipes.com



Rated: ★★★★★

Submitted By: prissycat

Photo By: Sarah Ovando

Servings: 8

"Layer slices of ready-to-eat jellyrolls with strawberries, vanilla pudding and whipped topping for a colorful dessert that is easy to make and festive to behold."

INGREDIENTS:

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 (7 ounce) package jellyrolls, each cut into 3 slices | 1 1/2 cups milk |
| 1 (5 ounce) package instant vanilla pudding mix | 3 cups frozen whipped topping, thawed |
| | 2 cups sliced fresh strawberries |

DIRECTIONS:

1. Arrange jellyroll slices on sides and bottom of a 2 1/2 quart glass bowl or trifle dish.
2. Prepare pudding according to box directions, except use only 1 1/2 cups milk; let sit for 5 minutes to thicken. Fold in 1 cup whipped topping.
3. Arrange 1/2 strawberries on jellyroll slices; top with pudding, then remaining strawberries and whipped topping. Garnish with strawberry halves, if desired.
4. Cover and chill for 8 hours; serve.