Oh, what a night it was! For the second year in a row, Salomé Chamber Orchestra rocked the house with their energy and talent, bringing the crowd to its feet, and bringing much appreciated donations to our agency.

Presenting such diverse pieces as Libertango and a medley of Beatles songs, their concert on April 15 at the Italian Academy at Columbia University drew an even bigger crowd of appreciative fans than last year. Salomé’s six musicians were at one point accompanied by guest clarinetist Joe Rutkowski, the former music teacher of the orchestra’s founders, husband of FFAS Assistant Director Lisa Binder, and official Agency Musician. Another highlight of the evening was when soprano Amanda Bollag joined the musicians for a soaring rendition of “O Mio Babbino Caro,” followed by “Brindisi” from La Traviata, to which the crowd responded with a well-deserved ovation that shook the walls!

As the last notes of music rang out, the doors of the Teatro were flung open to a warm spring evening as perfect as the music itself, and the guests were treated to a delightful wine and cheese reception.

In addition to the many guests and friends of the agency who attended, two of our Future Workers (one with his wife) from all the way up in the Lake George area made the trip down to NYC to enjoy the event. And much to our delight, several of Mr. Rutkowski’s students held a fundraiser in their school so that they could come as well.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Salomé; FFAS Board member Rick Whitaker who arranged for use of the Italian Academy’s Teatro; and Assistant Director Lisa Binder, who organized the event, with the help of Assistant Director Joanne Ferrante, Associate Director Rich Buley-Neumar, and intern Alexa Shelansky.

Thanks also to Skurnik Wines, and to Elana Xu and Audrey Tang (left, with their “hero,” Salomé’s David Carpenter) from Mr. Rutkowski’s school, who helped in setting up for the reception.

For more information about Salomé, their concerts, and their philanthropy, visit their website: http://salomechamber.org/org.

Adoption Conference: NACAC
This year’s North American Council on Adoptable Children conference will be in Long Beach, CA July 29-August 1. Two of our Future Workers will represent FFAS, along with Executive Director Emerita Maris Blechner, who will be presenting three workshops.
NACAC
Long Beach, CA. July 29-August 1.

Adoption Conferences:

RAD! Program update:
There are now twelve children in the RAD! Program, and seven of them have been matched with families!

CERTIFICATION TRAINING:
For adopting families, adoptive families, and foster/adoption professionals. Check our calendar for upcoming dates.

Covenant Ceremony:
One 17-year-old boy had his Covenant Ceremony and is now adopted!

Transition:
Two siblings from Texas have moved in with their new family.

New Chocolate Milk Club Members:
Gina DeCrescenzo, Carol Vincent

Current CMC Members

New Donations:
Amazon, Anonymous, AT&T Employee Giving, Maris & Stu Blechner, Anna Brady, Nancy Edwards, Michael & Donna Brennan, Ruth & Arthur Friedman Foundation, Joanne Ferrante, Fiduciary Trust, Jean Geraghty, Lisa Green, Alan Kroll, Pfizer United Way, Joshua Polenberg, Chris Pragman, PS 198 Brooklyn, Sheila Quinn, Diane Reid, Marguerite Ricciardone, Stewarts, Truist, And all those who bought tickets to the Salomé concert

Grants:
Stewart’s Foundation, The Hyde and Watson Foundation

WE ARE UPDATING OUR CONTACT DATABASE!
If you have not received any email from us in the past year, please email Rich Buley-Neumar (ffasrich@gmail.com) to be put on our mailing list. Every email saves us money in postage!

We are updating our contact database! If you have not received any email from us in the past year, please email Rich Buley-Neumar (ffasrich@gmail.com) to be put on our mailing list. Every email saves us money in postage!
I DON’T LIKE IT

It is our experience that “our” kids - the kids in our Relationships Are Decision (RAD!) program - are so guarded and careful that when we first meet them, they are not likely to let on when they like something. Also, oftentimes their sense of humor doesn’t come through until they have become comfortable enough with their Future Worker to show it. How can it, when they are still worried about whether they can trust them?

Zoe is nine. She lives in an institution, and has limited experience with new things. Since many of our kids do their future work while having a meal or snack, her Future Worker reported that she took Zoe out for ice cream, and Zoe ended up getting a Snickers ice cream bar. She took a taste of it, and remarked, “This is a different kind of Snickers.” Her Future Worker, wary about where this could lead, said, “Yes, it’s ice cream.” Zoe replied, “I don’t like it.” The Future Worker, a little taken aback, was thinking about how to respond, when Zoe repeated, “I don’t like it…”

And then stunned her Future Worker with the declaration, “I LOVE IT!”

What does Family Focus think about this sign of progress? We don’t like it… WE LOVE IT!

A G E N C Y  N E W S...

FFAS is thrilled to announce the birth of Emma Mercedes Sommer, daughter of Future Worker Yvonne Perez-Sommer and her husband, Ben. Emma was born May 15, 2015. The Perez-Sommer family is doing well, despite fewer hours of sleep!

Pam DeMan, who has played many roles at Family Focus since it was founded, including Deputy Director and Caseworker Supervisor, has announced her retirement, beginning July 1, 2015. As much as we are happy for Pam, we have tried everything we can think of to convince her to stay. It’s not working. From all of us here at Family Focus, we wish Pam a very happy and healthy retirement.

Family Focus is proud to have been selected for the second year in a row by P.S. 33 in Queens Village as one of two charities chosen by their students to receive a Penny Harvest donation. Penny Harvest is a program that teaches children about philanthropy and the importance and value in “giving back.” Assistant Director Lisa Binder attended a ceremony at the school and spoke to the children (grades 2-5) about Family Focus’s work of finding forever families for kids who need them. Lisa was able to talk to them about some of the unique things about Family Focus, including the idea of a “maybe mom and dad,” and the fact that kids make the decision about whether or not to be adopted. We were very grateful for this opportunity to share our work with a great group of children.

NYSCCCC CONFERENCE 2015

Several FFAS staff, including some of our Future Workers, attended this year’s New York State Citizens’ Coalition for Children Conference in Albany this past May. We are proud to say that both our Executive Director and our Executive Director Emerita presented well-received workshops. Here are two new posters we unveiled at the conference. The one on the right lists counties who have “given hope” to some of their children by placing them in our RAD! Program.
They Had No Intention of Telling Him…

One of our staff received an inquiry phone call one afternoon from a gentleman who wished to adopt a newborn. After spending some time going over the different aspects of infant adoption, they fell into a comfortable conversation about raising children, as the gentleman and his wife already had birth children and a large extended family.

The gentleman then mentioned that he and his wife had no intention of ever telling the new child of his adoption. His reasoning was that his adopted son would not need to know, and would feel less a part of the family if he knew he wasn't born into it.

Although this gentleman was confident that his perspective was logical and protective, the worker pointed out that there is so much more to consider. She explained that everyone has the basic human right to know where they come from. It is the parents’ responsibility to help their child understand their story, whether or not the child was adopted. And that story must be an honest one.

The gentleman was not yet convinced. The worker continued, explaining that in our experience, more often than not, even a child adopted into a family as a newborn will come to realize that they were not born into their family, even without being told. It’s as if they have some kind of special sense that we cannot understand.

She told him the story of her brother-in-law, who claimed to always have the feeling that he was adopted, although his parents always denied it. When he was an adult, and his mother was ill, he read her hospital chart and discovered that she had had a hysterectomy before he was born. When he confronted her, she admitted that he had been adopted, and said with regret that she never wanted him to feel as if he didn't belong, so the family agreed it was best to remain silent. His anger was apparent, but he was also bewildered that they would keep something like this from him. He understood that she was trying to protect him, but he felt betrayed nonetheless, that part of who he is had been locked away from him.

The worker then pointed out that with all of the people in this gentleman’s family keeping a secret, it was bound to happen that either the child, or a cousin or friend, would overhear someone talking about the adoption, and the cat would be out of the bag. He finally conceded that this could be a possibility. That is when the worker told him something he had not even considered: If his son discovered that his history was different than what he was told, he would see his mother and father as liars.

The gentleman expressed his horror at not recognizing that in his effort to protect his son by not telling him that he was adopted, he would actually be hurting him.

Family Focus takes this stance: All children who have been adopted have the right to know they have been adopted. It should be a normal, natural part of their story - just as birth children have their own stories - and a part of your family’s history. There are many age-appropriate books and websites to help parents talk about adoption with their children, such as www.tapestrybooks.com.

End Quote:

“Honesty is such a lonely word. Everyone is so untrue. Honesty is hardly ever heard And mostly what I need from you.”
- Billy Joel
To all our supporters,

For reasons that I don't understand, the adoption of children from the foster care system whose current foster parents are not adopting them has been getting short shrift in recent years. Agencies doing this expensive work cannot afford to continue it. Recently, the last two agencies funded by NYC to recruit parents for these kids did not have their contracts renewed.

In some ways, we are the “last man standing.” We get calls from all over the state from people asking us to help them adopt. They are much too far away from our workers, and especially our training, for us to take them on. But we have no one to even refer them to, closer to where they live. The counties want mostly folks willing to be foster parents and “we will see what happens.” Many people interested in adopting even older kids, do not want that. They do not want to be foster parents. And so they have nowhere to turn.

Then, imagine being a kid who through no fault of his/her own “fell into the foster care system.” Imagine, furthermore, having no family resources and your current foster parents are, say, retiring and moving to Florida. The loss of hope for a real future that only families can provide us must be unbearable for these kids.

We are exploring what we can do about this. Short of opening new offices around the state, there doesn’t appear to be much. But whatever we finally do - and adults all know this - is going to cost us money to get off the ground.

So I am going to use any and all funds that we raise from this summer appeal to allow us to do something towards this end. Every dime that our donors give us this summer will be put away in a separate account for the sole purpose of doing something about this, statewide.

I - we - would deeply appreciate your help.

Thank you,

June 10, 2015
Support FFAS With Your Donation

Complete this form and return with your donation or Chocolate Milk Club membership dues. If you are making your donation or paying CMC dues online, you don’t need this form.

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Email: _____________________________________________________________
Street: _____________________________________________________________________
City: _____________________________________________________________________ State: _______ Zip: ____________
Phone number(s): (_____)______________________________________________________

☐ I am making a one-time donation to FFAS
Check one: (  ) In my own name
(  ) In honor of (  ) In memory of ________________________________
Send donation notification to: ________________________________
(name) (email or street address)

☐ I am joining the Chocolate Milk Club
Your dues choice: (  ) $25 each month (  ) $300 each year
OR: (  ) I am making a one-time donation to the CMC, but not joining
Check one: (  ) In my own name
(  ) Gift membership in the name of ________________________________
Send gift membership notification to: ________________________________
(name) (email address)

To join the CMC with your Credit Card or your own PayPal account, go to www.familyfocusadoption.org and click the picture of the Chocolate Milk.
(What is the Chocolate Milk Club? Go to our website and Click the Chocolate Milk to find out.)

HOW TO PAY
☐ Enclosed is my check for the total of $________
☐ Please charge my credit card for the total of $_______

Credit Card Type (circle one): AMERICAN EXPRESS / DISCOVER / VISA / MASTER CARD
Card Number: _________________________ Expiration Date: _________ Card Security Code: __________

To Make A Donation or Single CMC Payment by Credit Card or PayPal:
(You do not need to use this form if you pay online.)
1. You can use your credit card or your own PayPal account to make a donation. Both kinds of transactions are processed through PayPal.
2. First go to www.familyfocusadoption.org and click “Donate.” This takes you to the PayPal link for Family Focus. (Or you can go to your own PayPal account and make payment to “ffasjack@earthlink.net.”)
3. In the picture of the electronic “check” enter the amount you wish to pay.
4. If you are using your PayPal account, log in at the right. If you are using a credit card, click “Continue” on the left near the credit card pictures.
5. During your transaction you will be prompted for “notes.” Tell us any details we should know. If this donation is in honor or memory of someone, tell us who we should notify, and how (email or mailing address).

Family Focus Adoption Services is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization, tax ID 11-2869661. Your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. Please consult your tax professional for full details.