FFAS Launches The Chocolate Milk Club

One December, we had a nine-year-old boy who still believed in Santa. Though we begged his pre-adoptive mom to hold on to him past Christmas, she, instead, dumped him only days prior. We placed him temporarily with a single man who never decorated for Christmas. There was no agency that was going to pay for the decorations, a tree, and Christmas presents we secretly provided to preserve - at the very least - that boy's belief that someone, even if only Santa, still personally cared about him. That boy, without a relative in the world and who'd lost everything else, was entitled to hold onto his belief in Santa. The Chocolate Milk Club is about personal connection.

Simply put, The Chocolate Milk Club is a community of like-minded people who agree with the need for that personal connection. The Chocolate Milk Club members become part of a community that is insisting on the needs of people before the needs of bureaucracy.

In our older child program, the children whom we are asked to find homes for have all been multiply betrayed by the adults in their lives, beginning with their birth parents. These brave kids, still open to new families, despite sometimes having had a dozen earlier foster families, are terrified of being betrayed still again. They need to proceed far more slowly, with far more in-person support than any public administrator will pay for, or often even believe in. Members of The Chocolate Milk Club do believe. They believe in the kids and they believe in our ‘confidence building’ supports.

To join the Chocolate Milk Club, visit our website: www.familyfocusadoption.org

Above and right: families mixing chocolate milk at their Adoption Covenant Ceremonies
Program Updates

Waiting Child Programs
In July one of our families finalized the adoptions of a group of four siblings from Texas, using our new Intensive Supervision model. Adapting from our existing transition models, Pam DeMan, the agency’s Caseworker Supervisor, and acting caseworker for this family, created tools and methods that can be used to help families who are adopting children over long distances. See the photo on page 1 (right) of this happy new family mixing chocolate milk at their Covenant Ceremony.

Direct Placement Program
We have two terrific undergraduate interns this year, working toward their bachelor’s degrees in Social Work. Michelle Monastero is a Senior at Molloy College. Stephaney Blackwood is a Junior at Adelphi. Among other agency tasks, as part of their internship Michelle and Stephaney will be working in our Direct Placement Program, learning to write home studies and doing outreach to area women’s healthcare providers.

Family Services Program
This past August, our offices were visited by two representatives of the Council on Accreditation, for the purpose of reviewing the agency’s policies and procedures for Hague recertification. We look forward to continuing to provide services to families adopting from Hague Convention countries.

Child Welfare Training
Program Director Jack Brennan presented a training in Syracuse, NY on the topic of inducement. This is one of our most popular training topics, about the condition whereby a child “speaks” through their behavior, inducing in adults the feelings that the children have, and seeking guidance or answers through how the adults handle those feelings. For more on inducement, visit our website.
New Training Opportunities for Families Seeking Adoption from Foster Care

Join Us...

for an
INFO meeting
(Introduction to Nationwide Foster/Adoption Options)
presented by
Family Focus Adoption Services

Newburgh • The Capital District • Queens

For more information go to:
www.familyfocusadoption.org
or call
866-855-1919

This four hour class (yes it takes that long!) gives you the answers to key questions such as:

- Who are the available children?
- What are their characteristics?
- How do I get them?
  a) Home Study
  b) Foster Care License requirements
  c) Public vs. Private Agencies
  d) Transitioning the child
  e) Supervising the placement until the finalization of the adoption
- What is the Interstate Compact?
- What is “CONNECTIONS?”

Is all of this for me?

When a family is sure they wish to adopt a child who is not a newborn, and don’t want to adopt from another country, their remaining option is to explore adoption from the foster care system. County Departments of Social Services have said they get a number of families who wish to adopt, but come to orientation meetings for foster care because they don’t know where else to turn.

Family Focus is now offering training sessions specifically designed to provide information to these families about their options for fostering and adopting children in care. The card above was distributed to local county agencies as an invitation for them to refer these families to us as a first step.

If you know anyone who is considering adoption, our INFO Meeting schedule is on our website.
New Board Members…

After recent elections, Family Focus Adoption Services is pleased to introduce quite a few new Board members. Some have been associated with the agency before, two recently adopted from the agency, and every one of them is a child advocate and friend of FFAS. Please join us in welcoming back Robert Pilgrim (Treasurer), and welcoming members Roslyn Bernstein, Judith Brambrut, Sharon Cohen-Powers, Keith Griffin, Richard Hughes, Jonathan Kleinman, Ines Miyares, and William O’Keefe. Visit our website and click “About Us” to learn more about them.

Staff Changes…

Several recent position changes have occurred at Family Focus.

Kathe Stojowski, Deputy Director for the past twenty-five years, has vacated her position. She will continue as the Director of our Family Services Program and remain part of the Administrative Team.

Jack Brennan and Joanne Ferrante, both Associate Directors, are now Assistant Directors. Taking on the role of Associate Director is Rich Buley-Neumar.

We are also excited to welcome our two newest interns, Michelle Monastero and Stephanie Blackwood who are currently attending our Certification series as part of their training.

Construction has begun…

If you’ve been to our main offices in Little Neck, Queens, you would notice a big, big change. Construction has begun on our offices to create a large, comfortable training room. We can hardly wait for it to be completed!

Seeking Volunteers…

Family Focus always welcomes volunteers, from students looking for community service credit, to retirees who feel they wish to “give back.” We can often use an extra hand with some of our office tasks and special projects. Please call or email us if you would like to help at FFAS.