Blechner to Brennan - A Seamless Transition

As many friends of Family Focus already know, as of September 1, 2013, after twenty-six years as this agency’s Executive Director, Maris Blechner has handed the reins over to Jack Brennan, previously Assistant Director and continuing head of our public adoption programs.

As Maris noted at the event held to celebrate her dedicated leadership since the founding of Family Focus, “I am not retiring, I am rewiring.” She will continue to be a supportive resource for the agency, with the title Executive Director Emerita, and plans to do training internationally on the agency’s behalf, while enjoying leisure time with her “other” family - namely her husband Stu, her children and grandchildren.

Jack takes over as we continue to expand and adapt our services for the multiply-betrayed children in the foster system. The Family Focus RAD! Program (Relationships Are Decisions) now has several clients, and our Certification Training for applicants has now reached its two year mark.

“We tell the children: Authentic adoption is like chocolate milk...
Once that chocolate is mixed with that milk, there is no way ever to separate them again.”
To join The Chocolate Milk Club, visit www.familyfocusadoption.org
Adoption Conferences:
Went to North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) in August in Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Upcoming: Adoptive Parents Committee (APC)
Sunday, November 24

Adoption Covenant Ceremonies:
- one 17 year old girl
- one newborn boy

Program Updates

| Waiting Child Programs
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<td>Nassau County has begun sending some of their families to us to participate in several modules of our Certification Training, to better prepare them for interstate adoption. Our RAD! Program is currently being piloted with several clients, and the interactions that our Future Workers are having with the children are fascinating.</td>
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| Direct Placement Program
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<td>We celebrated the Adoption Covenant Ceremony of one newborn boy, and placed another with a family. There have been many inquiries of late about our DPP, and we have been scheduling conference calls with families to give them information about adoption in general, and about how we place newborns for adoption. We are in the process of revamping our newborn placement program - stay tuned for coming details.</td>
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| Family Services Program
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<td>Families interested in international adoption continue to seek new countries from which to adopt. In addition Family Focus continues to assist local families to adopt orphaned young relatives from around the world.</td>
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| Child Welfare Training
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<td>On June 18th, Executive Director Maris Blechner presented a webinar on Inducement for the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC). The webinar was open to parents in the US and Canada. What is Inducement? You can find out on our website, familyfocusadoption.org - type “inducement” into the search bar. Our training at the NACAC conference was a big hit as well!</td>
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Agency News...

Staff Changes...
Just like the song “Hotel California” says, “You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!” After a short hiatus trying other ventures, Sandra Connor, Family Services Program Assistant, has returned to our offices. She can usually be found at her desk two days per week, and working from her home office the rest of the time. Welcome back, Sandy!

Chocolate Milk Club Update
Heat Wave Leads To Membership

From Lisa Binder, LSCW: During the middle of the heat wave in July, power was shut down in my NYC apartment building for the day, meaning no air conditioning, no internet and no elevator service. My husband and I decided we had to beat the heat and go to the movies. On our way down the 7 flights of stairs, we met a long-time neighbor who was off to take his grandson for lunch in an air-conditioned diner. He generously offered to drive us to the movie theater since he was going in the same direction. We got to talking and my neighbor mentioned he has been a long-standing supporter of children’s charities. He spoke of the great pleasure he receives from seeing his donations at work bringing real joy to kids in dire situations. I told him about Family Focus and the amazing work we do. He asked to see some literature about the organization. Among other things, I gave him our Chocolate Milk Club letter. A few days later, I received an envelope under my door with a check from my neighbor for a Chocolate Milk Club membership for two years!

Moral of the story: tell the Family Focus story to your friends and neighbors.

How CMC Dues Is Helping

The dues collected from Family Focus’s Chocolate Milk Club members helps us to provide services and benefits to families and children that are not paid for by social services agencies. We were able to pay to for one child to attend camp this summer. Also, a CMC member saw the “Call Me Maybe” T-shirts that we have begun giving to our “maybe-children” and she liked the idea so much that she gave us an extra check to purchase more.

To find out how you can become a CMC Member, visit us at www.familyfocusadoption.org or call!

New Logo!

You may have noticed that we have a new logo - a quick and easy way to recognize our agency, using our initials, one of which is reaching “outside the box.” Let us know what you think!
Dear Friends:

Just as the seasons move along, with summer ending in just a few weeks, so does today mark a major change in my life and in the life of Family Focus. It is the end of my tenure as the agency’s Executive Director.

My ties to Family Focus are strong, and I hope to be able to be of service in the days to come. However, the leadership of the agency now passes to Jack Brennan, our first outside employee, hired in 1987, and now a nationally respected adoption specialist in the broadest and truest sense of the word.

I leave Family Focus in his capable hands, and in the hands of a staff that is the best of the best. I am filled with optimism for the agency, and for the future of the waiting children who need us so badly.

Thank you all for your concern, your commitment, and your generosity. I am so grateful to have stood with you in fighting the good fight!

Sincerely,

[Signature]
September 1, 2013

Dear Agency Friends and especially long-time friends of Maris:

Last month, at the NACAC (North American Council on Adoptable Children) conference, held this year in Toronto, a woman from Kansas City, Missouri came up to me (and Assistant Director, Joanne Ferrante) and told us that it was her job to go around finding out about the good and thoughtful adoption practices around the U.S. and Canada. She asked me to come do training in Missouri, and told me that we, Family Focus, have the “best stuff out there.” There aren’t many compliments higher than that for an agency like ours that believes so much in what we do and in what we teach.

Maris’s approach to Family Focus is what has allowed us to create that “best stuff” out there and the field of public adoption owes her a great debt. In her honor, therefore, we have created the “Maris Blechner Fund For Adoption Education.” Any monies donated specifically to that “Maris Fund” will be used for that sole purpose. It is such an important purpose that, in addition, we have dedicated 25% of every non-targeted donation to the agency for that fund. We hope that you will consider this a valuable use of your financial generosity to Family Focus.

While Maris’s tenure as Executive Director is now over, we have asked her to accept the new life-long position of Executive Director Emerita. She has happily agreed, and so will continue to be an active part of Family Focus long into our future.

I can only hope to be able to continue the work that Maris has begun, and I trust that you will be willing to transfer your long time support of Family Focus from Maris to me.

We have enclosed a donation envelope for your convenience. Every dollar helps us in this wonderful mission of ours. Please stay with us.

Thank you,

Jack
SAVE THE DATE:
Salomé Chamber Orchestra Benefit Concert - April 3, 2014

Their website describes them as “New York City’s electrifying new conductor-less string ensemble.”
Made up of top-ranking graduates from The Curtis Institute of Music, The Julliard School, Manhattan School of Music, Princeton and Yale, the Salomé Chamber Orchestra performs at many NYC venues including Carnegie Hall, Steinway Hall and the MET Museum.

As part of their music outreach, Salomé will perform a benefit concert for Family Focus on Thursday, April 3, 2014 at the Italian Academy at Columbia University, NYC. Save the date - more information to follow!

MSW Internship Program

Lisa Binder, the new head of our Social Work Internship Program, will be supervising Melisa Kolenovic, a Fordham University first year MSW student this year. Lisa plans to expose Melisa to all aspects of the agency’s work with a particular focus on the Waiting Child Programs. Melisa has a background in social services and is currently working at the Young Adult Institute as a direct support counselor for adults with disabilities. Melisa is very enthusiastic about working with families. She was impressed by Family Focus’s website and in particular was struck by the way children are empowered through our transition processes. Welcome Aboard Melisa!
Support Family Focus With Your Donation

Please complete this form and include in the enclosed envelope with your donation or Chocolate Milk Club membership dues. If you are making your donation or paying CMC dues online, you do not need to send us this form.

Consider joining The Chocolate Milk Club

If you would like to support the work of Family Focus on an ongoing basis, why not join The Chocolate Milk Club, or give a membership as a gift? Go to www.familyfocusadoption.org and follow the links to learn more. You can join online* or include your first dues with this form.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

___ Enclosed is my check for the total of $________

___ Please charge my credit card for the total of $________

Credit Card Type (circle one)  AMEX / DISCOVER / VISA / MC

Card Number: ____________________________________________

Expiration Date: _________ Security Code: _______

Name of Cardholder: ______________________________________

Billing Street: __________________________________________

City: ______________ State: _______ Zip: __________

Home Address (if different): _____________________________

Or donate/pay dues online by credit card or PayPal:

 <> Go to www.familyfocusadoption.org and click “Donate.” This takes you to PayPal. You can enter your credit card information, or use your own PayPal account.

 <> During your transaction you will be prompted for “notes.” Note if this donation is in honor or memory of someone else, and how you would like us to notify them (email or address).

 <> You do not need to send this form back if you pay online.

I would like to make my donation (circle one) In Honor Of / In Memory Of

* I would like to pay dues for a Chocolate Milk Club Gift Membership for:

__________________________________________________________

Please notify: ____________________________________________

email or address:

*If paying for a CMC membership for someone else online, you don’t need to send this form. Please put their name and email address in the “notes” during the transaction.

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.