It’s Never too Late to Make a Permanent Commitment

Kenya Holloman sits on Alameda County’s Youth Adult Partnership (YAP) advisory board, which is made up of emancipated foster youth and adult stakeholders who come together to help reform foster and after-care practices. Kenya will be featured in the upcoming Heart Gallery exhibit, and she shared her story behind the photograph.

Kenya spent most of her life in foster care. She entered the system at age 4 and emancipated at age 18. Although she was a foster youth until her age of emancipation, she was fortunate enough to have found a permanent connection at age 11.

Kenya was 9-years-old living at a group home, Clara’s Cove, when she met Sharon Jones-Harrison. Sharon was a staff member and after two years of working there, bonding with Kenya, she decided to take Kenya into her home.

“She [Sharon] took me in because she said she saw that innocence in me. That I wasn’t hardened and I had potential. She could work with me.”

Despite Kenya multiple placements and a seemingly endless chain of social workers, Kenya was hesitant about opening up to Sharon and her husband Bruce. She had doubts that the Jones-Harrison house would be her home.

“Honestly, at age 11, after moving around like I did, [the Jones-Harrison house] was simply just another placement. Most of the early stages in their home, I spent a lot of time fighting back the feeling that this was permanent. So, no, I wasn’t open, I was just there.” Over time, and after a testing stage, their relationship began to blossom.

“I remember the way they treated me when they were mad. I realized I was in a safe place after I made a mistake. They would just ground me (no TV, cell phone, etc.) but they would never lay a hand on me. When I realized I was safe, I knew I didn’t need to run.”

Kenya is forever grateful to Sharon and Bruce for providing her with a stable place to live as well as the loving support she gained from their friends and other family members. She knows not all youth are as lucky as she was. As a YAP youth board member, Kenya understands that social workers have a hard time getting youth to open up to the idea of permanency.

(continued on page 5)
Dear Colleagues, Resource Families, and Community Partners:

Summer is wrapping up as we enter back-to-school season. Many foster youth were able to attend camp this summer thanks to our community partners who provide low cost summer camps and to everyone who has donated to the Shirley Eastman Fund. I’d like to thank all those who made it possible for many foster youth to attend summer camp. Please continue to donate to the Shirley Eastman Fund because the funds are also used to provide foster youth with holiday gifts.

This summer, we at DCFS have had a sense of hopefulness and gratitude for our ability to expand some of our vital efforts to improve outcomes. In July of this year, DCFS had our second anniversary of participating in the Title IVE Waiver. We’re excited about the opportunities our participation has afforded us, especially during these trying economic times. For example, we had several focus groups to gain staff input towards creating a family-friendly visitation center. Our goal with the visitation center is to provide a centralized location for youth, parents, and relatives to visit with each other in an effort to enhance reunification and permanence for youth. We will keep you all informed on this and other program changes.

I hope everyone has had a safe and relaxing summer. Keep up the great work!

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director

The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty
— Winston Churchill

Evening with the Stars

The theme, “Evening with the Stars”, of the annual Resource Parent Appreciation Dinner reflected the strength and beauty of our distinguished foster parents, their guests and families, and the youth entertainers who performed that evening. On May 15th DCFS recognized some of our stars: the inspiring and courageous resource parents who take care of our twinkling little gems and older, brighter shooting stars. Dinner guests were privileged to witness the joyful and spirited “Kids Dance Broadway”, presented by the Dance Theater Arts of Hayward. The performers ranged from 2 1/2 yrs old to senior tappers.

Dr. Yvonne Cole, adoptive mother of R & B singer Keyshia Cole, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Cole shared her own story of family and her experiences as an adoptive parent. She reminded foster parents that our children need families. She shared her own struggles with being there for Keyshia in good times and on those very challenging days.

The audience was treated with a dance by G.O.D.I.V.A.S., founded by two sisters of the tender ages of six and four. They have grown to become a performing group of seven members under the direction of Terrell White. They were outstanding.

All in all it was a wonderful night to reflect on the good graces of our community partners and the resource parents who light the way for children.
The Department is pleased to announce that effective April 1, 2009, the Another Road to Safety Family Maintenance Program (ARSFM), which began in January 2009, was renamed the Paths 2 Success Program (P2S). The new name was introduced as a result of a contest that was held among the DCFS’s three community-based P2S providers; Family Support Services of the Bay Area (FSSBA), La Familia Counseling Services and Prescott-Joseph Center.

The P2S Program provides up to six months of intensive in-home support services to families in the Family Maintenance Program. Families enrolled in P2S are visited on a weekly basis by a Family Advocate who works in collaboration with the Child Welfare Worker and other key service providers.

Some of the first families who enrolled in P2S services in January 2009 completed six-months of services this summer. Congratulations!

### Foster Youth Liaisons Assist with Education Plans

Did you know that every School District in California has a Foster Youth Education Liaison? Effective January 1, 2004, Assembly Bill 490 (Steinberg) created new duties and rights related to the education of foster youth, including the requirement that foster youth liaisons are assigned to facilitate educational attainment.

The Foster Youth Services Program serves all 17 school districts and coordinates with each District’s Foster Youth Liaison. For more information, contact Elisabeth Tarango at 510-601-9813 or email LizT@acoe.org. You can also contact the District Foster Youth Liaisons listed below directly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
<th>PHONE</th>
<th>E-MAIL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Terry Cooley</td>
<td>510-337-7198</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tcooley@alameda.k12.ca.us">tcooley@alameda.k12.ca.us</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Albany:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berkeley:</td>
<td>Francisco Martinez</td>
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<tr>
<td>Castro Valley:</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:lrothwel@cv.k12.ca.us">lrothwel@cv.k12.ca.us</a></td>
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<td>Dublin:</td>
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<td>Emery:</td>
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<td>New Haven:</td>
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### Substance Abuse Testing Providers in Alameda County

Effective July 1, 2009, the DCFS has contracted with the following Substance Abuse Testing providers in Alameda County:

**Options Recovery**  
(West Oakland & North County)

**East Oakland Recovery Project**  
(East Oakland & mid-County)

**BAART**  
(Oakland & mid-County)

**Terra Firma**  
(Hayward & South County)

**AXIS**  
(East County)

**ARSFM is now Paths to Success (P2S)**

The Department is pleased to announce that effective April 1, 2009, the Another Road to Safety Family Maintenance Program (ARSFM), which began in January 2009, was renamed the Paths 2 Success Program (P2S). The new name was introduced as a result of a contest that was held among the DCFS’s three community-based P2S providers; Family Support Services of the Bay Area (FSSBA), La Familia Counseling Services and Prescott-Joseph Center.

The P2S Program provides up to six months of intensive in-home support services to families in the Family Maintenance Program. Families enrolled in P2S are visited on a weekly basis by a Family Advocate who works in collaboration with the Child Welfare Worker and other key service providers.

Some of the first families who enrolled in P2S services in January 2009 completed six-months of services this summer. Congratulations!
A National Foster Care Month celebration was held on May 12, 2009 on the steps of the State Capitol in Sacramento. This annual event brings together leaders from across California who work on permanence for children and youth in foster care. This year, three county teams were honored for their work demonstrating the importance of finding permanent, adoptive families for older youth, maintaining sibling relationships, and supporting kinship care.

The Alameda County Team consisted of foster youth Richard Gay, his aunt, Kathleen Mills who is becoming his Legal Guardian, DCFS staff, Dumisha Jamaa Project staff from partner agency Family Builders, and staff from Lincoln Child Center’s Project Permanence. An L.A. County Team and Shasta County Team were also honored, along with California Supreme Court Associate Justice and Chair of the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Foster Care, Carlos R. Moreno.

Richard and his aunt were full of pride as they received this honor, surrounded by the supportive staff that helped them become a permanent family.

**Alameda County’s 10th Annual Adoption Day!**

On Saturday, November 21, 2009, DCFS will be celebrating our 10th Annual Adoption Day. This special day is a part of a national effort to raise awareness of the 114,000 children in foster care across the county waiting to find permanent, loving families. National Adoption Day is traditionally celebrated on the Saturday before Thanksgiving.

According to the National Adoption Day 2008 Results Summary, on National Adoption Day 2008, an unprecedented number of courts and communities across the nation came together to finalize 4,565 adoptions of children from foster care. It was celebrated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam. 325 events were held in 2008 throughout the nation.

Since its inception nine years ago, more than 25,000 children have been adopted from foster care on National Adoption Day.

We hope to make this year’s 10th Annual Adoption Day in Alameda County another memorable event for many children and their families. SSA staff and Courtroom personnel volunteer to work together on this special Saturday to honor and celebrate each and every adoption. Look for announcements regarding volunteer opportunities in the early Fall!
The Department of Children and Family Services is pleased to announce that several Alameda County employees have successfully become Foster and/or Adoptive parents. Formerly, Alameda County employees were not permitted to foster or adopt from Alameda County because there were concerns about confidentiality and conflict of interest. Therefore, a large pool of potential families were unavailable to foster youth.

Within the last few years, this has changed due to the commitment and perseverance of the Assistant Agency Director, Carol Collins. Her efforts to address the concerns and advocate for the needs of the youth resulted in active recruitment of Alameda County employees to become Foster and Adoptive Parents.

Alameda County employee, Laura Melendrez, said she was excited about the possibility of fostering and/or adopting a child in Alameda County. She also welcomed the opportunity to encourage others to consider opening their heart and their home. This message is routinely being shared throughout Alameda County and employees are responding with interest and enthusiasm. We are hopeful that Alameda County employees will be moved to learn more about foster care and adoption.

For more information about fostering and adopting in Alameda County contact 510-259-3575.

Alameda County Staff Are Becoming Foster and Adoptive Parents

Information about fostering and adopting in Alameda County contact 510-259-3575.

DCFS Press Fall 2009

Welcome Aboard!

Good news for Children and Family Services. The Foster Care Eligibility Section welcomed a training class of five new Eligibility Technicians on April 20, 2009. These five new staff members bring a sorely needed infusion of new life to the Eligibility Section, which has been suffering through a loss of staff due to promotions and retirements. Please join us in welcoming them on board!

DCFS is excited to welcome 18 new Child Welfare Workers this summer. At a time when other County departments are facing lay offs, we are fortunate to have the ability to hire new staff. This group of Child Welfare Workers is particularly unique because they are all coming to us with prior child welfare experience.

All of our new workers have come to us from other County Child Welfare Agencies due primarily to lay offs or other transitions. Our 18 new hires began on June 15, 2009 and completed their four week training on July 10, 2009. They possess a wealth of knowledge and experience across child welfare programs. Our new workers are from the following counties: Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, and San Joaquin.

It’s Never too Late to Adopt!

Adoption offers the highest legal form of permanency for children and youth in foster care who are unable to return home. Adult adoption can always be part of permanency discussions with youth and adults committed to them, even when an alternative permanent plan is being made. Adult adoption is a legal agreement between adults; it formalizes a committed parental relationship, and legalizes the parent-child relationship. It’s never too late to adopt! Contact Fredi Juni, Management Analyst, for more information junifx@acgov.org

It’s Never too Late to Make a Permanent Commitment

(continued from front page)

“My advice for social workers is for them to really try to keep the youth informed in as much detail as possible. It’s hard to trust after moving around so much and everyone taking notes down, documenting everything. But if you’re able to find a way to communicate where the youth understands – it’ll be easier for youth to trust you and not hold back.”

Kenya’s former foster family made a permanent commitment to her. She will be adopted by Sharon Jones-Harrison and Bruce Harrison upon her college graduation.

(continued from front page)
FREE Back to School Backpacks filled with school supplies

The Family Giving Tree Back-To-School Program
www.familygivingtree.org/agencies/agencies.html.

City Team Ministries of Oakland
722 Washington Street, Oakland, CA 94607
Phone: 510.452-3758 • Fax: 510-251-1114
Email:Oakland@cityteam.org

Serving Hayward and Castro Valley only
Salvation Army Corps Community Center
430 “A” Street, Hayward, CA 94541
Phone: 510.581-6444 • Fax: 510.537.7471
www.usw.salvationarmy.org

Serving Newark only
Viola Blythe Community Service Center of Newark, Inc.
37365 Ash Street, Newark, CA 94560
Phone: (510)794-3437 • Fax: 510.739-0343
E-Mail: violablythe@sbcglobal.net

UPDATES AND SUPPLEMENTAL HANDOUTS AVAILABLE

Updates and supplemental handouts to Alameda County’s 2005 A Guide to Permanency Options for Youth are now available for staff and caregivers. These tools can assist families in understanding financial, legal, and psychosocial aspects of permanency options. The guide also helps us make more informed decisions.

Contact Fredi Juni, Management Analyst at junifx@acgov.org for copies.