Alameda County Celebrates 8th Annual Adoption Day

On Saturday, November 17, 2007, the adoptions of 80 children and youth ages 1-15 were finalized at the Superior Courthouse in Oakland. The 67 adopting families comprised of 39 single parents and 28 two-parent families, including 6 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender (LGBT) families. Twenty-five of the adopting families were relatives. Thirteen sibling groups were adopted, including two sets of twins!

Alameda County Social Services Agency collaborates and plans this event annually with Alameda County Superior and Juvenile Courts. It coincides each year with National Adoption Day on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. This national effort raises awareness of the thousands of children and youth in foster care waiting for permanent, loving families.

This year over 50 DCFS staff volunteered to work at the event, along with volunteer staff from local private adoption agencies. Court personnel and Superior and Juvenile Court Bench Officers staffed 6 Courtrooms. The event was catered, and volunteer artists from Museum of Children’s Art led art activities. Participating children and family received gifts and a framed photograph to commemorate the special day.

A Family for a Lifetime

On Adoption Day 2007, Christian officially became a permanent member of the Rainey family! Christian, 15, has lived in the Rainey home for almost four years. For him, adoption means being part of a family, in every way, for a lifetime. When he asked his foster parent to consider adopting him, she was faced with a big decision: adopting a teenager!

Pastor Linda Rainey has 3 biological sons, Joseph, Damien, and Samuel, ages 16-32. She became a certified foster parent with Triad Foster Family Agency seven years ago as a single parent. Two of her adult sons have moved into homes of their own. The Rainey household now includes 5 boys, ages 11-16, two of whom are in the Family Reunification program. Pastor Rainey became Legal Guardian to 12 year old Emil two years ago, and of course, now she has adopted Christian.

Pastor Rainey shared that she doesn’t think in terms of “fostering”. Boys come to live in her home as “children”, not as “foster children”. She does everything she can to make them feel a part of her family, and loves them as she does her biological children. When considering adoption, Pastor Rainey understood that it meant a lifetime commitment, “not just a commitment until he reached age 18.” Pastor Rainey said it’s not always easy, but Christian is a part of her life forever.

Congratulations and best wishes to the Rainey family on their adoption!
Dear Colleagues, Resource Families, and Community Partners:

As we reflect on the past year and look to the upcoming new year, our Department and communities have a lot to look forward to and plenty to be proud of in our recent accomplishments. This past year, our Department became a Title IVE Waiver county with the goals of increasing the number of youth who remain safely and permanently in their homes while also working to improve the safety, permanence, and well-being for youth who must enter foster care.

We also have a lot to look forward to in 2008. For example, we are strengthening our Resource Family recruitment efforts and expanding our capacity to license Social Services Agency and other county staff members as foster and adoptive Resource Families. Be on the lookout for emails, flyers posted around county facilities, and presentations by our staff beginning in February of 2008.

In the meantime, I hope you consider taking advantage of the many opportunities to assist youth and families during this holiday season. We need donations of gifts and volunteer time. See the back of this issue of the DCFS Press for information on donating to the Shirley Eastman Fund, which is used entirely to provide gifts for youth during the holidays and summer camp scholarships, two seasons of the year that can sometimes be ironically and especially difficult for foster youth and families.

I am looking forward to working with you all in the new year! Happy Kwanzaa, Happy Hanukkah, Feliz Navidad, Merry Christmas, Joyous Yule, Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to all.

Carol Collins
Assistant Agency Director

“I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.”

-Helen Keller

Season of Sharing turns Twenty!

This year marks the 20th anniversary of The Chronicle Season of Sharing Fund. Over the years, nearly $51 million has been donated and distributed in nine Bay Area counties. Each year, the fund meets critical needs and provides emergency housing assistance for people who might otherwise become homeless.

Season of Sharing is a private fund made available all year to Alameda County residents by the San Francisco Chronicle. Grants are based not only on criteria being met, but also on merit and the greatest need. The maximum grant is $1,500.

The types of assistance that have been granted are:

- Security/rental deposit
- Delinquent rent or mortgage
- Delinquent utility bills under the threat of turn-off
- Beds/mattresses and basic household necessities
- Handicap ramps and lifts
- One-time medical or dental treatments

Those eligible for assistance are: low and middle income families with children residing in Alameda County; individuals over the age of 60; and individuals with disabilities.

For more information, contact Rebecca Legaspi, Season of Sharing Liaison for DCFS, at 510-780-8687 or legasra@acgov.org.

Also, visit www.seasonofsharing.org or www.alamedasocialservices.org.

DCFS Press Editorial Board

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Please provide comments and feedback regarding DCFS Press to Connie Linas at linasc@acgov.org
Ghosts and Goblins visited ERU

Halloween was celebrated in a most festive fashion this year at the Eden Area MultiService Center. Several Emergency Response Units participated in a Halloween Decorating Contest and went to great lengths to create Halloween displays that made you wonder whether you were at work or in a haunted house!

The ERU FRIGHT NIGHT festivities were organized to recognize all the staff’s hard work. Prizes were awarded to the best decoration and the best costume. Entrants went all out with sound effects and treats for the judges. Judges from Administration and Finance, Workforce & Benefits Administration, ERU, and Placement had a difficult time as all participants were creative and original.

At the October 31st Awards Celebration:
- Best Costume went to Benjamin Bogner, Child Welfare Supervisor, for his John Travolta Staying Alive interpretation, complete with White Suit.
- Everyone was a winner in the Area Decorating contest. Judges awarded honorable mention to each entry.
- The Grand Prize Winner was "Village of Horror", which was filled with scary props and came complete with sound effects.
- The 1st runner up was "Haunted Graveyard" in which the gravestones included Child Welfare programs that were cut when funding was scarce.

Tri-City Resources for the Holiday Season
(Fremont, Newark, and Union City)

Please call agencies directly for any updates.

**Tri-City Volunteers**
37350 Joseph St., Fremont 793-4583
- Holiday baskets available to Tri-City residents
- Eligibility: Low-income, must have ID, proof of residency (PG&E/phone bills), paycheck stub, or social security cards. Proof required for each member of family.

**Viola Blythe Community Service Center**
37365 Ash St., Newark 794-3437
- Regular hours: Mon., Wed., Fri. 12-4pm; Holiday hours: Nov. 1-Dec. 24 from 10-5pm
- Walk-Ins accepted but sign up is recommended.
- Eligibility: ID, proof of residency, children need birth certificates, SS#, medical cards, or immunization cards.

**LOV - League of Volunteers**
36120 Ruschin Dr., Newark 793-5683
- No-cost dinner available at the Newark Pavilion, 6430 Thornton Ave. on Thanksgiving Day from 12pm-3pm.
- All attendees will be given a voucher for groceries
- Transportation and food delivery is available.

**Salvation Army**
36700 Newark Blvd, Newark 793-6319
- Holiday food baskets available with advance registration.
- Eligibility: Photo ID, proof of Income and address required for all adults in a family. Children need to have birth certificates.

List provided by Fremont Family Resource Center (510-574-2000).
**Dumisha Jamaa Building Hope for Older Foster Youth**

The Dumisha Jamaa Project (Dumisha) was developed through a public/private collaboration between Family Builders by Adoption, based in Oakland and DCFS Permanent Youth Connection Program to address the permanency needs of youth who would otherwise leave foster care without permanent family connections.

With a combination of Federal and State funding, Dumisha maintains that every youth should leave foster care with a permanent family relationship that supports connections to the family of origin and that it is possible to develop such a relationship for each youth. The Program Director, Nancy McDonald, states that the phenomenal work of the Dumisha staff in building hope in older foster youth for a permanent, loving connection with an adult is extremely powerful. She reported that youth truly transform and blossom when they believe that they will have a sense of belonging in a family setting.

In the past year, Dumisha have also participated in several specialized recruitment efforts to locate potential families for foster youth. For example, the California Kids Connection is an Internet website which profiles youth available for adoption. Many other efforts are underway to create permanency for Dumisha foster youth and there is enormous commitment to continue this pursuit over the next three years.

For more information about The Dumisha Jamaa Project, please contact Nancy McDonald at 510-272-0204 or Permanent Youth Connections Program Manager Robin Luckett at (510) 268-4298 or lucker@acgov.org.

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**Annual DCFS Staff Appreciation Picnic**

On October 2nd the Department of Children and Family Services held its annual staff appreciation picnic at the San Leandro Marina. As a way of thanking the staff, the DCFS management hosts a picnic every year where all members of the department share a delicious luncheon and enjoy an afternoon of relaxation and bonding.

That Tuesday was a day made for picnicking- a warm day made cool every now and then by the slight sea breeze. The theme was Fiesta and the staff were treated to a variety of delicious Mexican food such as tacos, quesadillas, tortas, veggie fajitas, salsa, condiments and a table full of tempting desserts of different shapes and colors. A fiesta is not a fiesta without a piñata. Two piñatas filled with candy and movie passes were hoisted up in a tree by a Program Manager. It was an exciting game where the player and those watching could all win prizes. And winners there were!
Guess Who’s Clowning Around?

Did you know that our very own Peggy Kirkpatrick has been leading a double life? She has worked as a Clerk II, Specialist Clerk I and Specialist Clerk II for DCFS for some 17 years. And many also know her as Cuddles, the Clown!

Yes, that’s right, Peggy is an experienced and trained clown who has provided joy and laughter at shelters, employee picnics, Juvenile Hall, convalescent homes, and new this year, Cuddles led the Eden YMCA Early Learning Center Halloween Parade in the Eden Area MultiServices Center.

Peggy was introduced to clowning by a church member who at 98 years old decided to give Peggy her collection of Marionettes. Soon thereafter, Peggy attended a seminar on clowning and added hand puppets to the collection. Recently she has also added her motorized scooter to help her distribute candy.

Peggy attributes much of her clowning around to her church that runs a Mission Ministries for second hand clothing where some of Peggy’s costumes have been found and also runs a program that gives food to the needy.

Peggy is currently contemplating retirement. Until then, we look forward to seeing more of Cuddles.
Consider DCFS for Year-End Donations and Holiday Volunteer Opportunities

There are many ways you can help children, youth, and families during the holiday season:

**Make a tax-deductible donation:** Contact Robin Luckett - (510) 268-4298 or lucker@acgov.org
100% of your donation will go directly to providing gift cards to older foster youth during the holiday season. DCFS will provide a letter of thanks acknowledging your tax-deductible donation.

**Donate New Gifts:** Contact Rita Hayes - (510) 670-9764 or rhayes@acgov.org
All younger foster youth receive gifts from our annual toy store in December. Every donated gift is displayed at the store and given to caregivers for Alameda County foster children and youth.

**Adopt a Family:** Contact Rebecca Legaspi - (510) 780-8687 or legasra@acgov.org
You can adopt an entire family! DCFS will identify families in need of this help so that they can provide as much as possible for their children during the holidays.

**Volunteer:** Contact Katherine Richard - (510) 780-8987 or rich6k@acgov.org
We need your time & support during the holiday season. You can help drive gifts to our toy store or help setting up and cleaning up our toy store in December.

Seasons Greetings & Happy New Year