Shirley Eastman Fund Needs Your Help!

DCFS is beginning its annual holiday and campership fundraising drive. The Shirley Eastman Fund was created to provide holiday gifts for children and youth in foster care and funds for youth to attend summer camp.

All donations to the fund are tax deductible, and 100% of all donations are used directly to purchase a holiday gift card for teens, a gift for younger children, and send as many youth as possible to summer camp. Last year, we raised more than $12,000.00.

These funds made it possible to send over 55 youth to summer camp this year. The majority of these youth attended a one-week overnight camp at Camp Mendocino in Fort Bragg, CA. Through the diligent efforts of the Alameda County Faith Advisory Council, several youth were also able to attend a one-week overnight camp at The Oaks Camp in Lake Hughes, CA. UC Berkeley’s Cal Camp was also available to foster youth this summer, and several families assisted youth in attending this one-week overnight camp in Boulder Creek, CA.

Additionally, last holiday season, the Shirley Eastman Fund was used to purchase more than 900 holiday gift certificates for youth between the ages of 13 – 19, and over 1200 children between the ages of 0 -12 received toys for the holidays from the Fund. Our goal this year is to raise $20,000.00, and we need your help.

You can send tax-deductible donations to: Shirley Eastman Fund Attn: Ricardo Naval Children and Family Services PO Box 917 Oakland CA 94607

Be sure to include your name and address so we can send you a receipt for your donation. If you have any questions or fundraising ideas, please call Robin Luckett, Program Manager, at 510-268-4298.

Celebrating Family Reunification

The Concurrent Planning Division of the Department includes the Family Reunification program which has recently started several new efforts to try to reunify more families. On June 6, 2007 a Reunification Celebration was hosted at Preservation Park in Oakland. This was the first reunification celebration hosted by the Department and it showcased the hard work and accomplishments of families that successfully reunified through the Family Reunification program. A moving account of this accomplishment was given by a mother who described overcoming drug addiction to regain custody of her beautiful daughter. Her daughter was also in attendance. The reunification celebrations are worthy in themselves, but it is also hoped that overall they will, in time, help to increase parent engagement in the services offered by the Family Reunification program, offer support and encouragement to newly reunified families, and reduce the number of re-entries into out-of-home care. It is also a good moment to reflect on the hard work of family reunification staff to help parents succeed in this difficult process.
Dear Colleagues, Resource Families, and Community Partners:

This year’s annual Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner on May 18th was a huge success! It was a special evening with speakers, dancers and entertainers, and even gifts and awards for each of the county-licensed foster parents who attended. I’m so grateful for the tremendous support from the Faith Advisory Council in supporting this event.

The Faith Advisory Council supported Alameda County’s foster parents with over $3,300 in goods and services donated by the faith community and businesses, including photography services, gift cards, gift baskets, and free services for haircuts, shampoos and massages. Our partners in the faith community really supported our effort to have county licensed foster parents feel special and appreciated.

I would also like to announce that, effective July 1, 2007, we are officially a Title IVE Waiver County! The Title IVE Waiver provides us with the opportunity to spend our funds more flexibly and generate savings to be reinvested into our programs and services. Implementation has begun. You probably haven’t noticed any changes yet, and we will keep our staff and partners informed and involved throughout the five-year demonstration project.

Another exciting opportunity and partnership is in its early stages. Alameda County Social Services Agency and Fred Finch Youth Center are jointly exploring the feasibility of developing and operating Emancipation Village—a comprehensive range of housing and ILSP services for current and former foster youth to support their transition to independence and successful adulthood. Several opportunities for input will be available as partners explore the creation of a flourishing Emancipation Village. The goal is to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations by November 2007.

“Success is measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles they have overcome while trying to succeed.”

-Booker T. Washington

Carol Collins
Assistant Agency Director

CHDP
(Child Health & Disability Prevention)

An Important Preventive Health Care Program for children and youth of all ages in foster care

With back to school looming, here is a refresher about the CHDP program. This program is a free, preventive health care program that links eligible individuals with medical, dental and specialty providers. The program also maintains a network of medical providers who are certified to provide “well-child” exams for low to moderate-income children and youth (and children in foster care.) Children and youth in Foster Care are eligible for CHDP. CHDP services can prevent medical problems, identify medical conditions early, reduce the severity of disease and prevent disability and can establish a medical home. Thus, Child Welfare Workers (CWWs) are required by federal mandate to explain CHDP to foster/resource families, Foster Family Agency homes (FFAs), relative placements and an officially designated representative in a Group Home, Residential Treatment Center or other out-of-home care facility. Designated staff in the department inform caregivers of the importance and availability of CHDP within 30 days of the initial placement disposition, at the time of renewal of foster care eligibility, at change of placement and annually. In addition, Alameda County Public Health Nurses partner with CWWs to achieve this common goal of linking children and youth to preventative health care services. Together they share the message that CHDP is a valuable service.

For more information on CHDP, contact Allison Pulice, Alameda County Foster Care Supervisor at allison.pulice@acgov.org.

“DCFS Press Editorial Board

Connie Linas
Andrea Crutchfield
Fredi Juni

Pauline Keogh
Cerise Grice
Rebecca Legaspi

Please provide comments and feedback regarding DCFS Press to Connie Linas at linasc@acgov.org"
Kids and the Law

Did you know that…

Wearing a radio headset is prohibited while riding a bike…

Of the many ways young people get into trouble with the law, fighting is among the most common…

A criminal street gang is defined as a group of three or more individuals whose primary intent is to commit one or more specific criminal acts and whose members have been involved in a pattern of criminal gang activity…

It is against the law for an adult with sexual motives to seduce a child online or to arrange an in-person meeting with the child—even if the adult fails to show up…

California law prohibits pirating or downloading copyrighted material, such as music…

You can get more detailed information on youth and the law in the 2007 updated version of Kids and the Law: An A-Z Guide for Parents. Kids and the Law is an easy to read 16-page booklet that addresses a number of issues important to youth and parents.

DCFS Appreciates and Honors Resource Families at Annual Event

The Department celebrated National Foster Parent Awareness Month with our annual Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner held at the Oakland Airport Hilton. This annual event is an opportunity to celebrate and encourage our foster parents that work as our partners to promote safety, permanence and well being for the children, youth and families we serve.

The theme of this year’s stylish black-tie celebration was “Honoring Families, Communities & Partnerships”. Almost 200 Alameda County licensed Resource Families and their guests, Agency & Department staff and community partners enjoyed an evening of live entertainment, dinner and awards.

In her keynote speech, Lori Carr Johnson the Department Resource Family Recruiter, discussed the DCFS mission and reflected on her own experiences of having a family blended with biological and adoptive connections. She also gave us all a valuable reminder that love is what makes a family when she stated, "Family is NOT defined by our shared last name, similarities in appearance, the womb in which we were conceived…not even in whom we call mom and dad…we are a FAMILY because WE SAY SO".

This year's raffle prize give away was spectacular! Donations from Wal-Mart, Svenhard’s Bakery, The Jelly Belly Factory, Harrah’s Casino-Reno, Scott’s Seafood Restaurant, Napa Valley Wine Train and many other donations from concerned community partners were the highlight of the evening.

The Alameda County Faith Advisory Council provided hundreds of dollars in donations that were raffled away to lucky Resource Parents, including gift cards for each and every family present that evening. Every resource family walked away a WINNER!

The Alameda County Faith Advisory Council provided hundreds of dollars in donations that were raffled away to lucky Resource Parents, including gift cards for each and every family present that evening. Every resource family walked away a WINNER!

The planning for the 2008 Resource Family Appreciation Dinner has already started and we would love your assistance. For more information on how to contribute to this exciting event, please contact Katherine Richard, CARI Coordinator, at 780-8987.
Selected child welfare legislation enacted this year

Assembly Bill 2488 by Mark Leno, a San Francisco Democrat, was passed with 100% support of the Assembly and Senate in late 2006 and became law January 1st, 2007. The legislation reduces hurdles that limit when adopted siblings can petition to have names of related siblings released.

The bill allows an adoptee or sibling who is under 18 years of age, with the consent of the adoptee’s adoptive parent or the sibling’s legal parent or guardian, to file a written waiver of confidentiality for release of information to a sibling.

It also requires the Department or the adoption agency that joined in the adoption petition to release the names and addresses of siblings to one another if both siblings are 18 years of age and have filed a written request for contact with siblings, along with a waiver of rights for disclosure of their name and information to the sibling.

The bill also allows an adoptee or sibling who seeks contact with another sibling who has no waiver on file, to petition the court to appoint a confidential intermediary, whether DSS, the county welfare agency, the adoption agency, or an alternative, to access records of the adoptee and try to obtain the consent of the adoptee, the siblings, the adoptive parent or birth parent, if appropriate, to disclose their names for the purpose of reuniting siblings.

Senate Bill 1667, by Sheila Kuehl, a Los Angeles Democrat, was passed without any opposition in the Senate and the Assembly in late 2006, (effective January 2007). The bill allows any foster parent, relative caregiver, community care facility, foster family agency or Indian custodian, with physical custody of a child, to attend all juvenile dependency court post-permanency planning hearings for that child.

Up to now, attendance was only authorized for these caregivers for certain dependency review hearings. The bill also allows these caregivers to submit written information they deem to be relevant to the court.

To submit this information to the court, the Judicial Council Caregiver Information Form (JV -290) and instructions for filing must be provided to caregivers. The Department is in the process of setting up a process for providing these forms to all caregivers.

Assembly Bill 2985, by Bill Maze, a Southern California (Visalia area) Republican, requires a county child welfare department to request a credit report on a foster youth turning 16, and to refer that foster youth to a credit counseling organization upon any indication of a disclosure revealing negative items or evidence of identity theft.

The bill deals with the problem of identity theft in which foster youth are victims. Biological parents of foster youth, and in some cases foster parents, have in some cases exploited knowledge of a foster youth’s social security number and other personal information for financial gain.

Foster youth who are victims of identity theft find increased difficulty in obtaining housing and accessing other financial services, once they are emancipated. An estimated 6,000-7,000 foster youth turn 16 years old each year.

The Foster Care Ombudsperson

The Ombudsperson is there to listen and will provide information, answer questions, refer the caller to the appropriate staff members and, as necessary, conduct thorough and independent reviews of complaints regarding Agency practice and policies.

The office of the Ombudsperson does not give legal advice or have the authority to overturn court decisions or make recommendations to the court.

Alameda County’s Ombudsperson is Suzanne Featherstone. She can be reached at (510) 268-2365.

The Bay Area Heart Gallery

The Bay Area Heart Gallery is currently under construction! Plans are underway for the 2007-2008 exhibit to open in November 2007 in Alameda County. Please look for announcements regarding this year’s upcoming venues.

New photographs will feature children, youth and families to inspire and educate our community about the needs for families and lifelong, permanent relationships for children and youth in foster care.
Adoption Program Updates

Alameda County's 8th Annual Adoption Day
November 17, 2007 is the 8th Annual Adoption Day on Saturday. This special event is held each November on the Saturday before Thanksgiving and coincides with National Adoption Day. It is a major activity of National Adoption and Permanency Month. Large adoption finalizations and celebratory events are held across the country on this day, in order to bring public awareness to the needs for permanency of children living in foster care. At the last 7 Alameda County Adoption Day events, 379 families have finalized adoptions of 513 Alameda County children.

Planning for Alameda County’s upcoming Adoption Day is now underway. Staff volunteers are critical to the success of this annual celebration! Please save the date! E-mail announcements regarding Adoption Day planning and call for volunteers will be coming out in September.

Special June Adoption Calendar
In addition to the Department’s Annual Adoption Day, for the past four years Alameda County Juvenile Court has collaborated with the Department in convening a Special June Adoption Calendar. This event does not include the celebratory activities of our Annual Adoption Day, but is an effective effort to complete adoptions and support timely exits from foster care. This year, on June 29, 2007, 22 families finalized the adoptions of 27 children. Over the past four years, as a result of these Special Calendars, 103 families have completed the adoptions of 135 Alameda County children.

Expanded Weekly Adoption Calendaring in Juvenile Court
In 2002, as part of Departmental efforts to streamline the agency adoption process, the Department of Children and Family Services worked with Alameda County Juvenile Court to develop a weekly adoption calendar on Friday afternoons in one courtroom, Department 132. Prior to that, adoptions were heard in Alameda County Superior Court instead of Juvenile Court. Beginning soon, there will be two Juvenile Court Departments in North County and one in South County finalizing adoptions on Friday afternoons. More detailed information about this process will be shared with staff prior to implementation.

SEED Consultation Project

In 2002, the Department partnered with Children’s Hospital’s Center for the Vulnerable Child (CVC), to create an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project, called Services to Enhance Early Development (SEED) Consultation Project. This project serves to increase the awareness, knowledge, and skills of Child Welfare Workers and other key decision-makers (judges, attorneys, and police) about the mental health and developmental needs of children under five.

Experienced early childhood mental health specialists staff this project. Over the past 5 years, the project has expanded its services and has become an integral part of system change and our Family to Family Initiative. The work of the consultants includes:

- Provision of ongoing group consultation to a variety of Child Welfare Units in the Department. Consultants are also available to these staff for individual clinical consultation and follow up.
- In the project’s second year, training expanded to include Bench Officers, police and public defenders. A consultant now meets monthly with Public Defenders.
- In 2005, Project staff were invited to attend Team Decision Making Meetings (TDMs) held for children 3 and under, where crucial decisions about placement and services are made. Consultants are on-call weekly, and participate regularly in the majority of TDMs held for young children, serving as a community partner, providing resource information and clinical insights and expertise.
- In 2006, a Consultant began providing weekly consultation to the Department’s Parent Advocate Program. The Consultant guides and supports the Parent Advocates in their complex roles, to increase their knowledge of early childhood development and mental health.

The SEED Consultation Project continues to build long term relationships within the Department, developing credibility and trust. This project increases integration of early childhood mental health into the policies and practices of the agency.
This is a story about a teenager who is under the care of a child welfare worker in the Group Homes Family Preservation Program of the Department of Children and Family Services. The program's social workers provide intensive, permanency focused services to youth who are placed in group homes and residential treatment centers. The program's goals are to connect or reconnect youth with their family and extended family and to establish relationships that will provide support to assist the youth in placement, help them navigate the transition to adulthood and remain a life-long, committed presence.

Sixteen year old Tori was removed from her mother at the age of eleven and placed, along with one of her sisters, with an aunt who became their legal guardian. Tori lived with her aunt for several years until her behavior became too difficult to manage. After being discharged from a hospital psychiatric hold, it was determined that the adolescent needed treatment and formal structure and she was placed in a series of group homes. Unfortunately, Tori's behavior became even more problematic. She ran away from placement and engaged in high-risk behavior.

The Department’s Family Preservation worker contacted family members about Tori’s absence, and they provided an address where she had recently been seen. The worker drove there and spoke to Tori and the woman who had befriended her. Tori said she would not leave and wanted this woman to become her caregiver. After a lengthy conversation, the worker arranged to start the home approval process. But, before it could be completed, the intended caregiver telephoned and reported that Tori had gotten into an altercation with her son and had left. Before long, the worker received another phone call, this time from one of Tori’s cousins, who stated that she was staying there and she was willing to keep her as long as she did what she was supposed to do. After speaking with Tori and hearing that she wished to stay, the worker began the relative approval process again, this time for the cousin. A few days later, the cousin called to report that Tori had left the house to stay overnight with her 24 year-old boyfriend, despite the cousin’s objections.

This placement option was yet another lost opportunity as the cousin felt she could not care for Tori after all.

Several months passed without word from Tori or anyone who knew her. Then one evening Tori was brought into protective custody by the Oakland police who found her living in a car with her boyfriend. She called her worker and asked for help. The worker met with her and spent several hours listening to her story and talking to her about her options. She explained why she would not go back to a group home and the worker asked her if she knew of anyone else who might take her in, acknowledging past difficulties with two relative caregivers. Tori thought long and hard and began to talk about another cousin who lived outside Alameda County. After a telephone conference with her cousin, it was agreed that Tori would live with her pending a home approval.

Tori moved in with her cousin and in only a few months had made some significant improvements. After years of engaging in self-destructive behaviors she has begun setting substantial goals for herself, and is acting on these with enthusiasm. Her grades are very good and she has begun attending the Independent Living Skills Program in the local community college. She is looking forward to taking a drama class there to pursue her life-long dream of becoming an actress. She has also set her sights on attending a well-known modeling and drama school and hopes to obtain a scholarship.

Tori’s cousin has been an exceptionally fair and firm parent figure, encouraging her and giving her guidance. She immediately enrolled Tori in the best educational program for her in the area. She has also helped her feel a part of the family and the community. Although there are no guarantees, and there will undoubtedly be many challenges ahead, Tori has begun to develop her obvious potential. She has been through a lot of painful experiences in her sixteen years of life, but has made the courageous decision to learn from them and move forward with hope and determination.

(Name changed to protect identity)
The Child Abuse Prevention Council of Alameda County is dedicated to coordinating our community’s efforts to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect and to promote the physical and emotional health of children and families in Alameda County.

To carry out its mission, Alameda County Child Abuse Prevention Council has these goals:

1. To provide a forum for interagency cooperation and coordination in protection, prevention, detection, treatment, and legal processing of child abuse cases.

2. To promote public awareness of the abuse and neglect of children and the resources available for intervention and treatment.

3. To encourage and facilitate training of professionals in the detection, treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

4. To recommend improvement in services to families and victims.

5. To encourage and facilitate community support for child abuse programs.

The Council offers monthly clinical training at no cost to members with free Continuing Education Units. For more information about the clinical trainings or the Child Abuse Prevention Council call (510) 780-8989 or go to www.accapc.com.

Did you know that you can earn a FREE computer and FREE driving lessons?

TEENS: It’s that time of year to sign up for Independent Living Skills Program services!

ILSP can offer you these activities and more…

1. Pre-emancipation Life Skills Classes: Weekly life skills and emancipation planning classes covering education and employment, communication skills, health care, rights and responsibilities, financial literacy, and more.

2. Project H.O.P.E.: Helps current and former foster youth transition into successful adulthood by preventing homelessness and incarceration and by providing employment and educational opportunities.

3. Teen Health Center: Provides routine medical evaluations, health education services and referrals for mental health services to current and former foster youth and youth on probation, ages 16-21.


5. Scholarship Application Assistance: Workshops and individual assistance in researching and applying for scholarships at all levels of higher education.

6. California Youth Connection: Leadership training and opportunities, including legislative advocacy for current and former foster youth.

7. After Care Assistance: Individual assessments and case management for emancipated youth.

8. Nutritional Food Program: During ILSP office hours, nutritional snacks, including sandwiches, milk, and fruit, are available for students to prepare in the ILSP kitchen.


10. ILSP Graduation: Grand celebration of the students’ achievements as they transition to college, vocational training, and the world of work.
The Positive Place for Kids

Now in its 66th year, Boys & Girls Clubs of Oakland continues to provide local youth, ages 6-17, with fun and effective youth development programs in the areas of

Character & Leadership Development
Education & Career Development
Health & Life Skills
The Arts
Sports, Fitness & Recreation

The Club offers
A safe environment
Caring professional adult staff
Homework assistance and tutoring
After-school and summer programming
Indoor and outdoor activities
Awards and scholarships

Visit www.bgcoakland.org or call 510-444-8211 for Club information.

Alameda County
Social Services Agency
Department of Children and Family Services
L001
P.O. Box 917
Oakland, CA 94604

Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP)
2647 International Blvd. #312
Oakland CA, 94601
(510) 434-3333
www.alamedacountyilsp.org
(for full calendar)

ILSP Event Calendar Highlights
Aug. 11 North County Orientation 10am-2pm Mid Town Conference Center
Aug. 17 Make up Orientation ILSP Office 5pm-6:30pm
Aug. 18 South County Orientation ILSP Office 5pm-6:30pm
Aug. 24 Make up Orientation ILSP Office 5pm-6:30pm
Sept. 4 Classes Begin