



All Saints Church Foster Care Project Newsletter



December 2015

FOSTER CARE PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

- Gail Bardin
- Jay Belloli
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- Nancy Dannevik
- Patrice Gibson
- Rosemary Hyde
- Laurel Lambert
- Celina Lew
- Jeanette Mann
- Kim Miles
- Anne Riffenburgh
- Nicole Rodger
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- Melanie Williams
- Pamela Wilson
- Anne Wolf
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Foster Kids are our Kids! FCP, ITS COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND DCFS OPEN NEW FAMILY CONNECT SITE



Cutting the ribbon to the four-room visitation site. Front: Pastor Sandra Olewine, U.S. Rep. Judy Chu, Muzeyyen Balaban, and Vice Mayor Gene Masuda Back row: Rev. Ed Bacon, Gail Bardin, and Supervisor Michael Antonovich.

On October 14, FCP celebrated the opening of its new Family Connect Pasadena visitation site at the First United Methodist Church in Pasadena (FUMC).

The project is a unique collaboration between FCP, FUMC, Learning Works High School and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Since 2013, Family Connect Pasadena has recruited and trained volunteers to monitor court-ordered visits between children and their parents, as part of DCFS's effort to reunite families separated due to neglect or abuse. The new visitation site celebration was held in FUMC's enclosed patio, which was decorated by parishioners and DCFS to reflect the joy of the occasion.

Providing remarks to an audience of 80 people were Reverend Sandra Olewine, First United Methodist Church; Reverend Edwin Bacon, All Saints Church; Gene Masuda, Vice Mayor of Pasadena; Michael D. Antonovich, Los Angeles County Fifth District Supervisor; Congresswoman Judy Chu; and Muzeyyen Balaban, DCFS Pasadena Regional Administrator. In addition, Virginia Stringer, a monitor, related her experiences monitoring a little girl and her mom, and Monique



Gail Bardin addresses attendees



U.S. Rep Judy Chu

Mission Statement

All Saints Church Foster Care Project provides community education, public policy/advocacy and direct services for children and youth who have been removed from the care of their parents to the supervision of the state. The Project recruits and sustains volunteers who serve in public and private agencies or work on special projects designed to enhance the lives of foster, homeless, transitional and incarcerated children and youth.

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Vallejo, a Family Connect parent, shared her moving story of hope and healing.

Family Connect Pasadena Program Director Gail Bardin moderated the event. "Each speaker spoke from the heart offering his or her perspective on the importance of this project. Everyone stressed a strong commitment to the reunification of the families," said Gail. "It was a very moving experience."

Those attending the event to show their support for the project and for family reunification also included Armine Sargsyan, State Senator Carol Liu's representative; Margo Morales, field representative for Pasadena Council Member Margaret McAustin; Pam Thyret, field representative of Pasadena Council Member Andy Wilson; Theresa Lamb Simpson, representative for congressman Adam Schiff; former assemblyman Anthony Portantino; and Don Sevedes on behalf of Philip Browning, director of DCFS.

The highlight of the event came after the ribbon was cut by Pastor Sandra Olewine, when the audience was allowed to see the rooms for the families. "Family Connect started in a small room at DCFS," explained Gail. "This time, the visitation site included four large, sunny rooms with lots of toys, color and warmth, creating a safe, private family setting. When visitors entered this new site, you could hear audible oohs and ahhs."



L.A. County Supervisor Michael Antonovich presents citations to First United Methodist Church Pastor Sandra Olewine and All Saints Church Rector Ed Bacon.

Currently, Family Connect Pasadena has 15 trained monitors who help ensure that children and their parents have the opportunity to spend meaningful time with each other in ways that strengthen the bonds between them and support the reunification process. The project is growing very fast with new sites on the horizon. More monitors are urgently needed and the next training is scheduled to start February 19. Anyone interested in participating in this worthwhile project should contact: inbox@fostercareproject.org

FCP HELPS A YOUNG MAN SETTLE INTO COLLEGE LIFE

A new apartment -- with nothing in it. This is what Damien, a 22--year-old homeless youth from My Friends Place (MFP), encountered when he opened the door to his living situation for the first time. But thanks to five FCP volunteers, who became involved through MFP's "Home Helpers," things quickly improved. Damien came to California in hopes of living with his mother, but, when that didn't work out he turned to help at MFP. Damien is now comfortable and settled, with towels, linens, cooking equipment, microwave and more. He is a busy student at LACC, taking 13 units.

"Many of us remember the joy and sense of independence 'our first place' generated and we wanted Damien to experience these feelings," explained Nancy Dannevik, who spearheaded the effort for FCP.

Damien is appreciative of the effort: "I would like to share my gratitude with tremendous thanks to everyone at the Foster Care Project group for their invaluable donation of items that have since been and will be used every day for a very long time. Thank you again for this blessing and gift."



Items are stacked and ready to go to Damien's new place

FCP AND CHILD S.H.A.R.E. HOST INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON THE FOSTER/ADOPT PROCESS



Megan Harris from ChildS.H.A.R.E., Beth Gertmenian and Nancy Dannevik at FCP's lawn table.



Attendees discuss the issues of fostering and adopting children in Los Angeles County



Jason and Isaura Capell listen intently to presentation



Steve Hurley and adopted son, Josh, shared their experiences.

“Orphan Sunday” was established in Zambia during the early days of the AIDS epidemic to call attention to the great number of children orphaned by the disease. All Saints Foster Care Project and its partnering agency, Child S.H.A.R.E., celebrated Orphan Sunday, November 8, with a reception for families seeking information about the foster/adopt process. Child S.H.A.R.E. is an independent organization that finds and supports foster and adoptive families. At the afternoon event, Megan Harris, Child S.H.A.R.E., presented a brief program in the Guild Room to explain the overall process, answering questions and helping prospective parents take the first steps toward becoming foster/adopt resource families.

FCP first contacted Child S.H.A.R.E. when members of the Steering Committee were researching for and preparing a package of information about what is involved in becoming a foster/adopt parent. FCP's Rosemary Hyde, who helped prepare the package of materials and hosted Orphan Sunday, noted that Child SHARE offers helpful -- and often necessary -- assistance through a difficult and sometimes confusing process. In addition, they continue to offer support for parents of foster or adoptive families, even after permanent placement has occurred.

Also at the gathering was All Saints Church member Steve Hurley, with his two adopted sons. Together, they provided lively and interesting insights into the struggles, emotions and rewards of being an adoptive family.

This is the second meeting that FCP has hosted for prospective foster/adopt parents. In May, Five Acres and Raise a Child talked about their services. They will return to conduct another session at ASC on May 22, 2016.

Rosemary explained that FCP wants to make these information programs a continuing process. “What we see from these sessions is that there are many, many people who are committed to becoming foster/adopt parents and we want to help them in any way possible.”

Thanksgiving

*Making Thanksgiving
Brighter: FCP provided 30
Thanksgiving dinners to
needy foster families in the
Pasadena area.*

Partnering Agencies

Aspire West, Pasadena
California Youth Connection
CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)
Child S.H.A.R.E.
COLORS
County of Los Angeles
Department of Children and Family Services
County of Los Angeles Probation Department
First United Methodist Church
Five Acres
Friends of Foster Children
Hathaway-Sycamores
Hillsides
Hillsides YMO
Holy Family Services Adoption and Foster Care
Kidsave Los Angeles Weekend Miracles
Learning Works Charter School
Maryvale
My Friend's Place
Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services
Pasadena Well Being and Economic Prosperity
Pasadena YouthBuild
Public Counsel Law Center
Raise-A-Child, US
Rosemary Children's Services
STARS at PCC
The Alliance for Children's Rights
Violence Intervention Program
Vista Del Mar Child and Foster Care Program
Young and Healthy

All Saints Church

**Foster
Care
Project**

Join Us!

For information about FCP and to learn what Volunteer Opportunities are available, visit our website:
www.fostercareproject.org
or email
inbox@fostercareproject.org

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Jeanette Mann, FCP Public Policy and Community Relations Chair

2105 was a successful year for FCP's legislative advocacy. Nine of the sixteen bills supported were signed into law by Governor Brown. Attention was focused on five public policy issues: 1) the over and inappropriate use of psychotropic drugs for foster children and youth; 2) the funding of programs to provide additional support for foster youth in community colleges; 3) solitary confinement of minors; 4) the inadequacies of the Maximum Family Grant rule in California, and 5) the effects on foster children and youth on the elimination of categorical funding for services in local schools;

After a series of very negative stories in newspapers across the state depicting the over and inappropriate use on psychotropic drugs to the control of behavior of foster children and youth, several major bills regulating their use were introduced into the state legislature. FCP supported three of them: SB 319 (Beal) authorizes public health nurses to access psychotropic prescription information and grants them the authority to monitor thousands of foster youth medicated with these drugs; SB 238 (Mitchell) establishes standards for training, data reporting as well as systems to identify risky practices and alert counties to address these issues, and SB 484 (Beall) establishes new standards and reporting requirements for the administration of psychotropic drugs by group homes. All three were signed into law.

The FCP Public Policy Committee is pleased that the legislature funded a \$15 million grant to the California Community College's Chancellor's Office for 10 colleges to provide support for current and former foster youth and was



particularly gratified that Pasadena City College is one of the ten colleges. At PCC, where there are 163 current and former foster youth, the funds will be used for counseling, for monitoring student progress, and to pay for books, meal tickets, transportation, caps and gowns, housing, and child care services.

It is hoped that Senator Mark Leno and Senator Holly Mitchell will continue SB 124 (Juveniles: solitary confinement) and (SB 23, CalWORKs: eligibility) respectively as two-year bills. SB 124 would prohibit solitary confinement of minors. SB 23 would repeal the Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule which denies financial assistance to any child born into a household that is receiving CalWORKs.

"We have established excellent relations with our federal, state, and local elected officials and invite anybody interested in child welfare public policy to work with us to improve the lives of children and youth in foster care," said Jeanette Mann, chair, Public Policy Committee.