

Foster Families



A NEWSLETTER
FROM
CHILDREN
& FAMILY
SERVICES

Family to Family minimizes the pain

By Bob Cuddy

Meet Vincent and Sonia Manuel

When the county comes to take a child out of his or her home and place them in foster care, the youngster's trauma level is high. Something disturbing has taken place in the home to trigger the removal. For many of these kids, things only get worse as the youngster ends up in a strange house far away from his support system.

Sometimes he or she is moved to another town, even out of the county. Everything that comforted him, it seems, is gone: family, friends, church, school, even something so small but familiar as just the vacant lot down the road that she passed on her way to school or the corner store where he stopped for a soft drink.

Contra Costa County's fledgling Family to Family foster care program aims to take some of the sting out of this process for the child, by

keeping him or her in the same community, with at least a few of the same support systems intact.

"The focus of the program is to keep the kids in the community where they are coming from; to keep the disruption as minimal as possible," says Vincent Manuel of Antioch. As it is now, Manuel says, "a kid from Antioch could end up in Richmond."

Manuel and his wife, Sonia, have applied to be among the first foster parents in the new program. They are 14-year residents of Antioch, where their foster child will come from. Sonia teaches Middle School there, and Vincent is Chief of Staff to Contra Costa County Supervisor Federal Glover, working in local government administration.

Both are eager to take in the children. "We have the space, and we have the love," says Vincent.

Each is coming at it from a different background. Sonia came from a large family, and misses it.

Vincent was an only child, and is looking to expand.

The pair have two children, Patrick, 11, a fifth-grader and Nena, 7, in the first grade. Are the children apprehensive about their soon-to-be new siblings? No, say Mom and Dad.

continued on page 15



Message to our Foster Parents



Danna Fabella,
Director
Children &
Family
Services

WHY FAMILY TO FAMILY?

Many of you may already be aware that the Children & Family Services Bureau held a summit in 2001 that both staff and community members attended. The goal of that summit was to take a critical look at the Child Welfare Services in our County and make recommendations for improvement. Several themes emerged during this three-day event. One of the areas needing improvement was our relationship with those communities that receive Child Welfare Services. Another was the need for homes for our Contra Costa foster children so they could

continued on page 15

Danna's Holiday Tea

Danna's Holiday Tea will be held this year on December 17th, from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. at 2530 Arnold Dr., 2nd floor, Diablo Room, Martinez.

Feel free to wear your hat and gloves!

Team Decision Making (TDM)

By Janet Theobald

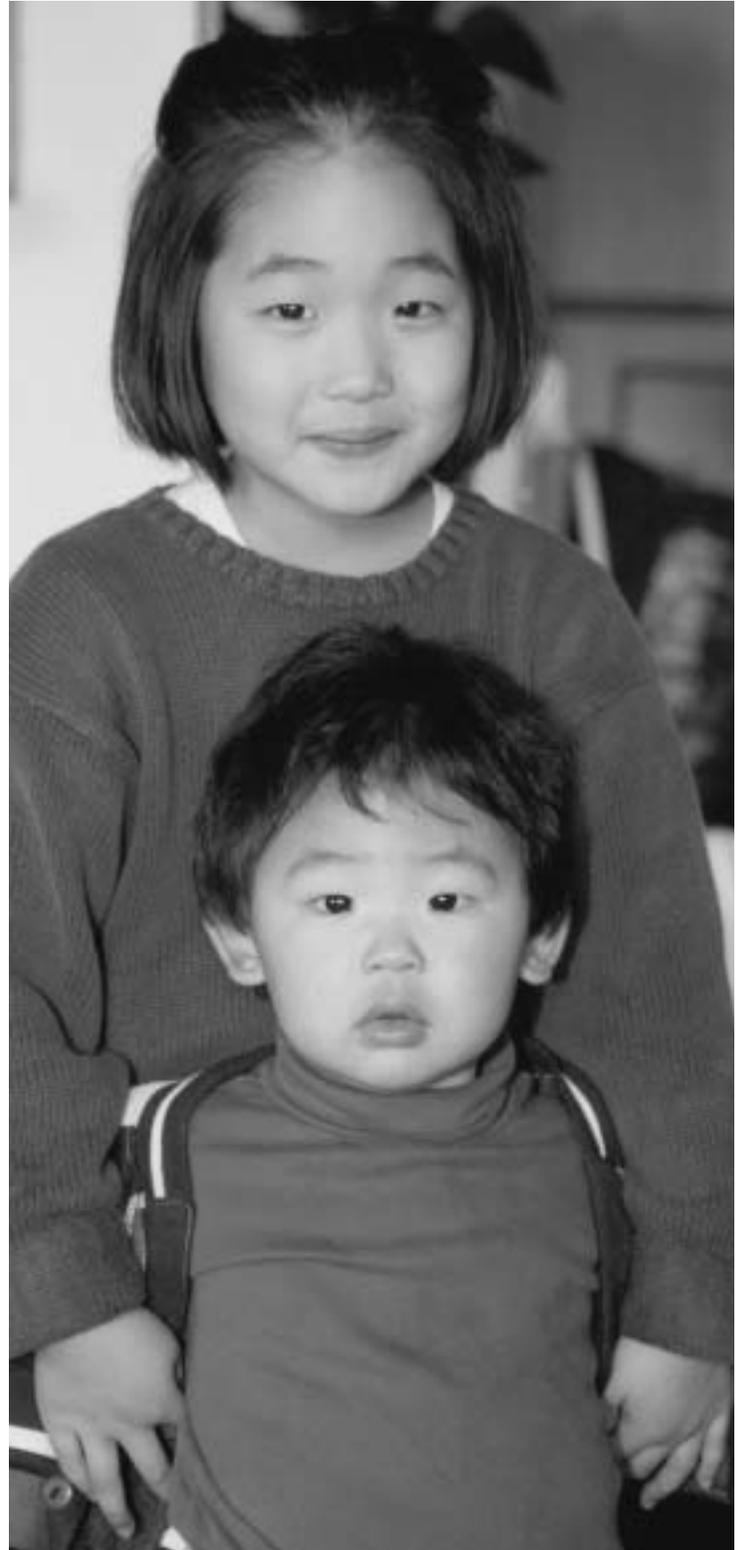
I would like to welcome you to a Team Decision Making meeting, my name is Janet Theobald and I will be facilitating the meeting today. This is generally the opening remark to get the meeting started. Team Decision Making came about from the desire to bring the family and the community into the decision making process for children who either have or may be placed in out-of-home care. The plan is to identify the strengths and the needs of the family as well as the resources within the community that may be able to assist the family and keep the children safe. If the children can not safely remain in the home, then the hope is to keep the children within their community so that they have as little disruption in their lives as possible.

The facilitator for Team Decision Making is responsible for keeping the groups' energy focused on the common task of reaching a decision about the placement for the child that will provide safety in the least restrictive manner possible. The facilitator is to assure that the purpose of the meeting is understood and that all participants have an opportunity to be involved. A safe, supportive environment is very important in a meeting so it is the facilitator's job to protect ideas and individuals from attack or being ignored. The facilitator for Team Decision Making meetings is to assure that the situation is thoroughly examined, risks are stated, family strengths are recognized, goals are verbalized, ideas are brainstormed and quality decisions are made with safety and action plans developed. The goal of the process is to reach a consensus decision with all participants. The consensus does not mean that everyone is in total agreement on all issues but that everyone can at least support the decision that is made. The facilitator is responsible for recording all information and decisions.

The facilitator is responsible for inviting the community members to the meeting. Foster parents will be invited as the need arises. At present the meetings are focused on the initial removal or possible removal of a child. As the program is expanded, the plan is to bring all placement changes to the Team Decision-Making process. Foster parents will be an important part of the team when decisions are being made about children that have been in their care. At this time, one foster parent attended a meeting as a neighbor and support person for the mother of a child.

My personal experience in the TDM meetings have been very positive. The majority of the families do get the support they need. It is empowering to have community members there that are willing to immediately become involved with the family or at least give them some guidance. For example, one young father stated that he felt much better at the end of the meeting even though we were going forward with the court process. He felt that he now had support from his family and from the community to work on the issues that he needed to take care of and

he would be able to complete a plan. My hope is that the process will continue to grow and that Children and Family Services will emerge from the negative image that has been prevalent in the community to a place of being part of a team of community members working toward a safe environment for all families. ■



Family to Family an empowering process

By Dorothy Powell, Team Decision Making Facilitator

Even before there was Team Decision Making (TDM), I felt that a system that respected the family and allowed them a voice was desirable. When TDM came along, I embraced it like a “long lost child.” When a family is asked by the Emergency Response Worker to participate in TDM, staffing it is done on a voluntary basis. The parents are asked to invite members of their family, friends, church members—in short, anyone they feel will be helpful as well as supportive. It has been interesting watching families enter the TDM room. The participants are asked to sit anywhere they like. Observing where people seat themselves (who sits next to whom) can be seen as part of the family’s dynamics. Some families enter the room with anxieties, some with fears and others not quite sure what they have volunteered for as a TDM participant. The TDM process starts by explaining that the meeting is conducted in a family-friendly environment utilizing the strengths of the family. I have observed people become more relaxed and open to the process because of this. The family is also made aware that the community participants in the staffing are there to provide

information as well as services that might assist in keeping the family together.

The community partners have played an integral role in helping the families during a TDM. They have been supportive and most cooperative when asked to participate. We have utilized the expertise of the Public Health Nurse, Domestic Violence and Educational and Housing Liaisons. Each of these disciplines has provided pertinent information to help the families with resources as well as tools to keep the families together if appropriate. The families are able to engage in dialogue with the service providers as well as set up appointments during the TDM. Other community partners that have played a significant role with TDM’s are Family Stress Center, Family Preservation, Mental Health Clinics, Child Care Council, Priority Male, Richmond Youth Works, Early Childhood Program, and Head Start.

At the beginning of the TDM the family is informed that the goal of the meeting is to provide the safest plan for the children. They are made aware of the seriousness of the situation pertaining to the referral. The family is aware that the plan might be to keep the child in the home with a Voluntary Family Maintenance Plan, or a plan that provides specific services, such as housing or information pertaining to medical care. After the services are provided the case might be closed. In some of the TDM Staffing the recommendation is for a petition to be filed and the children might be detained. The family can ask about possible relatives within which the child can be placed.

Questions are asked in this forum and the family has a voice around having the child maintained within the circle of family. The response from the ER worker, as well as other members of the team is to present information (not always in agreement with what the family would like) in a respectful, professional manner.

The TDM process has been rewarding to participate in and has the flavor of the African Proverb “IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD.” ■



Meet our Foster Parent Recruiters

My goal is to recruit loving families

By Renee George
East County Foster Parent Recruiter

I have been a foster parent for fourteen years. I had legal guardianship of two children for nine years prior to adopting them. I now have the pleasure of being a Family to Family Recruiter and feel that this is a good program that's going work. I've been involved with recruiting families for Family to Family Resource Homes. We have "coming out" events as a way to kick off the program in East County and to provide information to interested people. I also sit on the Implementation Team and Team Decision Making (TDM) for the development of Family to Family. I have attended training for Family to Family and work with foster parents throughout the community recruiting new Resource Homes.

It has been a fun and exciting process to work with the Family to Family trainers as well as getting to know county workers. It is my hope that everyone will take the time to attend some of these events and see the successes that Family to Family is creating for the welfare of our children.

As a Family to Family recruiter, my goals are to recruit families that are warm, loving, and have an understanding of the benefits for children and families when children remain in their own community. ■

I'm part of the process

By Maria Wisniewski
East County Foster Parent Recruiter

My husband and I have been foster parents in Contra Costa County for twenty-four years. As the Family to Family recruiter in Central County, my goal is to share with people the need for dedicated foster parents. I talk to them about the unique challenges they may encounter and the positive differences they can make when they open their homes and hearts to these precious children and their families. I'm excited about being a part of this process and look forward to working with the wonderful people I will meet. ■



Three of our Foster Parent recruiters: xxxxxxxxxxxx, xxxxxxxx, xxxxxx
xxxx,x,xx xx

A Fish in Water

Ethel Brotten
West County Foster Parent Recruiter

As the West County Family to Family recruiter, I find myself in a role that proves to be exciting, challenging, and stimulating. With weekly meetings, telephone calls, and person-to-person contacts there is actually never a dull moment. I find it ironic that now, after over 16 years of fostering, I have been chosen to recruit in the area of the county where my fostering began—West

County—in a position I truly believe in and a cause I wholeheartedly embrace. Excited? Yes, you bet I am. This position truly makes me "a fish in water."

Being one who is never at a loss for words, I am always actively on the recruiting trail. Don't believe me? Well, ask anyone who has stopped me to chitchat or to just say hello. To me, that's where the challenge begins! You see, I think, talk and walk foster care, and anyone within the sound of my voice quickly gets that message.

My experience working with youngsters of different ethnicities and ages, who come from different parts of the county and various backgrounds have more than solidified my belief in the Family to Family concept. It is hard for me to understand how our society can ask or expect youngsters experiencing various forms of abuse and ultimate separation from parents, families, and familiar surroundings, to be accepting of the sudden changes that occur so quickly in their lives. Why are we then, the adults, asking them to accept this thing called "change" when we ourselves sometimes have difficulty in accepting it.

My need to make a positive contribution to this society in which I live has lead me to become a foster parent. Wanting to change the world, to make it a better and safer place for our children to grow, to dream and to become all that they can someday is my driving force. To find loving and nurturing adults in our children's neighborhoods who will step up to the plate and help in this quest is the challenge I face. To work with and support those who will step up to meet this challenge is my goal. For, you see, I strongly believe that "If it is to be...it is truly up to me!" ■

Questions & Answers



Linda Canan,
Lead Division Manager,
Children's Services

Question: I am having trouble keeping straight what different kinds of foster parents there are, especially now that we have "resource" families. Can you give a brief description?

We do seem to be using a lot of new and different terms these days and it can be confusing, even to our staff. Over the years, we have developed different specialties in our caregiver community to address the needs of special groups of children.

The first specialty was developed in the mid-1970's. These were the **emergency contract homes**. Emergency foster families receive a small bed reservation rate to compensate for their willingness to carry a pager, be available for placement 24/7, and accept any child needing emergency placement within their age range. The emergency foster families are the backbone of our shelter system and we rely upon them to comfort and nurture children through the trauma of being separated from all that was previously familiar to them.

The second specialty, developed in the early 1980's, was the **Specialized Placement Program (SPP)**. This program started as the Specialized Teen Program but changed its name when it expanded to accept younger school-aged children. Foster parents in this program are trained and supported to take children who would otherwise be placed in group home settings. These families care for children and teens that are extremely difficult and have multiple behavioral and emotional problems. They stabilize these children and often "hang in there" with these children until they successfully emancipate.

The **Heritage Program** came into being next, designed to address the needs of the epidemic of drug exposed babies

flowing into the child welfare system. Heritage foster parents target the 0-3 year olds who were drug exposed. Specific training is provided and support services are also available.

In the 1990's, with the growing recognition that children absolutely need legal permanence with loving families as quickly as possible if they cannot return to their birth families, the concept of **Concurrent Families** was developed. The goal of this "program" was two-fold: first, to minimize the trauma a child experiences from multiple moves and, second, to streamline the bureaucracy for families who could both foster and adopt children. Concurrent families must be able to support reunification efforts while that is the legal goal. At the same time, they are committed to adopting the child should reunification fail, certainly a difficult emotional challenge.

In recent months, as we have moved into implementing Family to Family, the concept of resource families has emerged. For Family to Family purposes, **Resource Families** are families in the same neighborhoods where our children's birth families live. They must be able to embrace the child's birth family, in some ways as extended family members would, supporting their reunification efforts. Like concurrent families, however, they need to be able to adopt or provide lifelong permanency to the children if reunification fails. Feedback from various target communities around the country tells us that some communities have negative associations with the words "fostering" and "adoption." The term "resource family" is seen as a way of emphasizing the supportive role that foster and adoptive homes have in the out-of-home placement system.

In addition to all of the above, we continue to have a wealth of wonderful, generic foster families, caring for children day in and day out. The combination of all these options provides a rich array of options to best meet the needs of our children. Whether you are a specialist or a generic foster family, each of you has a unique and needed place in the system and we genuinely thank you for your contribution.

If you are interested in more information about any of the programs outlined in this article, please call your Homefinding Worker. She can either give you some specific information about these programs or connect you with the coordinator of the program. The phone number for the Homefinding Unit is (925) 335-7040. ■



Network of Care for Kids

www.contracosta.networkofcare.org/kids

This site provides comprehensive parenting information, connects users to local programs and needed services, tracks pending legislation that affects children and much more!

Options

FOR RECOVERY PROGRAM

as The Heritage Project at Contra Costa
County Children & Family Services

**Training!
Respite!
Support!**

The Options/Heritage Project is a program to address the needs of the drug or alcohol exposed babies and children, who are court dependents, and under 5 years of age.

Starting Soon
Fall 2003 Training
36 hours

Tuesdays in San Pablo at Contra Costa College
Sept. 9, Sept. 16, Sept. 23, Sept. 30, Oct. 7,
Oct. 14, Oct. 21, Oct. 28, Nov. 4, Nov. 11
9:00 a.m. to 12 noon
free with brunch and child care stipends
plus Nov. 18 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
with brunch and lunch!

– OR –

Wednesday nights at Pittsburg United Methodist Church
Sept. 10, Sept. 17, Sept. 24, Oct. 1, Oct. 8, Oct. 15,
Oct. 22, Oct. 29, Nov. 5, Nov. 12
6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
free with 5:30 p.m. dinner
and reserved child care at this location
plus Nov. 15, Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
with brunch and lunch!
153 West Leland Road, Pittsburg
through Los Medanos College

Curriculum by experts: Effects of Drugs and Alcohol on the Developing Fetus, Special Medical Needs & Resources, Neurological Influences on Behavior of Children, Attention Deficit Disorder, Attachment & Bonding, Physical Disabilities, Infant Massage, Comforting the Drug/Alcohol Exposed Child, Pediatric HIV, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Special Nutritional Needs, Building Self-Esteem, Self-Care for the Caregiver, Codependent vs Helping, and Addiction—Treatment—Relapse—Recovery—Panel of Birth Parents in Recovery.

Graduates include county licensed foster parents, approved relative caregivers, and prospective foster parents who will be applying for a county license!

Graduates receive respite!

Currently 38 hours per month by Family Support Services!

Monthly Heritage support group meetings with guest presenters!

3rd Wednesday morning in Pittsburg
4th Monday evening in Pinole
4th Tuesday afternoon in Hercules
Call COLLEEN SMITH for all information and registration
(925) 335-7037 or (925) 335-7039
smithc@cws.state.ca.us

ORIENTATION

ADOPTIONS/HOMEFINDING (925) 335-7040
RECRUITER (English and Spanish) (925) 335-7089

Applicants for a Foster Home License and Adoption are required to complete an orientation. Orientation meetings are held monthly at various locations.

Meetings for the months of September and October 2003 are as follows:

RICHMOND

Employment/Human Services Dept.
1275 Hall Ave. • (510) 231-8114
Monday, **September 8th**, 10-12 Noon
Monday, **October 6th**, 10-12 Noon

ANTIOCH

Employment/Human Services Dept.
4549 Delta Fair Blvd. • (925) 522-7400
Wednesday, **September 10th**, 10-12 Noon
Wednesday, **October 8th**, 10-12 Noon

WALNUT CREEK

Ygnacio Valley Library, rear meeting room
2661 Oak Grove Road • (925) 938-1481
Wednesday, **September 17th**, 7-9 p.m.
Wednesday, **October 15th**, 7-9 p.m.

ORIENTATION EN ESPAÑOL

Por favor llame al (925) 335-7089 para informacion.

We look forward to seeing you!



Recruitment—Training— Support



Lois Rutten,
Division Manger,
Children & Family Services

As Children & Family Services moves forward on its plan for Child Welfare Redesign, an important element to look at is Recruitment, Training and Support—the essential tools of foster care. The different types of recruitment are: general recruitment, which involves reaching mass audiences through media and public outreach programs, child specific recruitment that can include finding relatives or a close friend who will provide a foster home to a child or teen and, targeted recruitment. Targeted recruitment focuses on the specific kinds of children and teens in need of temporary and permanent homes in your community. We are currently targeting recruitment in our three identified target areas for Family to Family, or “resources” homes. These are foster homes that are more neighborhood based, culturally sensitive, and located primarily in the communities where the children live.

The Recruitment—Training—Support Implementation team meets every month to discuss recruitment strategies, setting specific goals and measurable steps for accomplishing recruitment objectives and activities to help make plans more concrete and achievable. The members of the team include Homefinding staff, foster care recruiters, the foster parent liaison, Foster Family Network representatives and district staff. We have a one-year general plan and discuss our outreach activities, any barriers to people who may be considering foster parenting, community events we want to participate in to recruit prospective foster parents. The team also brainstorms ideas about what works and what doesn't.

What does this mean to you? It means that “Recruitment is everybody's business!” Every chance we have, we can “plant the seed” or the idea that “yes—you can be a foster parent!” Providing a home for a child is a rewarding and fulfilling experience, there is joy in seeing a child develop, rise to challenges and grow to his or her potential. Tell your friends and neighbors about the many rewards, and yes, the many challenges. Know that you do make a difference in the life of a child, whether for one day or many years.

You can help us recruit by letting us know if you belong to an organization where we can make a presentation. You can help us recruit by working together as a team, with our foster parents and staff. You can help by just telling people that there are children that need them and would they be willing to open their hearts and homes and make a difference?

The Recruitment—Training—Support implementation team welcomes any and all ideas that you have. And we look forward to hearing from you!

FOSTER FAMILY NETWORK

A Lifeline of Love



Vicky Pierce,
Foster Parent Liaison

Foster parenting is unlike any other effort you may undertake in your life. The joys, rewards and difficulties are hard to comprehend or anticipate until you actually have foster children in your home. Regardless of whether you are a new or experienced foster parent you can be sure that you will encounter children who will challenge you in many ways.

Feeling lost in a sea of uncertainty does not have to occur. There is a lifeline for foster parents through the Foster Family Network. This wonderful organization is comprised of foster parents throughout the county. Each of these foster parents have laughed, cried and spent time together supporting each other in their love for children. Strong and enduring friendships have started at monthly potlucks, picnics or other events where foster parents socialize. Each meeting is a testament to love and caring as foster parents smile, coo and hold their children.

I recently asked Susan Gallegos, President, to share some information regarding the Foster Family Network on how it began and its goals for the future. I would like to thank Susan for her efforts and the following information.

Necessity is the Mother of Invention

By Susan Gallegos
President, Foster Family Network

There is a saying that “necessity is the mother of invention” and essentially this is how the Foster Family Network was launched. I want to share a little about the beginnings, how we have grown and what we hope to do in the future.

During classes at Diablo Valley College I built friendships with other foster parents and participated in numerous discussions. As a result of these discussions, I realized that Contra Costa County had no current foster parent association. Sara Monser (DVC Foster Care Education Coordinator at that time) approached me about starting a chapter of the California State Foster Parent Association in Contra Costa County. I met with the Northern Regional Vice-President for the California State Foster Parent Association, Inc. and received all the needed information to get started.

Mary Love and I initiated a meeting with Children & Family Services Director Danna Fabella and discussed issues and concerns about foster parenting and what the county needed in terms of cooperation and defining clear roles for the organization. We agreed that it would be important to develop a strong relationship between the county and the organization to best serve the needs of the children in our care.

In 1996, the Foster Family Network began as a chapter of the California State Foster Parent Association with approximately 11 members. Our goals were simple: 1) our foster children’s care comes first, 2) to inform foster parents of services and resources, 3) to educate foster parents, 4) network and support each other as foster parents and 5) to be inclusive of every foster parent in our diverse community.

In the beginning, we had Family Potlucks in Martinez and Richmond and concentrated on getting to know each other, discussing our concerns, problems and ideas for other activities. We even included the children and teens in the discussion and asked them to tell us what types of things they wanted to do at our gatherings. Because of their input, we regularly began to have crafts, games and kid-friendly activities during our potlucks. In the past two years, we have worked hard to bring the family potlucks to West, Central and East County. We are currently working on expanding the number of potlucks in Central and East County. Hilda Gonzalez has worked diligently to reach more people in East County, which has been underserved in the past. Our goal is to provide as many opportunities for foster families to support each other in every part of the county. Through the years, we have added more and more activities to our yearly calendar as well as rotating events in West, Central and East County. We rotate our summer picnic every year and this year (8th Annual) was held in West County at the Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline Park on July 19, 2003.

The Foster Family Network’s biggest undertaking is the Annual Holiday Event at Diablo Valley College. With collaboration from Loni Kawecki from Diablo Valley College and Patsy Sherman from Los Medanos College, we can provide a presenter, location and light refreshments for everyone. We usually have an educational presentation as well as Santa

making an appearance. The children are invited to go into “Santa’s Closet”, choose a toy on their own and talk with Santa. The Foster Family Network provides all the toys, decorations and raffle prizes. In the past three years of having our Holiday Event at DVC we have had over 200 people in attendance.

Three years ago, Nancy DeWeese, Foster Family Network Central County Vice-President, approached me about the idea of having a “Baby Shower” for emergency foster parents who take care of newborns and infants on a regular basis. This year we held our third Annual Baby Shower at Nancy DeWeese’s home and were bursting at the seams with babies and foster parents. We played baby games, had a wonderful brunch and were able to send foster parents home with new clothes, diaper bags, and a variety of baby necessities.



The Foster Family Network was instrumental in helping the Suitcases for Kids Program get started with a donation of \$500. This program provides suitcases for foster children so that they don’t have to rely on paper sacks or black garbage bags to carry their belongings.

Last year the Foster Family Network was able to provide backpacks with school supplies to over 65 children of FFN member foster parents. We called this program Back2School. We have distribution sites in East, Central and West County for Network families.

Why Join the Foster Family Network?

There are several benefits of belonging to the Foster Family Network. We have activities geared towards foster families, we can offer resource information, and we can put you in touch with foster parents living in or near your community. We also do a lot networking with each other in times of crisis. An example might be that you have a child needing hospitalization in an emergency and don’t know what to do about childcare for other foster children in the home. If you have met other foster parents, developed a relationship and feel comfortable calling them in times of need, you can ask for help, respite and even emotional support.

Foster Family Network hopes to provide other resources and programs to foster parents in Contra Costa County. The FFN is looking for a volunteer to help us set up a Web site with a listing of local support services

This year the FFN has conducted a Needs Assessment to determine what kinds of services foster parents need and what type of support they would like to see that is not readily available. We hope to develop future projects because of the information gathered. The data gathered has shown that foster parents are interested in having a health fair/conference specifically geared to foster parents and their children. Many foster parents also indicated that they would like to have an opportunity to learn leadership skills. To continue the Foster Family Network and face the challenge of budget cuts we need a strong foundation of leadership. This organization needs to have a continuous “pipeline” of willing individuals to keep a solid base of leadership for the future. The Foster Family Network is currently discussing the development of a Leadership Training Program for foster parents with Danna Fabella and Lois Rutten.

Through my efforts with the Foster Family Network, I have been able to enhance my education and leadership skills. Personally, the most rewarding part of my role has been to network with a very compassionate group of foster parents that ultimately do the important work of taking on the healing, nurturing and advocacy roles for our precious foster children.

The Foster Family Network has evolved into a valuable resource for foster families and if you are interested in participating in any of the events mentioned in this article, please call me. I look forward to getting to know as many of you as I can. **You can reach me at (510) 724-6942 home. (510) 691-9928 cell or SMGallegos@aol.com.**

Suitcases for Kids can be reached at (510) 758-KIDS or (510) 758-5437. ■

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

CONTRA COSTA COLLEGE

2600 Mission Bell Drive, San Pablo
For info call (510) 235-7800 x4252

FIRESIDE ROOM

Working with Difficult Teens/ Preparing Teens for ILSP

Thursday Mornings, 9:10 a.m.–noon
October 23, 30 and
November 6, 13, 20, & 24

Behavior Management and Positive Discipline

Tuesday Evenings, 6:40 p.m.–9:30 p.m.
September 16, 23, 30 and
October 7, 14, 21, 28 and
November 4, 11, 18

Family Night/Telling Our Stories

Wednesday Evenings 6:40 p.m.–9:30 p.m.
September 24, October 29 and
Saturday December 6

MUSIC BUILDING, ROOM M111

Expression through Music

Wednesday Evenings, 6:40 p.m.–8:30 p.m.
October 8, 22 and November 5, 12, 19,
and December 3

DIABLO VALLEY COLLEGE

For info call (925) 685-1230 x 2705
fax (925) 687-0472

TRAINING SITE: DIABLO VALLEY COLLEGE

Saturdays, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

9/6 **Working with Severely
Emotionally Disturbed
Youth Part I**

9/13 **Working with Severely
Emotionally Disturbed
Youth Part II**

11/1 **Working with the Severely
Emotionally Disturbed Child
Part I**

11/8 **Working with the Severely
Emotionally Disturbed
Child Part II**

Classes en Español

9/30 **La Crianza Practica de los Hijos**

10/28 **La Crianza Practica de los Hijos**

CPR/1st Aid

At Diablo Valley College
September 20th, 8:15 a.m.–4:15 p.m. or
November 1st, 8:15 a.m.–4:15 p.m.

TRAINING SITE: FAITH CHRISTIAN

FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

860 Bancroft Road, Walnut Creek

Wednesday Mornings, 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

9/3 **Pumping Up Deflated Caregivers**

9/10 **Be Prepared is More Than a
Scout's Motto**

9/17 **Activities for the Very
Active Child**

9/24 **Caregivers and the Courts**

10/1 **Humpty-Dumpty Kids: Effects of
Drug & Alcohol Exposure on
Infants and Children**

10/8 **Tricks in Treatment: Develop an
Action Plan for Your Attachment
Disorder Child**

10/15 **Invisible Scars: Challenges of
the Chronically Abused &
Neglected Child**

10/22 **Strategies for Unconventional
Problems: Challenges Presented
When Caring for the Severely
Disabled Child**

10/29 **Mad, Sad or Hurt: A Look at the
Health and Wellness Challenges
Faced by Foster Care Givers**

11/5 **Keep the Spark Alive While
Dealing with Difficult Children**

11/12 **Who Am I? Issues of the
Adopted Child**

11/19 **Coping with a Child's Coping
Mechanisms**

TRAINING SITE: 1465 ENEA CIRCLE,

CONTRA LOMA ROOM, CONCORD

Foster Parent Readiness Training for Team Decision Making

September 23rd, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. or
November 18th, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.



LOS MEDANOS COLLEGE

For info call (925) 798-3500 x 3328

TRAINING SITE: PITTSBURG UNITED

METHODIST CHURCH

153 West Leland Road

Tuesday Mornings, 9:30–12:30

8/26 **Taking a Look at the Court
System**

9/2 **Teaching Self Control**

9/9 **Navigating Through Special
Education**

9/16 **Dressing and Grooming Your
Foster Child on a Budget**

9/23 **Learning Disabilities—
What are the Red Flags**

9/30 **Planning a Safety Net for Your
Foster Youth after 18**

10/7 **Multiple and Emotional
Intelligences**

10/14 **Caring for Caregivers—Keeping
Marriage and Family Together**

10/21 **Allegations—
What to do if I get one**

10/28 **Resources—Where Can I Get
Help?**

11/4 **Looking at the Medications
Foster Youth May Take**

11/11 **School Assessments—
What Do They Mean?**

11/18 **Special Needs of the Preterm
Infant**

11/25 **Promoting Resiliency in Children**

Classes en Español

Monday Evenings 6:30–9:30 p.m.

La Crianza de los Hijos

September 8, October 13, November 17

TRAINING SITE: ILSP OFFICE

1875 Arnold Drive, Suite 200, Martinez

Tuesday Evenings, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

9/16 **ILSP—What is It and
How Can IT Help My Youth**

9/23 **How to Help Youth Emancipate**

9/30 **Helping Youth With Education
Issues**

10/7 **Dealing With Difficult Youth**

10/14 **Helping Prevent Teen Pregnancy**

10/21 **Working with Difficult Teens In
Positive Ways**

10/28 **Helping Youth Get Organized**

CPR & First Aid for Foster Parents

At Los Medanos College Campus
Saturdays, 8:15 a.m.–4:15 p.m.
August 30th or November 20th
Registration Required

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

through the Employment & Human Services Staff Development Department

All Concord trainings are held at the Staff Development Training Center at 1465 Enea Circle, Suite 788, Concord. For reservation call (925) 808-2532. For directions, questions or additional information about these training sessions, please call Lisa Molinar at (925) 808-2525. CEUs will be provided for LCSW, MFCCs RNs

SEPTEMBER

Team Decision Making (TDM) Participant Readiness Training

September 23, 2003 • 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. • Concord
Lisa Molinar

GLBTQ: Gay Lesbian, Transgender, Bisexual and Questioning Youth Training

September 30, 2003 • 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. • Call for location
Maryanne Rehberg and Margie Albers

OCTOBER

Presentation Skills for Team Decision Making

October 7, 2003 • 9 a.m. to Noon • Concord
Lisa Molinar

Black Grandparents: as Parents: Supporting African American Relative Caregivers, Eliminating the Generational Divide.

October 14, 2003 • 9 a.m. to Noon • Call for location
Dr. Leonora Poe

Team Decision Making (TDM) Participant Readiness Training

October 20, 2003 • 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. • Concord
Lisa Molinar

Communicating for Cultural Competence (repeats May's session)

October 29, 2003 • 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. • Call for Location
Dr. Peter Nwosu

NOVEMBER

Because We Are Family—Engaging African American Families in the Case Planning Process

November 6, 2003 • 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. • Call for location
Margie Albers & Joy Crumpton

Team Decision Making (TDM) Participant Readiness Training

November 18, 2003 • 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. • Concord
Lisa Molinar

DECEMBER

Presentation Skills for Team Decision Making

December 2, 2003 • 9 a.m. to Noon • Concord
Lisa Molinar

Team Decision Making (TDM) Participant Readiness Training

December 4, 2003 • 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. • Concord
Lisa Molinar

Behind Those Baggy Pants: Engagement, Empowerment, Encouragement of Black Youth

December 11, 2003 • 9 a.m. to Noon • Call for location
Donald Paul Miller, Intisar Shareef and Chris Chapman

Upcoming Training Opportunities in 2004

FEBRUARY 2004

Across the Generations: Traditional cultural values among Latino families; Creating Positive Diversity Conversations with Latino Families

Jerry Tello

MARCH 2004

Assessing the Effects of Domestic Violence in Latino families

Ricardo Carillo

APRIL 2004

Family Visiting with Asian Families

MAY 2004

Traditional Healing Practices Among Asian families



Meet our Community Liaisons



Ursula Soto,
Central County Community Liaison

A bridge in the community

As a Community Liaison, I have the pleasure of meeting families, the honor to serve them and the opportunity to help them in difficult times, be it raising children or finding resources in their own communities. In working with the Contra Costa County Children & Family Services team of professionals, I will be able to take on new challenges and learn new ways of serving. I bring to this position the experience of growing up in a Latin American country where material possessions have little or no value and

“I have the pleasure of meeting families, the honor to serve them and the opportunity to help them...”

where the only tokens of exchange we know are respect, honor, friendship and social responsibility.

Helping others in our communities takes more than speaking other languages because during difficult situations the ways of solving problems for each culture are unique

and often do not require translation. It takes the ability to give without being superior, the skill to listen without being judgmental, the will to walk with people through delicate situations as if they were your own. That is the most important part of this job. I feel honored to be able to serve families and children in Concord through the Children & Family Services Bureau as the bridge between the community organizations, institutions and professionals who are dedicated to serving the most important part of society, the family. ■



Eva Lujano,
East County Community Liaison

The community benefits, families flourish

I am Eva Lujano. I was born and raised in Pittsburg, California. In addition to being bi-cultural, I am also bilingual in Spanish and English. I have three beautiful daughters ages 16, 10 and 9, who keep me busy and involved in the community.

“I love helping people because I believe that in doing so, the community benefits and the children and families flourish.”

I have been involved in the community for over 10 years beginning with my position at United Council of the Spanish Speaking Organization (UCSSO). I've worked at Latino Family Program in Pittsburg (through Family Stress Center) as a Parenting Consultant/Caseworker. I have also been involved in the Pittsburg Unified School District as Secretary to the District English Learner's Advisory Committee (DELAC) and at the elementary school level with English Learner's Advisory Committee (ELAC).

As a Community Liaison I actively link Children & Family Services to the community nonprofit organizations, faith based institutions, businesses, community groups, leaders, schools and other county departments, by making contacts and presenting Family to Family concepts to various groups.

I love helping people because I believe that in doing so, the community benefits and the children and families flourish. I believe I'm very fortunate to be able to do what I love as my livelihood. ■

ANNOUNCING!

The Grand Opening of Post-Adoption Resource Centers

Contra Costa County has opened 3 Adoption Resource Centers. They are designed to provide information and support to families who have adopted children through the Contra Costa County public adoption system.

The centers are located in Antioch, Richmond and Concord for convenient access to residents in all parts of the county.

The centers offer the following services:

- Resource materials (books, videos, audio) on general parenting topics; special needs, and issues specific to adoptive families
- Recommendations and assistance with on-line/internet resources
- Telephone help with basic information and referral services
- Possible group meetings, book clubs, or other forums based on participation and interest of users.

For more information or to schedule a visit, please contact the Post-Adoption resource center nearest you:

East County:

Denise Bagley at (925) 756-0186

West County

Patricia Wright at (510) 374-3189

Central County

Cathy Botello at (925) 771-6048



Pat Wright, Cathy Botello, and Denise Bagley.

Caregiver Committee Update

The Caregiver Committee continues to meet regularly in the districts according to our published calendar. It will rotate between our Antioch, Martinez and Richmond offices and will be hosted by the Division Manager and Supervisors in that office. The primary purpose of the meeting will be to allow staff and foster parents to continue building relationships with each other, to put faces with names and get to know one another better. These are informal meetings with refreshments and are the perfect opportunity to have conversations on a variety of topics. We warmly invite you to attend the meeting closest to your home or any other location.

In addition to these regular caregiver meetings, we will have a Foster Parent Policy Steering Committee. This group will have a consistent membership with representatives from the various foster parent support groups and the Foster Family Network, as well as staff. This will be a working group and will be co-chaired by Danna Fabella and Linda Canan. The group's charge will be to discuss and make recommendations on broader policy issues of concern to foster parents. You can call Vicky Pierce, our Foster Family Liaison, at (925) 335-7090 and she will assure the issues come to Danna's or Linda's attention.

Upcoming meetings

SEPTEMBER 2003

Date: Thursday, September 25th

Place: 40 Douglas Drive, Martinez, Room 101-102

Time: 10 a.m. to noon

OCTOBER 2003

Date: Thursday, October 23rd

Place: 4549 Delta Fair Blvd., Antioch

Time: 10 a.m. to noon

NOVEMBER 2003

Date: Thursday, November 20th

Place: 1275 Hall Avenue, Richmond

Time: 10 a.m. to noon

DECEMBER 2003 — Holiday Tea!

Date: Wednesday, December 17th

Place: 2530 Arnold, Martinez, Diablo Room

Time: 10 a.m. to noon

To submit agenda items for upcoming meetings, or for any questions, please contact Brenda Sutherland, Program Analyst at (925) 313-1540. ■

Concurrent Support Group

By Michele Baker

The Concurrent Support Group welcomes all approved concurrent families who are waiting to be matched with a child or who currently have a child placed with them. The support group meets monthly in central and east county. The purpose of the group is to provide education and support. Meetings focus on the needs and interests of the group.

Meetings have had speakers ranging from adult adoptees telling their adoption stories, to families who have adopted and have shared their concurrent experiences, to social workers discussing concurrent placement, the court process, and visitation between birth parents and their children. The group also gives families the opportunity to meet other families who are going through the same process and to develop support and share information.

A light supper and childcare are provided free of charge, however, *please call at least two days prior to the group meeting if childcare is needed.* **To RSVP or for more information, please call Joyce Onyekwelu at (925) 335-7070 or Michele Baker at (925) 335-7071.**

Children & Family Services strongly encourages all concurrent families to attend the concurrent support group even if a child has not been placed in the home.



Central County Concurrent Support Group meets:

7:00–8:30 p.m.

the second Wednesday of each month at the
Central County Receiving Center
1341 Galaxy Way, Concord.

East County Concurrent Support Group meets:

7:00–8:30 p.m.

the third Thursday of each month at the
Antioch Receiving Center
2615 Somersville Road, Antioch



Are you interested in becoming a Foster Parent?

call toll-free **(866) 313-7788**

Family to Family

continued from the cover

“They’re giving children,” says Sonia. “And they’re sharing—their toys, their attention, their parents.” In addition, they are learning an important life lesson because “they are seeing their Daddy and Mommy helping others.”

Vincent and Sonia are licensed foster parents, and they have been through intensive training to prepare them. They sought out the Family to Family program in particular because they see such a glaring need for keeping the child’s support system relatively intact.

Vincent stresses that the community will be involved far more than in other types of foster care. Usually, he says, social workers and judges make the calls behind closed doors. This time, “community members will be involved with what happens to the family” as well as to the child. The county will seek input from teachers, clergy, a psychologist, maybe even neighbors where appropriate. “It’s much more public.”

These folks, who know the family dynamic, as well as the youngster or youngsters in question, will come up with a plan. The goals: to best serve the child’s interests—that is always the first goal—and to reunite the child with his biological parents, if possible, while working with the biological family to fix whatever went wrong in the first place. Keeping the child close to home is crucial in achieving this end.

The focus on working with the biological parents is a key element of Family to Family. “Many times the parents are very angry” that the child has been taken away. Like the children, the parents “are frustrated and distraught.” Family to family counsels, trains, and helps them.

Sonia and Vincent are willing to take in siblings if need be, because they understand the extra trauma that occurs when children are taken away from each other through no fault of their own and each placed in a different, strange foster home.

The placements will be roughly six months, after which, all involved hope, the children will go back to their biological parents.

The Manuels can see themselves doing this for years to come. After the first children go back home, they will welcome others. “This is a way in which we can touch a lot of lives,” Sonia says.

Others can as well, she adds. She recommends foster care to people who “have a big heart,” and who want to share their lives with children who need that sharing. Foster parents must understand, Sonia adds, that “it’s going to take a lot of time and patience,” and, above all, they have to be able to “understand where the child is coming from.”

The rewards, of course, are incalculable. ■

A Letter to Foster Parents

continued from the cover

remain in their communities rather than placed across county or in surrounding counties. Additionally, it was felt that we have inconsistent practices that have allowed for removal of children that has resulted in some children being left at home in situations that in another District office might have been removed.

The Family to Family Strategies that we have embarked on as part of our Child Welfare Redesign addresses all of the above issues. The strategies developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and piloted in many counties across the nation include: Community Partnering, Recruitment Training and Support of Resource Homes, Team Decision Making, and Self-Evaluation. These strategies are inclusive involving other public agencies, community based organizations, faith-based organizations, birth parents, foster parents, and relatives in the business of child protection and child well being. Child Welfare professionals finally realize we cannot do it alone, nor should we. The protection and nurturing of children must be a much larger effort if we are to be successful in keeping children safe.

To date, our Family to Family Strategies has resulted in over 60 Team Decision-Making Meetings that included birth parents and other community partners. We have been highly successful keeping children safely at home versus removing these children. We have hired Community Liaisons for each of the District offices in an effort to bring us closer to understanding these communities. We have hired Recruiters from our foster parents to assist us in licensing resource homes for placement of children in their own communities.

Our goal is to minimize disruption for the child and to maximize reunification efforts by having the child remain in the communities where they have been attending school and close to their birth family. And important to all of the redesign effort is to increase accountability through self-evaluation. We are working closely with the Center for Social Service Research at UC Berkeley on data collection in order to evaluate specific outcomes.

These are challenging times and exciting times. It is my hope that our staff and our community are up to this challenge. ■

www.networkofcare.org

A great resource
for the children and adults
in your family.

*Thank you
Foster Parents
for all you do!*



Find resources for health and nutrition questions, childcare, literacy programs, substance abuse services, support groups, mentoring, emergency food, prenatal care, mental health services, immigrant assistance, people with disabilities, homework help, senior housing, and much more.

Information is just
a click away...

www.cccord.org

Contra Costa CORD
(County Online Resource Data base)

Contra Costa County
Children & Family Services

A Bureau of Employment & Human Services
2530 Arnold Drive, Suite 200 • Martinez, CA 94553

www.ehsd.org

PRSR
Standard
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit #89
San Ramon, CA