



# Family Support Services OF NORTH FLORIDA INC.

SERVING DUVAL AND NASSAU COUNTIES

NOVEMBER | 2007

## Dental services bring smiles

The Jacksonville University School of Orthodontics has partnered with Family Support Services and other agencies to provide 15 sets of braces and treatments this year.

Other participants include the Florida Association of Adoptive and Foster Parents, the Kids N Care Clinic, Daniel, Mental Health Resource Center, Voices for the Children of Northeast Florida and the 4th Judicial Circuit Guardian ad Litem program.

JU Orthodontics School is also asking for donations. Each \$600 donation will fund one child's new smile. For more information, go to [www.smallsmilescampaign.com](http://www.smallsmilescampaign.com).

Children's dental services are also available through Kids N Care dental clinics, and there are dentists who accept Medicaid. For more information, call the Duval County Health Department Children's Dental Services administrative office at (904) 630-3282.



Photo by Simeon "Tim" Tyler

## Businesses help kids bridge digital divide

In October, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF) donated 100 used computers to Family Support Services of North Florida (FSS), and First Coast Options donated the monitors to help foster children "bridge the digital divide."

FSS and Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) collaborated so foster parents can first be trained on the computers and cyber-safety. The first group of six has learned computer basics, e-mail, research, document set-up and how to monitor children's activities on computers. Other training is



JR Figueroa, foreground, and Nick Rekau, deliver computers to Family Support Services from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida.

planned for those who've signed up.

"Through a state grant, FSS has been able to track the progress of foster children in the Duval County School System," said FSS Chief Executive Officer Jim Adams. "This funding has allowed us to gain valuable information about our foster children and their academic needs." The computers, he said, are just a part of the educational services FSS wants to provide foster children. A similar program is expected to begin in Nassau County.

"Our heartfelt thanks go out to the many volunteers behind the scenes from BCBSF, FCCJ and First Coast Service Options for their dedication to giving our foster children the tools they need to live up to their full academic potential," he said.

Foster parents who already know how to operate a computer but who don't have one in their home can call Debbie Campbell at (904) 521-5628 to take a survey before getting a computer. Leave a voicemail with your name, phone number and how many foster children are in the home if she is not available. Every family getting a computer will be required to attend FSS' course on computer safety and sign documents assuring children will be monitored while using the computer.

### Meet Justin

Justin is a handsome and shy 14-year-old. He excels in science in school and enjoys working with his hands, using the computer, and tinkering with cameras and other tech-type gadgets.

Fitting to his personality, Justin can be described as friendly, loveable, compassionate and caring. So finding a permanent and loveable family is just what he needs.

Justin currently resides in a group home but if your home has room for this loving young man, please don't delay in letting him know. Call about him today!





The Northeast Florida Fair in Nassau County brings families together and FSS was there to recruit new foster and adoptive parents.

## Easing out of foster care

Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) Regional Administrator Nancy Dreicer welcomed DCF Secretary Bob Butterworth to Jacksonville recently to unveil a \$750,000 check from the state coffers to help fund New Life Village.



This project, by the Youth Crisis Center (YCC), will provide transitional housing for young people aging out of foster care. The Congressional delegation has pledged \$6 million. YCC needs to raise an additional \$4 million as an operating endowment.

The transitional housing staff and programs will help foster youth, aged 16 to 21, get an education and job, life and social skills, and to live successfully on their own eventually.

## Ask Judge Gooding

Would a mentor help your child?

Family Support Services and Take Stock in Children have combined forces to recruit and train mentors for our children in the foster care system. Having taken the training this year, and recently being paired with my "Foster Buddy," Dontre, I can report to you first hand you about this experience.



I have been through a lot of training, both as a student and an instructor. The training I received from the Foster Buddy program was excellent, full of practical advice about building relationships with young people

Dontre is in the 6th grade and attends middle school. He is quick-witted, and loves to joke around. Dontre plays soccer on the weekends in a league. He is a good young man.

Building relationships with caring and responsible adults provide a role model not otherwise available to our children. Would your serve as a mentor to help a child like Dontre ?

But with all you do, there is not enough time, right ? In the foster buddy program, I have committed to 1 hour per week for the academic school year. I meet with Dontre in his school. Whether we continue after this year will be decided by Dontre and me.

The question is not really whether a mentor would help a child, but would being a mentor to a child help you. Please consider whether you can serve as a mentor or help recruit others.

*If you have general questions about adoption or would like to suggest a topic you'd like to read about regarding adoption, please contact Judge Gooding's case manager, Michelle Weisheit at [weisheit@coj.net](mailto:weisheit@coj.net).*

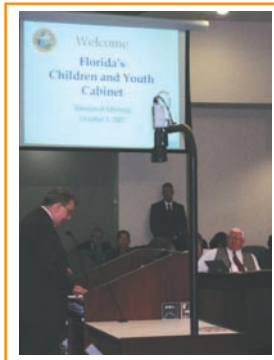


**FSS**  
Family Support Services  
OF NORTH FLORIDA INC.

4057 Carmichael Ave., Ste. 101  
Jacksonville, FL 32207



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Jacksonville, FL  
Permit #758



**Jim Adams, CEO of Family Support Services addresses the Governors Youth and Children's Cabinet at the inaugural meeting in Tallahassee. Adams emphasized the importance of information sharing between agencies to track foster children's educational progress — a process that was initiated by FSS.**

On average, 33 children come into care each week through Family Support Services (FSS), of which, many are siblings. Often, when a family of children is placed into foster care they, unfortunately, are separated and placed in many different homes. While FSS' Kids Central works diligently to place siblings together when possible, we are not always successful.

It is impossible to know what these children are experiencing when removed from their parents, but to lose their brothers and sisters at the same time can be devastating.

Research shows that even babies experience depression when separated from siblings. In addition, siblings placed together for adoption have a much stronger bond than siblings who grow up in their family of origin. This is attributed largely to the fact that they look like each other, may have similar mannerisms, and share a common history.

It is important to stress to our foster and adoptive parents the importance of the sibling bond. The sibling relationship is the single longest relationship most of us will experience in our lifetime, therefore, it is crucial that we, as foster and/or adoptive parents, family service counselors, etc. give our children the right to have this relationship.

**Erin Stuckey is an FSS Adoption Specialist. If you would like her to speak to your church or group about adoption, please call (904) 200-7745.**

ERIN'S CORNER

