



# Family Support Services OF NORTH FLORIDA INC.

SERVING DUVAL AND NASSAU COUNTIES

OCTOBER | 2007

## Music Prepares Kids for Life

Martin Luther, outspoken religious reformer of the 16th century, observed that “next to theologia, the most important thing for a young person to study is musica.”

A thousand years earlier, the Greek philosopher Plato reached a similar conclusion: “Music is the most important educational tool,” he said. “Music give wings to the mind!” While dozens of modern clinical studies confirm the cognitive advantages held by kids who take music lessons, the true value of a musical education lies in the life-skills that lessons impart.

Japanese music educators trained in the Suzuki method say that music education can lead children to become “very fine people, with beautiful minds and noble hearts.” Naturally, piano or violin lessons are no substitute for the living, breathing examples of love, patience, self-control and moral conduct that adoptive and foster parents strive to provide; but music lessons are still a vital ingredient in a child’s overall development.

Our educational system often fails to take advantage of this aspect of music—but you can apply it at the family level, where

its effects are most important and most needed.

Music lessons encourage self-discipline, creativity, self-expression, memorization, precise motor coordination, group interaction and an appreciation for order. Opposite to the effects of playing a video game, playing a musical instrument reduces stress. And music is an activity that involves the whole body in a positive way: it’s a great antidote for laziness and boredom.

Jacksonville is home to hundreds of top-notch music teachers and studios, many of whom offer family discounts and flexible rates; and prices for all kinds of instruments throughout the music industry have never been lower (just visit eBay). Give them the gift of music, and they will reap its benefits for life. If you need help finding a music teacher in your area, please call (904) 924-7772.

*Jim and Jean Volk are owners of PIANO VATION Studio on College St. in Riverside and are adoptive parents.*



Enjoying the fun at the Foster Children’s Picnic at Lonnie Miller Park...

## Ask Judge Gooding



Judges need to hear from you, the primary care giver and pre-adoptive parent for our children.

Florida Statutes require that judges review the status of every

child in the foster care system on a regular basis, no less frequently than every 6 months. The list of those who must receive notice of judicial reviews hearings includes “(t)he foster parent or legal custodian in whose home the child resides” and “(e) (a)any preadoptive parent.” One of the books judges rely on in handling Dependency cases goes further and states “Foster parents, legal custodians and preadoptive parents must be permitted to address the court . . .”

We need to hear from everyone about the welfare of our children, and we understand that your observations as primary care giver are unique. You are there when the child goes to sleep and when the child wakes up, when the child falls down and when the child has a great achievement, and when the child laughs and when the child cries. I am a better judge and make better decisions when I listen carefully to everything those before me have to tell me about the best interests of the child, including you. We need your input. Judge Wallace and I appreciate the selfless service of our foster and adoptive parents, and look forward to seeing you in court.

*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).*



Photo by Jeremy Paterno



Meet **Brittany**. She’s a 13-year-old social butterfly—genuinely nice, pleasant and outgoing.

In school, Brittany says she works hard at getting good grades. And, when she grows up, she says she wants to become a teacher.

Brittany loves basketball, horses and horseback riding—which she can enjoy on the grounds of the children’s home where she lives.

Brittany would welcome the opportunity to be adopted into a secure, stable and loving family that would allow her to grow, learn and have a chance to return to a normal way of life.

Call 421-5839 to inquire about adopting Brittany.

For more adoptable children visit [www.heartgalleryjax.org](http://www.heartgalleryjax.org).



## Be an adoption super star!

Jim Adams, Family Support Services of North Florida, has embarked on a new cause—adoption.

Taking posters of their children up for adoption to each agency subcontracted with FSS, he is challenging each organization's board of directors to find a forever home for the child in the poster.

He's also presented the agencies with an Adoption Superstar Award and each case worker received a pin.

"Every child needs a loving home with loving people to help them navigate through their lives," he said. "We all must help in this effort."

## Could you use some "free" time?

Are you a relative caregiver or adoptive parent interested in setting up a group to share play dates, outings, or need a little free time and would like to exchange babysitting—when there are errands to be run or appointments to be met, or maybe just some "down" time? Contact Cherie Shaw at [cherie.shaw@fssnf.org](mailto:cherie.shaw@fssnf.org)

## Direct Deposit, anyone?

Family Support Services offers direct deposit for monthly adoption subsidy payments. Fax or mail a voided check to the attention of Mandy Hooks and your monthly payment will be directly deposited into your bank account. Call (904) 421-5837; fax (904) 421-5801; mail to: Mandy Hooks, Family Support Services, 4057 Carmichael Ave., Ste. 101, Jacksonville, FL 32207. To change your address, contact Rhonda Holt at (904) 421-5861 or email [Rhonda.Holt@fssnf.orgparents](mailto:Rhonda.Holt@fssnf.orgparents).



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## Save the date - Dec. 20

Judge David Gooding is planning a big party – in time for adopted children to be *Home for the Holidays*. He's planning a super-sized adoption ceremony in his courtroom with a reception to follow.



Members of the Junior League and Family Support Services of North Florida staff collected backpacks and gift cards on Labor Day weekend in front of Area Kmart. These two young fellows donated backpacks at the Fernandina Beach Kmart. More than 700 backpacks were collected, as were many gift cards. The backpacks are stuffed by the Junior League to include underwear, socks, toiletries and other things they will need when they are taken from their home in the middle of the night. Gift cards are also put in the backpacks for older children placed in foster care.

The Duval County School Board honored case workers from subcontractors of Family Support Services. (From left) Tricia Pough, Vincent Foster, School Board Member Martha Barrett, Regina Smith, Lisa Hubbard, Jim Adams, FSS, and Susan Bell, Department of Children and Families.



## Support group meets

The Post Adoption Support Group will meet at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Children's Home Society's Louis Jackson Adoption Center. The topic will be "Toolbox for Success: Core issues of adoption and intervention strategies for parents."

As you may or may not know, my position as the Adoption and Community Service Specialist is new to Family Support Services (FSS). My job is to recruit adoptive families from the faith-based community.

ERIN'S CORNER



There are hundreds of churches here on the First Coast, and the hope is that they will be interested in assisting with FSS's mission to find permanent families for all children currently lingering in foster care.

Today, there are approximately 400 children on the First Coast available for adoption. Of that, 150 children do not have any prospect of a permanent family, which means those children live in foster or group homes waiting for a mom and dad.

FSS, in partnership with our five community care-based agencies, is working to recruit families for these children, but that's not enough.

Our goal is for every church to "adopt" a child, and commit to praying for that child, remembering him or her on birthdays and holidays, as well as trying to find a forever family for him or her.

Children deserve to grow up in families—possibly with siblings, grandparents, and other extended family—not in foster care.

**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.**