



Family Support Services
OF NORTH FLORIDA INC.



Agencies collaborate on prevention effort

Nassau County Sheriff Tommy Seagraves announced a major prevention effort this month at a kindergarten class at Yulee Primary School—the “Sheriff Seagraves Reading Club.” He passed out backpacks filled with goodies to the 4- and 5-year-olds.

Joined by Jim Adams, chief executive officer of Family Support Services of North Florida (FSS), and Nassau County Library Director Dawn Bostwick, Seagraves said that as a sheriff’s department, we all want our children to learn to love the library and reading, partly so they won’t get into trouble.

Adams said foster children, because they are not in their own homes, are more likely to have problems in school. “We not only want at-risk children to learn to love reading, we want all children to love reading,” Adams said. “Parents who read with their children provide quality time, and that can mean a whole change in family dynamics that removes the risk of a child having to be taken out of the home.”

Bostwick said the public library wants to keep children safe, well-rounded and enthused about reading. “If we don’t take care of them now, we’ll have to take care of them later. We have children’s programs in all our branch libraries from Fernandina Beach to Bryceville,” she said. “When children learn to read and love books, it gives their imaginations great journeys—often away from challenges in their lives.”

Besides beginner-level books, the backpacks contained some information for parents, a toothbrush, an application for a free library card and a Pound Puppy. Once children receive their own library card, the library will provide them with a “Charlotte’s Web” library card holder.

Cont. on reverse

Wish comes true for 13-year-old



When LaQuan, 13, went to the Jacksonville Municipal Stadium December 5, 2007, he was excited.

Not only was he going to be interviewed for CBS 47’s *Jacksonville’s Children*, he was going to do it where the Jacksonville Jaguars play football – a place he’s always loved but had never been.

Thanks to the efforts of many though, LaQuan was able to go inside the stadium for the first time to see the Jaguars’ home game against the Carolina Panthers.

Cont. on reverse

Making a dream come true, Jacksonville Jaguars Offensive Tackle Maurice Williams presented LaQuan, 13, tickets to the Jaguars’ game against the Carolina Panthers and a signed game ball.

In Brief

Foster Parent Associations (FPA) provide information, resources for training, support, education and child advocacy for foster children.

Anyone interested in starting a foster parent association in Nassau

County, please call Yolanda Tucker at (904) 899-9672.

Foster parents are reminded by the physicians at Kids N Care to please attend your child’s doctor appointments with your child.

Surrogate Parent Training will be held from January 10, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. at the Nemours Children’s Clinic auditorium. Topics will include dealing with special education laws, the structure of supporting agencies and the public school system, Individual Education Plans and the roles of a Guardian ad Litem, caseworkers and others.

Judge Wadell Wallace III: View from the Bench



The year-end activities helped me better appreciate what foster parents do for our most vulnerable children.

Family Support Services’ (FSS) Annual Christmas Party at the Jacksonville Zoo gave the children an adventure exploring the zoo’s many trails. Beyond that, they were treated with rides, games and delicious food. To top things off, the children got to see Santa Claus, sit in his lap and return home with a bag full of toys.

It was a moving experience for me. I walked around and observed the enthusiastic smiles on the children’s faces, while reflecting on what this Christmas may have been if we had failed to remove them from the darkness of abuse, abandonment and neglect. Through the efforts of FSS and many volunteers, our foster children had an enchanting Christmas experience they will always remember.

Also in December, we adopted 69 children. This accomplishment was achieved through the hard work and extra effort of the community-based care providers including Jewish Family and Community Services, the Mental Health Resource Center, Children’s Home Society, Daniel Memorial, and PSI.

Our courtrooms were filled with emotion as parents explained why they wished to adopt. Every child’s case history was different, but the common thread throughout was unconditional love and a sense of being called to care for the children.

When I speak to children in court, many of them tell me they want to go home, even those from families where they had been seriously abused. Many of these children cannot go back to the home from which they came, but through adoption, these children now belong to a new family and have found a safe, permanent home.

Whether or not you choose to adopt, foster families provide our most needy children with precious gifts: care, nurturing, unconditional love and a sense of belonging with others. Our foster parents are the heart and soul of the child dependency system. We who work in the courts or in the executive agencies go home at night when our work day is over. You faithfully serve the children all day and night, every day. I wish you all a very happy new year and look forward to meeting with you early in 2008 to discuss how we at the courts can better help you take care of the children.

If you would like to submit a story idea, calendar item or ask Jim Adams, FSS CEO, a question, please email mary.hurst@fssnf.org.





Orieal is a creative and inquisitive 9-year-old. While she likes to play with her dolls and toys, she especially enjoys watching over and playing outdoors with her younger brother Duan. She loves the company of friends, which is part of her desire to keep active.

When she grows up, Orieal wants to be a teacher where she can share her story telling and drawing abilities with others.

Duan is an adventurous 5-year-old who also gets along well with people and likes to make others smile. He is a happy little boy and enjoys playing with his sister—so it's important that the siblings be adopted together to help maintain their loving bond.

These adorable siblings would thrive in a family that will dedicate time to developing their educational needs. Both deserve the stability, security and love that comes with having a permanent family. If you would like to welcome Orieal and Duan into your heart, contact Melinda Delgado at FSS (904) 421-5800. For other adoptable children visit www.heartgalleryjax.org.



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Reminder:

January 14, 6:30 p.m.: The Northeast Florida Foster and Adoptive Parents Association meeting at Hope Plaza, 435 Clark Rd. For information call Lilly Blackshear (904) 751-9611.

January 24, 6:30 p.m.: The Greater Jacksonville Foster Parent Association meeting at Jacksonville Boys Home, University Blvd.

MAPP classes are now being offered in Nassau County at the Family Support Services Regional Office

86004 Christian Way, Suite 2, Building A, Yulee, FL
For class schedules please call (904) 548.4850 or visit www.fssjax.org/foster

PREVENTION (cont. from page 1)

Bowling Enterprises donated the Pound Puppies with the condition that children adopt the puppy as a "reading buddy."

"I have always been a big proponent of reading programs and am excited to be involved in this opportunity to promote this with children," Mike Bowling, Pound Puppy inventor. "I would like each child to take the puppy home, give it a name, take care of it and read to it."

The backpacks will be available to the early readers at all the Nassau County branch libraries. Parents are to bring their 4- or 5 year-olds to the library to receive the backpack. Periodically, other free books will be available for pick-up at the library.

The backpacks will be available after the first of the year at all library branches. Anyone wishing to donate money or books for this effort should contact Celeste Turain at FSS (904) 889-9671 or Candace Monroe (904) 421-5860.

WISH (cont. from page 1)

Winn-Dixie donated two game tickets and presented him with a goodie bag which included \$100 in Winn-Dixie gift cards, a t-shirt and a Jags mouse pad.

Offensive tackle Maurice Williams presented him with the tickets, which went right in LaQuan's pocket-hoodie sweatshirt pocket.

"Oh no," Williams said. "They need to go in your pants pocket."

LaQuan held the tickets toward the sun—wanting to make sure they were real.

Peter Racine, executive director of the Jaguars Foundation, donated a game ball, which Williams then signed and gave to LaQuan.

Still smiling, LaQuan didn't let go of the ball after that. The foster child's dream had come true.



Thank you to everyone who contributed to a beautiful and well-attended Foster Children's Christmas Party at the Jacksonville Zoo on December 15. The weather was warm and the ice skating show was a treat. There were games, good food, toys and Santa —plus, a free carousel ride and a chance to see all the animals at the zoo.

