



Family Support Services

OF NORTH FLORIDA INC.

SERVING DUVAL AND NASSAU COUNTIES

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR FOSTER PARENTS

See the Heart Gallery of Jacksonville:

- Oct. 29-Nov. 8 on display in the Expo Center at the Jacksonville Fairgrounds.
- Nov. 7-8 at the Midtown Centre St. Nick Art Fest and Salute to the Troops.
- Nov. 5 at the downtown Art Walk.

Foster news

NOVEMBER 2008

Grant provides computers and training for youth in care

It started last fall with a \$50,000 grant from AT&T Foundation for 50 computers and training for foster parents and teens aging out of foster care.

Jim Adams, chief executive officer of Family Support Services of North Florida (FSS), initiated the computer project so FSS' children could have a normal life (as close as possible).

"I wanted them to be able to do research on the computer for their homework and to be able to practice for the FCAT," Adams said. "Many foster children have an educational disadvantage to begin with. We want to help them live up to their fullest potential."

The project began in November 2007, with the purchase of a few laptops, other computers and printers. When FSS' partner, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, heard about the grant and the need for computers, the company donated one hundred "gently used" computers over time.

Debbie Campbell, FSS project manager, set up computer training classes for foster parents and teens, so they could learn how to use the computer, how to write a resume, and how to apply for jobs online.

"We didn't want our foster parents to have a computer without being trained because the children learn about using computers in school," she said.

Adams also insisted on a required cyber safety training course, before they can take their computer home.

Around the same time, Campbell's husband, James, ran across a listing [on Craig's List] for computers from the Florida Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics Jacksonville free to nonprofit agencies. She contacted the health department's Eric Mays, whose idea it was to offer the computers on the Internet.

Since then, the bureau has donated 74 computers to FSS with more to come. The most recent FSS pickup was mid-October.

"We're just glad the foster families can use the computers, rather than destroying them," stated Gina Aldridge. She and Mays work in the health department's IT area.

Foster mom Dee Wilson says the computer at her house means her children can do homework and research. In addition, they can use email to keep in touch with their siblings, and she can keep in touch with caseworkers.

"I think it's the best thing they've ever done for foster kids," Wilson said. "It's just wonderful."



Pausing after loading computers are (from left) Eric Mays, Jim Adams, FSS CEO, Gina Aldridge and Debbie Campbell, FSS program director. Mays and Aldridge are with the Florida Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics which has donated 74 computers to date.

Did you know?

- More than 168 parents and foster teens have been trained through FCCJ? Two additional classes are planned for November.
- More than 175 computers have been placed in the homes of foster parents and teens since the program began?
- Everyone trained at FCCJ have been registered at the college so they can take additional classes.
- More than 50 jump drives and gift cards have been given out.

For fun Cyber Safety tips visit www.ikeepssafe.org!

Become a surrogate parent

Surrogate parents are needed in Duval and Nassau counties to represent the best educational interests of an exceptional education student in foster care.

You, along with a case manager, the child's special education services. The student, ages 3-21, may be a girl or boy, may have a learning disability, a physical, vision or hearing impairment, or have other special needs. He or she may live in a group foster home, juvenile justice facility or another setting.

You can serve as a surrogate parent if you are:

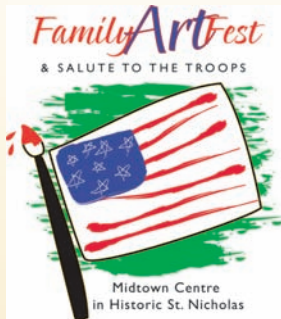
- A U.S. citizen
- Florida resident
- 18 years of age or older
- Not part of a local school board or agency responsible for the care of the child
- Have no interest that conflicts with the interest of the child

To apply, you will need to complete the background check and participate in a training session. For further information contact Sherry Kaufman, Duval County Public Schools – (904) 390-2422 or Diana Middleton, Nassau County School Board (904) 491-9954.

News Briefs

Support the troops

Midtown Center Foundation is hosting a Family Art Fest and Salute to the Troops celebration from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., November 8-9 in Historic St. Nicholas.



Family Support Services will display the Heart Gallery of Jacksonville with its award-winning photographers; Community Hospice will take registration for the Veterans' History Project, and artists and antique dealers will display their wares. A Military Zone will feature a Chinook helicopter, a grenade

launcher, a tank and other military vehicles. There will be health screenings and international foods to sample.

All proceeds benefit the USO, Community Hospice Veterans Partnership and the children's art programs of Duval Public Schools. For more information call (904) 396-9092 or visit familyartfestsaluetothetroops.org.

Thankful for a great year

The Northeast Florida and Greater Jacksonville Foster and Adoptive Parent Associations will hold a joint meeting from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 18 at the Evangel Temple on Ramona Blvd. They will also celebrate with Thanksgiving Dinner and will honor Circuit Court Judges David Gooding and Waddell Wallace, and FSS CEO Jim Adams, for their help this year. The Greater Jacksonville Foster and Adoptive Parent Assn. will not meet again until January.

Don't forget the party

The annual Foster Children's Holiday Party for Nassau and Duval Counties 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, December 13. at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens. Come see Santa, eat pizza and pick up gifts. Then, enjoy the day at the Zoo at no cost. Relative caregivers and adoptive families are also invited.

The FSS Nassau office will hold its annual Holiday Party for Nassau County foster children on Sunday, December 14 at the Pirates Woods Clubhouse in Yulee. The time and place is to be determined.

Offices closed: Family Support Services offices will be closed Tuesday, November 11, in honor of Veteran's Day.



Attention Parents: If you would like to learn how to use a computer or you do not have a home computer for your school-aged children, FSS has computers and training for you! Call Debbie Campbell at (904)521-5628. The next Cyber Safety

class is Saturday, November 1 at 10 a.m.

Childproofing for the holidays

Holidays are a fun time of year for most children, but it's important to be aware that holiday decorations, traveling, new toys and visiting homes that may not be childproofed can impact your child's safety.

Most parents understand the importance of childproofing their homes—gates on stairs, medications, chemicals and poisons out-of-reach, and working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

But if you're visiting relatives or friends who may not have a childproof house, you should keep a closer watch on your children.

- ▶ Check to see if there are guns in the house that they are stored, unloaded and in a gun safe or locked box with the ammunition locked away separately.
- ▶ If there is a pool without a fence around it?
- ▶ Are there small objects like hard candy or nuts in candy dishes, where younger children can get them?
- ▶ Are medication, poisons and household cleaning items out of reach?
- ▶ Do they have a pet that may harm the children?
- ▶ If your child has food allergies, will they be serving that food?

It's hard to keep an eye on every move your children make—and others who may be there—with in a house full of friends and/or relatives. You may want to offer to go over ahead of time and do some home childproofing for them.

Source: about.com

All things behavioral...

Smartly managing children's behavior

You can reinforce behavior in a number of ways including social interaction, praise, appropriate touch, rewards, earned privileges and breaks from tasks or work.

There are several ways to reinforce the child's behavior including:

- Tell child what behavior you liked (if this is appropriate)—and be specific about what the behavior was.
- Provide a consequence for the behavior that matches the value of the behavior. For example, if your child hands you a napkin after you ask for one, you say "thank you;" if child mows lawn, rakes and bags leaves and your response is to give him/her \$5 or an extra 30 minutes on the phone for a week.
- Deliver the reinforcing consequence within three seconds of recognizing the appropriate behavior. When this is not possible, be sure to specify the behavior you want to strengthen, and try to limit your request to about eight words.
- Use sincere and appropriate facial expressions, tone of voice and body language—for younger children, use happy and enthusiastic facial expressions, tone of voice and body language; for older children, be sincere and show real interest in their activities.

Part 2 of 2—Source: *Essential Tools for Positive Behavior Change*. Shadianna Singh-Vinson, FSS Crisis Specialist