defining success
2012-2013 Report to the Community
The mission of Family Support Services of North Florida is to be the leader in providing safety, stability and quality of life for all children, by working with the community to strengthen the family unit.

Financials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casework Services and Related Support</td>
<td>$17.35 million</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption Promotion and Support</td>
<td>.45 million</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention Services</td>
<td>$5.37 million</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff and Parent Training</td>
<td>.37 million</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support, Preservation and Reunification</td>
<td>1.50 million</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health for Child Welfare</td>
<td>.81 million</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>2.81 million</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>$28.67 million</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
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ROOM AND BOARD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Care</td>
<td>$14.23 million</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Licensed Care—Foster Home and Shelter</td>
<td>5.60 million</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>2.87 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>$22.70 million</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
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TOTAL EXPENDITURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$51,360,000</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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Annual Community Donations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash Donations/Grants</td>
<td>$838,678</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Kind</td>
<td>$769,023</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$1,607,700</td>
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A note from the corner office

Lee Kaywork, CEO

Family Support Services of North Florida (FSS) and its board of directors are committed to solving child welfare issues at the local level in a collaborative and caring environment. I am pleased to report the fiscal year outcomes achieved by FSS in serving our community in Duval and Nassau counties.

Over the past 11 years, we have achieved significant milestones—but not without the help of our case management partners, local schools, churches and government offices. And because of these accomplishments, and the dedication to serving the children and families in our community, FSS was once again awarded a new 5-year contract by the Department of Children and Families—so that we are able to continue our services.

In this year’s report, we highlight the successes of the individuals and families directly impacted as a result of the services they receive from FSS. Whether it be finding a permanent, loving home for a child, providing educational support and guidance to a foster youth, or reconnecting a broken family with extended counseling, parenting classes or other family services, we would not be able to accomplish these goals without the generosities from individuals and businesses committed to making a difference.

This year, as a result of $1.2 million in grants, we were also able to introduce a Quality Parenting Initiative for foster parents; create a Safe Harbor program for children victimized by human trafficking; and fund projects such as mentoring and quality early education initiatives, among others.

Our success could not have been achieved without the local community ownership and the involvement of our case management organizations: Children's Home Society, Daniel, Jewish Family and Community Services, Mental Health Resource Center and Neighbor To Family.

On behalf of the FSS board of directors and staff, I encourage you to learn more about our organization, those we serve, and those that have achieved success, by reading this report. The stories we’ve shared here are representative of the many we hear and see everyday—it’s what keeps us motivated and is evidence that the work we do does make an impact.

Many thanks for helping support our mission and allowing us to share our stories on defining success in the lives of those we touch.

Sincerely,

Lee Kaywork, CEO
Keeping families together

FSS provides immediate and necessary services to help stabilize and strengthen families in crisis in order to help prevent children from entering into foster care.

As part of FSS efforts in prevention and family preservation, following a series of assessments, families receive coordinated, needs-based services, which help to reconnect family members and improve their living situations. Whether the needs be food or financial assistance, job placement, education or parenting lessons; or child care, school clothing, summer camp or eyeglasses, the goal is to keep families together by giving them the tools needed to develop a healthier family relationship.

Results show that most families, when given support and assistance, will care for their children successfully.

Programs focus on teen success

Active Parenting of Teens is new to the list of FSS services offered to local families. The in-home parenting program provides guidance and assistance to parents of teens (ages 13–17), particularly those with teens who exhibit risky behaviors.

FSS teamed up with Teen Leaders of America to provide 48 teens a summer camp focused on building leadership skills, preparing for college testing, and computer learning. Participants also received training in personal development and health and fitness. The camp was held at the Schell-Sweet Community Resource Center on the campus of Edward Waters College.

1,352 families and 3,799 children received services that help promote healthier family relationships.

2,470 families and 5,659 children received community services through FSS’s Strengthening Ties and Empowering Parents (STEPS) program.

424 families and 1,082 children received intensive counseling services from the Family Assessment Support Team (FAST).
Community helps family thrive in times of adversity

Adding to her own family of four, Shanita Brown opened her home to her sister’s three children in 2009 when they were removed from their home for their safety and well-being. Two years later, she adopted her nieces to provide them the stability and permanency they needed.

The family thrive as it grew.

Shanita is an active resident of the New Town Success Zone, and also participates in the Building Our Limited Dream (BOLD) Parents program, supporting her two girls who participate in the BOLD after-school program. The girls are also involved in cheerleading and Girl Scouts.

As a mom who focuses on the needs of her children, Shanita ensured that each of the children learned sign language so they could all communicate with their brother, who is deaf.

When her home needed critical roof repairs at significant expense, she tried to stretch dollars as best she could, but additional weather damage to the home increased repair costs, and bills began to add up. Shanita was also providing financial support to her mother, and had taken in her much-younger sister.

She was soon overextended and her utilities were disconnected. More than her comfort was threatened as she edged toward the possibility that her children could be removed from the home, which would also terminate the adoption. That’s when a concerned friend from the New Town Success Zone project referred Shanita to FSS for help.

While a local church helped with repairs, FSS had the utilities reconnected. Then, through the FSS family preservation program Strengthening Ties and Empowering Parents (STEPS), Shanita successfully completed classes in budgeting, parenting and behavior modification—all cornerstones in strengthening and stabilizing struggling families.

Shanita Brown is surrounded by her family, including fiancé Robert Jean: Shakeria Riley, 10; Marcus Riley, 8; Shakirvy Solomon (Shanita’s sister), 8; Shalivia Brown, 8; Savannah Brown, 7; Aneesah Brown, 5; Cheline Jean, 2; and Cheyenne Jean, 11 months.

With the help of FSS family preservation services, Shanita recently earned her GED and has enrolled at Edward Waters College. The children are doing well in school, and the family was recognized by FSS and the Department of Children and Families for overcoming the challenges and obstacles it faced.
Safe Harbor homes help child victims of human trafficking

As a result of FSS’s successful efforts in bringing the issue of human trafficking in Duval and Nassau counties to the forefront, four local adults have become licensed to serve as Safe Harbor homes.

While anyone can become a victim of human trafficking, certain populations are especially vulnerable—including runaway and homeless youth, victims of trauma and abuse, and individuals fleeing conflict.

FSS has been tracking trends in serving these victims, which include attending extensive training and educational seminars, and has recognized the need for specialized homes to care for these youth.

Safe Harbor homes and these committed foster parents are licensed to provide specialized care and services to young victims of human trafficking, which including long-term housing, mental health care, access to GED or other remedial education, and life skills learning.

Caring for kids

Children enter foster care when the home and family situation compromises the safety of the child. Through FSS and community programs, efforts are made to remedy the home situation so that the child and family can reunite safely.

FSS ensures that foster children in Duval and Nassau counties are placed with licensed, trained and loving homes, and provides medical and dental care, counseling and support services—while striving to bring normalcy to their lives.

In the communities FSS serves, more than 227 licensed foster homes provide the love, support and security these children deserve.

26% the reduction of sibling separations while in foster care.

72% the reduction in the number of children in out-of-home care, which represents the fewest children in FSS history.

84% of the reunified families were successful and the children did not return to care.
Keith Pearce is 14 years old and an 8th grader at Yulee Middle School. He came into foster care and was placed at Florida Baptist Children’s Homes in Jacksonville. While this traumatic change in his life could have been devastating, instead, Keith earned a starting position on his school’s soccer team and was selected to join a local mission trip, where he helped renovate a local church.

When Keith was reunited with his family, he continued to excel. He was an award recipient at the annual FSS Academic Awards Luncheon, and was selected to attend the Myron Rolle Wellness and Leadership Academy. Keith continues his focus on school and working to maintain a 3.4 grade point average.
Thanks to new state legislation, foster care services will no longer end at age 18. Effective January 2014, the new extended foster care program "My Future, My Choice" will offer services to age 21. In addition, post-secondary educational services and support will be provided to teens and young adults in care until age 23.

Paving the path to a successful life

To improve their opportunity for success, teens in foster care are provided extensive life skills training and services to prepare them for adulthood through FSS's Independent Living services. Education, job readiness, career development, financial management and personal development are the focus for ages 13-17.

Young adults, who age out of foster care at age 18, can also receive expansive, subsidized services and support, including education assistance, through age 23.

Programs help youth succeed

Passport to Leadership is an FSS program designed to help foster teens prepare to navigate the challenges of daily living. From critical thinking, public speaking, banking and education, to resume writing and much more, teens are challenged to meet the goals and objectives of the program. This year, 10 participants graduated from the program.

Participants developed and completed the Community Connections Rec Room Revamp project, including more than 100 volunteer hours, revamping and redecorating a multi-purpose gathering room that will support learning, computer training and use, group projects and exercise for local teens in need.

Just Like Me! is a unique, cultural arts education experience provided by FSS for 16 and 17-year-old foster teens, particularly high-risk and challenging youth. The three-week summer camp focuses on music, dance, painting, writing and photography. Offered in partnership with The Performers Academy, participants use their talents and interests to tell their story—or to help someone else tell theirs. The teens also learn about training, education and careers in their talent areas. An Exhibition of Talent at the end of the program gives the teens a chance to perform and demonstrate their talents. Nearly 200 people attended the glamorous evening event. Just Like Me! is funded in part by the Neviaser Charitable Foundation.
Tutoring and tenacity pay off

In foster care since the age of 16, Edward McDonald entered the FSS Independent Living program at age 18 as a high school student. His tumultuous home life had resulted in many school absences and he struggled academically.

As a young adult, his challenges continued. At 22, Edward was discouraged that his reading test scores were preventing him from being admitted into a general education diploma (GED) program.

FSS staff persuaded him to participate in a specialized tutoring program. As a result of one-on-one tutoring, Edward began making tremendous progress, and shortly thereafter, successfully completed the Test of Adult Basic Education.

Defining success

Employed part-time, Edward continues to work toward his GED. To reach his goal of becoming an automotive repair specialist, once he has his GED, he plans to enroll in the automotive vocational program at Florida State College of Jacksonville. Edward happily shared how good it feels to see progress toward his goals and his future success.

PHOTO BY BOB SELF
Finding “forever” families

Despite dedicated efforts to reunify families, every year hundreds of children are unable to safely return to their families and hope to find permanent homes with loving adoptive families. FSS has established long-term partnerships with local businesses, community leaders and organizations that help promote the need for adoptive families. As the statewide leader in number of adoptions, FSS has helped Florida become a model for adoption programs nationwide.

307 children adopted; 80% finalized within 24 months of coming into care.

FSS was ranked top in the state for number of adoptions two consecutive years.
Family adopts siblings in time to celebrate Christmas

William and Sarah, now 4 and 3, are adorable siblings who faced unfortunate circumstances—put in protective care to escape family violence and physical abuse.

While in care, medical tests revealed that both William and Sarah showed signs of a rare genetic disease that may affect them in the future. The siblings needed a family who would accept and love them regardless of their potential medical risks.

The Triche family attended one of FSS’s adoption recruitment events where they learned the story of William and Sarah. Looking to share their love and their home selflessly, the family wanted to adopt the siblings regardless of any medical risks they may face in the future.

William and Sarah were adopted in December 2012—giving them a true “home for the holidays.”
Family Support Services is a nonprofit organization. Donations are greatly appreciated and are utilized to provide normalcy for children in care.

Please send your contribution to:

**DUVAL COUNTY MAIN OFFICE**
4057 Carmichael Avenue, Suite 101
Jacksonville, FL 32207
(904) 421-5800

**NASSAU COUNTY OFFICE**
96016 Lofton Square Court
Yulee, FL 32097
(904) 225-5347

You can also donate online at fssjax.org/donate

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