



Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments

Child Welfare News

Edition 2

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Message from the Program Manager

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November is one of my favorite months of the year, because it's focused on family. This November marks

the 11th annual national observance of *Adoption Day* where tens of thousands of children will be formally adopted by their forever families. *National Adoption Day* and *Adoption Month* are celebrated differently in each jurisdiction in the metropolitan region. Many jurisdictions will host their *Adoption Day* celebrations on November 20th at their courthouses where several adoptions will be finalized. These special ceremonies for foster children and their adoptive families warm hearts and inspire hope.

It is a real privilege to be a witness to the finalizations of adoptions. For foster children, their journey through the system to permanency has been a long and arduous road. I am honored to have the opportunity to see their happy faces as they eagerly prance across the stage, their adoptive parents in tow, knowing they have a place to call home forever.

For those who sit in courthouses on November 20th during *National Adoption Day*, we are also witnessing the hard work of our region's social workers, supervisors and support staff. Tremendous effort goes on behind the scenes to ensure these pre-adoptive placements make it to this final stage. I want to take this opportunity to applaud the region's social workers for a job well done!

This newsletter is packed with timely articles about adoption from several angles. In this issue, we are launching an article series entitled, "Jurisdiction Spotlight," where we highlight one COG member jurisdiction, and their creative work to recruit and retain foster parents.

Please enjoy this second edition of *Child Welfare News*. Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours!

All the best,

Kamilah Bunn

Editor's Footnote



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Carette Rogers
crogers@mwucog.org

If there are any ideas that you would like to see covered in future newsletters, please email me. Looking forward to receiving your suggestions!

You can also contact me if you would like to unsubscribe to the newsletter.

Happy Birthday Barbara Harrison!

Barbara Harrison is considered to be a Washington icon. Not only is she a well-known NBC 4 news anchor, she also hosts the *Wednesday's Child* program that airs weekly on the network. Barbara has a special place in her heart for children who are in foster care. Her sincerity, concern and commitment show in each Wednesday's Child segment.

What some may not know about Barbara Harrison is just how far her commitment to our region's foster youth goes. Barbara spends her birthday each year by serving as Mistress of Ceremonies at the District of Columbia's Adoption Day. Barbara gushed about her experience: "What a birthday present every year...to know that so many kids will be spending their next birthdays in forever homes."

We would like to extend a Happy Birthday wish to Barbara from COG, our member jurisdictions, and the children we all serve. We all appreciate her constant contributions to foster children who are waiting for a permanent home, and those who have found forever families.



Barbara Harrison

Jurisdiction Spotlight: City of Alexandria

The City of Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services has retained their resource parents by being proactive, professional and thorough in their approach. From community recruitment to orientation, training, and home assessment, parents who agree to be a resource for the City of Alexandria are aware of the expectation the city has of them. Now this jurisdiction is focused on supporting the families who have agreed to support the agency by launching CARPA, City of Alexandria Resource Parent Association.

The mission of CARPA is to better connect resource families with one another so they can exchange ideas, vent as needed, and support each another. CARPA will be organically developed by the parents themselves with an emphasis on the group's first four goals: to establish monthly meetings, develop and distribute a resource parent directory, generate a computer list serve group, and to create a CARPA website: www.carpava.org.

As a whole, the City of Alexandria is making headway with building CARPA. Along with support from staff at the agency, three motivated parents who volunteered are spearheading the effort. The very first support group is scheduled to meet later this month. The first meeting will focus on the topic of *compassion fatigue*, but the format will be open to allow for free discussions of the issues most relevant to those in attendance.

In addition to launching their first association for their current resource parents, the City of Alexandria has been busy ensuring that their waiting children have permanent parents. This jurisdiction celebrated the finalization of 34 adoptions this year (the highest number of finalized adoptions within one year ever), and the identification of permanent homes for all of their children. For the first time in recent memory, they have *no* waiting children.

There are three key strategies that have contributed to Alexandria's success. First, the city has a designated adoptive home recruiter who partners with adoption social workers to develop a recruitment plan and materials that best reflect the types of families needed for waiting children. Secondly, supervisors within the Foster Care and Adoption Units meet monthly to review cases and assign concurrent workers. Finally, they purposefully look at placement decisions at different times throughout the case to make sure that the child's placement meets their needs. Staff also credit their success to the tremendous attention the city gives to the child's placement. If a child cannot be safely reunified, ideally their first placement will be their last placement. Of the 34 adoptions Alexandria had this year, 12 children were adopted by their resource families, 5 were relative adoptions, and 7 families were recruited from outside of the agency.

With a strong beginning to the foster parent association, a beautiful ending for 34 children who were adopted this year, and the identification of permanent homes for all of the city's waiting foster children, this jurisdiction has an awful lot to be thankful for this November. Their synchronized teamwork should be celebrated.



Back left to right: Odessa Becker, Michele Mintling, Chrissy Levine, Diana Tracey, Dahlia Foreman, Bette Smith, Suzanne Kratzok, Greta Rosenzweig

COG Celebrates Adoption Month on Facebook



The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) marked the start of National Adoption Month by utilizing social media. COG's Adoption and Foster Care podcast Series includes three recordings on RSS feed and Facebook.

The series was released on November 1st to kick-off National Adoption Month and covered timely topics such as: the Freddie Mac Adoption Expo, COG's Foster Care Advisory Committee's goals for the fiscal year, and a 101 on adoption and foster parenting in the National Capital Region for new families. To listen to these podcasts, please visit www.facebook.com/kidsneedfamilies or click the Facebook or RSS link above.

Freddie Mac Foundation: Adoption Expo in Review

To help kick-off National Adoption Month, the Freddie Mac Foundation, along with COG and NBC 4, hosted the 3rd Annual Adoption Expo on November 6, 2010 at the Grand Hyatt in Washington, D.C. The family-friendly event was free to the public. The attendees were treated to a one-stop-shop experience. They received free adoption materials, advice from adoption experts, and testimonies from adoptive parents and children about their experience all in one place, one Saturday afternoon.

Thousands attended the expo, and left with renewed energy to continue (or start) on their journey toward adoption. Barbara Harrison kicked off the event with a few encouraging to the crowd of anxious prospective adopters. Several families who adopted Wednesday's Child children also attended the event to share their experience and inspire others to do the same. In case you missed this exciting 3rd annual event, you can see a NBC4 Wednesday's Child segment about the expo by clicking [here](#).



Click on the logo above to search for Adoption Day events in your community!



Adoption Expo, November 6, 2010

Wednesday's Child Success: A Social Worker's Perspective



Shanda Carr

Shanda Carr was very excited to feature a beautiful 5 year old named Katrina on *Wednesday's Child*. Shanda, a Recruitment Social Worker for Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) in the District of Columbia, was having trouble

finding an adoptive family for the little girl because of a medical issue. Shanda was very optimistic though that a feature on *Wednesday's Child* would yield results for little Katrina.

Katrina's taping was filmed in January 2010. The filming centered around a fancy tea party held at the Ritz Carlton in Pentagon City. The hotel provided Katrina with a princess dress for the

special occasion. The dress was all pink, (Katrina's favorite color), curls fell to her shoulders, and her smile could have lit up the world. Staff at the Ritz Carlton, especially Angella Reid and Julie Matos, made Katrina feel like the little princess she is. They showered her with dainty treats and lady-like conversation. Shanda had no doubt that numerous inquiries would be received for Katrina, given how adorable and loveable she is, and the camera only illuminated her preciousness.

Along with the inclement weather during January, staff at the Council of Governments (COG) experienced a storm of our own after Katrina's segment aired. COG staff, who answers and returns 100% of the calls to 1-88-TO-ADOPT-ME received over 200 calls and emails for Katrina. All inquiries were pre-screened by COG staff. COG alerted CFSA to follow-up on each inquiry, and receive more insight on the family's preparedness to adopt Katrina. In turn, Shanda spent hours filtering through

copious home studies and speaking with the families who were definitely appropriate for Katrina. Needless-to-say, the thought of making one selection was challenging.

A final decision was made. The family selected is not only loving and nurturing, but is extremely dependable and committed to Katrina's care. There is no doubt that this family will meet Katrina's needs on all levels forever.

Today, Katrina couldn't be happier! Shanda recently learned that Katrina picked out a princess bed for her new room, and that she loves having a big sister, and a new puppy in the home. Finally a family was able to see beyond Katrina's medical issue to notice this lovely little girl anxious for a family. Thanks to the *Wednesday's Child* feature, and the Council of Governments efforts before and after the feature, this little princess has her forever family.

Child Welfare Committees

COG's Child Welfare Program has 47 active committee members who sit on one or more of the following COG committees: Child Welfare Directors, Foster Care Advisory, or the *Wednesday's Child* committee. Please visit www.mwcog.org/childwelfare to learn more about the work of these committees.



Director, Valerie Cuffee
Wed's Child, Denise Eigen
Foster Care, Gerson Paniagua



Director, Suzanne Chis
Wed's Child, Dahlia Foreman
Wed's Child, Michele Mintling
Foster Care, Diana Tracey



Asst. Director, Mike Demidenko
Wed's Child, Erica Burns
Foster Care, Jennifer Long



Director, Gloria Brown
Foster Care & Wed's Child, Lisa Robertson
Foster Care & Wed's Child, Lavette Sims



Admin., Heather Peck Dzewulski



Director, Kathy Froyd
Wed's Child, Beverly Howard
Wed's Child, Anne Goldberg
Foster Care, Emma Marshall
Foster Care, Rosa Suau



Director, Agnes Leshner
Foster Care, Linda Gore,
Foster Care, Corrinne Millette
Foster Care, Shari Zouhairi,
Foster Care, Erin Stillwell
Wed's Child, Catherine Robinson



Director, Janine Sewell
Wed's Child, Diane Gestrich
Foster Care, Van Washington



Director, Dr. Roque Gerald
Foster Care, Ritu Atwal
Foster Care & Wed's Child, Charelia Bazemore



Wed's Child, Christopher Wirt



Wed's Child, Amber Brown



Wed's Child, Matthew Shaffer



Foster Care, John Bertulis

COG's Child Welfare
Committees are staffed by
Kamilah Bunn.

If you have specific
questions about the work-
ings of these committees,
please contact her at
kbunn@mwcog.org