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6th Annual Wednesday's Child Match Party



Wednesday's Child Alex in hot air balloon photo booth



Ballroom at Ritz –Carlton, Pentagon City

Up, Up and Away Dream was theme of our 6th Annual Wednesday's Child Match Party. On April 26, 2014 the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments once again partnered with Kathleen Holt-Whyte and the Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City to host this annual event. This occasion provides prospective adoptive families the chance to interact face-to-face with many of our Wednesday's Child Children that are still waiting for a loving family. It allows them to see past the labels, diagnoses and case histories that often mask the personalities of each child.

We were joined by our generous community partners: Wendy's donated gift cards and Bach2Rock provided items for our tremendous prize table. Surprises were abundant. Katherine & Sophie, owners of Georgetown Cupcake and stars of hit TLC show DC Cupcakes, made a surprise appearance and signed autographs for all the young people in attendance. They also brought with them over 100 cupcakes to sweeten our event. There was also a surprise performance by The Metropolitan Youth Tap Ensemble of the Metropolitan School of the Arts.



Wednesday's Child Charlie with Georgetown Cupcake Owners: Katherine Kallinis Berman and Sophie Kallinis LaMontagne

The afternoon was filled with great food, music, games, and activities where laughter and smiles were shared between adults and young people alike. But behind the fun, the aim could hardly have been more serious: to get the 20 children who attended out of the foster care system and into adoptive families. The youth centered activity *Everyone Has a Voice* gave young people a genuine opportunity to express their views and desire for a family.

Over 50 inquiries were submitted as a result of the Match Party. It is our hope that these inquiries lead to adoptions, and our waiting youth found the forever families that they are dreaming of.

Editor's Footnote



Child Welfare Team
Krystal Fenwick and Kamillah Bunn

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

Krystal Fenwick
kfenwick@mwcog.org

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

Recent Wednesday's Child Children



Johnny is a great kid who loves to laugh and have fun! He's an outdoorsy, interesting, extremely cordial young man with a great sense of humor.

To learn more about Johnny, call 88-TO-ADOPT ME, or click [here](#).

Photos by © 2014 Aude Guerrucci



Talieya is a sweetheart. She adores puppies and kittens. Not surprisingly, Talieya would like to become a veterinarian one day or she might like to work in a vet office. To learn more about Talieya, call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).



Shanecia is a sweetheart. She has a delightful cheerful personality and bright smile. She wants to be a pastor or a lawyer when she grows up. To learn more about Shanecia, call 88-TO-ADOPT ME, or click [here](#).

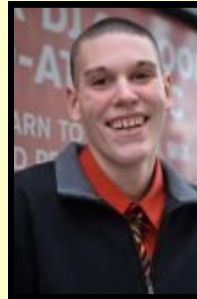


Jamila is a real sports lover. She really enjoys playing all kinds of sports, especially basketball. She also likes amusement parks, drawing, and watching movies. To learn more about Jamila, call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).

Photos by © 2014 Shelley Miller



Jerry is an intelligent and extremely polite young man with a dazzling smile to match. Like most kids his age, he enjoys video games, but he also has an adventurous side and enjoys rock climbing too. To learn more about Jerry, call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).



William is a super-friendly laid-back self-proclaimed "Country Boy." He loves to work with his hands-- from cooking to mechanics to his new found love of deejaying. To learn more about William, call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).

Photos by © 2014 Shelley Miller

Jurisdiction Spotlight: Maryland Passes New Tax Law to Help Foster Parents

Delegate Peter Murphy of Charles County and other colleagues in the Maryland legislature sponsored a bill to support Maryland foster parents. It passed the Maryland House and Senate unanimously and upon Governor O'Malley's signature will go into effect July 1st and shall be applicable to all tax years beginning after December 31, 2013.

This new tax law will allow a subtraction modification of up to \$1500.00 per foster family per year under Maryland income tax for unreimbursed expenses incurred by specified foster parents on behalf of a foster child. This law stipulates that only specified expenses may be included in the subtraction and prohibits expenses for which the foster parent receives an allowance or reimbursement. The bill defines foster parent as an approved public foster parent or a kinship parent providing 24 hour substitute care for a child under the care and custody of a local department of social services.



The Maryland Resource Parent Association (MRPA) advocated and testified on behalf of the State's foster parents for this legislation. The rationale that supported this measure according to Michele Burnette, Vice-President of MRPA, is that when a child is initially placed in a foster home, more often than not, the child comes with very little. Although an initial clothing allowance of \$75.00 is sometimes received, many foster parents incur some unreimbursed expenses. Burnette, a Southern Maryland foster parent, shared "we are grateful to Delegate Murphy for his support of foster parents and MRPA is proud of our successful advocacy for this new law."

—John Bertulis Foster Parent Ombudsman, Maryland Department of Human Resources contributed to this article

More Photos from Wednesday's Child Match Party



Photos by © 2014 Linda Wang

2014 Foster Parents of the Year

On May 14, 2014 the National Capital Region's Foster Parents of the Year were honored at the Council of Governments Board meeting for their commitment to their foster sons and daughters as well as to the children's birth families. The foster parents were praised for developing productive partnerships with the birth families that benefitted the children and entire communities. Keep reading to learn more about this year's Foster Parents of the Year.

Frederick County's Denise and Robert Disney

When the Frederick County Department of Social Services offered an opportunity for a specialized foster parent training to work with teenagers, a very difficult population to place in foster homes, the Disneys were the first to sign up. Since that time, the Disneys have received dozens of teenage boys in their home. Mr. and Mrs. Disney are staunch advocates, mentors, nurturers, and supporters of each young man they have fostered. Their commitment to these young men has never faltered, and the agency is very grateful for the difference they have made in their lives.

Montgomery County's Florence Bell

Over 100 children have called Ms. Bell "mom." She has been a foster parent since 1998, and is known for her patience and flexibility. Ms. Bell rarely declines the opportunity to receive a new placement, so over the years she has cared for the full spectrum of children, including infants, sibling groups, children with special needs, pregnant and parenting teens and young adult teenagers on the verge of aging out. Coming from situations of horrific abuse or neglect, Ms. Bell has the ability to make each child feel safe in her home so their healing process can begin.

Prince George's County Valerie Jones

An island native, Ms. Jones has a light-hearted nature and is passionate about "her kids." Each child who is placed with Ms. Jones feels her genuine concern for their well-being. Ms. Jones made the decision to become a foster parent in 2001 after witnessing her relatives in their roles as foster parents. Ms. Jones is carrying on a family tradition, and is doing an excellent job of creating a legacy of love.

Charles County's Teri Traudt

Ms. Traudt is a single mom on the go, and yet she finds time to give back to her community as a foster parent. Ms. Traudt has adopted a child from foster care and is in the process of adopting another. She is known by the agency, parents, and community as a patient nurturer. This is why Ms. Traudt is often called upon to help children and their birth parents renew their relationship so the child can return home. She is an awesome example of how one person can make a significant difference. For her service to Charles County's foster children, Ms. Traudt deserves this recognition.

Loudoun County's Allan & Claire Wright

The Wright family is being honored for many reasons, but especially for their commitment to children with special needs and developmental delays. They are consistently supportive of each foster child's birth parents, and have worked tirelessly with the birth families to support them in learning how to care for their child's needs so they can return home. The Wrights are seen as cooperative parents, and are known as a very supportive, kind and loving family within their community.

Prince William County's Daniel & Mae Morey

Every child that is placed in the Moreys home knows they are loved. This large family, including 5 foster children, is best described as a fun, "never dull" home. Education is key in the Morey household, and the children who are placed there thrive academically. The Moreys recently had a child placed in their home who was failing in school. After a short time, that same child caught up to grade level, and is graduating a year earlier than scheduled.

Fairfax County's Megan Wells

Although Ms. Wells is a new foster parent, fostering for less than a year, she approaches the role as a seasoned veteran. She embraced her first placement last year by helping a 13 year old boy remain connected to his extended family. She provides pictures and updates to his family constantly to keep them connected to their son. Ms. Wells has been able to work with the family in a manner that does not diminish their role or make them feel threatened. This level of trust is

extremely hard to develop with birth families. The fact that Ms. Wells developed this bond so quickly is a true testament to her natural and obvious commitment to children, and earnest desire to help.

Arlington County's Ben and Shira Simon

The Simon's home is a home away from home for many foster children. They are inclusive of all birth families, even teaching one birth dad how to drive a car so he could get a job and receive his children back. After their foster children are reunified, the Simons are often invited to attend their birthday parties by their birth families. The Simons are truly seen as extended family members by the birth parents. They embrace the idea of foster parenting as a way to give back to their community, and have exposed their friends and relatives to the wonders of foster parenting and the difference it makes.

City of Alexandria's Keith and Cherie Smith

The Smiths are phenomenal foster parents. They are diligent caretakers willing to go the distance, any distance, to make sure their foster children are safe and secure. In fact, because it was in the best interest of the teenager who was placed in their care to continue to attend their base school, the family traveled over 40 miles each way to take the child to school. The Smiths also helped an infant, who arrived at their home in poor physical condition, return to optimal health by tending to her specific medical needs. The Smiths truly exemplify the generosity, understanding, care, thoughtfulness, and steadfastness that Alexandria foster children need and deserve.

District of Columbia's Alecia Witherspoon

Ms. Witherspoon is an outstanding foster parent. She was chosen among the many foster parents in DC's system to serve in the Mockingbird project as a HUB parent. As a HUB parent Ms. Witherspoon is not only a foster parent, she is on-call 24/7 to the other foster parents in her neighborhood. If a parent has an emergency or a child needs respite care, they call Ms. Witherspoon. Her door is rarely closed, and she truly embraces her role as a parent to the children within her community, and as a servant of the District of Columbia.

Photos from Foster Parents of the Year Awards Reception

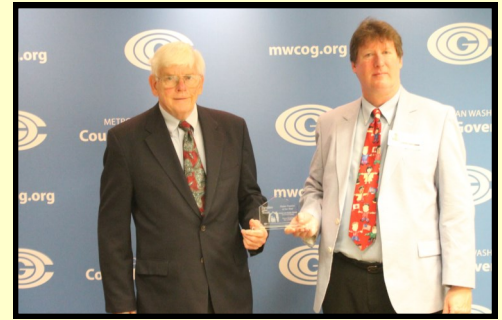


(L:R) Rockville Mayor Bridget Newton and Florence Bell, Montgomery County Foster Parent of the Year

Photos by Matt Kroneberger, COG

To view documentary-shorts featuring some of these inspiring families, visit:

[facebook.com/kidsneedfamilies](https://www.facebook.com/kidsneedfamilies)



(L:R) Frederick County Commissioner, David Gray, and Assistant Director of Frederick County Department of Social Services, Steve White, accepting the award on behalf of Disney Family, Frederick County Foster Parents of the Year



(L:R) Prince George's County Acting Chief Administrative Officer, Nicholas Majett, Valerie Jones, Prince George's County Foster Parent of the Year, and Katrina Mitchell, Social Worker



Teri Traudt, Charles County Foster Parent of the Year



(L:R) Sassan Jahanian, Social Worker, Loudoun County Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Scott York, Claire & Allan Wright, Loudoun County Foster Parents of the Year



(L:R) Prince William County Supervisor Frank Principi, Mae & Daniel Morey, Prince William County Foster Parents of the Year



(L:R) Megan Wells, Fairfax County Foster Parent of the Year and Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman, Sharon Bulova



(L:R) Arlington County Board Member, Walter Tejada, Shira & Ben Simon, Arlington County Foster Parents of the Year, and Arlington County Department of Social Services Director, Heather Stowe



(L:R) Tamara Carter, Social Worker, Cherie & Keith Smith, City of Alexandria Foster Parents of the Year



(L:R) District of Columbia Child and Family Services Director, Brenda Donald, and Alecia Witherspoon, District of Columbia Foster Parent of the Year

Support our Families Like Yours Campaign on Kickstarter!

We've Launched our Kickstarter Campaign – Please join us!

We are thrilled to announce that Families Like Yours, our project to recognize, recruit, and retain foster parents, has officially launched a Kickstarter Campaign during National Foster Care Month.

KICKSTARTER

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/familieslikeyours/families-like-yours-foster-parent-documentaries>

We are fundraising NOW through June 14th to recognize outstanding foster parents from across the region! With the funds we raise, we will continue to produce the Foster Parent of the Year documentary-shorts. These videos are used by local agencies to recruit more foster families, and have helped existing foster parents feel proud and honored for their work with children. If we are successful, we will also host a regional appreciation event where all foster families can be recognized for their work with children in our communities.

You can give anywhere from **\$10.00 to \$1,000.00**—all amounts matter, and all are appreciated! Donations are tax-deductible!

Please spread the word to your family, friends, co-workers, and everyone you know!

We MUST raise **\$20,000 by June 14th** to keep any of the money, and help our region's wonderful foster parents !

If you have any questions, contact us at familieslikeyours@mwcog.org

Upcoming Community Fundraisers

The Child Welfare Program is fortunate to benefit from the fundraising efforts and generosity of the community. We are grateful for partners in the community who organize fundraisers and donate the proceeds to *Families Like Yours* enabling us to fulfill our vision to recognize outstanding foster parents, recruit new foster parents, and retain existing foster parents. We will be partnering with several community retailers throughout the summer. We would love to see you at our next event!

June

Monday, June 2nd 5:30-8:00pm

Tapping Party at Gordon Biersch Navy Yard location (District of Columbia)

Tuesday, June 3rd 5:00-7:00pm

Spirit Night at Chick-Fil- A in Waldorf (Charles County)

July

Wednesday, July 23rd 5:00-8:30pm

Run the Diner at Silver Diner Potomac Mills location (Prince William County)

See more at:

<https://www.facebook.com/kidsneedfamilies/events>

Do you have an idea for a fundraiser that you'd like to organize on our behalf?

Contact Krystal Fenwick at kfenwick@mwcog.org

About COG's Child Welfare Program

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) —

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is a regional organization of Washington area local governments. COG is comprised of 22 local jurisdictions surrounding our nation's capital, in addition to area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives. COG provides a focus for action and develops sound regional responses to such issues as the environment, affordable housing, economic development, health and family concerns, child welfare, population growth, public safety, and transportation.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' Child Welfare Program —

In partnership with local and state child welfare agencies, COG's Child Welfare Program achieves positive outcomes for youth in foster care by bolstering local governments' foster and adoptive parent recruitment and retention initiatives. COG's child welfare committees provide a platform for this work while also providing local governments in the National Capital Region with technical assistance and a gathering place to discuss and track trends in foster care.

Our Committees —

- ◆ Child Welfare Directors Committee (meets quarterly)
- ◆ Foster Care Advisory Committee (meets monthly)
- ◆ Wednesday's Child Adoption Committee (meets monthly)
- ◆ Child Welfare Data Workgroup (meets monthly, October-May)
- ◆ Child Welfare Emergency Preparedness Workgroup (meets as needed)

To learn more about the Child Welfare Program, please visit: www.mwcog.org/childwelfare
"Like" us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/kidsneedfamilies, or send us a Tweet, [@kidsneedfamily](https://twitter.com/kidsneedfamily)