



METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON
Council of Governments

Child Welfare News

Edition 14

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4th Annual Wednesday's Child Match Party



Bill Helms, Ritz-Carlton &
Kathleen Holt Whyte



Ballroom at Ritz-Carlton

On April 28, 2013 the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments partnered with the National Adoption Center, Kathleen Holt-Whyte and the Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City to host the 4th Annual Wednesday's Child Match Party. As in the past, we were joined by our wonderful community partners: Best Buy staffed the prize table; and Georgetown Cupcake donated close to 100 cupcakes to sweeten our event!

This annual event offers a unique adoption opportunity to local children in the region's foster care system. It brings together Wednesday's Child children, their social workers, and prospective adoptive parents in a fun, safe environment where they have the opportunity to interact in a way that brings life to a child's personality.



Wednesday's Child Brandon in his cowboy gear

There were many activities to explore that Sunday afternoon—all coinciding with the western theme selected by the youth. Activities such as a corn hole game, western trivia, caricature drawings, and a western photo booth. But what the youth appeared to enjoy the most was the dance floor where they not only danced, but took to the center of the room to share many of their other talents- singing, spoken word, and one young person even told a few jokes.

In addition to the families having the opportunity to see some of the youth do what they do best, they also had the opportunity to speak individually with each child as they viewed the child's dream board. The children's dream boards featured images and words cut from magazines that depicted their interests along with hopes and dreams for the future.

The event was fun-filled for everyone involved, and there were thirty adoption inquiries on the children from the families in attendance. We are hopeful for many potential matches that will become adoptive placements!

Editor's Footnote



Child Welfare Team : Krystal Fenwick and
Kamilah Bunn

If there are any ideas that you would like to see covered in future newsletters, please email me.

Looking forward to receiving your suggestions.

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

Recent Wednesday's Child Children



Victor is an adorable young fellow! He thoroughly enjoys swimming. To learn more about Victor, call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).

Photos by © 2013 Christine Meulemans



Christopher is a sweet young man. He has a contagious smile and a wonderful sense of humor. To learn more about Christopher, call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).

Photos by © 2013 Alyson Cohen



Isaiah is a sweet and curious little one! He has made many developmental strides, including walks with little assistance! To learn more about Isaiah, call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).

Photos by © 2013 Christine Meulemans



Shanell is an outgoing ambitious young lady who aims to be a child-care provider one day. To learn more about Shanell, call 88-TO-ADOPT ME, or click [here](#).

Photos by © 2013 Alyson Cohen



Lilliana is a sweet young lady who loves music. To learn more about Lilliana, call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).

Photos by © 2013 Kathleen McCullough



Tony is a happy young man. He loves school and listening to music. To learn more about Tony, call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).

Photos by © 2013 Christine Meulemans

Jurisdiction Spotlight: Arlington County Reaching Latino Families

“Niños claman por padres temporalis” or “children cry out for temporary parents” is the message being spread throughout Arlington County in an effort to recruit more Latino foster families. Arlington County Child and Family Services is hoping to better meet the language and cultural needs of the Latino children and their families in their foster care program by utilizing targeted recruitment efforts.



Arlington is a diverse county. Many efforts have been utilized in recruiting Latino families in this county. They are working collaboratively with the community and participating in events directed to the Latino population, collaborating with ethnic media and being more visible in places frequented by Latinos. To further connect with Latino families, they have translated materials into Spanish. “Our main focus is to educate the Latino population about foster care as a family service,” said recruiter, Erica Serrano. One of the greatest barriers they are currently faced with is dispelling misconceptions about foster care.

This agency has found the message that resonates most with Latino families is a same message that resonates with most families, “there are children in need in their community.”

Many families want to be good neighbors, and give of their time and resources to improve their communities. Arlington officials are making the case that foster parenting is a wonderful way to do just that.

May is National Foster Care Month

This May we once again celebrate Foster Care Month in the National Capital Region and across the nation. This annual campaign is a national effort designed to increase awareness around issues that impact foster children and to encourage individuals and communities to do more to support these amazing and deserving youth. Every year, hundreds of families care for thousands of children in the National Capital Region who have been abused and neglected. While foster parents should be celebrated year around, National Foster Care Month is a great time to honor those families who selflessly open their homes.

There are a number of events being held throughout the region to recognize foster parents and their commitment to children in need of safe, loving homes. We want to take the opportunity to recognize all of the foster families and express our sincere appreciation for the love, care, hope, guidance, and nurturance they provide to the abused and neglected children of our region.

2013 Foster Parents of the Year

Each year, COG member jurisdictions select outstanding foster parents and provide them with the distinction of, "Foster Parent (s) of the Year." In the past, COG has hosted galas and appreciation events for these outstanding caregivers. This year, our awardees are being featured on social media and on local and regional television. Keep reading to learn more about this year's Foster Parents of the Year.

Arlington County's **Mark & Rebecca Goodhart** are foster parents that go above and beyond their call of duty. All of their placements have been teenagers with various needs and behaviors, including one child that was transitioning from a residential treatment facility and one young lady pregnant with her first child. The Goodharts ensure children placed in their home have a stable, loving, and supportive environment to thrive.

City of Alexandria's **Matt & Carole Keane** recently fostered a three year old; the child was able to make a successful and smooth transition to a relative's care. This was largely due to the Keanes' tremendous work in building a relationship with the

relatives in family activities such as the child's soccer games and gymnastics lessons. They also often had the relatives over to their home for dinner. As a result of this "Bridging the Gap" work, the child was able to make a smooth transition to his relative's care all the while being able to continue to have ties with the Keanes.

District of Columbia's **Arvia Palmer** has a unique ability to connect with the teenage population, a group that is often seen as challenging to others. Ms. Palmer describes herself as "a foster parent who believes that kids are people too". This mantra has allowed Ms. Palmer to develop relationships with the children that extends beyond their time in her care.

Fairfax County's **Amy Zydell** is committed to providing support to birth families of children who are placed in her home. Ms. Zydell recently opened her home to a premature infant. Ms. Zydell immediately began communicating with the infant's biological mother who was in the hospital. She kept the birth parents informed of all the child's medical appointments and progress documenting with many photo-

graphs along the way. She went out of her way to guarantee the biological parents develop and maintain loving bonds with their child.

Frederick County Foster Family of the Year: Byron & Sharon Copley have provided loving care for two boys, who are part of a larger sibling group, for many years. They have always understood the importance of family connections. They have maintained consistent contact with the boys' siblings, parent, and extended family members to ensure that the children had the opportunity to maintain their family relationships. The Copley family and the boys' birth family have truly blended into a larger extended family for the children, sharing holidays, birthdays and special occasions together.

Montgomery County's **Darlene Battle** has been known to accept children on an emergency basis. This has included several groups of siblings. She has shown expertise and compassion in caring for children of all ages. Ms. Battle is especially skilled at having necessary conversations with teens about the importance of education, developing positive relationships, and avoiding risky

behaviors. It has been said that Ms. Battle can see the good in each and every child. This viewpoint has made Ms. Battle's home a place where children are given second chances.

Prince George's County's **James & Gail Craig** have gone above and beyond expectations in their efforts toward transforming fragile and traumatized children into confident and zealous youth. They are currently caring for two siblings, who are from a sibling group of 13. Mr. and Mrs. Craig understand the importance of maintaining family ties and often have the children's siblings over to their home.

Prince William County's **Keith & Jacqueline Mitchell** have demonstrated an enormous amount of dedication, patience, commitment and endurance for the children that have been in their home. They have worked through challenging behaviors with some children and also have provided care for a special needs child that required weekly therapy and constant supervision.

Wednesday's Child Love Yourself, Day of Beauty

On February 18, 2013 the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments partnered with Aveda Institute, and The Washington DC Alumnae Chapter and the Federal City Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. to host a post Valentine's Day celebration for teenage girls previously featured on NBC4 Wednesday's Child.

Kendra, Danetta, and Shania were treated to manicures, hair styling, and make-up application courtesy of the students and educators at Aveda Institute. The young ladies thoroughly enjoyed themselves and were happy to be experiencing this day of beauty.



Photos by © 2013 Aude Guerrucci

In addition to receiving pampering services, each young lady was paired with two lovely women of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority alumnae chapters who served as mentors for the day. Ooohs and ahhs over nail polish color choices were overheard in conversation in addition to chat about likes, dislikes, and hopes for the future.

The event was designed to further build self-esteem and confidence in our young ladies Kendra, Danetta, and Shania who are still waiting to be adopted. Events like this one, remind children of the child welfare system that they are valued and worthy.



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 governments surrounding our nation's capital, plus 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 (adhoc)

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