

Growth Through Gardening— Planting Seeds for a Better Tomorrow

The Garden Project at Ashler Manor began as a means to promote nutrition and a healthy lifestyle, while educational lessons were taught in planting, growing and harvesting a garden. The project soon blossomed into a motivational opportunity for residents to set goals, make decisions, and in turn, improve their self esteem.

An initial grant through the PA Dept. of Education, in association with the National School Lunch Program, launched the Garden Project. A variety of activities were introduced that included trips to the local farmers' market, taste-testing new fruits and vegetables through a "Fear Factor" game, picking strawberries and making jam. Families United Network, Inc., Executive Assistant Vickie Johnson, spearheaded the project and remarked, "the calm easy spirit that comes with the garden is the gift, and the vegetables are the bonus." Teamwork, adult mentoring and nurturing opportunities offered through this project instilled personal satisfaction for many of our residents and promoted self esteem in the process.

A Roadmap for Success: Transitioning to Independence

Families United Network, Inc., is committed to providing a solid foundation for older youth transitioning to independence. Statistics show that many youth aging out of the child welfare system are not adequately prepared to meet life's challenges. The Supervised Independent Living Programs at Ashler Manor and Arborvale Manor have been preparing youth for a positive transition to independence for the past 9 years.

This past year, the programs have successfully transitioned 21 youth, all of whom have furthered their educational achievement, through continued high school progression, GED attainment or college/trade school admission. Stipend programs have accentuated earnings from paid employment, with our youth entering adulthood with an average of \$2500 in savings. Targeted skill development, experiential learning opportunities and a supportive environment provide a solid roadmap for success, as we continue to support youth transition to independence.

Families United Network's Ashler Manor program, located in Muncy, PA, offers Community Based Residential Services and Independent Living Services for neglected and abused females, ages 12-18. Arborvale Manor, located in Lancaster, PA, provides independent living services for adolescent males, ages 15-18 years old.



Families United Network, Inc.
Administrative Office
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We welcome your feedback!

Please direct any questions or comments to
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Outlooks

2007-2008 Outcomes

Annual Newsletter for Stakeholders

Play Therapy

Play Therapy refers to many treatment methods which all apply the therapeutic benefits of play. Play therapy builds on the natural way children learn about themselves and their relationships in the world. Children learn to communicate with others, express feelings, modify behavior, develop problem-solving skills, and learn new ways of relating. Play provides a safe psychological distance from their problems and facilitates developmentally appropriate expression of thoughts and feelings.

Trained clinicians use play therapy to assess and understand children's play, as well as help children cope with difficult emotions and find solutions to problems like anger management, grief, loss, family dissolution and trauma. In addition, play therapy is also used for modification of behavioral disorders which includes anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity, autism or pervasive developmental, academic and social developmental, physical and learning disabilities and conduct disorders. Research supports the effectiveness of play therapy with children whose problems are related to life stressors, such as divorce, death, relocation, hospitalization, chronic illness, stressful experiences, physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence, and natural disasters.

By confronting problems in a clinical play therapy setting, children find healthier solutions. Play therapy helps children change the way they think about, feel toward, and resolve concerns. The most troubling problems can be confronted and lasting resolutions can be discovered, rehearsed, mastered and become lifelong strategies. In summary play therapy helps children become responsible for behaviors and develop creative solutions, while developing respect for others and self acceptance.

Excerpts taken from the Association for Play Therapy~Why Play Therapy Brochure.



Expanding Families Through Adoption

Families United Network's Private Adoption program helped several families grow through adoption. Four families successfully traveled to Guatemala and brought home their children. Each of these adoptions occurred before Guatemala entered into the Hague Convention, which has since slowed adoptions from that country. This year has been full of changes and improvements with the Guatemala program and adoption process. The exact future of Guatemala adoptions is unknown, but it is hopeful that the country may be ready to re-open for international adoptions in January of 2009.

In addition to the families who adopted from Guatemala, several home study family's also welcomed new arrivals. One family welcomed home a young girl from Liberia. Several other home study families welcomed home infants domestically from Missouri, Kansas, California, and Pennsylvania.

Several other families active in home study services with Families United Network, Inc. have been matched with children from all over the world. Adoptions are planned for the upcoming year from Latvia, Russia, Ethiopian, India, Vietnam, Uganda, Mexico, and Haiti.



From the Chief Executive Officer



As we see declines in our economic environment, we see increasing challenges in the Child Welfare world. Families United Network, Inc. prides itself, not only in our ability to keep pace with the change, but also in our ability to set ourselves apart in this competitive environment.

Each year brings with it new regulations and mandates for enhanced levels of care and oversight. Children are being shifted from higher levels of care into the foster care system. These all require additional funds and time on the part of our employees. But as an agency we have been able to adapt to the change and to even be ahead of the wave. We have performed FBI fingerprinting clearances of our employees for a decade prior to this becoming the "best practice" in an effort to ensure the highest level of safety for the children we serve. Our agency is fully accredited with the Council on Accreditation (COA), which is a voluntary effort on our part to assess the quality of our program. The majority of private and public agencies are not accredited. We are COA approved under the Hague Convention to do foreign adoptions and are approved by the U.S. Department of State. We have developed an extensive training schedule for our foster and kinship parents to better equip them for the behavioral issues present with many of our children, and we follow the curriculum developed by the Child Welfare League of America which is a recognized leader in this field. Our use of the Child Behavioral Checklist, Ages and Stages and Global Assessment Functioning are all tools we use to empirically measure the progress of the children as they advance through our programs and services. These assessments also give us the ability to adjust our programs to meet the changing needs of our clients. We are extensively involved with our state private provider organization – Pennsylvania Council for Children, Youth and Family Services, through our leadership of several workgroups and board membership. This keeps us on the cutting edge of innovation in child welfare services.

Despite all of these recognitions and accreditations, what really enables success for our agency is the dedication and hard work of our staff, Board of Directors, Advisory Board and especially our resource/kinship parents. We have seen significant growth over this past year, and the reputation that we enjoy is built on the extensive hours of work by this entire team. Thank you for your tremendous effort in making a difference in the lives of our children.

Sincerely,

 Thomas A. Neuhard
 Chief Executive Officer

Our Mission:

Families United Network, Inc. is dedicated to strengthening families by providing children and youth with a safe, nurturing, community environment through a continuum of services, which focuses on reunification or permanency.

Families United Network, Inc. Board of Directors



Pictured left to right: Mary Ann Tarantino, Secretary; Sheila M. Ross, Treasurer; Robert Wagner, Chairman; and Joseph O. Smith, Vice Chairman

Ashler Manor Advisory Board

Chris Smith	Corey Palmatier	Woody Shaner
Tonya Anderson	Paula Miller	Nancy Matter
Danielle Liddic		

Program Locations:

Administrative Office

P.O. Box 264 • Muncy, PA 17756

Foster Care & Adoption Program Offices

South Central

101 Old Schoolhouse Lane
 2nd Floor
 Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Mount Joy

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 Mount Joy, PA 17552

Scranton

1006 Pittston Avenue, Ste 200
 Scranton, PA 18505

Muncy

1825 John Brady Drive
 Suite 400
 Muncy, PA 17756

Western Office

2735 Mossie Blvd.
 Suite 400
 Monroeville, PA 15146

Residential Programs

Arborevale Manor

2016 Millersville Pike
 Lancaster, PA 17603

Ashler Manor

P.O. Box 264
 Muncy, PA 17756

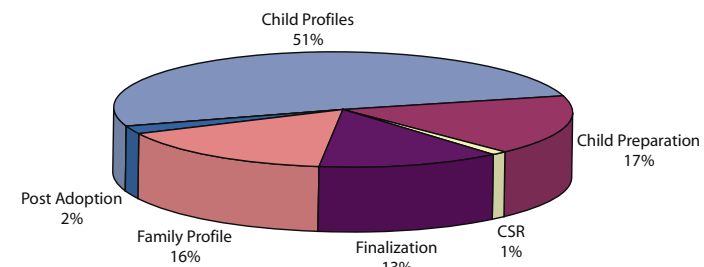
Affiliates



South Central Coalition of Foster Care Providers The Northeast Foster Care Coalition

Families United Network, Inc. does not discriminate in regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin, age, or sex.

Permanency Services 2007-2008



Permanency Program Highlights

Families United Network, Inc. continued to celebrate many positive permanency achievements over the course of the 2007-2008 fiscal year. While SWAN Services were once identified only for children possessing a goal of adoption, there has been a notable shift in how these invaluable permanency services can benefit any child placed through the foster care system.

Throughout the year, Families United Network, Inc. completed numerous child profiles for children with goals of adoption, reunification, or another permanency goal. The child profile captures information from a child's past while also noting placements with resource parents throughout their foster care journey. As the child prepares for adulthood or independence, the child profile will provide answers to their questions or identify supports that will aid them in a successful future.

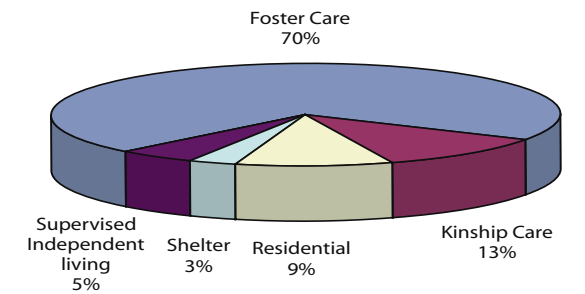
The Permanency Program also branched out and served children that were not directly involved with Families United Network. In the past, much of our permanency service population reflected children that were placed through our foster care program or families that have been approved with the agency. Families United Network has started serving more children and families that are placed directly through County Children & Youth agencies or agencies that may not be affiliated with the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN).

Families United Network, Inc. is also forever striving to enhance the child preparation services we extend to children in the foster care system. Child preparation services are geared toward helping a child answer, "Who Am I," "What Happened to Me," "Where Am I Going," "How Will I Get There" and "When Will I Know I Belong." Families United Network has supported training and educating staff in play therapy techniques as a means of delivering quality services. We have successfully incorporated play therapy activities when working with the children to discuss and address feelings associated with their past, or to aid in dealing with sensitive and difficult issues.

Drug and Alcohol Testing Program

During Fiscal Year 2007/2008, Families United Network implemented a program of drug and alcohol testing for the Westmoreland County Children's Bureau. This service is designed to provide random testing for drug and alcohol use on the part of county designated clients whose substance use may be jeopardizing the safety of a child or children in the home. The service is available 24 hours per day/seven days per week. The purpose of the program is to verify that individuals tested are free of alcohol and/or other drugs at the time of administration of Children's Bureau prescribed test(s) and subsequently, that children in the home are safe. Families United Network staff perform safety assessments on every visit to a client home.

Clients Served 2007-2008



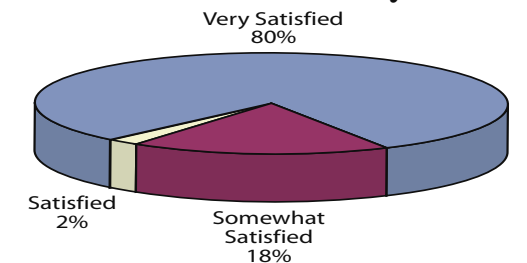
Foster Care Program: A Year in Review

The demand for resource homes for children in need of foster care placement remained strong throughout the year. Families United Network's foster care programs fielded and placed unusually high numbers of referrals, starting with 206 children in foster care and ending the fiscal year with 271, a thirty-two percent increase. The kinship segment of those totals represented approximately nineteen percent of all placements, up just slightly from last year's eighteen percent.

The Muncy foster care office relocated from its previous home on the Asher Manor campus to a separate office in the local community due to exceptional growth. That program began the fiscal year with 24 children in placement and ended with 49. Thirty-five percent of those children were in kinship homes. During the year, the Scranton regional office began an enhanced independent living program of assessment and services for children 16 and older. The staff there now provides assessments and group life skills training sessions combined with child profiles and child prep services to help those getting close to aging out better prepare for success in life after placement.

Our foster care program staff continued to strengthen their partnerships with our county agency colleagues and seek out ways to help fill service gaps where they exist. The agency continued with its full commitment to participate with the Office of Children, Youth and Families and contracting counties to capture data to help measure the success of our services. As the agency transitioned from an old year to a new one, Families United Network renewed its constant and steadfast commitment to always acting in the best interest of children and their families.

Client Satisfaction Survey 2007-2008



Who Are The Children We Serve?

Gender:	47% female	53% male
Age:	5% 0 - 11 months	16% 11 - 15 years
	45% 1 - 5 years	10% 16 and older
	26% 6 - 10 years	
Race:	56% Caucasian	27% African American
	10% Hispanic	7% Two or more races