



Outlooks

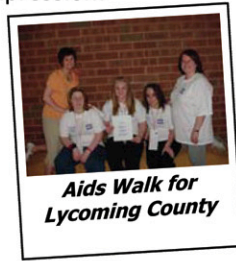
Summer, 2010

Stakeholders Annual Newsletter for Fiscal Year 2009

Community Outreach Tops 3,000 Hours!

The residential programs at Ashler Manor and Arborvale Manor utilize community connections to cultivate and sustain positive experiences.

We are quite fortunate to have relationships with many individuals and organizations who have given their time and talents to encourage positive growth and support for our youth. Whether our residents are lending a hand with preschool educational programs, assisting with a Habitat for Humanity project, celebrating the seasons through fellowship or learning about safety, it is the value in learning to help others that makes a lasting lifetime impression.



Aids Walk for Lycoming County



Ashler Residents play "4 Season of Safety" game at Safe Kids event



SPCA Community Service Project

Family Engagement in Foster Care

Families United Network continues to exhibit best practices by placing a heavy emphasis on working closely with our foster children's birth family. Forming these relationships not only aids in our case planning, but more importantly helps the child adjust as they enter care. Our case managers continue to excel by including the birth parents in the children's various appointments, special programs and events to help maintain and improve the parent/child relationship.

Birth parents often develop close relationships with our case managers and have been very appreciative of their support and encouragement. In numerous cases we have witnessed this relationship being instrumental in helping the families achieve reunification as well as seeing this contact continue long after the children return to their care. And when reunification is not in the child's best interest, our case managers and permanency specialists have shown a great deal of compassion and empathy to birth parents as they get closer to termination of parental rights. Helping the family grieve through this process and prepare for the future is often a difficult and emotional process. Regardless of what the situation may be, we applaud the effort that our workers make everyday with our birth families in upholding Families United Network philosophy, mission and delivering the highest level of quality services to the children and families that we serve.

Who Are the Children We Serve?

Gender:	57% Female	43% Male
Age:	7% 0—11 months	25% 11—15 years
	30% 1—5 years	14% 16 and older
	24% 6—10 years	
Race:	54% Caucasian	31% African American
	5% Hispanic	9% Two or more races
Language:	99% English	1% English & Spanish
Religion:	83% Not Identified	4% Catholic
	13% Christian	

New Computer System

A small internal committee was formed in September 2007 to explore various software applications to improve overall agency productivity and efficiency. After an exhaustive search and evaluation process, Defran Systems was awarded the contract in March 2010.



A special thank you to the committee which included: **Janna Brubaker, Jen Colna, Tom Neuhard, Mae Ling Seto, Leo McLaughlin, Lori Kriner, David Steele** and headed up by chairperson extraordinaire, **Tracy Drescher**.

Their hard work has resulted in the selection of Defran's Evolv-CS. Defran has been providing technology solutions to human service organizations for over 20 years. They have over 400 installations in 31 states and 95% customer retention. The software is a web based application with modules for:

- Case Management
- Clinical Management
- Financial Management
- Management/Compliance and Outcomes Statistics

The roll out will be a thorough and well thought out process as well, which is scheduled to take six months. An on-site and "train the trainer" approach will be utilized for the rollout which will be headed up by:

Tracy Drescher – Project Manager
Lori Kriner – Network and Database Administrator

Each month employees receive status updates of the implementation in the employee newsletter. While the financial and time commitment has been significant, the real-time capabilities of the software for compliance and record keeping alone, will allow staff more time and energy that can be dedicated to the children and families we serve.

Residential Programs Engage Families to Promote Permanency

Family involvement in service planning increases the likelihood of a successful and permanent reunification for families post-placement. Trends in child welfare have shifted to a shorter term length of stay for children in residential care, with continued emphasis on addressing the issues that led to placement. In order to achieve positive outcomes for families, greater emphasis has been placed on a systemic approach to care, which focuses on family involvement in service planning, case assessment, goal achievement, and preparation for reunification.

Our residential programs at Ashler Manor and Arborvale Manor encourage and welcome family involvement. Our philosophy is driven by a team approach to care, which is vital in contributing to the successful achievement of service goals. With this approach, we have discovered that the more a family is involved through open communication, visitation, attending service plan meetings, and family therapy, a noticeable improvement is evident in overall outcome indicators. Children are three times more likely to successfully reunify with families, reintegrate into their home communities and remain in that setting after discharge if consistent family involvement occurs. This pattern essentially reduces the amount of time the family is disrupted and promotes stability within the home community.

Ashler Manor has the capacity to host families in two furnished cottages available on-site for overnight visitation. The cottages feature ample sleeping areas, a bathroom, sitting area, microwave/fridge and TV. Families are able to enjoy on campus amenities, including the Activity Center and meals. Family Therapy is also available as scheduled.

"We have found that children in our program are three times more likely to successfully reunify with families after discharge, if consistent family involvement occurs while they are with us."

*Jen Colna
Residential Services Director*



Keyboard Cottage Accommodations for visiting families



Keyboard & Jennie Lind Cottage This shot taken before our renovation



Activity Center Houses a game room, exercise area, big screen TV & computer room

Families United Network's **Ashler Manor** program, located in Muncy PA, offers community based residential services, life readiness programming and emergency shelter care for neglected and abused females, ages 12-20. **Arborvale Manor**, located in Lancaster PA, provides independent living services for adolescent males, ages 15-20.

Foster Care Program: A Year in Review

Families United Network, Inc.'s foster care programs continued to be busy this fiscal year, continuing a trend that was evident the prior two fiscal years. The programs started the fiscal period with 269 children in foster care and ended June of 2009 with 266. The kinship segment of those totals represented approximately fifteen percent of all placements, down from last year's nineteen percent. These small drops in overall placements and the kinship percentage are most likely attributable to the statewide county children and youth agency emphasis on reducing the number of out-of-home placements and identifying family members for placements which their staff monitor directly rather than using a private agency. Although placement referrals were down just over two percent from the prior fiscal period, placements were somewhat more difficult to make since there was a new and strong emphasis on keeping children in their home schools. An older group of children who came with more complex histories and behaviors also complicated transforming referrals into placements.

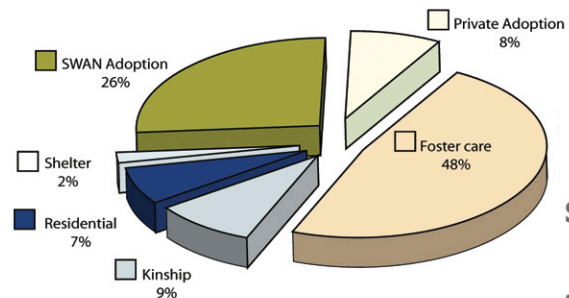
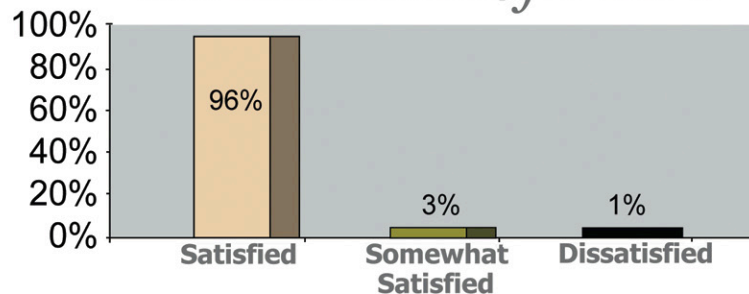


The Mount Joy and Muncy (now called North Central) Offices experienced more growth, and moved to larger accommodations in Mount Joy and Montoursville respectively. Permanency results for the children in Families United Network care, continued to be a high priority and the results reflected a positive trend.

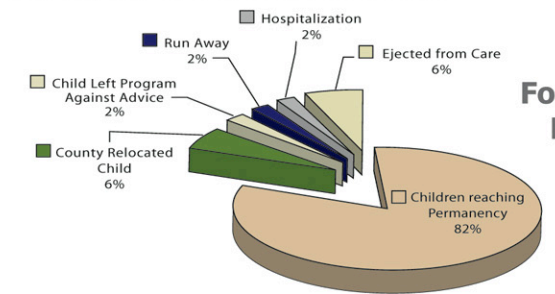
Our kinship activities continued to cover a broad spectrum. The foster care offices provided a variety of kinship services ranging from informal brief assessments of multiple relative homes, to full kinship home studies funded by Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) dollars, to a combination program of home approval and case management of formal kinship care placements.

The agency actively sought ways to assist our county children and youth agency colleagues in the challenging work with which they are charged. A number of staff receiving training and certification in Family Group Decision Making, Family Finding and Family Development Credential Training bolstered that emphasis. Families United Network, Inc. pledged full commitment to assisting county agencies in achieving their goals of: reducing out-of-home placements, shortening the length of stay and increasing the number of children who are reunited with their families of origin, by actively embracing birth families.

Client Satisfaction Survey for 2008-09



Mix of Services for 2008-09



Foster & Kinship Permanency Statistics for 2008-09



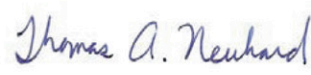
From the Chief Executive Officer



The years 2008-2009 were some of the most challenging as we operated in the face of the ongoing economic recession, unemployment and delays in state budgeting. For our agency, this often meant that we had to continue with our mission while not receiving revenue from federal, state and county sources, which comprised nearly 100% of our income. This situation occurred during a time when the children we serve needed increasing levels of care and resources to ensure a safe, nurturing, community environment in which to adjust. Often times as society suffers from the pressures of financial strain and the breakdown of family structure, children are the victims. It has been our agency's task to put the pieces together. We strive to lessen the negative impact on the children, and to demonstrate positive coping mechanisms as a tool for our clients to develop into productive adults.

In spite of these challenges we continued to provide a comprehensive menu of services ranging from foster, kinship and residential care to state-wide adoption services as a SWAN affiliate. We also provide domestic and international adoptions services. We are currently contracted with nearly 50 counties throughout Pennsylvania. As a recognized leader in child social services, we have had a significant impact on children's lives, and have assisted many children and families to reunite in a healthier environment. Our programs have been recognized nationally through our accreditation with the Council on Accreditation.

We have been successful in attaining our goals through the dedication and hard work of our staff, our Board of Directors and Advisory Board members, and especially our large network of resource parents. Our residential staff has been very busy with programs that have at times been nearly full this past year. Our adoption programs have consistently helped more children to have permanent homes year after year. Together as a team we have worked to make a difference in the lives of the children and families we serve.

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.

We welcome your feedback! Please direct any questions or comments to: Melinda Lyon at mlyon@families4kids.org

**Families United Network, Inc.
 Board of Directors**



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

Ashler Manor Advisory Board
 Chris Smith, Woody Shaner, Danielle Liddic and Paula Miller

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 - North Central**
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 Montoursville, PA 17754
 - Scranton**
 1006 Pittston Avenue
 Suite 200
 Scranton, PA 18505
 - Western**
 655 Rodi Road
 Suite 300
 Pittsburgh, PA 15235
 - Mount Joy**
 412 South Angle Street
 Mount Joy, PA 17552

- Residential Programs**
- Arborvale Manor**
 2016 Millersville Pike
 Lancaster, PA 17603
 - Ashler Manor**
 276 Ashler Manor Drive
 Muncy, PA 17756

Affiliates and Accreditations



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

Private Adoption Program Highlights

The Families United Network, Inc. private adoption program continues to grow; up 88% from the prior year. While the agency no longer offers placement services, instead home studies and post adoption services have been the area of focus and growth. Home study services have been completed for families adopting from: Ukraine, Russia, Ethiopia, India, Taiwan, Kazakhstan, China, and the United States. Many more countries are expected to be added to this list in the coming year including Columbia, Belize and Rwanda.

This fiscal year, a number of inquiries for services were recommended by other agencies that provide placement services. These relationships continue to develop and provide the agency with opportunities to assist more families. Home study services are offered for families adopting from both Hague and Non-Hague approved countries. In each situation, FUN is able to tailor the home study to meet each country's specific requirements.

The development of new international programs was placed on hold during the 2007- 2008 fiscal year. Nepal and the Ukraine were originally considered. However, due to the changing and unexpected international climate, future advancement in becoming a placement agency is not an agency goal at this time. Growth can occur in the services offered as the market for home studies and post adoption services is in high demand and five new permanency specialist positions were added across the state.

- During the 2008-2009 fiscal year the following families welcomed home their children:
- Mr. and Mrs. S. welcomed home their daughter from **Haiti**
 - Mr. and Mrs. M. welcomed home their daughter from **India**
 - Mr. and Mrs. A. welcomed home their son from **Russia**
 - Mr. and Mrs. W. welcomed home their daughters from **Latvia**
 - Mr. and Mrs. G. welcomed home their daughter from **Ethiopia**
 - Mr. and Mrs. O. welcomed home their son from **Russia**



FUN Implements No Smoking Policy

Effective in January, Families United Network instituted a smoking ban at all agency owned facilities. FUN has offered to pay for costs agency wide, associated with various smoking cessation programs in an effort to support staff during the transition. The agency is providing employees an 80% reimbursement, up to a maximum of \$500 per employee for their effort to quit smoking.



SWAN Adoption Program Highlights

The Families United Network, Inc. SWAN Permanency Program continues to grow and evolve as 2008-2009 marked a memorable year. The demand for permanency services remained strong and consistent as Families United Network, Inc. had the opportunity to embark on many regional transformations across the state of Pennsylvania. Numerous County Children & Youth agencies identified new and creative ways that enable all children and families to benefit from the permanency units of service offered through the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN).

The request for child profiles remained high as several County Children and Youth agencies shared their hope and vision of providing every child in their foster care program with a child profile that captured the child's story and family history. Some child profile referrals were received with an attached child preparation unit of service. These "packaged referrals" were designed to pull together the child's background while also preparing to help the child process grief and loss issues, increase their understanding of past events, allow the child to ask questions and learn the truth, focus on making connections and ultimately prepare them for their future permanency goal. Many child preparation services were requested for older youth which was geared toward teaching additional life skills activities along with the incorporation of a lifebook and play therapy interventions.

"In response to the increased demand for SWAN services, we hired five new permanency specialists in 2009."

*Stephanie Hunt
 Permanency Specialist Supervisor*

On another front, Families United Network, Inc. assisted other County Children and Youth agencies across the state in assessing and approving kinship caregivers that may have presented as possible resources for children. The family profile unit of service was permitted to be utilized for more than the completion of adoptive family approval documents as County Children and Youth agencies sought Families United Network's assistance in the timely exploration and study of fit and willing relatives or extended caregivers. The vision is that more and more children will be able to maintain ties to their birth families as kinship caregivers are identified, assessed and approved as resources. Finally, Families United Network, Inc. has seen a slight increase and anticipates the request for Child Specific Recruitment services to continue to be on the rise as County Children & Youth agencies are expected to exhaust Family Finding, Family Group Decision Making or Family Credentialing efforts to explore relatives or possible connections to children in foster care. Child Specific Recruitment is beginning to take a new shape as it no longer has to be geared toward finding an adoptive resource for a child.

In an effort to stay at the forefront with the exciting changes and shifts in practice, Families United Network, Inc. has also expanded the SWAN permanency program as several new permanency specialists were added across the state.

