



# familymatters

a newsletter for foster and adoptive families

Published by the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services

## May is Foster Care Month

Governor Sonny Perdue has proclaimed May 2006 Foster Care Month in Georgia. May is also National Foster Care Month. Both campaigns honor the many caring individuals and organizations that work year-round on behalf of our nation's most vulnerable children. In the United States, 518,000 children and youth are in foster care. In Georgia, over 4100 foster families are caring for 8,400 children; many others reside in group homes or other institutions

DFCS is actively working with WAGA-TV (Channel 5 in Atlanta) and the Wednesday's Child initiative in an ongoing effort to draw attention to the needs of foster children in this state. DFCS is also working with the Heart Gallery to promote foster awareness in May (see article below).

"The need for foster parents in Georgia is great. Foster parents are not only needed for newborns and toddlers, but there is a particular need for those willing and able to

foster teens, children of large sibling groups, and children with special needs," said DFCS Director Mary Dean Harvey.

Georgia continues to urgently seek more foster parents to meet the needs of children and youth of all ages. Please encourage anyone interested in becoming a foster parent to contact their county DFCS office.

For more information about National Foster Care Month call 1-888-200-4005 or see [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org).

## A Gallery with a Heart

The Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) is teaming up with Gift for a Child to promote and encourage adoptions in this state by launching the Heart Gallery Georgia. Gift for a Child is an organization that works with social service agencies across the country to promote adoptions and educate the community concerning the urgent need for foster and adoptive families. The Heart Gallery works with professional photographers who donate their skills by photographing children available for adoption. The pictures are then exhibited in various cities to encourage people to become adoptive parents.

The Heart Gallery Georgia will exhibit in Atlanta in the King and Queen Buildings at the Concourse near Perimeter Mall May 4 and at the Fox Theater June 9 during the Celebration of Excellence for foster children (see article this issue). Other exhibits are being organized throughout Georgia starting this spring. For more information as it becomes available see <http://www.giftforachild.org>. Click on "Calendar of Events."

Hundreds of children in Georgia are seeking adoptive homes. They are typically

8 years old or older, African American, and/or a member of a sibling group. There are many adoption success stories. Many

other Georgia children will spend their childhood without the guidance and security of having a home

of their own. Permanent loving families are needed for our waiting children. Through collaboration with the Heart Gallery, DHR hopes to reduce the number of children needing adoptive homes in Georgia.



# AFPAG Conference a Success

*This March the Adoptive and Foster Parents Association of Georgia (AFPAG) held their 33rd annual conference. It was a tremendous success. A total of 1300 parents attended, including 800 for the first time. Their mood was energetic and enthusiastic as they attended the many interesting and informative workshops.*

It was quite an experience to hear foster and adoptive parents talk about their roles and what an enjoyable experience caring for the children has been for them.

Speakers at the opening session were dynamic. The first lady of our state, Mary Perdue, was the keynote speaker. Our DFCS Division Director, Mary Dean Harvey, also spoke at the opening in addition to being the keynote speaker at the awards banquet. Ms. Harvey applauded

the day-to-day efforts of the foster and adoptive parents in making life better for children here in Georgia. She also encouraged the parents to applaud and recognize themselves

for the great work that they do. There was a standing ovation from the audience in support of foster and adoptive parents.

Mrs. Perdue spoke of the great strides she and governor Perdue have made in improving the child welfare system.

Mrs. Perdue spoke of the great strides she and governor Perdue have made in improving the child welfare system. Staff morale is higher, case-worker turnover has dropped from 49 percent to 28 percent, and caseloads have been reduced by 36 percent. In addition she spoke of the Foster Family Foundation,

which will train and support adoptive and foster parents and increase retention of foster parents. She also gave accolades to the foster and adoptive parents for the

wonderful work they do from day to day.

One of the AFPAG board members mentioned a bill pending, introduced by Senator Tom Rice, that will create a prestige license tag for foster parents with a portion of the proceeds from the sale of these tags going to the organization. The foster parents were excited about the idea of a prestige tag and seemed to agree that this was a good way to support AFPAG as it provides support to parents.

Among the palm trees and calm waters at the Jekyll Island Convention Center, the conference attendees were able to network with each other and exchange "foster parent stories." Hats off to Sharon Carlson, AFPAG president, for her leadership and to the officers and board members of the organization for their hard work in pulling together such a well-organized event.

*Dianne Cleveland-Sharp,  
Policy Specialist, DFCS*

## Take the Children Some Place Special

VSA Arts of Georgia works with arts groups and other organizations to provide opportunities for people with disabilities or who are economically disadvantaged – including children in foster care – to attend concerts, plays, or sporting events, or visit attractions such as museums, Zoo Atlanta, the World of Coca-Cola

or the Atlanta Botanical Gardens.

The tickets are only available through organizations; they are not given directly to individuals. However, you may be able to take advantage of this program through your county DFCS office or your local chapter of the Adoptive and Foster Parents Association of Georgia, though not all participate.

Most of the tickets are to events and places in Metro Atlanta, but some are for other parts of Georgia such as Bibb County.

If there is no group in your area that receives tickets through VSA you may be able to encourage a nonprofit community group or agency to apply for services. The organization will be asked to pay

a small fee based on its budget, and to send a contact person to an orientation session in Atlanta.

For more information about VSA Arts of Georgia, the kinds of enrichment opportunities they provide and who is eligible, see [www.vsaartsga.org](http://www.vsaartsga.org) or contact Jan Truslow at 404-221-1270 ext. 205 or [jan.truslow@vsaartsga.org](mailto:jan.truslow@vsaartsga.org).

## PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Family Matters reaches over 10,000 foster and adoptive parents. We are proud that we can provide you with this information. *However, printing and postage costs are high.*

**Please help us cut costs and send Family Matters to you faster.**

If you send your **name, zip code and email address** to [familymatters@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:familymatters@dhr.state.ga.us) we will email you future issues. Also, at any time, anyone can read the newsletter on the Web at [dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/familymatters](http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/familymatters).

# Dog Bites: A Serious Problem for Children

Dog bite prevention should be a top priority for all foster parents, not just those who own dogs. Dog bites can have serious health consequences – including rabies, a fatal disease. Almost half of all dog bites to children require medical attention.

The DFCS foster parents' manual provides guidelines for pet safety in foster homes. The main points include: Avoid bringing into your home any type of animal that has a known history of violence and/or aggressiveness toward people, and choose a breed that has a history of being people-friendly. If you have an animal that has been violent or aggressive toward people, secure it safely in a cage, pen or fence that the animal can't get out of and the child can't get into. Report immediately to DFCS any act of violence that an animal in your home commits toward a child in your care or anyone else. Finally, teach the children in your care how to behave safely around people-friendly breeds of animals.

Here are some other things dog owners can do to keep their pets and the people around them safe: First, make sure your pet is healthy, up to

date with its vaccinations, and spayed or neutered. Many communities have leash laws requiring dog owners to leash their animals. Always use a leash and never let your dog run loose. Make sure your dog is comfortable around people and other animals. Do not play rough games with your dog, since this teaches dogs to behave aggressively towards people. Teach your dog to obey basic obedience commands like sit, heel or stay.

Since most bites involve a dog the victim knows, never leave young children alone with a dog. Even if you believe your dog is safe, there is no way to predict how a dog will behave. Teach children to respect dogs and other animals, and never allow children to tease a dog.

Even if you do not own a dog, it is very important that you teach children in your care safe behaviors around dogs:

- Children must ask permission before petting a dog, and never attempt to pet a dog unless the owner is present.
- "Stand like a tree" if approached by a scary or unfamiliar dog. This means to stand still, arms at your side, and look straight ahead. Never run from a dog!
- "Be like a log" if attacked or knocked down by a dog. Lie face down on the ground with your hands behind your neck and arms covering your ears.
- Stay away from dogs that act scared, or that are protecting their territory, food or something else. Examples include dogs that are behind a fence, tethered to a post or tree, in a car, injured, eating, sleeping or with puppies.

*If you have questions about pet safety or how to be a responsible dog owner, contact your local humane society, veterinarian, animal control agency or county health department. The DHR Division of Public Health has a dog bite prevention curriculum and other instructional resources for grades K-5 available for schools, agencies and community organizations. Please contact the Injury Prevention Section at (404) 657-6322 for more information about these materials.*

**– BILL VAN FLEIT, DHR Division of Public Health, Injury Prevention Section**



## Help Find LaQusha a Home

LaQusha, born 3/93, is a child with a winning personality! She has a beautiful singing voice and takes great pride in this talent. She also enjoys watching television and participating in outdoor activities. LaQusha's warm personality wins everyone over. She responds well to positive reinforcement and special rewards. LaQusha has had to take on some adult responsibilities in the past. Now, she needs a family that will allow her to be a child.

LaQusha is enrolled in special education classes to assist with her academic and emotional needs. She often struggles to understand her schoolwork and becomes frustrated, so she will require help to ensure that her academic needs are met.

LaQusha's greatest wish is for a family of her own. Although she tries to remain optimistic, she doubts that she will ever be adopted. As a result, she struggles with feelings of rejection,

loss and isolation. Although therapy is helping, LaQusha needs a "forever" family to call her own. She deserves a loving, supportive and patient family, one that will remain committed to her even through trying times. She will also need continued contact with her siblings, who are being planned for separately.

If you would like to know more about LaQusha or adoption, please call My Turn Now at **1-800-603-1322**.



# Summer Fun for Foster Kids

Summer is a great time for children to try new activities, get in touch with nature, improve their social skills – and just have fun. Community resources and some funds may be available to help you provide your children with an enriching summer experience.

DFCS' Summer Safety/Summer Enrichment program provides funding for summer activities for children in foster care. You can receive \$252 per foster child under age 14 to help pay for an approved camp or other activity during June, July or August.

Activities could include a stimulating or culturally enriching program such as swimming or art classes or horseback riding.

These could be offered by the Red Cross, the YMCA or YWCA or a school. The children could attend day camp or an overnight camp (church-related or otherwise). Some county DFCS offices have lists of low-cost camps.

To discuss summer plans for your child and to find out how to apply for the funding, contact your child's case manager. If your foster child is 14 or over, contact the child's case manager for information about summer enrichment activities. Also call your county or city parks and recreation department for information about summer programs for children.

## Frames of Mind

*Each human being has unique gifts. We are full of wonders and miracles.*

There are EIGHT types of intelligence, or frames of mind, but traditional high schools emphasize just two types. As a result, many of our children graduate high school under the illusion that they are poor students or less intelligent than their classmates. However, they might be great students if they could take a course in designing video games, music recording or basketball.

Help your children take pride in their own abilities. Try sharing the following list of the eight frames of mind with your older children. The first two, the linguistic and logical (mathematical) frames of mind, are the primary types taught in school.

- **Linguistic intelligence** is the ability to use language through the spoken and written word. The linguistic frame of mind is demonstrated by the novelist, the teacher, and the reporter.
- **Logical intelligence** is the ability to reason and to grasp mathematical relationships. The logical frame of mind is often seen in the mathematician, the architect and the scientist.
- The **kinesthetic** or **bodily intelligence** is the ability to establish balance between the mind and body. The body frame of mind is represented by the athlete, the mime, the dancer, and the carpenter.
- **Visual/spatial intelligence** is the ability to see form, color, shape and texture and to translate this ability into concrete form. The strong visual/spatial frame of mind is represented by the mechanic, the architect, the designer, the builder, the sculptor and the video game designer.
- **Naturalist intelligence** is the ability to relate to plants, animals and the environment. The person with a strong naturalist frame of mind may be a gardener, a farmer, or a park ranger.
- **Musical intelligence** involves the ability to use pitch, tone, timbre and rhythm. The individual with a strong musical frame of mind may be a musician, a record producer, a music teacher or even a music critic.
- **Interpersonal intelligence** is the ability to understand and relate well to others. Leaders are often able to correctly identify the emotional needs of others. This gift of empathy (feeling the feelings of

others) is the foundation of the family and society. Someone with strong interpersonal intelligence may be a politician, a manager or a counselor.

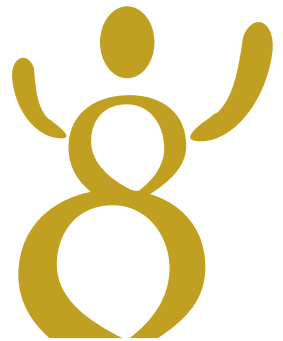
- **Intrapersonal intelligence** is the ability to know ones' own inner self and be responsible for one's own actions and emotions. Individuals with this strength may become therapists, ministers, or poets.

Imagine you are a television set with eight channels. All of the channels – or frames of mind – are playing at the same time. On one or two channels you are the star. These are your strongest frames of mind. You are the best mechanic and a great guitarist. On the next two channels, you are the co-star. You are good but not great in sports. You love hiking and spending time at the lake. On the fourth and fifth channel you are a bit player – you have a small part. Math is a bit of a challenge, and you can read but prefer not to spend your time reading. On the next two channels you take a back stage role (camera operator, make-up artist). You are friendly but not interested in being a leader and you are not into spending a great deal of time analyzing your actions and your words.

All frames of mind are equal in value. The world would be a sorry place if every human being were a scholar in the arts and sciences. Imagine a world without farmers, mechanics, builders, garbage collectors, dancers or basketball players. Our cars would fall apart. Our gardens would be empty. Our weekends would be without sports. Our CD players would be silent.

Let your teenagers know that there is life after high school. Tell them "The world needs you and your frames of mind. Match your frames of mind to your interests and your dreams. Each individual is a jewel of inestimable value. Polish your strengths and let the world see you shine. You can do it!"

**By Wendy Haus Hanevold,**  
*Ph.D., Consultant, DFCS Treatment Services Unit*



# Your Lending Library

The Georgia Center for Resources and Support: Serving Adoptive and Foster Families opened its doors to the adoption/foster care community in April 2002. One of the resources that the Center is most proud of is its free lending library. Housed at the Center in Atlanta, the library offers a selection of well over 300 titles and 700 volumes.

The library's collection includes videos, CDs, DVDs, and audio tapes, all related to adoption, foster care and parenting typical children as well as children with special needs. Magazines and free articles on a variety of topics are also available to check out. The library includes a children's section and a reference section. Parents as well as professionals in the child welfare field can use this library free of charge.

You can easily check out up to three items for five weeks by calling the Center; going online at [www.GACRS.org](http://www.GACRS.org) and placing your order; or visiting the Center. The library has become popular over the past three years so you might want to call ahead to see if the book, video or DVD that you want is in. Once you are finished with it you will only need to drop the item in the mail in its return package. For more information, call 404-929-0401 or 1-866-A-PARENT.

Some of the newest additions to the lending library are:

## PARENTING

- Real Kids Come In All Sizes
- Ex-Etiquette for Parents: Good Behavior After a Divorce or Separation
- 4 Weeks to a Better-Behaved Child
- Parents in Charge: Setting Healthy, Loving Boundaries for You and Your Child

- Building Healthy Minds
- Getting Through to Your Kids
- Happily Married with Kids: It's Not Just a Fairy Tale
- Raising Resilient Children
- Beyond Sibling Rivalry
- Your Baby & Toddler
- What Kids Really Want That Money Can't Buy
- Healthy Kids, Smart Kids (nutrition)
- Ask Nancy Thomas (DVD)

## SPECIAL NEEDS

- Building Brilliant Brains Through Bonding (Nancy Thomas, video)
- Overcoming Autism
- The Sensory-Sensitive Child
- The Autism Book
- Alex – The Fathering of a Preemie
- Parenting Your Premature Baby and Child: The Emotional Journey
- Delivered from Distraction: Getting the Most out of Life with Attention Deficit Disorder

## FOR PROFESSIONALS

- Recent Innovations in Interactional Assessment Methods in the Home Study (audio tape)



## Fostering a Love of Literacy

A group of Georgia teenagers in foster care belong to a special book club. At the weekly meetings they are not only reading and discussing books but also writing their life stories in journals. At the end of the program the stories will be published in a book of their own and a book signing will be hosted for the young authors.

The "Fostering a Love of Literacy" program gave each participant a journal, a notebook, and four books to help them start a personal book collection. The program encourages them to read each day; helps them improve their writing skills through journaling; and teaches them different ways to tell a story.

"Fostering a Love of Literacy" was created by a youth development company called

the IN THE LOOP Program of Success, with a grant from the Georgia Reading Association, to enhance the literacy skills of teens in foster care ages 14 to 17 by helping them tell their own stories.

"Our goals are to help teens become more confident and better informed and to promote leadership," says IN THE LOOP Program Director Carletta S. Hurt. "Literacy is a way to give them a voice and an opportunity to realize their power to help others."

Open to teens in Clayton and Fulton counties free of charge, the group is meeting from March through May 2006. The program and funding was announced after the previous issue of Family Matters went to press, but IN THE LOOP hopes



that it will be renewed next year. If so, this newsletter will help get the word out to foster parents in participating counties who would like to sign up their children for the 2007 program.

For more information, contact [paperpushers@intheloopprogram.com](mailto:paperpushers@intheloopprogram.com) or call 404-508-4612.





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## Celebrating Excellence and Independent Living

On June 14, more than 400 foster children who are graduating from high school, vocational school or college or have earned a G.E.D. will be honored at Georgia's annual "Celebration of Excellence." They will be addressed by a former recipient of foster care in Georgia who has achieved success, and attendees will receive over \$80,000 in scholarships for post-secondary education, including – for the first time this year – graduate school.

The event, which will take place in the Egyptian Ballroom in Atlanta's historic Fox Theater, is sponsored by

the Division of Family and Children Services' Independent Living Program; the Georgia Association of Homes and Services for Children Foundation (GAHSC); and the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia.

The Independent Living Program helps youth who "age out" of foster care make a successful transition to the adult world. They may receive services from age 14 through 21. Those over 18 who have left foster care but are still pursuing their education can participate through the "Aftercare" program. Independent Living

services include life skills training; preparation for employment; health education; tuition and fees for post-secondary education; and utility and security deposits and furniture for youth over 18 who are ready to live on their own.

For more information about the Celebration of Excellence contact Susan Allison at GAHSC, [404-351-1678](tel:404-351-1678). For more information about the Independent Living Program contact Brent Stein at [404-657-3482](tel:404-657-3482).

The purpose of Family Matters is to strengthen the relationship between resource parents and the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR); supplement foster and adoptive parents' training; and keep parents up to date about

new policies and services. It is published by the Division of Family and Children Services

Please send us your comments and ideas for articles you would like to see in Family Matters to Barbara Joye, DHR Office of Communications,

Two Peachtree Street NW, Suite 29-426, Atlanta, GA 30303 or [brjoye@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:brjoye@dhr.state.ga.us).

Please also let us know if you do NOT want to receive future issues.