

fostering FUTURES

Rhode Island Foster Parents Association

No. 6 – Issue 7 – July/August 2007



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An Uncertain Future for Older Foster Youth

Despite our best advocacy efforts throughout the recent Rhode Island General Assembly session, the enacted budget for the state fiscal year beginning July 1st includes deep cuts to programs for older youth in foster care. Furthermore, the language in Article 22 amends existing state law and lowers the age limit for youth in DCYF care to 18. Although DCYF may continue to provide services to youth until age 21 on a voluntary basis, services will be limited by funding availability and there will be no oversight from the Family Court. As a foster parent you are probably asking “so what does that really mean for my foster child, or for other foster children in the system who are affected?” The most truthful response we can offer at this point is that we are not really sure. We know that DCYF is immediately filing motions in Family Court to close the cases of ALL youth in DCYF care who are 18 or older. Many of those youth will also be immediately closed to services from DCYF, while others will continue to receive “voluntary services” through DCYF. Nonetheless, we are not yet certain who is being scheduled for ongoing services, who will be closed, or what option they may have for appeal if they are denied for “voluntary” services or if such services are insufficient for their level of need.

The Rhode Island Foster Parents Association will continue to advocate on behalf of the 18-21 year olds who are experiencing this traumatic transition and urge all of our foster parents to join us in supporting this vulnerable population of youth. We will keep you posted as new developments become available. If you have

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Dr. Day Care

Dear Dr Day Care:

I recently started a new job and do not have any vacation time accumulated. I have been told by my colleagues that the only way to take time off is to call in sick. I really want to take a few vacation days with my children during their school vacation time because they are growing up quickly and in a few years they will be teenagers. I realize how important it is for me to be able to spend time with my children while they are young.

How can I obtain time off from my new position?

Signed, Working Mom

Dear Working Mom,

I strongly recommend that you speak with your direct supervisor or human resource department and explain the importance of spending a few summer vacation days with your children.

With a positive manner, let your supervisor know you understand the underlying culture of the business' time off policy, but want to discuss the option of requesting time off in a timely, planned manner that will benefit your family.

When you meet with your supervisor, have a list of suggestions to discuss with her/him. Some suggestions include requesting time off when there is a lull in the business or during an unpopular week that other employees do not often request. Remember to emphasize the importance for you and your children to have a few summer vacation days to enjoy family time together.

Hopefully, your supervisor will be understanding and grant you the time off that you are requesting. If your supervisor denies your request, you have choices. You can take your request to the next level (if that is a possibility in the corporate structure) in your organization. Or, you can explain to your children that your employer will not grant your vacation request and come up with another alternative for your family.

I do not recommend calling in sick when you are not ill because that may cause your colleagues or supervisor to become suspicious of your job performance.

I hope that the organization you chose is family – friendly, as this is an important quality to look for when seeking a career. Keep in mind that, from an employer's perspective it is easier to negotiate needed time off during the interview process, before you accept a position.

Dear Dr Day Care,

My nine year old son hates day camp this summer, but I need to work, what do I do?

Signed, Camper's Mom

Dear Camper's Mom,

I would like to begin this answer by outlining the developmental perspective of a nine year old. Developmentally, a nine year old is typically seeking more independence, tends to complain about the routines of daily life and is a bit rebellious. In contrast, the two years prior to the ninth birthday are characterized as a calmer time. So, taking his age into consideration, he could just be complaining and exercising his independence.

However, I would still listen to his concerns and find out what he likes and does not like about camp. Ask him to write a list of the pro and cons of camp and go over the list with him to determine what you can do together to alleviate his concerns. This is also a good skill for him to learn for the future as he makes decisions about playing sports, choosing a college and selecting a career path. If one particular concern stands out, find a way to address this concern first.

Then, set up a time to meet with the camp Director. Directors need parents to effectively and honestly communicate with them so they are aware of the camper's concerns and can work on ways to help. I have realized in my 34 years of caring for children that if one family or child has a concern, that other families may have the same concern.

I suggest your son help with the selection process for next year's summer camp. Prepare a list of camps that meet your expectations and have him make the final decision. He can checkout the camps online, talk with friends, or read brochures. I am sure once he has input, it will become a much smoother camp season; plus he will be ten - a wonderful easy-going age!

Dr. Day Care is actually Mary Ann Shallcross Smith, Ed.D., owner of Dr. Day Care Enterprises which encompasses Kids Klub, Inc., Dr. Day Care's Child Development Center for Learning and Play, Comprehensive Child Care Services of Rhode Island, Women's Business Talk Show, and is also co-founder of Child Care Connection. Dr. Day Care welcomes your questions as they relate to child care. Please contact her at 1-877-333-1393 ext. 222 or email her at drdaycare@kidsklubri.com.

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a youth living in your home who will be affected by these changes, please call (401) 438-3900 or email us at lisa.guillette@rifpa.org so that we may outreach to you immediately with updates as they become available. We have also included a "Discharge Record Form" on pages 7-8 of this newsletter for you to fill out with your foster youth if they are 18 or older. These forms will be collected and compiled by staff at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT to help document the impact of this drastic policy change. Finally, if you don't have a youth in your home who will be affected, but are interested in getting involved to help support youth in transition, please let us know too. Our new Real Connections Program offers opportunities to mentor an older youth in foster care to help ensure that no child "ages out" of the system without life-long adult connections. Thank you to ALL of the foster parents, youth in care and providers who worked so tirelessly to fight these horrible budget cuts. Even though we did not win this battle, we did mobilize together as a strong voice for youth in DCYF care, and we must rally around these youth NOW to support them through this uncertain transition to a more hopeful future.



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Phone 401.438.3900

Fax 401.438.3901

Email rifpa.org@verizon.net

News You Can Use

In the months ahead, you'll find even more in each issue of Fostering Futures. We know it's hard to find time to open your mail, never mind the time to actually read it. That's why we are pleased to introduce our monthly section of News You Can Use. You will find quick, easy to read tips from our colleagues, our readers and fellow foster parents, but we'll need your help. **Take a look!**



FREE! Movie Passes

if we print your idea!

Email to kara.duffin@rifpa.org



Click of the Month

Each month Fostering Futures will feature a different website related to foster families, parenting, advocacy or just plain fun! We'll highlight sites that are informative, easy to navigate and useful.

www.readingrockets.org

Reading Rockets develops and manages several web services in both English and Spanish. ReadingRockets.org is a comprehensive and daily updated web site that includes reading news headlines, research-based articles, tips for parents and educators, video interviews with top children's book authors, a monthly e-newsletter, national and local resources, an online store, and much more.

www.ColorinColorado.org

Colorín Colorado es un sitio Web bilingüe que provee información, actividades y consejos sobre cómo ayudar a sus niños a que aprendan a leer y tengan éxito en la escuela. Desarrollado por el proyecto Reading Rockets, Colorín Colorado resalta información práctica para los padres de habla hispana, contiene hermosas ilustraciones de David Díaz, el ilustrador ganador del Premio Caldecott, además de videoclips de celebridades tales como la que fuera nuestra querida Celia Cruz, y actividades que giran alrededor de canciones y rimas en el lenguaje español para desarrollar habilidades.

Do you have a web resource you think we should consider for our Click of the Month?

Sites can be professional, informative, educational or organizations. Our primary criteria is that a site be unique in some way and offer it's readers useful information and insight. Please send an email to kara.duffin@rifpa.org with your suggestion.

(Please note: RIFPA cannot be held responsible for content on any external website. In the event you encounter content that is inappropriate or offensive, please let us know.)

Contact Record Form: Youth Formerly in DCYF Custody

Date: _____
 Gender: _____ Race/Ethnicity: _____
 City/Town of Origin: _____ Current City/Town: _____
 Client ID: _____ Primary Provider: _____ Staff Initials: _____
 Date of Discharge: _____ Age at Discharge: _____ Years in DCYF Care: _____

BASIC NEEDS

Do you have enough food to eat? Yes No
 Do you have the clothes and other personal items you need to live? Yes No
 Do you have health insurance? Yes No
 Have you needed medical care since you left DCYF care?
 If yes, did you receive it? Yes No
 If you didn't receive care, why not? _____

HOUSING

Where were you living before you left DCYF care? _____
 Where have you been staying since you left DCYF care? _____
 How often do you stay here? _____
 Is this a safe place to stay? Yes No

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Were you attending school or a training program while you were in DCYF care? Yes No
 As a result of leaving DCYF care have you had to leave school or a training program? Yes No

WORK

Were you working while you were in DCYF care? Yes No
 If yes, how many hours per week: _____ Pay rate: _____
 Are you currently working? Yes No
 If yes, how many hours per week: _____ Pay rate: _____

SAFETY

Do you feel safe? Yes No
 If no, why? _____
 If no, do you have someone you can go to when you feel unsafe? Yes No

PARENTING

Did you have custody of any children when you were in DCYF care? Yes No
 If yes, do you still have custody? Yes No
 Since leaving DCYF care are you now or have you ever been pregnant? Yes No

Please send completed forms to:
 Kat Keenan, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
 One Union Station, Providence, RI 02903
 kkeenan@rikidscount.org

Discharge Record Form: Youth in DCYF Custody

Date: _____
 Gender: _____ Race/Ethnicity: _____
 City/Town of Origin: _____ Current City/Town: _____
 Client ID: _____ Primary Provider: _____ Staff Initials: _____
 Date of Discharge: _____ Age at Discharge: _____ Years in DCYF Care: _____

DISCHARGE

Did the youth participate in his/her discharge planning process? Yes No

When did the process begin? _____

What programs or services were youth receiving just before discharge? _____

Were any of the following services or supports in place upon discharge?

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| _____ Room & board support | _____ Health care |
| _____ Case management | _____ Mental health services |
| _____ Education | _____ Family Independence Program (welfare) |

What immediate impact did the discharge have on youth?

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| _____ Homelessness | _____ Change in school/drop out |
| _____ Change in employment | _____ Physical safety |
| _____ Ability to meet basic needs (i.e. food, clothing, etc;) | |

HOUSING

Where was youth living before you were discharged from DCYF care?

(Circle one and provide additional information if available)

Relative foster parents: (_____)

Non-relative foster parents: (_____)

Residential placement (_____)

Independent living apartment (Program: _____)

Adoptive Family

Relatives House/Apartment

Friends/Significant Others House/Apartment

Own apartment (Live alone/Roommate/Significant Other)

College Dorm (Live alone/Roommate/Significant Other)

In transition (Explain: _____)

Homeless (Shelter/Couch Surfing/Street/Other)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

What was youth's educational status at discharge? *(Circle the most appropriate responses)*

Current grade in school:

- Seventh Grade
- Eighth Grade
- High School Freshman
- High School Sophomore
- High School Junior
- High School Senior
- College Freshman
- College Sophomore
- College Junior
- College Senior
- Not currently enrolled in school

Grade expected to be in next year

- Seventh Grade
- Eighth Grade
- High School Freshman
- High School Sophomore
- High School Junior
- High School Senior
- College Freshman
- College Sophomore
- College Junior
- College Senior
- Do not expect to be enrolled in school

WORK

Was youth employed at discharge? Yes No
 If yes, how many hours per week: _____ Pay rate: _____

PARENTING

At discharge did youth have custody of any children? Yes No
 At discharge did youth have any children living in substitute care? Yes No

FUTURE CONTACT

How should we contact youth for follow-up surveys:

Phone (cell and/or home) : _____ Email: _____
 Address: _____

If possible, three other places where youth can be reached (we will be discreet)

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____

Please send completed forms to:
 Kat Keenan, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
 One Union Station, Providence, RI 02903
 kkeenan@rikidscount.org

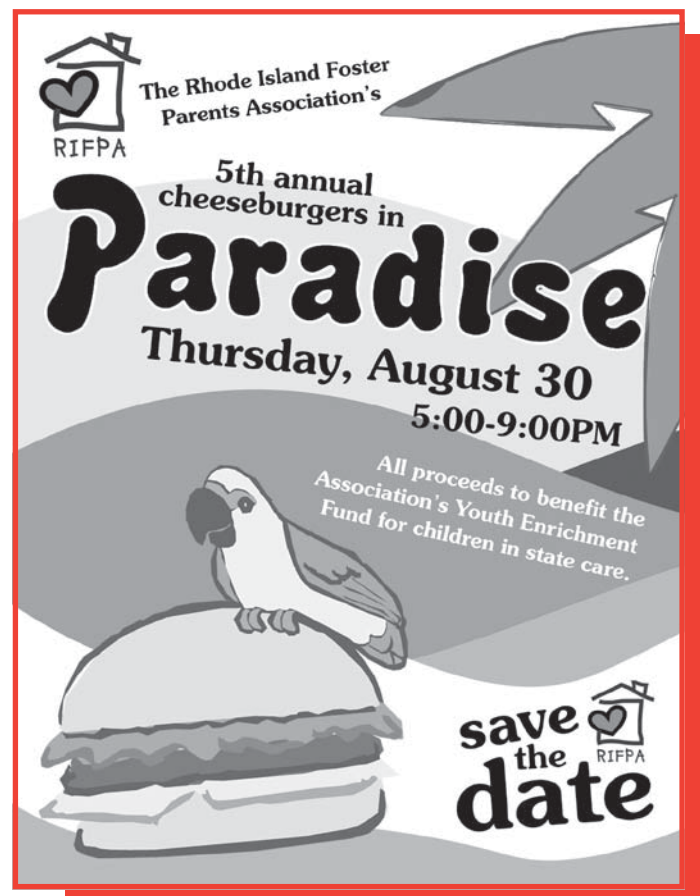
Fostering Friends

Pawtucket Credit Union Check supports the Youth Enrichment Fund – Thank you!

Pawtucket Credit Union recently made a \$300 donation to the Youth Enrichment Fund. The Youth Enrichment Fund supports youth in foster care who would like to participate in activities that enhance their self esteem, skills or knowledge. Kristin Rojas, Community Development Officer at Pawtucket Credit Union stated “we all agree that it is important for children to be part of the same activities as their peers, and ultimately gain a wonderful learning experience through this participation.”

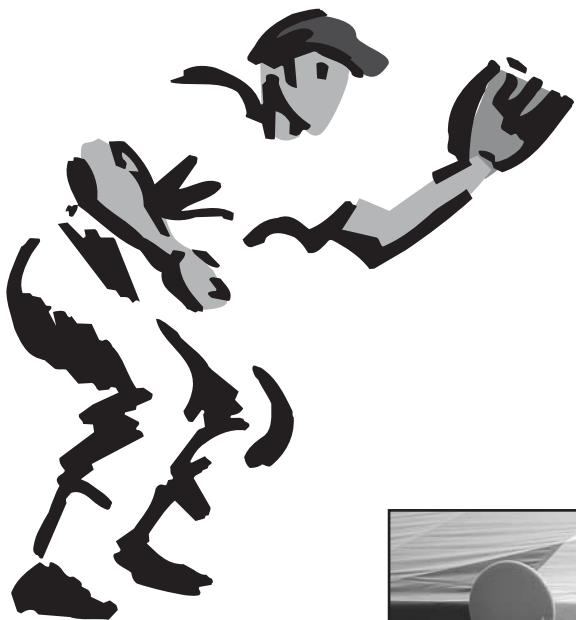
O’Halloran Family Foundation Continues Generous Commitment to Real Connections Program


The O’Halloran Family Foundation continued their generous commitment to the Real Connections Program with a \$20,000 donation for the 2008 program year. This is their second installment in a three-year commitment to the program totaling \$60,000. The Real Connections program is a community collaboration between the Rhode Island Foster Parents Association; Rhode Island Council of Resource Providers; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative; Communities for People; Department of Children Youth and Families; and Adoption Rhode Island. The program serves youth ages 14-21 that are in state care with the goal of “ensuring that all youth leave state care with positive, permanent adult connections and options for a successful future.” To that end the program identifies adults from a youth’s own network that have the potential to become lifelong supports and engages them in a mentoring relationship with the youth as a stepping stone to longer term involvement. The program also engages community mentors to help youth achieve specific goals related to their adult transition. Support from the O’Halloran Family Foundation enabled the program to launch successfully in January 2007. The program is currently serving 25 youth with plans to serve 50 by 2008.




Family Fun at the Paw Sox

On Friday, May 25, 2007, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island teamed up with the RI Foster Parents Association to host the 4th Annual Foster Family Appreciation Night at the Paw Sox. Additional event sponsors included Casey Family Services, Communities for People, Devereux Therapeutic Foster Care, the Groden Center, and the Rhode Island Council of Resource Providers. This sold-out event included a private tent party with an all-you-can-eat buffet for 400 people, visits from Paws and Sox, autographs by a player and t-shirts for everyone! Mark Reynolds, CEO of Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island was on hand to throw out the ceremonial first pitch. A great time was had by all!



 Mark Reynolds, CEO of Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island takes to the mound with a Paw Sox player and two youth to throw out the first pitch of the evening.

The Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island's team of dedicated volunteers are ready to distribute free t-shirts to the foster families. 

From left to right: Mack Johnston, Medical Director, Bob Coburn, (Nancy,s husband) Nancy Coburn, Chief Operating Officer, Jayce Huynh, Pharmacy Operations Manager, Mark Reynolds, Chief Executive Officer.



Photography by: Cheryl DaCosta



**Call Neighborhood
to learn about our
many benefits!
1-800-459-6019**



We are proud to partner with DCYF and the **RI Foster Parent Association** in supporting foster parents and the children in their care.

SHARON O'KEEFE, ESQ.

(Former R.I. Assistant Child Advocate)



Adoptions

- DCYF*
- Private
- Step Parent

401-247-1740

**Accepts DCYF subsidy as payment*

FAMILY COURT ADOPTIONS



Adoptions

- Private
- DCYF
- Step Parent

**Qualified for
DCYF Subsidy**

Timothy J. Morgan, Esq.*

401.826.3344

** Timothy J. Morgan Esq. is a private attorney and is not associated with DCYF.*

RIFPA At-A-Glance

The Rhode Island Foster Parents Association is fostering futures. And we're doing so, in part, by offering a wide range of programs including fostering information and support, resource assistance and life-skills. Whether you are new to fostering parenting or a seasoned veteran, please take a minute to check out the services we provide.

New Foster Parent Mentor Program

- Mentors are experienced foster parents who work on developing a relationship with newly licensed foster parents during their first year of service
- Offers direction and personal support in order to improve foster parent retention rates.
- Learn about accessing services and finding resources
- Share fears, frustrations and joys
- Get help with issues ranging from obtaining clothing vouchers to managing children with challenging behaviors
- Connect with someone who knows how the system works and understands how difficult it is to care for someone else's children in your home

For more information about the New Foster Parent Mentor Program contact: Leslie Vargas, New Foster Parent Mentor Program Coordinator 401.438.3900

Foster Parent Helpline

- Peer support service available statewide
- Staffed by foster parents who understand your situation
- Call with questions or simply when you need someone to talk to
- 24 Hours
- Confidential

Call the Rhode Island Foster Parent's Association's HelpLine at 1.800.655.7787

RIFPA Staff and volunteers are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect laws.

Real Connections

- Goal is "to ensure that all youth leave state care

with positive, permanent adult connections and options for a successful future."

- Program works in coordination with the Chafee Life Skills Center
- Focuses on working with teens, ages 14-24, who are vulnerable to "aging out" of state care without positive, consistent adults to rely on
- Identifies adult supports for youth in care in two key ways:
 1. Tapping a Youth's Existing Network
 2. Engaging Community Mentors
- Partnership between Rhode Island Foster Parents Association, the Rhode Island Council of Resource Providers, DCYF, Communities for People, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, and Adoption Rhode Island.

For more information contact us directly at 401-438-3900.

Life Skills Program

- Serves youth, 16 years of age and older, who are living in foster care through DCYF
- Prepares youth for life after their foster care experience
- Addresses different areas of independent living including:
 - Obtaining affordable housing
 - Preparing nutritious meals
 - Obtaining employment
 - Maintaining proper hygiene
 - Health
 - Educational planning
 - Transportation
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Anger management and conflict resolution
 - Legal skills
 - Emergency and safety skills
 - Money management
 - Accessing community resources
- Receives referrals from a variety of sources including case workers at DCYF, other social service providers, foster parents and youth
- Attend our Open House prior to the start of each semester to learn more
- Funded through the Department of Children

Youth and Families (DCYF).

For more information about the Life Skills Program, contact Life Skills Program Coordinator 401-431-0557

Enrichment Fund

- Offers grants to youth age 13 and under who live in DCYF sponsored out of home care, and who would like to participate in an activity that will enhance their self esteem, skills or knowledge
- Provide up to \$350 annually per child upon request so that foster children may participate in the same activities, at the same facilities as their peers
- Applications are reviewed monthly by a committee of staff and youth.
- Applications that represent requests more likely to be considered as “presents” or “gifts” are much less likely to be approved
- Visit www.rifpa.org to download and print a Enrichment Fund Application Form.

Teen Grant

- Assists youth ages 14 and older who live in DCYF sponsored out of home care to receive

funds for the purpose of assisting that youth to better prepare for independence and adulthood.

- Requests that will enhance a youth’s self esteem, skills or knowledge are encouraged.
- Applications to the Teen Grant program are reviewed monthly by a committee of staff and youth Applications that represent requests more likely to be considered as “presents” or “gifts” are much less likely to be approved
- Funded through DCYF
- Visit www.rifpa.org to download and print a Teen Grant Application Form

Appreciation Dinner

- Hosted annually in the spring by the Rhode Island Foster Parents Association
- Provides an opportunity to recognize the valuable public service performed by foster parents
- Foster parents are presented with longevity certificates
- Excellence awards are bestowed upon outstanding contributors to foster care in Rhode Island

Working Together: An Educational Series

Understanding Parental Substance Abuse and Its Impact on Children

Presented by: Sandy Woods, M.A.,
Substance Abuse Coordinator, DCYF

This workshop is designed to provide a basic understanding of addiction and how parental substance abuse can impact a child’s physical, intellectual, and emotional health. Special emphasis will be placed on both the short-term and long-term effects of pre-natal exposure to alcohol and other drugs.

Thursday, July 19th
6:00 - 8:00 pm
Independence Square
500 Prospect St.
Pawtucket, RI

Thursday, August 16th
6:00 - 8:00 pm
Casey Family Services
1268 Eddy St.
Providence, RI

For further information or to register call: Bernie Hicks at Adoption RI, 724-1910. Participants will receive two hours in-service training credit!

ADOPTION ATTORNEY

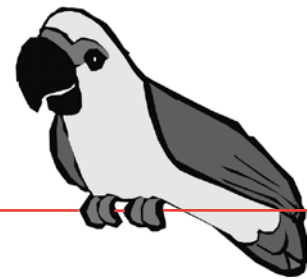
Joseph A. Palmieri, Esq.*

- Step Parent Adoptions
- DCYF Adoptions (will accept DCYF Legal Subsidy as Full Payment)
- FREE Pre-Adoptive Telephone Consultation

“Just Call”
(401) 258-3371



*Joseph A. Palmieri, Esq. is a private attorney and is not associated with DCYF.



Please join us for the Rhode Island Foster Parents Association's 5th Annual

Cheeseburgers in Paradise

Event to benefit the Youth Enrichment Fund.

August 30, 2007 5:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Tent Party

Botanical Center – Roger Williams Park, Providence, RI

Featuring the "Rhode Island Dreams Auction," live music, door prizes and down home barbecue and burgers with all the fixins' by Morins Catering. We will dine and dance for a couple of gorgeous hours during sunset. Please mail in the coupon below to reserve your advance price tickets.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Tickets at \$25 per person 4 Person Table (\$100 each) Corporate Sponsor \$250
(table of 8 with recognition signage)

Total Enclosed _____

Make check payable to: Rhode Island Foster Parents Association

Credit Card: Circle one: VISA, MC, AMEX, Discover

Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____

I can't attend Cheeseburgers in Paradise but I would like to make a contribution to the Rhode Island Foster Parents Association in the amount of \$ _____.

Mail completed form to: **RIFPA** 55 South Brow Street, East Providence, RI 02914

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Janet Pichardo
 Providence School Department

Elizabeth Winangun
 Mount Hope Learning Center

Save the Date Annual Back to School Celebration



Providence Schools, Neighborhood Health Plan, Sodexho School Services, Citizens Bank, Providence Journal and a host of other community partners are once again supporting Providence Schools through the annual district-wide Back to School Celebration.

Don’t miss this opportunity to get free school supplies. There will be fun games and entertainment for the children, as well as free food and information on community services.

When: Saturday, August 18, 2007 10a.m. to 1 p.m.

What: Free school supplies, food, Fun & games

Who: Students, parents, teachers & staff

Where: Eight Locations –

Contact Jackie Dowdy (401) 459-6172

Cuándo: Sabado, 18 de Agosto, 2007 10a.m. a 1 p.m.

Qué: Utiles escolares gratuitos, comida, entretenimiento y diversión

Quién: Estudiantes, padres, maestros y personal educativo

Dónde: Ocho (8) Localidades:

Llame a Jackie Dowdy (401) 459-6172

Locations:

- *Hope High School,
324 Hope St.
- *Nathanael Greene Middle School,
721 Chalkstone Ave.
- *Perry Middle School,
370 Hartford Avenue
- *Progreso Latino,
626 Broad Street, Central Falls
- *Providence School
Registration Center,
672 Prairie Ave.
- *St. Teresa’s Church,
18 Pope St. (corner of Manton Ave.)
- *West End Community Center,
109 Bucklin St
- *Woonsocket High School,
777 Cass Ave., Woonsocket



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Fostering Futures is published monthly by the Rhode Island Foster Parents Association, and partially funded through DCYF, to keep foster parents and others informed and aware of the issues and activities that affect them. Please send your ideas, suggestions, tips, and input via e-mail to: kara.duffin@rifpa.org, entering "Newsletter" in the subject line, or mail to:

RIFPA
Attn: Newsletter Editor
55 South Brow Street,
East Providence, RI 02914

FREE CHILD CARE for Children in Foster Care

Comp Services offers **free preschool** to all foster children ages 3, 4, and 5. We work with over 20 child care centers and family child care homes in Rhode Island. We are waiting to offer your foster child a fun and exciting learning experience, call Rita at 401.475.7707 x250.

Foster Parent HelpLine

The Foster Parent HelpLine is a peer support service that is available statewide. It is staffed by foster parents who understand the issues and situations you face on a daily basis. Foster parents are encouraged to call the helpline with their questions or when they simply need someone to talk to.

Call the Rhode Island Foster Parents Association's HelpLine:

1.800.655.7787
24 Hours. Your call will be confidential.

A service of the Mentor Program.
RIFPA STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ARE MANDATED REPORTERS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT LAWS.