



Department of Children and Family Services

Kinship Support Division

Providing Assistance and Support to Relative Caregivers

Volume 2: October 2011

QUOTE OF THE MONTH: "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do." –Eleanor Roosevelt

KINSHIP HERO--GLYNNDEAN SUGGS: This month, Kinship introduces you to Glynndean Suggs, one of DCFS's finest, not only because she has been a hard working CSW for 15 years, and worked for DPSS 15 years prior, but because she was also a relative caregiver just like many of you! Ms. Suggs clearly remembered the day of June 1991, while working at the DPSS office, receiving a telephone call from someone crying. "It was my sister. She said, 'DCFS is here to take my kids.'" Ms. Suggs was honest in stating that it was hard for her to take care of her nieces and nephews while also working and caring for her own 15-year-old daughter. "It was a tough drive every weekend from San Bernardino to Long Beach where my sister was in treatment. I cried when I found out my sister was not doing her part in the program and had left it. After I got over my cry, I let the kids know that we were going to be a family." Ms. Suggs praised her DPSS supervisors for being "Awesome", and allowing her to go to school meetings for her nephew, when he was having difficulties settling in a new school. She also credits a neighbourhood support system that helped her care for the children.

When asked if she had any advice for relative caregivers, Ms. Suggs stated, "Go into the plan (with the child) realistically. Know how long the process takes. Take advantage of the **support system**." Ms. Suggs (without any special treats given to her under our interview table) stated that she wished that there would have been a Kinship Program when she was going through the system herself. She stated, "It would have been nice to have a support system that knows exactly what you are going through."

GIVE BY THE POWER OF INSPIRATION: DCFS Kinship Division would like to hear your inspirational stories regarding caregivers, children and or CSWs to compile in a yearly memory book. Please try to keep your stories to no more than one 8x10 page. E-mail your stories to: chavem@dcfs.lacounty.gov. No access to a computer, no problem--write up your story and mail it to: Marianne Yamato, Kinship Resource Center South, 9834 Norwalk Blvd., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670.

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME: **KINSHIP'S RESOURCES OF THE MONTH**



***Black Mat MMA:** 12200 East Washington Blvd, Suite J, Whittier, CA 90606. Black Mat's vision is to reach as many at risk kids as possible. The program offers an after school program, having the kids do their homework before working out! For more information, visit: www.blackmatmma.org or contact Coach Koon at: 323-864-4385. Let him know DCFS Kinship sent you!

***Kinship Division at Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court.** After assessing the need of relative caregivers who were requesting assistance in filing 388 petition forms (to change visitation orders, add co-legal guardians, and terminate guardianships), Kinship's Diana Alcantara began an out-stationed Kinship Support Resource Center at Children's Court, and Marianne Yamato recently took over there. The program remains strong today and a valuable resource for relative caregivers. For questions and or assistance please call: (323) 526-6082.

BONDING ACTIVITY FOR CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN: (from Adopting.org website)

Creating a family tree chart, drawing, or diagram can be fun, creative, and a great idea for a family day together. Family tree projects are also frequent school assignments. Traditional charts and drawings often do not accommodate foster or relative families. Here's a good alternative:

Hedgerow: In a drawing, children represent each current family member as a bush in a row of bushes. Roots can be labeled as birth parents, grandparents, foster parents, different countries of origin, etc. The finished hedgerow shows the blended strength of many individual plants.



KIDS' CORNER: Kinship South is looking for teenagers between the ages of 13-17 who are interested in joining a teen group, meeting once a month at: 9834 Norwalk Blvd., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90607. Call Marianne Yamato at (562) 324-5282 to express interest.

STRICTLY BUSINESS:

UPCOMING ASSEMBLY BILL 12 WORKSHOPS will be held at the following locations:

October 5, 2011: DCFS-West Los Angeles, 5757 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 200, LA, CA 90036, Conference Room A, 10am-5pm.

October 12, 2011: DCFS-Vermont Corridor, 8300 S. Vermont Ave. LA, CA 90044, 1st Floor Conference Room, 10am-3pm.

October 19, 2011: DCFS-Compton, 921 E. Compton Blvd. Compton, CA 90221, Room G-08, 10am to 5pm.

October 29, 2011: Rita Waters Learning Complex, 915 W. Manchester Ave. LA, CA 90044, in Cafeteria, 10am to 3pm.

COMPLETION OF THE SOC 369 AND SOC 369A:

The California Department of Social Services has made the determination that if the SOC 369 and SOC 369A forms were not completed and signed **prior** to the establishment of guardianship, the child will NOT be eligible for Kin-GAP benefits. Please contact Kinship at 1-888-694-7263 if you have any questions.

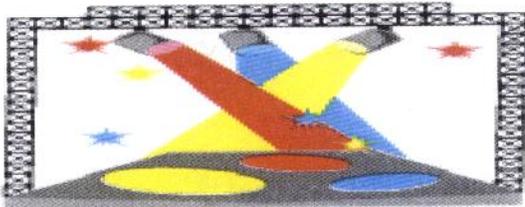
SAVE THE DATE!

Relative Caregiver Christmas Celebrations

December 10, 2011, Marina Del Rey, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.; For reservation, contact (323) 298-3515

December 17, 2011, Whittier, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; For reservation, contact (562) 777-1751

**If you have any special talent that you would like to share at the Christmas Celebration, please contact Marianne Yamato at: (562) 324-5282.*



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT... Congratulations to the Kinship Support Section!!!

In October, 2011, the Kinship Support Section will be honored with the prestigious Director's Employee Recognition Award (DERA) as a team. The staff has displayed a continuous commitment towards connecting with relative caregivers. Through mailings, phone calls, support groups, home calls, and meeting with walk-ins to the Kinship Resource Centers, this small number of staff has remained available and dedicated to meeting the needs of relative caregivers and the children in their care. This not only increases safety for these children but also reduces detention from relatives who feel they no longer have the support and/or resources they need to provide adequate care for their kin. Kinship staff has been instrumental in educating Kin-GAP caregivers about Assembly Bill 12 and in helping the relative legal guardians complete the necessary paperwork for conversion.



ASK-A-PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE

Betsy Blankfield, RN, BSN, PHN



Question: My children are overweight—and we celebrate Halloween. Any ideas on how to keep less candy around without spoiling the fun?

Answer: Halloween does NOT have to be a scary season dominated by The Sugar Monster! There are many things you can do to enjoy a healthier time of Trick or Treat and still have fun. Some families play a game called **The Switch Witch**. After the candy is collected, children leave the whole bag of candy out for The Switch Witch. In the morning, the candy is gone and replaced by a special toy brought by the Switch Witch. This is a good option for children with Diabetes, too. Some children fantasize about a Halloween costume all year. Playing imaginatively as a pirate, a tiger, a princess, a super-hero, etc., engages children's speech, drama and storytelling skills. Be part of the playful fun. Get a silly hat or simple mask for your eyes. Halloween is about more than candy. As you help kids conquer The Sugar Monster, pat yourself on the back for inviting health into your lives this Halloween.

(Ask-A-Public Health Nurse, all rights reserved, 2011, Betsy Blankfield, PHN)

Planning Stage-Kinship Conference:

The Kinship Division is in the planning stage of a Kinship Conference in the Spring and requests your suggestions for topics. Please e-mail any suggestions to Program Manager Michael Scoggins at: scoggm@dcfs.lacounty.gov.

Questions? Please call Kinship at the telephone number below or e-mail any questions to Program Manager Rosella Yousef at: youser@dcfs.lacounty.gov. We are also on the internet at <http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us/> (click on the Kinship section to the far right of the page.)

Way to go Kinship Support Services staff and those who have pitched in for this monumental task! Our families are benefiting from your perseverance and commitment to support every relative caregiver in need of a helping hand!