



Los Angeles Foster Care Awareness Month Campaign for 2009
Fostering Connections to Success for Older Youth
Campaign Coincides with National Foster Care Month in May

Throughout the month of May, foster youth, their caregivers, families, child advocates and associated organizations will participate in events in Los Angeles County and California in celebration of National Foster Care Awareness Month. This annual campaign is a national effort designed to increase awareness around issues that impact foster children and to encourage individuals and communities to do more to support these amazing and deserving youth. This year, Foster Care Awareness Month will focus on issues of older foster youth which have been highlighted by the recently enacted federal bill, "Fostering Connections to Success." Major aspects of the bill include the option of extending jurisdiction for foster youth to age 21 and increased funding support for foster youth placed with relative caregivers.

In Los Angeles County, the Board of Supervisors honors selected foster care community "heroes" on Tuesday, May 12, 2009, with a private reception at 8:30 a.m. which will be followed with scroll proclamations at the Board of Supervisors meeting at 9:30 a.m. These honorees are nominated by community members for their extraordinary contributions to the foster care system. This year's Foster Care Hero recipients include Tereana Jolly, a non-relative extended family member; Amanda Riddle of L.A. Youth; Sue Thompson, a Court Appointed Special Advocate; Katherine Kirkpatrick and John Michalski, foster parents; Guadalupe Valdivia, a former foster youth; Maria "Connie" Mercado, a foster mother; Beverly Marie King, a former foster youth; and Brighton Collectibles, an "Adopt a Family" sponsor.

Over the last several years, Los Angeles County has successfully led many national reforms in foster care. Many of these innovative programs have been directed to the needs of older foster youth. As a result of programs such as Permanency Partnership Program and Youth Permanency Units, many older youth who in the past would have left the system without any support are now being reunited with family and connected with mentors or guardians before they age-out.

Los Angeles County Foster Care Awareness Campaign activities are coordinated by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Alliance for Children's Rights, the Dependency Court Judiciary, the Los Angeles Affiliate of the

National Association of Counsel for Children, the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council, and Public Counsel Law Center, Children's Action Network, The Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA), Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Free Arts for Abused Children, Kids in the Dependency System at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center Hub (K.I.D.S.), Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE).

The state Foster Care Awareness Month activities will have its fifth annual kick-off on Tuesday, May 12, 2009, in Sacramento at the Capitol. A range of organizations will have information booths about services available for foster youth, their caregivers and families as well as opportunities for individuals to offer their time and support to foster youth through volunteering, mentoring, and becoming foster parents. Selected state legislators will address the audience and present awards to recipients who represent both the challenges and the possibilities connected to aging out of foster care and relative kinship. Additional Foster Care Awareness events scheduled for the month include:

- **Luggage Round Up:** The collection of new and gently used luggage to be distributed to foster youth. For more information, contact Jennifer Wolbransky at JTWolbransky@lasuperiorcourt.org.
- **May 3rd** -- Foster youth and other community members gather to lend a 'green thumb' at Kenneth Hahn State Park as part of the "**Big Sunday**" weekend of community services events going on across Los Angeles. For more information, see www.bigsunday.org.
- **May 18th** --: The iCare Foundation, founded by six-time Grammy nominated and R&B Hall Of Fame Living Legend Kashif, will sponsor a **Mentoring Dinner Cruise** for older youth in the foster care system. For more information, see www.teamicare.org.
- **May 18th** -- **Career Day** will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Edelman Children's Court. Individuals from various careers talking about what they do and how they got there; many of whom will be former foster youth. For more information, contact Linda Jones at jebonysence@aol.com.
- **May 22nd** -- Foster youth learn first-hand about what it is like to work at places such as the mayor's office and law offices during **Job Shadowing Day**. For more information, contact Adam Dewey at adewey@achsa.net or Vincent D'Averso at v.daverso@kids-alliance.org.
- **May 28th** -- **Harbor UCLA Medical Hub** holds its Foster Care Awareness Month event. For more information, contact Deborah Knox at dknox@dhs.lacounty.gov.

For further information regarding Foster Care Awareness month activities across the country, visit www.fostercaremonth.org.

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