

- 2 Success Stories
- 4 Specialized Programs
- 5 On the Line
- 6 SPA Spots
- 7 Public Health Nurses
- 8 Employees of the Month

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Permanency Plans Create Better Outcomes for Children

As I mark my second anniversary with the Department, I applaud the contribution and daily dedication of DCFS social workers. Your hard work has already resulted in shortening the timelines to find safe and permanent homes for children. Because of your efforts, over the past year, the Department has decreased the time from termination of parental rights to finalized adoption. I commend all staff, especially social workers, for their efforts that contributed to this decrease.

You have heard me say many times before that long-term foster care is not an acceptable life plan for children. Instead of accepting the concept of long-term foster care, we must all continue working to increase legal permanency for children through family reunification, adoption and legal guardianship.

Currently, we are focusing our permanency efforts on children who have been in foster care for two years or more and have no legal permanent plan. Foster care is not a way to grow up and we are working on several initiatives to ensure that children under DCFS supervision do not languish in foster care for years.

Plans are underway to roll-out Point of Engagement in all DCFS offices to help prevent children and families from entering the foster care system. We are also working at finding permanent homes for children and decreasing the number of children in the system by focusing on Permanency Planning, pursuing Concurrent Planning and initiating innovative pilot programs such as the Permanency Partners Program (P3). These initiatives were borne out of your ideas, partnerships with DCFS and nurtured by hardworking DCFS staff. It is your commitment and dedication to these efforts that has already resulted in better lives for thousands of children and families over the past two years.

As demonstrated by these initiatives, our goal is to keep children out of the foster care system by using community support services. If the child or children must enter foster care, we should do everything possible to get them home as soon as safely possible or into an alternate permanent plan of adoption or legal guardianship without unnecessary delays.

With all these efforts, social workers remain the leaders in the permanency process. I encourage you to revisit your caseloads and create Permanency Plans for children who have been in foster care for an extended period of time.

As we continue to re-deploy more workers to the line and hire new workers in the coming year, you will have more time to do what is most important and what you entered this profession to do - nurture families and help children. ■

**David Sanders, Ph.D.**  
Director

## P3 Aims to Find Permanency for Older Youth

In an effort to find permanency for older foster youth, the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has entered into a partnership with the Consortium for Children, a private non-profit, to create the Permanency Partner's Program (P3). P3 began last fall to find permanency options for foster youth ages 12 to 18 by creating partnerships between the youth and people who have been significant to them in the past. These relationships could result in reunification with family, or evolve into adoption, guardianship or mentorship. In some instances, the youth will exit foster care.

The first phase of P3 was funded by the Consortium for Children's contract with the California Department of Social Services. Because of the success of the pilot in the last four months, \$1 million has been allocated in the DCFS budget to expand P3 this year.

"Finding permanency for older youth is a major goal for our Department," said DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders. "P3 has been an effective way to start achieving this goal. No child should languish in foster care or exit foster care without a significant adult in their life."

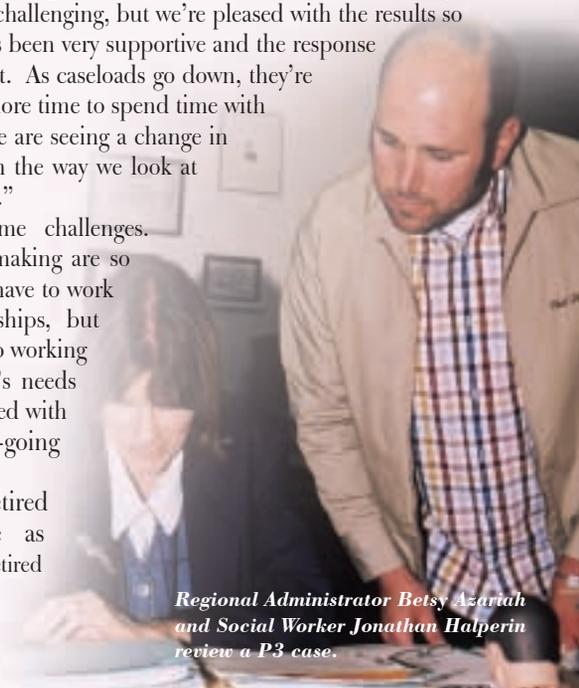
Twenty experienced mediators who have a masters degree or higher in social work or a related field, underwent training last August to serve on the P3 mediation teams. Since then, P3 teams, which include DCFS social workers, have identified permanent connections for 13 of 29 older foster youth. Four of those youth have already moved into permanent homes. In some instances, mediators worked with youth who were already living with a relative and helped to create a permanent plan.

P3 has also called on volunteer private investigators to locate individuals who youth identified as important to them. In one instance, a private investigator was able to locate a teacher who had been a significant influence in a youth's life before foster care.

"I'm thrilled," said DCFS Deputy Director Trish Ploehn. "It is a huge undertaking and extremely challenging, but we're pleased with the results so far. The Juvenile Court has been very supportive and the response from staff has been excellent. As caseloads go down, they're looking forward to having more time to spend time with the children and youth. We are seeing a change in the culture and a change in the way we look at permanency for older youth."

P3 is experiencing some challenges. "The connections we are making are so fragile," said Ploehn. "We have to work on nurturing the relationships, but that takes time. We are also working on making sure the family's needs are met and they are provided with appropriate services and on-going support."

This year, P3 will use retired social workers to serve as mediators. More than 80 retired



*Regional Administrator Betsy Azariah and Social Worker Jonathan Halperin review a P3 case.*

*Continued on Page 3*



# DCFS Success Stories

**A**s a regular part of "DCFS News," we recognize the successes of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and its community partners. These success stories are diverse and offer an opportunity for staff and community partners to celebrate accomplishments and share the good work they are doing. To submit story ideas for this section, please e-mail Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at [riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us](mailto:riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us).

## Transitional Housing Program Creates Options for Youth

"Delvon Fonda Lampkins should be looked at as a role model for future Transitional Housing (THP) residents," said THP Children's Social Worker Gretchen Bryars. Lampkins entered the program in August 2002 and soon got a full-time position with the Los Angeles County Internal Services Department (ISD). Lampkins had already interned at ISD in the apprentice program, but after demonstrating a strong work ethic and a willingness to learn, he became a permanent employee.

Throughout this time, Lampkins used the THP and quickly bought into the concept of budgeting his earnings. The money he paid for rent was placed in an interest bearing account and would be returned to him when he completed the program. Initially, Lampkins was paying \$500 per month for rent, but when he realized that he could afford to save more, he increased his payments to \$1,000. While the program paid the rent and utilities for his apartment along with a food stipend of \$200 per month, Lampkins built up his savings account, which he has now locked away in a money market account. Children's Services Administrator III Otho Day said that the youth has now set a new milestone for the Transitional Housing Program – he was able to save more than \$21,000 by the time he graduated from the program in August 2004.

Lampkins attended weekly workshops facilitated by Bryars. Lampkins was not extravagant. He did not have a closet full of designer clothing, a big screen television, DVD player or credit cards he could not afford.

Lampkins' determination and motivation did not stop with the THP. While working full time, he continues his education in carpentry at Los Angeles Trade Tech. Lampkins plans to complete his training and continue to rise in his job. Lampkins explains that "you have to have an education, so that you always have something to fall back on. It feels good to have so many options." ■

## Black Investment Project Offers 'Life-Changing' Experience

Recently, staff from the Department's Black Investment Project received a letter from a graduate of the project's Effective Black Parenting course. Children's Social Worker Thelidria Calhoun of the Black Investment Project, shared this letter with "DCFS News":

Dear Mrs. Calhoun:

The way my family and I came to know you is not something I am necessarily proud or ashamed of. However, I can say that after having gone through the Effective Black Parenting course with my family, I gained some critical skills that have stayed with me into adulthood. Even though I went through the program as a child, I learned skills that helped shape me into the self-motivated and determined individual I am today. It was truly a life-changing experience.

Although it has been over 12 years since my family completed this course, I still remember some underlying themes that will stay with me forever. Your program put emphasis on pride, self-esteem, healthy communication, appropriate discipline strategies, child and substance abuse prevention, and the list goes on ... I am currently working on my Ph.D. in Functional Genomics at North Carolina State University. It is my sincere hope that your program continues to be available to meet the unique needs of the Black family and community. ■

## Youth Attend International Foster Care Conference

Last November, foster parents Howard Green and Raynard Price of Palmdale escorted six foster and emancipated youth to the Czech Republic for the 2004 International Foster Care Organization's (IFCO) European Training Seminar in Prague. Representatives from 29 countries attended the conference.

Price and the youth sent three workshop proposals to the conference which were accepted. They then worked hard to raise money needed for the trip. The trip was ultimately funded by community donations from Antelope Valley College, a local Christian women's group and Green.

At the conference, the workshops, dinners, lunches and plenary sessions were a collaboration of foster parents, foster youth, social workers and policymakers. The foster youth presented their personal experiences in foster care and then answered questions from the audience.

"I was so proud of our youth who participated and presented at workshops in the conference. They were honest, bright and said many profound things," said Family Group Decision Making Program Manager Joselyn Geaga-Rosenthal, who also attended the conference. Price came away from the conference realizing just how fortunate Los Angeles County foster parents are in terms of support.

There were opportunities for the youth to visit Czech children's projects, go on a sightseeing trip in Prague and sample Czech culture.



*Foster parent Raynard Price leads a discussion at the IFCO training seminar.*

*Continued on Page 3*

## P3

*Continued from Page 1*

social workers have expressed interest and the Department will hire about 40 this spring. Pilot offices identified to use the retired workers include Lancaster, Covina, Belvedere and Torrance.

DCFS is also looking at expanding P3 Department-wide, applying for additional money to fund the program and purchasing specialized services for families.

More information on the P3 pilot can be found on L.A. Kids. ■

## P3 Case Studies

**D**uring the first three months of P3, 29 youth were assigned to mediators, resulting in 13 of these youth having potential permanent connections identified. Mediators are now working to reunite one youth with his non-offending birth parent, seven youth have connected with adults who have an interest in adoption and five more youth have potential legal guardians identified. The following are some successes so far:

- A 14-year-old girl had been living with her grandmother for five years. At first, the grandmother had concerns about becoming the child's legal guardian because the youth was acting out. A mediator went to visit the family and found out the youth was acting out because she was hurt her grandmother wasn't willing to become her guardian. The mediator was able to work with the grandmother and presented the situation through the eyes of the youth. The grandmother is now pursuing legal guardianship and considering adoption of her grandchild.
- A 14-year-old boy had been in a non-relative foster home for four years and wanted to permanently stay in the home. The foster mother considers herself his mother. She has simply never thought about making the relationship legal through adoption. The P3 mediator introduced the concept of adoption to the foster mother and she is proceeding forward.
- After exploring the case of a 15-year-old, it was discovered that the youth's previous ROTC instructor was an important person in the youth's life. The ROTC instructor has been contacted by the P3 mediation team and is now renewing a relationship with the youth.

*Continued from Page 2*

## Success Stories

Jairo Rodriguez, 18, a Palmdale foster youth who lives with Price said, "There were many different cultures and new people to learn about and lots of new things to see like historic sites."

Family Group Decision Making was very much a part of this conference as was the topic of Emancipation. Another highlight of the trip was for foster parents Green and Price, other foster parents and the youths from Palmdale to sit down with American Ambassador to the Czech Republic William J. Cabaniss at the American Embassy. The ambassador was very knowledgeable on the subject of foster care, said Price. He also suggested the youth seek careers in foreign service. ■

# Placement and Recruitment Unit Works to Find Permanent Homes

This spring, staff from the Placement and Recruitment Unit (PRU) will visit DCFS regional offices to inform staff about the permanency services they provide. "DCFS News" recently spoke with Sari Grant, PRU Program Manager, to talk about the Department's efforts to find permanent homes for children.

*"DCFS News"*

*What does the PRU do?*

**SG**

We help find adoptive homes for children who are in need of a permanent loving family and cannot reunify with their family or be placed with a relative. The Permanency Planning Liaison (PPL) works with the regional social workers to help identify the children in need of an adoptive family. PRU recruiters are assigned to help find adoptive families and facilitate matches between the children and the prospective adoptive families. We also spearhead the Department's child specific recruitment efforts for adoptive homes through campaigns and outreach programs.

*"DCFS News"*

*What are some of the misconceptions about the PRU?*

**SG**

Many staff do not know the PRU exists and that staff is here to assist them with finding permanent homes for children on their caseloads. Sometimes people believe that older children are not adoptable, but we've been very successful in finding homes for older children, sibling groups and those with special needs. The process doesn't have to be overwhelming for social workers. We are here to support them and support the Department's belief that children do not belong in long-term foster care.

*"DCFS News"*

*What is DCFS doing to reach out to the community and recruit adoptive families?*

**SG**

We have a few campaigns we're working on right now. Through the Kinship Center and funding from the Dave Thomas Foundation, we are stepping up our efforts to recruit permanent homes throughout Southern California for older children and special needs children. In addition, we're working with Kidsave, a program to find "host families" to take children for weekends to introduce them to the community and advocate for permanent families. We also feature children awaiting adoption every week through "Wednesday's Child" a program on Fox 11 LA and on four internet sites including Adopt US Kids and California Kids Connection. We have also hired a public relations firm to specifically recruit families for African-American children. They, along with One Church, One Child will be reaching out to various community groups and the faith-based community. Four times a year, we hold Adoptions Fairs, child-friendly events designed to help match children with adoptive families.

*"DCFS News"*

*What can social workers do if they have a child on their caseload in need of a permanent home?*

**SG**

Social workers can refer children through their PPL. We will work as hard as and as long as necessary to find a permanent home for a child or sibling group. We believe that every child deserves the opportunity to have a permanent family, not just until age 18, but forever. If there is an immediate need for an infant or toddler to be placed with an adoptive family or resource family (concurrent planning family), social workers can telephone PRU directly and we will work to find a home within a day or two. For more information, staff can contact the Permanency Planning Liaison in their office, call the PRU office at (626) 229-3790 or call the Adoptions Intake line at (888) 811-1121, extension 2. ■



# A Closer Look at Specialized Programs

**A** variety of specialized services are offered by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to clients with specialized needs. The range of DCFS specialized services are wide. Each provides an important, constructive component to better service the needs of the Department's diverse clients. Here are some important facts that can clarify some of the misconceptions and enhance the use of specialized services.

## Services to Medically Fragile Children

Specially trained social workers in the Medical Fragile Unit are assigned a caseload that is very intensive both physically and emotionally. Cases are carefully screened by two workers who conduct intake assessments to ensure a proper placement. Due to the fragility of most of these children, these workers deal with a disproportionate amount of child deaths on their caseloads. However, there is a great deal of support for the three units.

"Having a medical director as well as the assistance of public health nurses has truly enhanced our services in that we have been able to connect with many more resources for children," said Specialized Programs Regional Administrator Amaryllis Watkins.

## Indian Child Welfare Unit

Specially assigned social workers notify the tribe of court proceedings that only occur in Department 402. If children or families are more than a quarter Native American, the court must make active efforts, not reasonable efforts, to notify the family's tribe-of-origin. Cases are identified at the Department's front end by the Child Protection Hot Line who then maps the case to the Indian Child Welfare Unit.

The Indian Child Welfare Unit was formed in response to federal legislation urging that all the states comply and follow specific criteria and guidelines for investigating cases involving Native Americans.

## Deaf Services

The Deaf Services Unit provides services to families whether the child, the parent, or both, are deaf. Social workers must contact the Deaf Services supervisor to initiate a case transfer. Since the deaf community has its own culture, highly trained social workers are needed who are able to communicate effectively with deaf clients.

This specialized unit is staffed with social workers who are themselves deaf or hard of hearing. Four interpreters and one supervisor assist in conducting vertical case management, which consists of investigating referrals and servicing the family until the case closes.

## Rites of Passage

Youth who are receiving Family Reunification and Family Maintenance services do not qualify for services from Rites of Passage. The youth must be receiving Permanent Placement services and must be living in a foster home, small family home or a group home.

With a high success rate, the Rites of Passage program services at-risk youth ages 14 to 18 in their quest to obtain independence and self-sufficiency. Youth are exposed to educational workshops, field trips, skill development training, violence prevention methods and tutoring among other services. The program's goal is to assist adolescents in successfully transitioning out of foster care.

## The Asian-Pacific Project

The Asian-Pacific Project services families who speak Tagalog, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Cambodian, Korean, Japanese, Hmong, Korean, Tongan and Laotian.

The Asian-Pacific Project was established in 1987 to ensure that the Department better meets the growing diversity in Los Angeles County's Asian-Pacific Community. This program is the largest Asian-Pacific child protection service in the United States. Six units provide Countywide services to Asian and Pacific Island families in their native languages.

## Runaway Adolescent Project (RAP)

Since 1988, RAP has aided runaway homeless youth ages 14 to 17, who have a history of abuse or neglect. It also helps youth with parents or guardians who are willing to sign a Voluntary Placement Agreement allowing RAP staff to intervene immediately. The project's goal is to get children off the street where they are prime targets for exploitation and violence, and enable them to become productive citizens. The single unit consists of five social workers, one supervisor and clerical assistance.

RAP also has an outreach program component. This includes social workers going out in the streets at night making contact with youth who have not sought help from the Department due to lack of knowledge. Social workers inform homeless youth of resources and options available to them.

## The Central Los Angeles Sexual Abuse Unit (CLASAU)

"Research has not demonstrated any one particular modality of therapy to be more effective than any other modality in the field of treating child sexual abuse," said CLASAU SCSW Ken Prescott. "Workers have the authority to recommend a type of counseling such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, or anger management, but therapists should themselves determine the modality that is best fit for the client."

CLASAU provides sexual abuse counseling services to victims and their families only in the Central Los Angeles area. "The goals of the program are to help sexually abusive families accomplish their goals safely with permanence and without re-offending," explained Prescott.

## Child Sexual Abuse Program (CSAP)

CSAP services offending and non-offending parents as well as child victims. CSAP provides sexual abuse treatment services throughout Los Angeles County, except for Central Los Angeles, to child victims and their families. The program combines three components: considering the legal aspect of the crime, which requires participation in therapy by court order, close networking with DCFS social workers and other treatment professionals involved with the family and peer support offered by a self-help component. CSAP meetings are located in Pomona, Van Nuys, Long Beach, Monterey Park, East Los Angeles and the Antelope Valley. ■

# ON THE LINE

In this edition of "On the Line" we profile two DCFS social workers at opposite ends of their careers. Janice Spicer and Sandra Maldonado-Sandoval both embody a caring professionalism and joy for their work that makes them model social workers and great assets to DCFS and the children and families we serve.

## 36 Years Investigating Cases

Janice Spicer never intended to be a social worker. But, she was a young, single mother with two sons and needed a job. Then she saw the ad in the newspaper for an intake worker at the Old Age Program and applied. The fit was perfect. That was many years ago. How many, Spicer won't mention, but for almost 36 years, Janice has been a Dependency Investigator (DI). Spicer explained that she never tires of the job. She has investigated cases throughout the County, from Bel Air to South Los Angeles. "Just when I think I've seen everything, I haven't," said Spicer. Enthusiasm is what she brings to the job on a daily basis.

Over the years, Spicer has seen many changes in social services and many Department directors come and go. She remembers the day DCFS was created 20 years ago and the excitement. She has seen psychosocial trends come and go such as the War on Poverty, Recovered Memory Syndrome and Satanic Ritual Cults.

Throughout all these changes, being a DI has remained a "perfect fit" for Spicer. The excitement of being on the line for 36 years has kept her from moving into supervising or administration. Prior to becoming a DI, Spicer had been a training supervisor and program director in other programs. She says that she is not interested in the

bureaucracy and feels, "Now that I have the hang of it (being a DI) there is no downside."

Patricia Cegarra has worked with Spicer for over 20 years. She describes her colleague as "a shining example of what it means to be a Dependency Investigator. Her work is used as examples for staff to follow and shows her compassion and commitment to the children and the families we serve and has never wavered even after all these years."

*Janice Spicer*

You have to have the right temperament for the job, explained Spicer. "I enjoy accumulating the evidence, analyzing it and presenting the results to court in a readable way." She also doesn't even mind testifying in court. Spicer also attributes her job satisfaction to always having good supervisors; good relationships with co-workers and not letting things bother her.

According to Spicer, to succeed at being a social worker one needs to be a realist, a quick learner, adaptable and have a strong ego and stomach. Regional Administrator Chuck Tadlock describes Spicer as "a highly talented and knowledgeable social worker who is seen by all of the Century Office staff as a tremendous resource. She is extremely committed to the safety and welfare of the children that she serves." ■

*"Just when I think I've seen everything, I haven't."*

*-Janice Spicer, Dependency Investigator*

## New Position Brings New Challenges

Sandra Maldonado-Sandoval began as a Children's Social Worker II just last September. "Sandra has displayed both outstanding social work skills and an exemplary attitude in her short tenure with DCFS," explained her former supervisor Beth Minor. Minor already describes Maldonado-Sandoval as an asset to the Department.

Maldonado-Sandoval set out to be a social worker and she brings a good deal of past experience with her. Since the end of high school and continuing throughout her college and graduate work, Maldonado-Sandoval has worked in the field of social services in some capacity.

Throughout all her experiences, Maldonado-Sandoval said she has always had good, supportive supervisors. Supervisors like Beth Minor and Adrian Gonzalez, along with having a number of school-mates in her unit, help.

One of Maldonado-Sandoval's first cases put her knowledge to the test. The court ordered a newly detained 16-year-old boy to remain in his current school and attend his extra-curricular activities although he needed to be moved to a new placement. The child was very upset about the transition and Maldonado-Sandoval did all that she could to comfort him, which included calling over 75 foster homes in the area of his current placement, to support keeping the neighborhood familiar. No home could be located in

the immediate vicinity. However, a home was located within about 10 miles of the child's school.

Maldonado-Sandoval was concerned about how the boy was adjusting to his placement and called to check on him from her cell phone. The youth used caller ID and tracked her phone number. He called her repeatedly over the course of a weekend leaving her angry messages. Sandra relayed this information to her supervisor, telling her that she was planning to speak with the child so that they could establish appropriate ways of him seeking her help.

Maldonado-Sandoval then took on the responsibility of leaving her home (about 50 miles away from where the child was placed) early each day for about two weeks so that she could ensure the child got to school as she worked to arrange for appropriate transportation.

Several weeks later when Maldonado-Sandoval was visiting with the youth, he told her that he could tell that she really cared about him. He apologized to her for treating her initially with such disrespect. Since then, Maldonado-Sandoval has built a bond with the boy; made him feel special, earned his trust and showed him adults (including social workers) could be trusted. ■

*Sandra Maldonado-Sandoval*



## 2004 Productivity and Quality Awards

The 17th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards (PQA) resulted in a variety of honors for DCFS in October. The PQA program is a Countywide recognition event sponsored by the Quality and Productivity Commission. This year, two DCFS programs were named "Top Ten" winners. DCFS also won awards for Special Merit and Certificates of Recognition.

The two DCFS programs placed in the top 10 included Clinical and Placement Support and Step-Out Apartments. DCFS was the lead agency on Clinical Placement and Support along with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and Probation Department. Marilyn Sklar and Crystal Cooper-Smith were the DCFS program managers honored. As part of the Mental Health Services Integration Program, this first-of-its kind program provides direct, personalized clinical and placement support, intervention and communication in multiple settings.

The other DCFS Top-Ten winner was Step-Out Apartments. DCFS worked along with the Community Development Commission/Housing Authority in collaboration with DMH and Probation. This program combines housing for clients with mental health counseling, crisis intervention, life skills and independent living training; employment readiness services and aftercare for emancipating youth who have been diagnosed as mentally ill. Step-Out Apartments provide 11 units that house 22 young adults in a secure and nurturing environment. DCFS Program Managers Rhelda Shabazz and Robert Goldberg were recognized.

Other DCFS programs honored at the awards ceremony included Structured Decision-Making, which received a Special Merit Plaque for meritorious accomplishment accepted by Program Manager Dick Santa Cruz. Certificates of Recognition for programs deserving honorable mention included the mandated reporters website and the Department's employee newsletter, "DCFS News." ■

## Employees Honored During National Adoption Month

In November, managers from the Adoption Division and the Permanency Resources Division Consolidated Home Study Section hosted an event honoring their employees in recognition of National Adoption Month. The event was held at DCFS headquarters and included continental breakfast and awards. Deputy Director of Services Bureau I Trish Ploehn attended.

Twenty-two employees were given awards for finalizing 24 or more adoptions between October 1, 2003 and September 30, 2004. In addition, employees were given prizes for having the most votes from their colleagues in a variety of areas including most likely to get out of a sanction; and most likely to complete an adoptive homestudy, adoptive placement and finalization all in one day. ■

## CWLA Adoption Conference

During National Adoption Month, DCFS joined the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) for its Western Regional Conference held at the Beverly Hills Hilton on November 10 through November 12, 2004. "All In the Family, Achieving Excellence in Adoption" was the conference theme. There was a wide and excellent range of workshops to select from ranging from finding resources to adopting older youth, to issues in adopting gay and lesbian youth. Throughout the conference, the single underlying theme was that all children deserve permanent homes.

During the general sessions, adult adoptees shared their personal adoption stories. One presenter was Tony Shellman, the young co-founder of a hip-hop line of clothes. Another was British comedic actress Allison Larkin who performed her one-woman show about her life as an adoptee and finding her biological American family. ■

## 'My CSW' Creates Personalized Homepage

"MyCSW" provides each CSW a personalized home page containing critical information needed by the CSW to meet case goals. Including tracking case milestones and monitoring CWS/CMS alerts. This time-management automation program frees up more time for CSWs to focus on protecting children and supporting their families. "MyCSW" was developed by and for social workers.

"MyCSW" also allows CSWs to organize their day-to-day case activities, which includes viewing their caseload geographically, accessing caseload-related reports and viewing child-history abstracts. The abstracts include past referrals, associated cases, foster care placements and payments. There will also be alerts for important upcoming and overdue activities such as participating in forum discussions and locating resource information geographically.

The first phase of the new program is dedicated to case-carrying CSWs. It is scheduled for deployment March 2005. The next phase for the Emergency Response CSWs will follow. A "MySCSW" personalized home page will be the next major project. ■

*In every issue, "DCFS News" provides information about what's happening in the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Service Planning Areas (SPAs). If you have SPA news to report, please submit your ideas to Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Public Affairs Office at [riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us](mailto:riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us).*

## Spa Spots

Continued from Page 6

### Toy Loan Program

Busy children are safe children and are far less likely to get into trouble. This has been the belief of the Toy Loan Program for over 70 years. Since the Great Depression, the Los Angeles County Toy Loan Program has provided needy children, schools and other child support programs with free books, toys and games that can enhance learning and stimulate communication. Today, over 30,000 Los Angeles County children reap the benefits of this program.

There are no membership dues or late fees. All materials are donated. A parent's signature is all that is needed to join the program. Toys are loaned on a weekly basis. The children are then graded on the timeliness of the toy's return and care they have given them. When they have earned 20 good marks, they become an "Honor Borrower." This status entitles them to a free gift. This is all based on the Toy Loan Honor Code, which was established to teach honesty, responsibility, courtesy and integrity.

Distribution centers are located throughout the County. Locations will be posted on LA Kids. For more information, call Program Coordinator Nancy Rodriguez at (213) 744-4346. ■

### Social Worker Wins Marathon

"Exercising and running helps reduce the stress at work and in my personal life," says Santa Clarita Social Worker Lisa Fink. Fink has been running the same amount of time she has been with the Department, about six and a half years. Recently, she won the Women's Overall Category of the Santa Clarita Marathon, which was her sixth race. When she is training for a marathon, Lisa trains five to six days

per week and runs 50 to 60 miles. In the future, Fink hopes to run the New York Marathon, the L.A. Marathon and the Midnight Sun Marathon in Norway, where her mother was born.

Fink is not only a dedicated runner, but also a dedicated social worker who loves being on the line. Whether she is training for a marathon, triathlon or finding a placement for a child, she gives 110 percent says Fink's former supervisor Lora Sholtzberger.

Lisa feels that one major key to surviving on the line is having excellent organizational skills, which includes daily filing. She also has a strong interest in working with teens and emancipating youth. "I was a difficult teen myself," she says. However, Lisa has a strong belief that prevention programs are the best way to combat family dysfunction and child abuse. ■

### Hiring Update

Of the 284 anticipated social workers being hired by the Department, 138 were hired in January and four academy classes are now in progress. To accommodate additional hiring, three additional Core Academy training sequences are scheduled with the possibility of additional trainings in early April.

"So far, the training groups have been energetic; demonstrating a high level of commitment and focus regarding our work," says Training Director Mark Miller. Several candidates said they have been waiting for the opportunity to work for the Department since applying in 2002. In general, Miller says the new crop of social workers are bright and energetic. "They are all eager to learn, so they can get down the business of working with children and families." ■

## Initiative Partners Nurses with Social Workers



The Joint Response Referral (J2R) Initiative was developed to decrease detentions and increase child safety by pairing Public Health Nurses (PHNs) with social workers on the initial Emergency Response visit when a second allegation has been identified, especially when children from zero to 36 months are involved. Working side by side, nurses and workers can assist each other to better ensure that children receive fast and appropriate care.

Children in the referral with medical or health issues and others considered at highest risk are also to be assessed by PHNs. After assessing medical and developmental issues, the PHN consults with the worker and can provide referrals for community resources to the family.

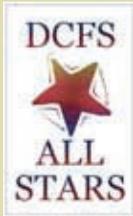
J2R was tested in three offices from June to October 2004 and the results of the pilot were evaluated by nursing staff and social work staff. Everyone agreed it was very helpful to have the nurses participating in the Structured Decision-Making process. It was proposed that the criteria be broadened to include more categories and to modify the required home visits to maximize PHN staff time.

The Department is now working on implementing J2R in all Emergency Response Units throughout DCFS. The criteria were broadened to include mandatory PHN/social worker consultation on all referrals of children ages zero to 36 months, and all referrals with a suspected or known medical or developmental conditions. Furthermore, joint social worker and nurse visits were made mandatory on all referrals with a serious medical condition such

as failure to thrive, and allegations of severe neglect regardless of age of the children. These visits must occur before the referral is closed.

During the joint visit, the nurse observes the child's physical, developmental and nutritional status, and provides the family/caregiver with resources and referrals to meet the child's suspected or identified needs.

On all children being jointly assessed, the nurse requests and reviews medical records if necessary, makes referrals to community health care resources, arranges for the children's medical examinations or any other physical issues that are identified. Other PHN activities may include gathering and clarifying health information, assisting with referrals to the regional center, WIC, CHDP providers or specialty providers, and facilitating the family's access to medical care. The nurses follow-up on identified problems, interpreting medical reports and entering all health related information in the CWS/CMS Contact and Health Notebooks. ■



## Director's Employees of the Month

As part of the "DCFS All Stars" employee recognition program, one Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services employee in three different categories is honored every month by the Director for enriching the lives of the children and families and contributing to our goals of permanence, safety and reduced reliance on out-of-home care.

We're still looking for "DCFS All Stars" to honor in the months ahead and you are encouraged to send in nominations using forms on the L.A. Kids web site. For more information on the "DCFS All Stars" employee recognition program, please call Lois Shirk in the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at (213) 351-5886. To learn more about these outstanding recipients, check out the Director's Page on L.A. Kids. Congratulations to all of the honorees!

### Outstanding Administrative Service Staff Award

**October:** Dick Santa Cruz, Children's Services Administrator II, Bureau of Finance

**November:** Barbara Hitchcock, Children's Services Administrator I, Training Section

**December:** Paul Buehler, Assistant Regional Administrator, Antelope Valley West Office

### Outstanding Direct Service Staff Award

**October:** Judi Ann Simmons, Supervising Children's Social Worker, Medical Placement Unit

**November:** Ruby Guillen, Children's Social Worker III, Adoption Division/Torrance Office

**December:** Charles "Chuck" Ramirez, Supervising Children's Social Worker, Santa Fe Springs Office

### Outstanding Support Service Staff Award

**October:** Robin Lewis, Intermediate Typist Clerk, Lakewood Office

**November:** Patti Metzger, Staff Assistant, Antelope Valley West

**December:** Trinidad Gavidia, Senior Secretary III, Contracts Administration

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**2005 CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION WALK**  
Saturday, April 30, 2005

8 a.m.  
Exposition Park  
Information: (323) 750-0629  
Dr. David Sanders will be a featured speaker at this event. DCFS will also sponsor an informational booth. Lend your support and exercise your legs!

**LOS ANGELES FOSTER CARE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

Month of May  
Information: (213) 351-5886 or (323) 980-1589  
For a complete listing of activities, log on to L.A. Kids.

DCFS, the Children's Law Center and dozens of community stakeholders join together to provide a variety of activities honoring the successes of the foster care system.

**CELEBRATION I**

Thursday, June 2, 2005  
7 p.m.  
Walt Disney Concert Hall  
Information: (213) 351-5886  
Applications available on [www.ilponline.org](http://www.ilponline.org)  
Applications are now being accepted for participation in this annual graduation ceremony celebrating the academic accomplishments of foster youth.

## L.A. County Board of Supervisors

**GLORIA MOLINA**  
Chair, First District  
**MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH**  
Chair Pro Tem, Fifth District  
**YVONNE B. BURKE**  
Second District  
**ZEV YAROSLAVSKY**  
Third District  
**DON KNABE**  
Fourth District

## L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services

425 Shatto Place  
Los Angeles, CA 90020  
[www.dcfcs.co.la.ca.us](http://www.dcfcs.co.la.ca.us)  
[www.lacounty.info](http://www.lacounty.info)

Child Abuse Hotline  
1-800-540-4000  
Adoptions and Foster Care Information  
1-888-811-1121

Director  
**David Sanders, Ph.D.**

## DCFS News Staff

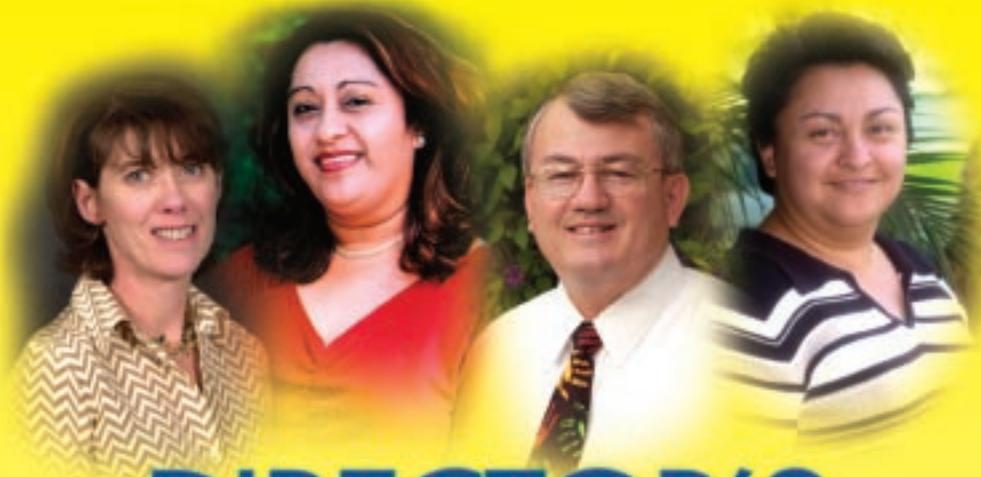
Editor  
**Louise Grasmehr**  
Writer  
**Stu Riskin**  
Editorial Assistant  
**Gino Hernandez**  
Photography  
**Richard Cervantes**

DCFS News is published by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Public Affairs.  
For article ideas and submissions, e-mail [grasml@dcfs.co.la.ca.us](mailto:grasml@dcfs.co.la.ca.us), or fax to (213) 738-9257.  
All submissions are subject to review and editing.



As part of the annual Foster Care Awareness Campaign in May, foster youth from across Los Angeles County submitted artwork to be used as part of the campaign. Pedro Martinez, 18, submitted one of the honored pieces of artwork, above, reflecting the theme "Where have I come from? Where am I going?"

DCFS  
  
ALL  
STARS



# DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD

## Submit Your NOMINATION

Here is your opportunity to nominate a fellow employee for their outstanding work and dedication to the department, children and families we serve.

Nominate that special employee who epitomizes customer satisfaction by supporting the department's goals of safety and permanence.

Nomination forms can be accessed on L.A Kids in the Press Room, located on the L.A Kids home page. For more information, please call Lois Shirk in the Office of Public Affairs at (626) 938-1763.

All nomination forms should be faxed to the Office of Public Affairs at (213) 738-9257.