



The Helping Hand

The voice of Community Partnership for Children

We restore families, support caring relatives, connect children with loving homes and prepare adolescents for adulthood.

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Couple answers teen's plea for a family

Twenty-year-old Renee Warren had only two wishes growing up as a child, to have a family and to attend a Christian college. Renee lost her hearing at age two because of abuse at the hands of her biological parents, and after a failed adoption, she lived most of her childhood in foster care. When Renee reached her junior year of high school, she began a personal mission to find a family.

Renee first wrote Dean, a former house parent at the group home where she lived. Dean had just adopted Renee's best friend, so Renee sent a pleading letter asking him to consider also adopting her. Because Dean was adopting two children at the time, he didn't feel he could take on another child. Dean sought to help Renee by forwarding her letter to his sister Connie Warren, a registered nurse who knows sign language.

Connie says she and her husband Paul prayed about adopting Renee.

"We had already raised our children and were now grandparents. Our only real reservation was whether Renee might need younger parents," explained Connie. "In our minds, we made the commitment and now it was entirely Renee's decision."

Connie and Paul traveled from North Carolina to Florida to meet Renee, where Connie says they hit it off immediately. Renee went to live with Connie and Paul and was adopted one week before her eighteenth birthday. The ceremony was held at her high school by telephone with a Florida judge.

"It was difficult at first," said Connie. "All communication went through me since Renee had only 5% hearing with a hearing aide."

After careful consideration, Renee

decided to try a medical procedure known as a cochlear implant. She received her first implant at the age of 18. The procedure required several follow up visits to allow for adjustments to increase volume and clarity of sound through the device. On the way to one follow-up visit, Renee made a quick stop at a McDonald's where she met a deaf pastor from Wilson, North Carolina. He encouraged her to follow her dreams and helped mentor her with her senior project at the high school, which was to bring deaf awareness to her church. This relationship led Renee to start a deaf ministry and teach sign classes at her church. She also started a deaf club at her high school, even though she was the only deaf student. Her mission was to encourage those who could hear to learn sign language.

Renee soon focused on attending college. With help from teachers at her high school and one of her interpreters, she researched and applied for scholarships. Her ambition has paid off as she now attends Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina on a full scholarship.

The state paid for Renee's first cochlear implant, but the Warrens learned that the second would not be covered. They shared this news with Renee's physician. Renee received her second implant at the age of 19, donated by the physician and hospital. Renee now has 95% hearing.

Today, Renee says, "I'm the happiest I've ever been," because her wishes to have a family and attend college have both come true.

Renee will share more of her story at the National Adoption Day Event on Saturday, November 15 at 10:00am. The event is hosted by Calvary Christian Center in Ormond Beach.

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NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY
November 15, 2008
Don't miss this heartwarming event! details inside



Connie, Paul and Renee Warren. Renee will serve as guest speaker at the National Adoption Day event.

November marks National Adoption Awareness month. In our country, there are 129,000 children waiting to be adopted from foster care. We enter this month thankful for the many supporters who have engaged in our mission to help us find loving, adoptive homes for our local children. Since 2005, we have found homes for 585 children.

Over the next year, we will continue to make improvements to the services offered to adoptive families. We will continue our Faith-based Partnership Program by further strengthening relationships with area churches, as the support our children and families receive from the church community is remarkable.

Adoption may not be for everyone but supporting the effort is. I ask that you continue exploring ways you can get involved to help our children.

Sincerely,

Ron Zychowski, CEO

By The Numbers Child Abuse

Volusia, Flagler & Putnam Counties

163

Abuse Reports Every Week

8

Children Removed From Families Every Week

9

Children Reunited With Families Every Week

1,419

Abused Children Being Helped Today

My day with Nancy

There are many partners making up the "Partnership" in Community Partnership for Children. One very important such partnership is the one we have with the Foster-Adoptive Parent Association. For this quarter's *My Day With*, I spent an afternoon with Nancy Lowden Norman, an adoptive parent and the vice president of the association.

After receiving a personalized VIP tour of the Atlantic Center for the Arts, where Nancy serves as the Director of Advancement, we talked at length over lunch at a nearby restaurant. Nancy shared with me the journey she and her husband Andrew have taken as foster parents. What struck me most was the tender story of Nick.

Nick was the first child brought to the Norman's home. He was 14 years old and the plan was to have him stay for the week until arrangements could be made to send him to live with his uncle in Tampa.

When Nick arrived at the Norman home, he was amazed at the many

amenities most of us take for granted. He marveled over food in the pantry and the fact that all of the bedrooms had doors at the entrances.

Nancy and Andrew spent the week showing Nick what a healthy family life was like-family dinner, a family fishing trip, and a genuine interest in each other's lives and well-being.

"It was hard to say goodbye to Nick," said Nancy. "I know we made a positive impact on his life even though he was only with us a short time. It shows that you can make a tremendous difference in the life of a child whether you spend an hour with them, a week, or a lifetime."

When a child comes into care, their record, called "the red book", follows the child to every placement. Nancy noticed there was nothing in the book about how wonderful Nick was, just what she saw as a litany of his placements.

"We added a page to the front part of his book with a photo of him fishing, and we listed some of his great

qualities. We did this so that if he went to another foster family, they would see a great picture of this gregarious kid and learn a little something about him," said Nancy. "We wanted Nick to be seen as the great kid he is!"

As the vice president for the Foster-Adoptive Parent Association, Nancy works with a team of dedicated child advocates to coordinate meetings on the east and west sides of Volusia County. Nancy's experience with foster care has taught her how valuable the network is between foster/adoptive parents, agencies, trainers, and therapists.

She says, "It all comes down to people who are passionate and dedicated to our kids, and we are so lucky to have each other!"

Nancy and Andrew continue to open their hearts and home, and have adopted their daughter from foster care.

By Jo Lynn Deal

National Adoption Day, November 15



Saturday, November 15 is celebrated as National Adoption Day, to create awareness about those children who are still waiting for a forever home.

In Volusia, Flagler, and Putnam counties, there are 123 children eligible for adoption, of which 38 have not been placed with a family.

This year's celebration will take place at Calvary Christian Center located at 1687 West Granada Boulevard in Ormond Beach.

The event is FREE to the public, doors open at 9:30am for light refreshments and networking, and the program will kick off at 10:00am with a special proclamation read by County Councilman, Carl Persis.

The keynote speaker, Ms. Renee Warren, was adopted just one week before her eighteenth birthday. Renee will share how she recruited her own

adoptive family. Her presentation will be followed by four live adoption ceremonies.

Hopeful adoptive parents will be able to learn about the many benefits of public adoption.

The program includes an exhibitor and Q&A session with representatives from Community Partnership for Children, Guardian ad Litem, Children's Home Society, Florida United Methodist Children's Home, and Devereux Florida.

Welcome home to RIVERSIDE BANK

Since 1982, Riverside Bank has been providing a caring, hometown style of banking to people and businesses in hometowns along Florida's east coast and heartland regions.

What began in 2006 as a trusted banking partnership has grown into hands-on personal involvement by the Riverside team to make a difference in the lives of foster children. Through their dedication and commitment, the team at Riverside has become a valuable partner in providing a safe-haven for our community's most vulnerable citizens, our children.

This year, the team developed a training class in Financial Basics to offer to foster teens. The informative training covers budgeting, borrowing money, building credit, opening checking accounts, earning interest, and opening a savings account. Teens are able to open a free checking account with Riverside Bank and each teen receives a \$10 gift card upon completing the training.

The team at Riverside isn't afraid to step into the trenches. They've donated hundreds of volunteer hours at special events over the years, from

the Hand of Hope Poker Runs, the Make A Difference Day 4Kids 5K, and the Duffel Bag Drive, to shopping for 30 children for the holiday toy drive. Riverside continues to serve as a Premier Event Partner for the annual Friends of Children Breakfast.

Topping off the longstanding partnership, the Riverside Partners Program offers a chance for Riverside account holders to help support children's programs. Find information on how easy it is to get involved by visiting CommunityPartnershipforChildren.org.

See-through tricks and safe treats offered to children



The Halloween Committee at Community Partnership for Children coordinated a safe Halloween day for foster children. The event was held on site Friday, October 31 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00p.m.

The halls were decked with Halloween décor from ceiling to floor moldings, with decorations donated by staff and community partner Ocean Walk Shoppes. The host of children's

activities included a not-so-haunted tour, sneaking through a pumpkin patch, and pin the face on the pumpkin.

Children also received a friendly "good fortune" reading from longtime agency volunteer Madame Lucia letting them know that good grades were in their future if they hit the books and stayed on task.



Community Partnership for Children

160 North Beach Street
Daytona Beach, Florida 32114
CommunityPartnershipforChildren.org
Phone: (386) 238-4900
Fax: (386) 238-4880

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Calendar of Events

Fall is for family. Bring your family to an upcoming event to help support our programs and, most importantly, local children in need. Enjoy a great time networking with partners of Community Partnership for Children. **To get involved, please contact Jo Lynn Deal at 386-944-4709.**



November 2008

- ✧ November: National Adoption Awareness Month
- ✧ November 12: Palatka Office Open House
- ✧ November 15: Adoption Event, Calvary Christian Center

January 2009

- ✧ January 7: 4th Annual Friends of Children Breakfast

For details on all events, please visit our Web site at communitypartnershipforchildren.org.

Daytona Beach Kennel Club and Poker Room invests in children



The Daytona Beach Kennel Club and Poker Room opened its new location on Williamson Boulevard in 2008, but General Manager Daniel Francati has opened his heart to children for many years in support of Community Partnership for Children.

Francati said when he listened to Community Partnership for Children CEO Ron Zychowski share the stories of local children at a donor reception, he was greatly affected by what he heard.

In 2005, the Daytona Beach Kennel Club and Poker Room signed on as a Hand of Hope Poker Run sponsor and continued this partnership for each year the event was held. The club also served as the check-in and first stop in

the runs. A portion of the poker run event proceeds were used to enable foster children to participate in extra curricular activities like dance and music lessons. This year the Kennel Club and Poker Room continues its partnership by joining as a Gold Sponsor for the 4th Annual Friends of Children Breakfast.

Daytona Beach Kennel Club and Poker Room offers year-round entertainment. Established in the summer of 1948, the Club and Poker Room has been a mainstay in the Daytona Beach entertainment landscape. Learn more about the venue at daytonagreyhound.com.

Join the mission... make a difference

Here are some ideas:

- Make a donation today.
- Sponsor an adoption matching event or sponsor one child to attend the event.
- Donate giveaway items for distribution at community events.
- Provide advertisement for our special events, foster & adoptive parent recruitment, and mentor recruitment.
- Hold a fundraising event.
- Volunteer.

Questions? Please call 386-944-4709