



# Turning Points

*“ . . . I became a young woman in this wonderful family. No matter what I did, they never gave up on me. Now I speak, act, and talk like a young adult. I'm an attractive young lady — and mom, it's all your fault. I may not be your daughter by the way I look, but I am your daughter by the way I talk . . . ”*

~ Excerpted from a poem recently written by Carmen, age 15, a former group home resident, now living with a loving foster family that's in the process of adopting her



## Wanted: Foster Families

Creative efforts underway to find foster families for kids like Carmen

To spotlight the plight of children without families, Children's Aid and Family Services is reaching out to the public in new ways. In the Garden State Plaza and Paramus Park malls, large, compelling photos of an older child and baby are displayed with the words "Transform a Child's Life. Become a Foster Parent."

"We're excited about this recruitment effort, and believe we'll reach people that aren't aware of the desperate need for foster parents," says Liz Mason, executive vice president. "There are thousands of children in the state of New Jersey who are orphans of the living, meaning their parents are alive, but are unable or unwilling to care for them. A typical family shopping in the mall may not

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*The staff of Children's Aid and Family Services wishes you a safe and joyous holiday season!*



It's hard to believe the holidays are here again, and 2006 is quickly coming to a close. This is the time of year when most of us reconnect with our family, perhaps traveling long distances to visit our parents, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. We enjoy holiday get-togethers filled with family, plenty of good food, and reminiscing about our shared pasts. Children learn about their parents' childhoods from their grandparents. Family bonds are forged, memories are made, and connections deepened that endure for the next generation.

That's the typical holiday scenario most of us enjoy. However, for many of the children in the agency's care, family memories associated with the holidays may not always be happy and warm. In fact, the memories are often of strife, discord and neglect.

It's usually the work of many dedicated individuals - therapists, clinicians, and our child care staff - that helps these kids to finally look forward to the holiday season with anticipation. You, too, play a huge role in the transformation of the holidays into something worth celebrating. Whether you donate holiday gifts, underwrite the costs of a holiday party, or volunteer to decorate one of the agency's facilities, you're showing the children and families we serve the generosity and happiness that's usually associated with this time of the year.

I thank you for all you do, day in and day out, to help the vulnerable children and adults the agency serves. I urge you to read this year's holiday appeal, which is about Shandora Miller, a remarkable young woman who lived in the Woodlea group home. You'll see firsthand how the time, energy, and passion you give to Children's Aid and Family Services reaps huge dividends.

I wish you and your family a joyous holiday season and a safe and prosperous New Year!

**Robert B. Jones, Ph.D.**  
President & CEO

even think of fostering – our hope is that seeing the billboards might spur them to find out about it.

“While we are actively seeking families for infants, our ad campaign is particularly intended to draw attention to the great many older children who are in need of foster parents. There are thousands of foster children in New Jersey alone, which is why we are taking billboards to highlight this issue in the public's mind, and give these children a greater chance of finding a loving foster family to care for them. The need for foster parents has become even greater as the number of children in residential foster care facilities grows.”

### An all-too-familiar scenario

Tamara's\* story is an unfortunately typical example of what a foster child endures before finding a loving home. Born to a single mother who lacked the education and maturity to care for her, she



A photo of an adorable young boy graces a billboard at the Garden State Plaza's food court. The agency is reaching out to the public in new ways as it seeks foster parents.

was shuttled back and forth to relatives, and then ended up with her elderly grandparents. Her grandmother was the caregiver to Tamara's grandfather, who suffered from chronic heart disease. As Tamara got older, it became increasingly difficult for her 65-year-old grandmother to keep up with the needs of her family. In poor health herself, she could barely get her husband to the doctor, much less her granddaughter. One day, when she was 8, Tamara came home from school to learn her grandmother was making her a ward of the state.

Angry, frightened and betrayed, Tamara had difficulties adjusting to new foster homes and found herself being shuttled around from one temporary home to another. When she was 10, the state asked Children's Aid and Family Services to care for her in one of its group homes. There, caring and dedicated social workers supported Tamara and the other children, most of whom had similar backgrounds. Agency child care staff got the children ready for school every day, cooked their meals for them, took them to doctor visits, and made sure they went to their weekly counseling

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*“I like foster care because it is very fun. I live in a group home. I like all the kids here. They are very nice. I feel good at the group home. I feel sad because I do not see my birth family. When I first came to here I was very sad. Now I am not sad anymore because I get taken care of. I really like living in foster care but I’m ready to live with a forever family.”*

~ Alexis, age 9

sessions. Slowly, Tamara began to feel hopeful again, and find out new things about herself. She discovered she loved clothes, now that she had nice outfits to wear every day. She liked to paint pictures, now that she was in an environment where her creativity was encouraged. She looked forward to school each day with great enthusiasm, now that she had someone willing to help with her homework.

#### **Finding a loving family**

After about one year in the group home, Tamara made great strides. She was happier, gaining confidence and beginning to trust others again. She began meeting with a foster family with the possibility of living with them. The family received ongoing training from the agency, and had cared for many children during the 15 years it was with the agency. After six months of spending time with the family, Tamara felt comfortable enough to move in to their house, and eventually became a cherished family

member. She’s been with them for three years now, and the family is in the process of adopting her.

Tamara’s story is typical of what happens when a loving and supportive foster family takes in a child. Many of the foster parents with the agency have adopted their foster children.

“Although this is great news for the adopted children, unfortunately it lessens the foster families we have available,” says Rose Zeltser, senior vice president of child welfare services. “And, at any one time, we always have about 60 children living in our group homes that are yearning for the stability of being part of a loving family.”

Foster parents receive a monthly stipend to pay for the child’s food, clothing and household costs, and Medicaid provides medical and dental coverage for the child. Additionally, Children’s Aid and Family Services provides support and counseling for foster parents, and is on call to them 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**For more information on becoming a foster parent, call 201-226-0300.**

*“I’m making a positive difference in their lives, and they in turn are making a positive difference in my life. Just by showing these kids love, you get so much more love back.”*

~ Patty Dansen  
Foster/Adoptive Mother  
Boarder Babies program

*“I’m grateful we worked so hard to get our grown foster child Devon in a group home close to here. Sticking by her is the best thing I ever did.”*

~ Harriet Wilson  
Foster Mother to more than 100 children

*“Each child that comes into your home is innocent and vulnerable. It is thrilling to start their journey, filling each day with all the love, warmth, and human touch it can hold.”*

~ Anne Oros  
Foster/Adoptive Mother  
Boarder Babies program

*\*Names and certain details have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.*

# A Magical Evening Awaits You

4th annual gala to feature \$10,000 emerald donated by Arthur Groom & Co.

Mark your calendars! March 16, 2007, is the date. The Hackensack Golf Club in Oradell is the place. And your attendance is highly desired. Join Children's Aid and Family Services for "A Sparkling Evening of Magic, Marvel, and a touch of March Madness!"

United Water has signed on as a corporate sponsor for the agency's 4th annual gala special event, which will include a cocktail hour, sumptuous buffet dinner, and live and silent auctions.

Additionally, basketball fanatics can count down to the Final Four, with the chance to win all kinds of prizes. And here's something to make everyone a little "green with envy" – Arthur Groom & Co. of Ridgewood has generously donated a \$10,000 emerald to the event. More exciting details are to follow.

Tickets start at \$150, with all proceeds benefiting the vulnerable children and families the agency serves. And just think, while you are taking part in the festivities, you will be simultaneously helping Children's Aid and Family Services continue to provide quality individual, family and community-focused services to those in need. Last year alone, the agency helped more than 16,000 people! For more information, or for sponsorship opportunities, please call Lyn Ramage at 201-261-2800.



**The mission** of Children's Aid and Family Services is to help children, families, and communities to heal, to learn, and to grow. Since 1899, the agency has helped thousands of individuals – of all ages and from all walks of life – to thrive in their communities. Whether we're working with a child seeking an adoptive family, providing a low-income family with affordable child care, helping a teenager resist the pressure to take drugs, providing a mentor for a vulnerable child, or offering support to those caring for elderly loved ones, we're helping to build futures for children, families, and communities throughout New Jersey. For more details about the agency's more than 20 programs and services, please visit [www.cafsnj.org](http://www.cafsnj.org) or call **201.261.2800**.



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