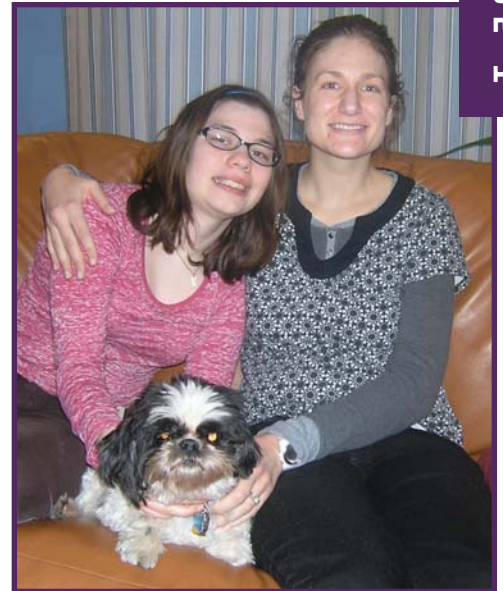


I Love Coming Home

Laughter comes easily to 14-year-old Shanna. She talks excitedly to her adoptive mother, Blake, about her friends, music and school. The two have such a strong relationship it's hard to believe that Blake and her husband, Bill, adopted Shanna less than one year ago.

Shanna came to Children's Aid and Family Services when she was 10 years old, after having been in several foster homes. She went to live in one of our Path to Permanency homes where she eventually met Blake, who was a social worker for another child living in the home. "Bill and I always wanted to foster or adopt, and when I saw what good care the children got at the Path home, I knew I wanted to adopt through Children's Aid and Family Services," Blake says. "We really liked Shanna from the start. She was a little shy but seemed like she'd fit in our family well."

Blake and Bill continued to visit Shanna at the Path home to get to know her better. They taught her "Hot Cross Buns" on the piano and made holiday ornaments together. When Shanna got the devastating news that her grandfather passed away, Blake and Bill took her to dinner, talked to her and helped ease her grief.



Shanna and Blake.



First trip to Disney World.

Shanna moved into their home in 2011 and has adjusted well. She loves animals and takes horseback riding lessons, as well as swimming and bowling. She also went to Disney World for the first time recently with Blake and Bill. A nurturing child who often had to care for her younger siblings before she entered foster care, Shanna is learning to simply enjoy being a teenager.

"I like going to school here and really love coming home every day," she says. Shanna plays with the family dogs and cats and enjoys reading in her room.



A forever family (l. - r.): Bill, Shanna and Blake with the judge that finalized Shanna's adoption.

Do you have room in your heart and home to adopt or foster a child? Please call our family recruiter at 201.226.0300 or visit www.cafsnj.org.

"I have a lot in common with Blake and Bill," says Shanna. "They're really caring and give me a lot of attention. Now I have a wonderful mom and dad. We're growing into one big happy family!"

Message from the President



Spring is almost here, the time of new beginnings. I want to thank you for the new beginnings you give to our children and families. Whether you're a volunteer, a foster or adoptive parent or a donor, you're working with us to give a new beginning to those we serve. You'll read in this issue of *Turning Points* all the ways your contributions of caring are changing lives. Thank you!

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



Mark learning to ride a horse.

A Beautiful Boy

Children's Aid and Family Services opened its second community home for children with intellectual/developmental disabilities last summer. The staff provides 24/7 care for the children, helping them to lead richer, fuller lives through activities and community participation. Mark is one of four boys living in our Maywood home, and this is his story as told by his mother, Dawn:

I had a difficult pregnancy with Mark, and after he was born, he didn't make his developmental milestones. He was diagnosed with Angelman's Syndrome, a chromosomal disorder that affects one in 15,000 babies. He is non-verbal and didn't walk until age 6, isn't able to dress himself or use the bathroom and he needs to be fed. But my Markie's a beautiful boy; he's very easygoing, happy and laughs a lot.

I'm a single mother to Markie and Gregory, his 17-year-old brother, plus I care for my grandmother and work full-time. I've had health problems since Markie was 2 years old, when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Thankfully, I'm in remission but have arthritis from the chemotherapy I went through.

Markie is 13 years old now and he's getting to be a big boy. He needs full-time care and it was becoming increasingly hard for me to give it to him. I never planned on placing him in a home for children with developmental disabilities, but I was becoming overwhelmed and knew I needed help.

I began working with Children's Aid and Family Services and the State of New Jersey's Division of Developmental Disabilities to get help for Markie. I met with Children's Aid and Family



Services' staff and saw how they care for children. I visited the home where Markie now lives and was so happy that it was "homey" and also close to where I live. This was so important because I could still see Markie a lot and also because he could go to the same school and doctors.

Markie moved into Children's Aid and Family Services' community home last fall, and although it hurt to let my baby go, the experience has been good for us. He's doing so well and loves his room and the home. I visit him several times a week and he's always excited to see me. Our time together is more fun now – I am totally his and can give him all of my attention.

My health and energy have improved and I can go to church now and take care of myself. I'm also able to give more attention to my son Gregory, and help him get ready for college. Overall, the move has been positive for all of us.

To learn more about our services for children and young adults with developmental disabilities, please call 201.261.2800.

"Markie gets a lot of attention from the staff. They've been 100% wonderful with him. I know they care for him the way I would, which is a huge blessing."

Dawn
Mark's mother

Education Services: Cornerstone of Success

Before coming to Children's Aid and Family Services, most of our children have been in seven to 10 foster placements. Many of them can't even name all of the schools they've attended and are often two grade levels behind. **On average, a child in foster care who changes school even once is less than half as likely to graduate high school.**

We believe a good education is the cornerstone of success for our children. To help our children get back on track, we engage an education specialist to supervise all IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) and make professional one-on-one tutoring services available, tailored to meet their individual needs. The impact on the children's academics has been remarkable.

Since 2009, 100% of the children in our care eligible to graduate from high school have graduated.

Here are some of our children's recent achievements:

- Anthony,* Thomas* and Alyssa* entered our care behind grade level and received tutoring for the past year. **With the help of their tutors and hard work, they made so much progress that each of them skipped a grade!**
- Samantha* came into our care last year and couldn't read, even though she was starting second grade. She worked with her tutor every week for one-and-one-half hours. The hard work paid off! She is in third grade and is reading close to grade level.
- Derek* was failing most of his 6th grade classes when he came into our care. A bright child, Derek needed support and resources to



help him catch up. With an IEP in place, one-on-one weekly tutoring and the support of school staff, last fall Derek earned four As, two Bs, and one C.

We are one of the few children's agencies that offer the expertise of an education specialist and provide professional tutoring services to the children in our care. On average, 38 of our children receive tutoring each week. All of our tutors are certified teachers. Our Educational Services program is supported entirely by philanthropy. A gift of \$50 will provide one tutoring session, \$250 will provide five tutoring sessions and \$500 will provide 10 tutoring sessions. Thank you!

**Names changed to protect client's privacy.*

Lil Wayne's Trukfit Clothing Line Makes One of Our Children Smile



Robert Klemt, Principal of Thomas's school, and Thomas, who is wearing Trukfit clothes and holding an autographed photo of Lil Wayne.

When 13-year-old Thomas was given a school assignment to write to a company, he didn't hesitate to search for Trukfit, the clothing line from hip-hop recording artist Lil Wayne. He sent a letter in which he explained he lived in one of Children's Aid and Family Services' group homes for foster children and was a huge fan of Lil Wayne. Thomas requested samples of clothes. To his surprise, Trukfit sent a large box of jackets, hoodies, t-shirts and hats that arrived at the group home just after the holidays.

"I love music, especially Lil Wayne," says Thomas. "I have all of his albums and mix tapes. I was so surprised and thankful to get the donation. It meant a lot to me. I'm sharing the clothes with some of the kids I live with."

Thomas is in 7th grade and made honor roll this marking period! A natural leader, he wants to be a criminal attorney when he grows up.

A *New* BEGINNING



Foster parents Lillian and Ramon.

Lillian and Ramon believe strongly in faith and family. They are close to their three daughters – ages 24, 19 and 17– and have long wanted to foster a child. Last year, the time was right for them to learn more about becoming foster parents. They contacted Children’s Aid and Family Services, because “we wanted to give hope and a new beginning to one of the kids,” says Lillian.

After going through the training process and becoming licensed foster parents, Lillian and Ramon met Carla.* She was 17 years old and had been in foster care since her mother passed away seven years ago. She was removed from her father’s care because he was abusive toward her.

Before coming to the agency, she was in several group homes and hadn’t lived with a family in many years. She

had difficulty trusting adults, but got along well with Lillian and Ramon from the start. “Before Carla moved in, we let her know that we respect each other in our home and that she was free to express herself as long as she did it respectfully,” says Lillian. “Carla has adapted quickly to our home and gets along great with our daughters. They’ve included her when they go out with their friends and have encouraged her to push herself in school. Her grades have improved since she’s been with us and she’s planning on a career in the medical field.”

Lillian believes a consistent and stable home life has helped Carla thrive. “She knows she can rely on us and that we support her,” she says. “She’s become part of our family. She even visits Ramon’s mother on her own and calls her ‘grandma.’”

Ramon has worked to earn Carla’s trust and become a father figure to her. Each week, he talks to her about a specific life lesson. “One week we spoke about fruitfulness and how we apply it to our lives,” he says. “I asked her how our family life has been fruitful to her and how she has been helpful to us. We want her to know she needs to be appreciative and work hard to achieve her goals.”

Carla also went on her first vacation last summer with Lillian and Ramon and their daughters. “We went to South Carolina and had so much fun,” says Lillian. “Carla was excited like a child. We went to the beach and on the Ferris wheel. We cooked dinner together and Carla would help with the dishes. It was a wonderful time.”

There are many children in our care who need loving foster parents. Do you have room in your home and heart to help a vulnerable child? To learn more about becoming a foster parent, please call our family recruiter at 201.226.0300.

*Name changed to protect client privacy



Lillian believes a consistent and stable home life has helped Carla thrive. “She knows she can rely on us and that we support her. She’s become part of our family.”

I know what family means now

Marybeth has known for a long time that she wanted to adopt a child, most likely an older boy or girl, perhaps a second grader. For the past three years, she has been the legal guardian to 17-year-old Ashanti, so she knew she could care for an older child. But after becoming a foster parent with Children's Aid and Family Services and providing short-term respite care to children of all ages, she became open to other possibilities. When an agency staff member called asking if she would open her home to 22-month-old Zamir, she said yes right away and got to work preparing her home for a busy toddler.

"Zamir is a loving, bright and inquisitive child," says Marybeth. "He took to me right away and the transition into my family was relatively smooth. He's a typical toddler – loves to climb and be active – and he's also calm and easy going. In the beginning, the major impact on me was lack of sleep."



Zamir loves to have fun.

Like any new parent, Marybeth spent many nights listening to Zamir sleep in his crib. "Zamir had asthma and I always wanted to make sure his



Marybeth, Zamir and Ashanti.

breathing was clear," she says. "He's been treated for the asthma on a regular basis and is much better now. The agency staff has been very helpful and always there when I needed them. With their support and also all of the 'Googling' I did, I learned so much the first few months he came here and my confidence as the parent of a toddler grew."

She believes that Zamir's loving nature has helped her other son, Ashanti, as well as her relationship with him. "At first, it was a struggle for Ashanti to leave his birth family and live with me. And it was a huge change when Zamir joined us, but they quickly became brothers.

They roughhouse, cuddle and read together, and Ashanti says, 'this is my brother. I know what family means now. They are the people that take care of you.'"

Last summer, Marybeth took the kids to Disney World to celebrate all the good things: Zamir's adoption, Ashanti being a big brother and her birthday. "It was our first big trip together and we had such fun! I had experiences growing up that I want to share with them, such as travel and education. This is the kind of life I want for them."

Do you want to help change the life of a child for the better? To learn more about our children waiting to be adopted, please call our family recruiter at 201.226.0300 or visit www.cafsnj.org

Marybeth says that "adopting a child is an extraordinarily rewarding experience. It helps redefine and balance your life."

LEARNING TO BE INDEPENDENT

Think about all the practical skills your parents taught you, such as laundry, cooking, opening a bank account, paying bills, and dressing for a job interview. Without these essential skills, the transition into adulthood would have been enormously difficult. For children in our care, learning these tasks is an important part of the work we do with them.

“Our goal is to help our teenagers successfully live independently,” says Jacquie Kohlberger, youth development specialist with Children’s Aid and Family Services. “They don’t have the safety net that parents usually provide for their kids. So we teach them life skills. We pair each of our children with a partner who helps them prepare to eventually live independently. They learn to cut coupons and grocery shop, cook, budget their money, take public transportation and find an apartment.”

This year, our Life Skills training has expanded to include monthly interactive workshops on subjects as varied as car maintenance, work readiness, money management and internet radio production. Ronald Williams of

“They don’t have the safety net that parents usually provide for their kids. So we teach them life skills.”

Jacquie Kohlberger
Youth Development Specialist
Children’s Aid and Family Services



Mastering the art of tying a tie.

Gyroscope, who led the interactive workshop on internet radio production, set up a studio in Children’s Aid and Family Services’ offices and hosted a live broadcast. The kids helped with all aspects of the production. Mr. Williams also spoke to the children about various college majors related to the entertainment field.

Members of GRACIAS (Giving, Resources, Appreciation, Care, Inspiration and Services), a volunteer group, hosted a workshop on work readiness, teaching the boys to tie neck ties and the girls about job-appropriate hair and dress. They also staged mock job interviews with the youth. “It was an honor for us to serve the kids,” says Erika Gerena of GRACIAS. “We had a great time and hope to help more.”

Don McCue, a Master Technician, taught a hands-on workshop about car maintenance. The teens learned how to check oil, change a headlight and check tire pressure.

“The kids are excited about the workshops,” says Jacquie. “One



Internet radio production.



Grants Update

Children's Aid and Family Services wishes to thank the many generous organizations and foundations that recently provided vital support to its programs for vulnerable children and families:

- BJ's Charitable Foundation
- BRV Sharma Family Foundation
- CME Group Community Foundation
- Edward W. & Stella C. Van Houten Memorial Fund
- Fred J. Brotherton Charitable Foundation
- The Gertrude E. Skelly Charitable Foundation
- Giants Foundation
- Gift of Life America Fund
- Greater Newark Holiday Fund
- Horizon Foundation for New Jersey
- ICAP North America, Inc.
- John and Margaret Post Foundation
- Kaplen Foundation
- Lillian Pitkin Schenk Fund
- Orange Orphan Society
- Ronald McDonald House Charities New York Tri-State Area and Ronald McDonald House Charities Global
- St. Elizabeth's Church
- Stop & Shop
- TD Charitable Foundation
- TJX Foundation
- Todd Ouida Children's Foundation
- Toy Lending Library of Bergen County
- United Water Foundation
- Walmart Foundation



Interview-ready hair and makeup.

young woman wants to be a mechanic and loved working on cars. During the job readiness workshop, two young men had a race to see who could tie their tie the fastest!"

Children's Aid and Family Services is seeking volunteers to lead life skills workshops, especially in the following areas: How to Lower Utilities and Save Energy, Understanding and Securing a Student Loan, Budget Planning, Music Instruction and Money Management. We also need mentors for our children. If you have expertise in any of these areas, or other areas that you think would help our children, please call our volunteer manager at 201.261.2800. Thank you!



Learning to check oil.

"It's amazing to see that young people, no matter what they've been through, still have the basic desire and curiosity to understand the world around them."

Don McCue
Master Technician



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Call us at 201.261.2800

STEP RIGHT UP TO HELP CHILDREN



**Save the date for
Children's Aid and Family Services'
10th annual gala:**

Date: Thursday, April 18, 2013
Time: 7:00 - 11:00 p.m.
Place: Macaluso's, 161 Rea Ave., Hawthorne, NJ
Honoring: Otterstedt Insurance Agency
Tickets: \$150, \$250, \$350

- Circus-themed entertainment
- Exciting silent and live auctions
- Dinner and much more.

Sponsorships, event journal advertising and auction item donation opportunities available.
For more information, please call at 201.261.2800 or visit www.cafsnj.org

MISSION

The Mission of Children's Aid and Family Services is to preserve, protect, and when needed, provide families. Motivated by compassion for vulnerable children, young adults, frail elderly and their families, we provide high-quality and innovative services that meet their social, educational and emotional needs. Since 1899, the agency has been recognized as a leader in adoption and specialty therapeutic services for children who have been severely traumatized and abused.