

Welcome to the first issue of Children & Family Services Center's quarterly newsletter.



VOLUME 7 | SPRING 2014

HELLO AGAIN!

Welcome back to *Collaborations Quarterly*, Children & Family Services Center's quarterly e-newsletter designed to keep stakeholders updated on happenings at CFSC and our member agencies. Increased communication enhances collaboration, so please forward this newsletter to your staff and supporters.

The Human Equivalent of a Swiss Army Knife

Communities In Schools' site coordinators are true utility players

"Our team tries to keep students from falling through the cracks," says Federico Rios, director of elementary school services for Communities In Schools (CIS). "We've got a whole host of tools ready. We're kind of like Swiss Army Knives."

Rios supervises 10 CIS site coordinators stationed at elementary schools throughout CMS. Each one is responsible for 90 to 100 students who have been identified as high-risk. Rios knows the territory well. He used to be one of those coordinators.

All the coordinators – six of whom are bilingual – are there to intervene, if necessary, to ensure kids are getting all the support they need to thrive in school. Their tactics vary depending on the student, the family circumstances and the school. The student may need a mentoring program or one-on-one counseling or a combination of tools and programs.

The coordinators have to sometimes be detectives. They monitor attendance records and intervene when they see frequent absences. Elementary school kids aren't just ditching school; there's a bigger issue. "It could be homelessness, or it could be the acute illness of a parent or caregiver," Rios says. CIS staff members investigate and then address the

intervention is crucial.

The 10 site coordinators in elementary schools are far from the only CIS staff embedded at CMS. CIS site coordinators serve more than 6,000 students in 43 CMS elementary, middle and high schools. They serve the schools with some of the greatest needs but the fewest resources.

Rios says parents are grateful for the support. “They see us as a resource,” he says. “We’re not school employees, but we still fall under the auspices of CMS. We can be an advocate for parents and their children with CMS.”

The bilingual coordinators fill that advocacy role often. Many undocumented workers – including those with children in CMS – are living in the shadows, Rios says. They don’t have and can’t get a Social Security number, so they can’t work except as day laborers. They’ve often been given misinformation and are distrustful.

For example, one family CIS was working with on legal issues surrounding their documentation asked a coordinator for food. The family was hungry. The coordinator took them to the school’s food pantry, but more importantly, addressed a bigger issue. He asked if their child was born in the United States. Since she was, that child qualifies for food stamps. The parents believed that if they got food stamps for their daughter, she’d have to pay the government back when she turned 18. That’s not true, and the family had been going hungry because they were afraid it was true.

“There is so much misinformation,” Rios says. “Many of these people can’t read or write. We’re serving a vital role for them.”

Rios says partner agency **Council for Children’s Rights** has been crucial in helping families seek a path to citizenship. CFCR staff has even trained CIS staff on how to offer the most effective help. “Council for Children’s Rights has been key in getting our at-risk students served and in making us aware of the issues,” he says. **A Child’s Place** is also essential in helping find housing for kids identified as homeless.

“There are some programs these families are eligible for and entitled to,” Rios says. “We help them get access to assistance they didn’t know was available.”

AGENCY
MILESTONES

RECENT SUCCESSES & UPCOMING EVENTS

Annabelle Suddreth, Executive Director

- A Child's Place (ACP) annual fundraiser on May 31 will have a Bond – *James Bond* – theme. **A Swine Evening 2014: Piggies Galore** happens at the Renaissance Charlotte Suites Hotel. Learn more at www.aswineevening.com
- The 2014 **Swing Fore A Child's Place Golf Tournament** took place at River Run Country Club in Davidson on May 19. This third-party event raises funds for My Place, an academic enrichment summer camp that hosts current ACP client children for six weeks in the summer.
- After eight wonderful years of dedicated service, **Annabelle Suddreth** is stepping down as executive director. The ACP Board has engaged Sockwell Partners of Charlotte to conduct the search for new executive director.

Care Ring

www.careringnc.com

Don Jonas, Ph.D., Executive Director

- The Charlotte South and North Rotary Clubs are combining efforts to raise awareness and funds to support four nonprofits, and Care Ring is one of them. We join Charlotte Bridge Home, YMCA Y-Readers and Patriots Path as beneficiaries. The **WORLD TASTING TOUR** on Saturday, June 7 is from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Audi of Charlotte, 9300 East Independence Boulevard in Matthews. Single tickets are \$60. A pair is \$109 – in honor of Rotary's 109th birthday. Enjoy live music, auctions and taste more than 20 wines while feasting on hors d'oeuvres from local restaurants. For beer lovers, enjoy microbrews from local breweries. And get the chance to test drive an Audi, too. Purchase tickets at www.charlottenorthrotaryclub.org.
- **Care Ring, NC MedAssist, RAIN** and others collaborated to help enroll more than 200,000 North Carolinians into health insurance during healthcare.gov's open enrollment from October through March. We are still helping enroll people who qualify for special enrollments.

There are still more than 80,000 people in Mecklenburg without health insurance, so be sure your clients, friends and family know about Care Ring: They *do* have a place to go for affordable healthcare. A doctor's visit for children or adults is just \$50.

- Care Ring's **Under the Big Top** on April 5 was our biggest fundraising success to date. After a three-year hiatus, we renewed our annual gala at the Hilton Charlotte Center City. More than 300 guests were treated to an evening of big fun and excitement thanks to our Ringmaster Sponsor, Wells Fargo, and Ballyhoo Sponsors Novant Health and OrthoCarolina. A dozen local businesses purchased Grandstand tables of 10, and more than 60 vendors donated unique auction items and services.

Out and Nurse-Family Partnership – which provide high-quality healthcare to 7,000 of our neighbors annually.

Communities in Schools

www.cischarlotte.org

Molly Shaw, Executive Director

- Make a difference in the life of a student and **Dine Out For Kids®** on June 17. Communities In Schools (CIS) is holding its 15th annual Dine Out For Kids event, where more than 85 participating restaurants will dish up great food and fun and donate a portion of their sales to CIS. Whether you dine out for breakfast, lunch or dinner, every bite helps support the CIS mission to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. Visit www.cischarlotte.org in mid-May to see a list of participating restaurants.

Community Link

www.communitylink-nc.org

Floyd Davis, Executive Director

At Community Link, we're about enabling individuals to get and stay in housing. Enabling homeownership is one of our major programs. And, we'd love to share with you one of our recent successes.

Working full-time as a medical assistant, Ismenia was spending a lot on rent and not necessarily paying attention to her finances. "I never figured I could buy a house or pay anything off. I thought, 'Who cares?' I'll just use credit."

Her view changed when, by chance, she was providing blood pressure checks at a neighborhood health fair and met someone from Community Link. This brief encounter introduced her to our Homeownership Education and Counseling program. Ismenia attended an introductory session, enrolled in our program and met with a homeownership counselor.

"Community Link changed my thinking," she says. "I learned how to budget and improve my credit, change my financial behaviors, ask the right questions and better understand the home buying process. I had to learn to cut everything ... but knew from Community Link that these sacrifices would create for a better financial future for me. I even downsized my car for a lower payment and better gas mileage!"

Ismenia's commitment to change paid off. She raised her credit score by more than 50 points, paid off her credit cards and found herself a beautiful house she could afford. Adhering strictly to her budget, Ismenia continues to build her savings, with a goal of having a "rainy day fund" just in case.

Be inspired by more of our success stories here: **[Success](#)**

Susan K. Campbell, Ph.D., Executive Director

- Council for Children's Rights (CFCR) Defense Team will hold a **Spring Juvenile Delinquency Training** from 8:30 a.m. until 12:45 p.m. on Tuesday, June 6 at the CFSC in training rooms 1 and 2. This training will focus on effective crossover advocacy for youth. CFR will provide new attorneys and juvenile defenders tips and practical skills for working with youth who have Juvenile Delinquency cases and concurrent Truancy, Department of Social Services or Adult Court matters or Juvenile cases on appeal. To register, call 704.372.7961.
- **Books A Million** is hosting a fundraiser for CFR from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Saturday, June 28. The store, at 1451 Steele Creek Road, will donate 10 percent of sales proceeds to CFR.
- **Charlotte West and Charlotte Evening Rotary Clubs** will host Tossin' for Tykes, a cornhole tournament, to benefit CFR on Sept. 13 at Bryant Park.
- Community agencies, including CFR, got their hands dirty recently for a good cause. In March, **TreesCharlotte** partnered with the Junior League of Charlotte and Wells Fargo to plant 200 trees at Reid Park Academy. Among the volunteers at the event was Muggsy Bogues, founder of **Always Believe** and former star of the NBA's Charlotte Hornets. Bogues' participation kicked off his nonprofit organization's MB1 Program, which assists at-risk youth, ages 12 to 18, in the involvement of activities focused on student athletics and leadership development.
- Since 1983, April has been nationally designated as **Child Abuse Awareness & Prevention Month**. The Mecklenburg County Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month Committee spearheaded a public awareness campaign to educate the community about mandatory reporting and implementing a school-based initiative to protect the physical and mental health of children. The local committee is comprised of representatives from the Council for Children's Rights, Youth and Family Services, Communities In Schools, Pat's Place Child Advocacy Center, A Child's Place, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office.

The committee distributed flyers, brochures and posters across Mecklenburg County, planted "pinwheel gardens" around the city. (Blue pinwheels are the symbol of Child Abuse Awareness & Prevention Month) and delivered an age-appropriate curriculum to second graders across the district. Those second graders were taught about the importance of reaching out to the trusted adults in their lives if something doesn't seem right.

- Welcome, **Dr. Natalie Conner**! Dr. Conner joined Council for Children's Rights as Vice President of Research and Planning in April. A Charlotte native, Dr. Conner graduated from Charlotte Country Day School and earned her bachelor's degree

from UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. Dr. Conner has worked as a behavioral therapist with adolescents for nearly 20 years.

- **Darkness to Light's *Stewards of Children***[®] training is a two-hour, evidence-informed training program designed to teach adults how to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. Led by a Pat's Place authorized facilitator, the training incorporates videotape of adult survivors, parents and professionals, along with discussion and a workbook. Expected outcomes include increased knowledge, improved attitudes and changes in child protective behaviors.
- CFCR is involved in **Reid Park's System of Care (SOC) Pilot Initiative**. The model uses formal and informal community and neighborhood resources to provide additional support to families uncertain of how to best advocate for their child. The primary focus areas of the SOC Initiative are meeting the academic needs of students, creating a more positive school climate, and engaging parents.

NC MedAssist

www.medassist.org

Lori Giang, MBA, Executive Director

NC MedAssist is busier than ever this season with the addition of our Over the Counter (OTC) medicine program. A few facts about the program:

- The volunteer-run program started in August 2012.
- OTC Giveaway Days are scheduled the third Friday of each month, unless there is a major holiday.
- Volunteers at MedAssist sort and distribute the medicine to needy families in the Charlotte community.
- The OTC medicine is also mailed to free healthcare clinics throughout North Carolina that serve uninsured and low-income people.
- Since its inception, MedAssist has distributed more than \$700,000 in donated OTC medicine.
- At least 250 individuals come to MedAssist for the OTC Giveaway Day to pick up free medicine that they can't otherwise afford.
- Your help is needed. Volunteer groups are needed to help sort medicine on delivery days and distribute medicine during monthly giveaways days. Contact Emily Mueller at 704.350.3566 or emueller@medassist.org to learn more.

RAIN

www.carolinarain.org

Debbie Warren, Executive Director

RAIN's biggest fundraiser of the year took place on May 3. The 18th annual AIDS WALK is the largest HIV awareness and fundraising event in the Carolinas and is a visual representation of our community's commitment to HIV and AIDS. We walked bravely because it was our opportunity to stand up and be counted. All of us will have had our lives forever changed by HIV.

Close to 1,400 individuals walked two miles through the heart of uptown Charlotte in celebration of the past, present, and an HIV free future.

Smart Start of Mecklenburg County

www.smartstartofmeck.org

Jane Meyer, Executive Director

The First 2,000 Days *Champions for Children* campaign is under way. There are only 2,000 days between the time a baby is born and when that child shows up for the first day of kindergarten. Experiences during these 2,000 days have a lasting impact on later learning, health and success because children's earliest experiences determine how their brains are wired, lay the groundwork for future health and form the foundation of the social and emotional skills needed for academic and workplace success. With quality early childhood education, children will be school ready, have higher graduation rates and grow into productive citizens and valuable employees.

Champions for Children are local leaders from businesses, law enforcement, nonprofits, faith communities and citizens who are strong advocates for children. Champions carry the First 2,000 Days message by sharing the importance of early childhood development through public speaking engagements throughout the state. These can take place at local businesses organizations, employee development meetings, civic clubs and local church ministries. Other opportunities include writing letters to the editors of local papers, online magazines, guest blogging, meeting with local legislators and promoting the importance of the first 2,000 days in their professional and personal networks.

Each Champion has a dedicated page on **Smart Start's website** to highlight their commitment to bringing awareness and educating others in our community about the importance of a child's first 2,000 days. To learn more about being a Champion for Children, email Jennifer Taylor and use the subject line, "Champion for Children."

To request a presenter to come to your organization, church or civic group to present the First 2,000 Days presentation, email **Jennifer Taylor** and type "First 2,000 Days" in the subject line.

www.safealliance.org

Phil Kline, President and CEO

- April was **Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention**. Safe Alliance held its Fourth Annual Victim's Rights Awareness March in Monroe on April 5 and had more than 175 attend to support the work of our Tree House Children's Advocacy Center. The Second Annual Run For Hope & Healing was held in Huntersville on April 5. It's a family-friendly Run/Walk designed to raise funds for our programs and services in the Lake Norman Community. And on April 26, walkers clad in teal joined us for "UnCaged" – the Second Annual Mecklenburg Sexual Assault Awareness Walk.
- In May, Safe Alliance hosted the **17th Annual Men For Change Breakfast & Silent Auction** at Bank of America Stadium. More than 400 men turned out to take a public stand against domestic violence and sexual assault. They heard inspirational messages from keynote speakers Chief Rodney Monroe of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department and Charlotte Deputy City Manager Ron Kimble, both of whom have lost family members at the hands of violent abusers.
- The 20th annual "**Run For Peace at Home**" was held at McAlpine Greenway Park on May 31. This series of races features events for competitive runners and family-friendly walkers.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Several CFSC agencies collaborate to help all children of Mecklenburg County

The Children's Alliance of Mecklenburg County seeks to make Charlotte/Mecklenburg a great place for *all* children to live. Created in 2002, the Alliance is a collaborative effort of 40 nonprofit agencies that believe in the power of working together. (In that way, it's similar to the CFSC model.) By sharing information and connecting services, Alliance members can have a greater impact on children. We're proud that the Alliance has chosen to hold their meetings at the CFSC building for several years. It's the perfect spot for collaboration.

- They will have adults who will provide them with affection, a positive role model and concern for their present and future needs.
- Family support and stability
- Parental involvement in education
- Quality foster care and adoption programs
- Open communication with a parent or parents

The mission of the Children's Alliance is "to work as a group to identify, advocate and act upon real solutions for the challenges and barriers faced by the children of our community." The group takes a holistic approach by considering education, physical and emotional health, family support, economic support and safety.

Partners in the Children's Alliance include some of our CFSC agencies. Members include Communities In Schools, Council for Children's Rights, Care Ring, Smart Start, United Family Services, A Child's Place, the city of Charlotte, CMPD, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, among others.

The Alliance's 2013-14 leadership team includes Brennon Graham of The Relatives, Susan Campbell of Council for Children's Rights and Shelley White of Children and Family Services Center. Learn more at www.thechildrensalliance.org

THE LAST WORD

Let's keep the conversation going. Tell us your success stories, how collaboration has helped your clients and what you'd like to see in *Collaborations Quarterly*. Contact epageleggett@gmail.com with your feedback and story ideas.

CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES CENTER

601 EAST FIFTH STREET, SUITE 100 | CHARLOTTE, NC 28202 | P 704-943-9400

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