



## COACH Program Aims to Help Former Youth in Care

Virginia's foster care system has changed rather dramatically in the past 30 years. One area that has never adequately been addressed, however, is what really happens to our 'kids' after they leave the foster care system. What keeps them from making it to the finish line? Why can't they take advantage of what Virginia can offer them after high school? Who picks them up when they fall?

Many former foster care youth do not have family resources to support and guide them as they transition into adulthood. They often move to independence without careful planning and lose many supports when they leave the system - including a foster family to help launch them on the next part of their journey. As a result, they often find themselves adrift in the world and entirely on their own for the first time in their lives. Limited state and local funding is available to help those who choose to leave foster care between 18-21. At this stage in their lives, however, former youth in care are more likely to develop associations with individuals who do not have their best interests in mind. They can make poor decisions and get into trouble. Their difficulties are compounded by isolation, emotionality, poor problem-solving skills and low self-esteem - all complicated by financial stress.

Last year, a number of our former foster youth came back to People Places staff members for help and guidance. A common theme in each case was the desire to connect with someone who knew their past and with whom they

could talk about their present. Each needed someone to listen, to help problem-solve, and to offer advice. Some needed jobs, money, housing. Others needed counseling and legal help. All needed encouragement and someone to care - someone to show a measure of pride in who they had become. In short, they needed the gift of validation that a parent can offer an adult child.

The stories our grown 'kids' told inspired the development of a pilot program we call **COACH** (Community Offered Adult-Child Help). People Places was fortunate to receive a one-year grant from a private donor to launch this program. **COACH** pulls together public and private resources to help young adults from the Charlottesville-Albemarle area who have left the foster care system as they transition into adulthood.

With Charlottesville and Albemarle Departments of Social Services, People Places has begun to identify youth who have aged out of the foster care system. We aim to recruit, train, and support a pool of community volunteers to serve as mentors to these young adults. We have partnered with the Jefferson Area Board for Aging, the Senior Center and United Way to recruit volunteers. We are developing a pool of referral sources to address specific needs in the areas of employment, vocational

training, mental health, substance abuse and housing needs. Additionally, we have funds available to provide short-term financial assistance on a contingency basis for emergency or critical needs.

First Lady Anne Holton's *For Keeps* initiative ([www.ForKeepsVirginia.org](http://www.ForKeepsVirginia.org)) targets the need for permanency. She understands that former foster youth represent a population that has fallen through the cracks. On July 26, **COACH** staff met with Ms. Holton to discuss the program and its future. The First Lady was very supportive. We left the meeting encouraged about the prospects for helping this most vulnerable population. Virginia's communities must find a way to assist youth leaving public care without the benefit of a supportive family, and who struggle as young adults to find their way.

For further information on the COACH Program, contact **Sandy Richardson** or **Linda Currence** at 434-979-0335.



## What's New In the Valley



**People:** Congratulations to Senior Family Consultant **Angel Cooper** who celebrated her 22<sup>nd</sup> year as a Family Consultant this year. While the most senior of the Family Consultant crew, Angel is one of several who have been with the program for 10 years or more.

These include **Missy Berry** (18 years), **Ted Teachey** (17 years) and **Donna Cason** (15 years). Overall, staff turnover remains very low with length of service ranging from a few months or years for our talented newer staff to over 30 years for many of us “Golden Oldies”. Many thanks to all for continuing to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to make People Places work for kids and families!

**Services:** Fall groups for youth began in late September and include

*Finding and Keeping a Job* for older youth, *Transitions* for youth preparing to leave foster care, *Anger Awareness* (with therapeutic riding component) and the *Survivors Group* for Girls. Monthly parent support group meetings continue in Staunton on the last Thursday of each month and in Harrisonburg on the third Tuesday of the month. All Teaching Parents and new applicants are encouraged to join in. Contact your Family Consultant for details.

## What's New In Cville

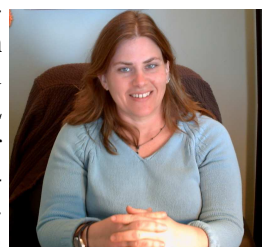
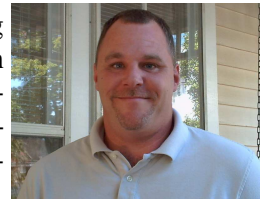
**People:** We have been fortunate in the past year to welcome several new staff joining us from Harrisonburg-Rockingham DSS. Most recently, we welcomed **Heather Garrett** as a new Family Consultant who comes to People Places after 10 years with the H-R DSS. In return, Harrisonburg-Rockingham DSS has hired our own **Molly Pallavicini** as Foster Care Supervisor. Molly leaves People Places after 14 years of excellent service to children and families. While a loss to us, it's some consolation to know that Molly's commitment and professionalism will continue to benefit the field.

In a season of new beginnings, we say farewell to Admissions Coordinator & Adoption Specialist **Stephanie Snider** who leaves after 6 years with People Places for a position as Social Worker with Charlottesville City Schools. **Michelle Weiss, MSW** will take on Stephanie's duties. In addition to her 3 years' as a Family Consultant, Michelle brings experience in foster care and adoption from her years as a social worker in New Mexico. Also taking her considerable talents elsewhere – this time home to her family and new child, Elias –

**Erin Garcia** leaves for fulltime motherhood after several years as Family Consultant. Many thanks and good fortune to Molly, Stephanie and Erin for their years of hard work and good heart.

Finally, we are excited to welcome new staff who bring with them a wealth – and a diversity – of experience. **Trudi Godwin, MS** joins us as a Family Consultant with experience as a Residential Therapist at Child Help. A Licensed Professional Counselor, Trudi earned her degree in Art Therapy from the very demanding program at Eastern Virginia Medical School. **David McGlothlin** also joins us as a Family Consultant. His extensive experience includes seven years as an In-Home Counselor with Family Preservation Services in Charlottesville as well as background in residential services at both New Dominion and Oakland School. We are pleased and fortunate to welcome **Sandy Richardson, M.Ed.** as COACH Program Coordinator (see cover article). Sandy has 14 years experience as a teacher and administrator at Tandem School and has been a leader in local efforts to establish a Charter School in Cville.

**Services:** The big news here is completion of our annual Summer Training Program, which this year received a thorough organizational makeover. Leading that effort, **Douglas Johnson** and **Emily Umberger** joined forces to broaden participants' exposure to career choices and to focus more intensively on work-related social skills. IL groups for older youth and support group meetings for parents will add to the Fall menu of Cville activities. For more information, Teaching Parents are encouraged to contact their Family Consultants.



# Welcome to our New Foster & Adoptive Families!

Another good group of prospective Teaching Parents has joined the People Places family since Spring in our Staunton, Harrisonburg and Charlottesville locations. Meet a few of our recent “grads”...



**Sheila & Larry** are a Caucasian couple with grown children. Sheila is self-employed as a barber working in her own home on a part-time basis. Larry is a former vocational instructor, now retired on disability. The couple places a particular value on helping others ... One of their favorite “leisure time” activities is collecting clothing and household items to distribute to those in need. Sheila & Larry draw on their experience as parents and on Larry’s many years working with special needs youth in the school system. They are interested in both foster care and adoption.

**Elizabeth & Irvine** are an African-American couple with a blended family of four children, ages 4 to 13. Irvine is a Mental Health Specialist at Liberty Point residential center. Elizabeth provides day care in the home. Both are actively involved with their children’s sports and other extracurricular activities and are nurturing, accepting and sensitive caregivers. They are interested in foster care and adoption and would consider a sibling group.



**Rachel & Tiffany** are the two oldest of eight children. Rachel is a fluent signer working for the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind and for Albemarle Schools as an interpreter. Tiffany works in her father’s log home construction business. Both sisters are energetic, enthusiastic and creative. Rachel enjoys gardening and sells vegetables and flower arrangements at

the local Farmer’s Market. Tiffany has raised border collies and currently has three. As the eldest of a large family, they have helped with younger sibs, including one with special needs. Rachel & Tiffany, Caucasian, are interested in both foster care and adoption and are enthusiastic about working with children of any ethnic background.

**Wendy & David**, a Caucasian couple, do not have children of their own and are interested in foster care and adoption. Wendy teaches English as a second language and David is Senior Project Manager at the University of Virginia. Both are active in their church and enjoy outdoor activities like mountain biking and hiking. They would like to include a child in their family and to share their enthusiasm for life in supporting a child’s individual interests and activities.

**Fasha & Stephen** met when both were working in Venezuela. Fasha works in administration at James Madison University. Stephen works for North-South Truck lines and formerly was employed with Adult Corrections. Fasha was born in Trinidad. She and Stephen live in a richly diverse neighborhood which includes Egyptian and Pakistani families as well as Anglo and African-American. With their 15 year-old daughter, Fasha and Stephen have considered foster care and adoption for years and are interested in both.

**Minnie & Clayton** are an African-American couple with strong ties to church and family. Both work as Corrections Officers. Minnie works for the

Dillwyn Correctional Center and Clayton works at Beaumont Correctional Center. Minnie and Clayton have three children: Cierra, 21, Martika, 15 and Quenton, 14. As a family, they enjoy sports, going out to eat, shopping, church and spending time with family and friends. They are interested in working with girls ages five and up.

**Megan & Roderick** are an interracial couple residing in the City of Charlottesville. They are interested in foster care now and adoption in the future. Megan works for Region X as an Assessment Coordinator while Roderick teaches at Covenant School. Megan has a mentally challenged brother with autistic characteristics for whom she provides respite on occasion. Megan and Roderick have two children: Kitty, 16 and Darius, 13. As a family, they enjoy sports, playing games, going out to eat, going to the mall, going to church and spending time with family and friends. They are interested in working with children between the ages of four and ten but would consider respite for older children.



# Serving Virginia's Families and Youth

## PEOPLE PLACES UPDATE



### STAUNTON

1215 N. Augusta Street  
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[www.peopleplaces.org](http://www.peopleplaces.org)

## People Places Joins NMT Training

For the past several years, a core group of staff have been studying the latest developments in the neuroscience of trauma and attachment. Several participated in Dr. Bob Marvin's intensive training offered through the Attachment Clinic at UVA two years ago. In September, a dozen staff including clinicians, line workers and supervisors began an exciting live on-line training with Dr. Bruce Perry – founder of the Child Trauma Academy and one of the pre-eminent researchers studying the effects of trauma on the developing brain.

The 10-week series leads to a Level One certification for participants in the use of what Perry calls the "Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics" (NMT). NMT offers a new approach to assessing and responding to children with emotional and behavioral issues, based on a thorough consideration of their presenting problems and their personal exposure to trauma. We know now that the brain develops sequentially and hierarchically; that is, from the

bottom to the top. Each major portion of the brain is "in charge" of different functions and develops at different points in an individual's young life. Insults in one period of development to one part of the brain can compromise the later healthy development of subsequent areas of functioning.

Knowing when traumatic events occurred offers clues to what parts of the brain – and what functions – may have been most affected by abuse, neglect or other types of trauma. Such knowledge can guide more targeted interventions that address the earliest effects of trauma first, rather than prescribing generic "talk therapy" as a one-size-fits all remedy for all children affected by early maltreatment.

We are excited about the NMT training and how well it fits into our original focus on social learning as the key to understanding and helping children. We will share more of what we have learned in subsequent newsletter issues.

