



PARTNERS IN ACTION

SAFE CHILDREN HEALTHY FAMILIES STRONG COMMUNITIES

St. Louis Family & Community Partnership Newsletter

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Fall 2009

November is National Adoption Awareness Month



"Adoption has a profound effect on many lives. It thrives on hope and commitment, yet often originates from pain and loss. At different times, adoption can create a void or fill a void. At all times, however, adoption means family, and by definition family means connection." ~Wilbert Talley, President, National Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC).

In May 1976, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis issued the first state Adoption Week proclamation, and President Gerald Ford then officially proclaimed the week in a letter to NACAC held later that year. As years went on Adoption Week came to be observed in November during the week of Thanksgiving.

In 1986, NACAC helped coordinate a national "Calling Out" event. That year groups across North America braved late November weather and simultaneously assembled on state and provincial capitol steps to read statements about waiting children, and call out the names of children in their state or province who needed homes.

Two years later, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed National Adoption Week, and in 1991 and 1992 President George H. Bush also issued proclamations. In 1990, NACAC decided to expand opportunities for raising awareness, and began advertising Adoption Week as National Adoption Awareness Month (November). The idea quickly caught on, and President Bill Clinton issued Adoption Month proclamations every November during his eight years in office. President George W. Bush and now President Barack Obama have continued the national recognition of adoption month.

New Meeting Schedule and Officers for Council

It's a New Day at the St. Louis Family and Community Partnership with a new every-other-month meeting schedule and some new officers. Upcoming meetings for the Council will be **Wednesday, November 16, 2009, January 20, 2010, and March 17, 2010**. The Council will continue to meet at 9:00am to 10:30am at Vision for Children at Risk (VCR).

The terms of office for Co-chair **Jerry Dunn**, Secretary **Joan Garrison**, and Nominating Chair **Tena Thompson** have ended. A long stem rose and the Council's grateful appreciation for their work were presented to those in attendance at the September Council meeting.

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Upcoming Events

Council

Nov 18
9:00am / VCR

Self-Evaluation Work Group

Oct 20, Nov 17
9:00am / VCR

Recruitment, Training, and Support Work Group

Oct 26, Nov 23
9:00am / VCR

Strengthening Families Work Group

Oct 29, Nov 24
9:15am / CDCA

Team Practice Work Group

Nov 6, Dec 4
1:30pm / South Broadway
CD

New officers are **Josh Wilson**, from Mission St. Louis who is Co-Chair of the Council; **Michelle Smart**, of St. Louis System of Care, as Secretary; and **Richard King**, from Annie Malone Children and Family Services as Nominating Committee Chair. The **Rev. Keith Kisart** will continue as Co-Chair of the Council and Michael Fitzgerald as Treasurer.

New Council Members are **Donna Jones**, District Administrator, Missouri Board of Probation and Parole; **Dennis Braziel**, CEO, Neighborhood Houses; and **Amber Stevenson**, Vice President, Partnerships, ARCHS.

Planning Process Looks Ahead

The St. Louis Family & Community Partnership is conducting a strategic planning process to help focus the work of the Partnership and ensure its sustainability. After reviewing the strengths and needs of the Partnership, the executive committee has identified the following priority strategic goal areas:

- **Securing financial resources** and attracting members
- **Internal organizational cohesiveness** and effectiveness, particularly the relationship between the work groups, the council, the partners and the executive committee
- **Improving external stakeholder** and community relations

The Partnership is working with facilitator **John McClusky, Ph.D.**, director emeritus of the Nonprofit Management & Leadership Program at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and consultant and trainer to numerous nonprofit organizations locally and nationally.

What Can Professionals Do During November?



Professionals can use Adoption Month as a time to increase the amount of celebration in their work:

Hold a simple rite of passage ceremony with your families upon placement or finalization (or both). Light a candle, plan a brief reading or recite a poem, ask the family members to say a few words, create and sign a certificate of accomplishment, take a photograph, offer refreshments, and give a small gift or memento.

Appreciate all that foster and adoptive families do. Send thank-you notes or small gifts to recognize them during Adoption Month.

Recall important dates in the lives of the families you work with. Create a calendar or database to help you. Each month, send cards to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries of placements or finalizations, school graduations, or other important days.

Display photos. Decorate your office with pictures of the families you work with to remind yourself and all who enter why you do the work you do.

Plan an appreciation event for families. Provide a dinner, massage, or outing to relax and entertain them.

Select a worker, family, or public official (or all three) to honor at a recognition dinner or event. The event will raise morale and provide an opportunity for networking.

Recognize the efforts of adoption advocates, workers, and others in the adoption community.

Organize a reunion of advocates or social workers and children whom they helped to place in adoptive homes. Time the reunion to coincide with a worker's retirement or an anniversary date (an agency's 25th anniversary, a parent group's 10th year of offering support to adoptive families, etc.).

Building Community Partnerships

Nov 13
1:30pm / Dignity House

Communications Work Group

Nov 19, Dec 17
1:00pm / VCR

Disproportionality Work Group

Oct 19, Nov 16
1:30pm

Safe Places for Newborns Work Group

Oct 22
9:00am / VCR

Our Mission

The St. Louis Family and Community Partnership is a partnership of parents, families, schools, faith communities, the St. Louis City Family Court, the Children's Division, public and private agencies, neighborhood organizations, businesses and city and state government working together to support families, prevent child abuse and neglect, and help ensure that children have permanent relationships that help them safely thrive with families in their own communities.

Partners in Action

St. Louis Family and Community Partnership
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OFFICERS:

Rev. Keith Kisart and Josh Wilson, Co-Chairs
Michelle Smart, Secretary
Mike Fitzgerald, Treasurer
Richard King, Nominating Committee Chair

Editor: [Frances Johnson](#)
314-838-9353

Articles appreciated and welcomed.

North American Council on Adoptable Children, Adoption Month

Know Your Council

Josh Wilson is Executive Director of Mission: St. Louis, responsible for community development. He also is the newly elected co-chair of the Partnership Council. He attended Millsaps College and Louisiana State University.

Why on the SLFP Council: I deeply care and am burdened by the needs in our city, and believe that at the core of a healthy city, and community, is healthy families. To truly impact our city, we must do it together.

Family: I have been married for five years to my wife Leigh, who is a physical therapist. We have a beautiful little girl, Morgan Lily, who is one yr old.

A favorite book: That is too difficult of a question. I love biographies. The last book I read was My Friend Leonard, by James Frey

Best vacation: My wife and I took a road trip from St. Louis, to Arizona, via Colorado and Utah. We spent time hiking, rock climbing, and the highlight was backpacking the Grand Canyon. It was amazing, and we ended up being very sore.

Wish for the children of St. Louis: That they would grow up in healthy communities, knowing they are deeply loved and cared for.

One accomplishment you would like to see the SLFCP achieve: To become a more diverse group of agencies, who work together well.

Favorite Quote: *I submit to you that if a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.* - Martin Luther King, Jr.

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