AMBISSADOR FAMILY PROGRAM: Making a Difference

THE AMBASSADOR FAMILY PROGRAM IS A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SIERRA FOREVER FAMILIES AND FAMILIES WHO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY PROVIDED PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN FOSTER CARE.

Ambassador Families share their stories in the community to help spread the word about the need for families to come forward for the waiting children. They do this in several ways: informally sharing with friends and family; volunteering to work at community events to share with potential families; speaking at community service groups or at employee fairs; and through finding new outreach opportunities to introduce Sierra to a larger segment of the community.

Since its rollout in October 2011, there have been many exciting accomplishments. To date, we have successfully recruited a total of 18 Ambassador Families who have participated in 15 events, organized four of their own outreach activities, and distributed countless brochures, referral cards and many other recruitment materials.

“Since its rollout...we have successfully recruited a total of 18 Ambassador Families…”

Some of the outreach events our Ambassador Families have participated in are the Sweet Potato Festival in February, Festa di Vino in March, Festival de la Familia in April, the Strawberry Festival in May, and the Juneteenth and PRIDE Festivals in June. At these events, Ambassador Families shared their stories of adoption to inspire others who may be willing and able to provide permanency for a child. Community members heard firsthand what it is like to go through the process and what they might expect.

WE WANT TO THANK OUR AMBASSADOR FAMILIES FOR ALL THEY ARE DOING!

For more information on becoming an Ambassador Family, please see page 6.
MISSION STATEMENT
We transform the lives of children in foster care by building and nurturing permanent families.

Sacramento Center
8928 Volunteer Lane, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95826
Tel: (916) 368-5114
Fax: (916) 368-5157
E-mail: sffsac@sierraff.org

Nevada City Center
138 New Mohawk Road, Suite 200
Nevada City, CA 95959
Tel: (530) 478-0900
Fax: (530) 478-0970
E-mail: sffgv@sierraff.org

Auburn Center (PlacerKids)
275 Nevada Street
Auburn, CA 95603
Tel: (530) 887-9982
Fax: (530) 887-9994
Toll free: 1-888-387-9982
E-mail: placerkids@sierraff.org

Chico Adoptive Family Resource Center
520 Cohasset Road, Suite 140
Chico, CA 95926
Tel: (530) 879-3861
Fax: (530) 896-1792
E-mail: sfchico@sierraff.org

California Department of Social Services/Adoptive Family Resource Center
Warm Line: (800) 268-2967
Fax: (916) 484-0430
E-mail: dfischer@sierraff.org
KEEPS THE PROMISE OF FAMILY

I am frequently asked, “What does a ‘Forever Family’ mean”? While every Forever Family can look different from each other all of these families share the following:

- At least one committed adult
- A safe, stable and secure parenting relationship
- Love
- Unconditional commitment
- A lifetime of support

Sierra Forever Families mission is to transform the lives of children in foster care by building and nurturing permanent families. The graphic below indicates the various programs and services that we provide to families in twelve Northern California counties to insure more than just a placement, but a lifetime of support, love and guidance that creates a forever family.

In this issue you will read about two services we started this year. Our Family Ambassador Program helps to build families through a partnership with our finalized families who recruit new families to provide loving homes for our children. The Permanency Support Services, in partnership with Placer County, provides nurturing through short term, intensive, in-home supports some of our families need in order to enhance the attachment and for children to remain in their adopted family home.

As always, I would like to thank you for your continued support of our mission.

THE MORE YOU KNOW…
FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK

through OUR NURTURING & BUILDING we produce

A FOREVER FAMILY

with OUR SUPPORT SERVICES we are

Nurturing Families

Nevada County
Outpatient Mental Health Support Groups
Library
Education

Placer County
Adoption WRAP Support Groups
Parent Partner Education

Sacramento County
Outpatient (1/2 time) Support Groups
Library
Education

CDSS-Rural
Full Post-Adoption Programs Support Groups
Education

This graphic demonstrates the importance of both building and nurturing families in order for a child to have permanence that will last a lifetime.
SFF CALENDAR: EVENTS AND CLASSES

EVENTS: For more information or to volunteer, please call 916-368-5114.

WONDER MENTORING NEW GUIDE ORIENTATIONS (SACRAMENTO) FOR OUR FALL 2012 CLASS:
Thursday, September 6, 6-7pm · Thursday, September 13, 12-1pm · Saturday, September 15, 10-11am · Tuesday, September 18, 6:30-7:30pm
If you wish to attend the Fall 2012 Orientations, please RSVP to wonderinfo@sierraff.org.

CLASSES: Classes, trainings, workshops and support groups require a reservation.

SACRAMENTO
Second Mondays
EXPLORING PERMANENCY I. (Orientation). 6:00-8:30pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

Second Thursdays*
SINGLE & GAY/LESBIAN ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS. 6:00-8:00pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

July 10 & 24*
ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP. 6:30-8:00pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

ADPTION MODULE. 5:30-8:30pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

August 11 & 25; Oct 27 & Nov 3
EXPLORING PERMANENCY II. 9:00am-5:30pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

Mental health Module. 6:00-8:00pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

Sept 19; Nov 28*
CONCURRENT PLANNING. 5:30-8:30pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

PLACERKIDS
July 21 & 28; Oct 20 & 27*
PRIDE/PRE-SERVICE. 8:30am-4:30pm. PlacerKids, Auburn. Call Banetta (530) 308-3283 for information and childcare.

First Tuesdays*
K.S.S.P. SUPPORT GROUP. 6:00-7:30pm. Placer Kids, Auburn. Call (916) 774-6802.

Second Thursdays*
FOSTER/ADOPTIVE SUPPORT GROUP. 6:00-8:30pm. PlacerKids, Auburn. Call Banetta (530) 308-3283 for reservations. Call Laurie (530) 889-6794 for childcare.

Third Tuesdays*
K.S.S.P. SUPPORT GROUP. 6:00-7:30pm. Kids First, Roseville. Call (530) 887-3536.

Third Thursdays*
PK ORIENTATION FOR FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION. 6:30-8:30pm. PlacerKids, Auburn. Call Donna (530) 887-9982 for information and childcare.

Fourth Thursdays*
FOSTER/ADOPTIVE SUPPORT GROUP. 6:00-8:30pm. South Placer at Cirby Hills. Call Banetta (530) 308-3283.

TBD
ADOPTION MODULE. 9:00am-4:00pm. Placer County Child System of Care. PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED, call Theresa Bardakjian at (530) 889-6758 to register.

NEVADA COUNTY
First Wednesdays
EXPLORING PERMANENCY I. (Orientation). 6:00-9:00pm. Nevada City office. Call (530) 478-0900.

First Fridays*
ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP. 9:00-11:00am. Gold Country Gymnastics, 110 Spring Hill St, Grass Valley. Play care provided for children. Space is limited, please RSVP. Reservations are needed for child care. Call Diana at (800) 268-2967.

YUBA/SUTTER COUNTIES
Third Tuesdays*
ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP. 6:00-8:30pm. Yuba College, 2088 N Beale Rd, Marysville, FKCE, room 1321. Parking pass required. Free childcare and snacks. Free lending library. For more information call Diana at (800) 268-2967.

CHICO
First Tuesdays

Second Wednesdays
PARADISE ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP. 9:30-11:30am. Paradise Family Resource Center, 6241 Skyway. Call (530) 879-3861.

First Thursdays*
CHICO ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP. 6:30-8:30pm. 520 Cohasset Rd., Suite 140. Call (530) 879-3861.

*Childcare available, please make childcare reservations when calling in to sign-up for class.

REGISTER ONLINE AT SIERRAFF.ORG
WELCOME HOME: RECENT FINALIZATIONS

THE PARKER FAMILY
On March 8, 2010, our Wendy’s Wonderful Kid’s worker Sandy Sertyn received a referral for two lovely sisters, Mikayla (now 10) and Carmela (now 13), who, along with two other siblings, had been in the foster care system since 2006. It was determined to be in the best interest of the girls to have them remain together in one permanent family home.

In September 2007, the children were returned to their home. By December 2008, the girls were once again taken into protective custody and placed in a foster home.

When Sandy met them, she found them immediately charming and a joy to be around. It was difficult to correlate the challenging histories and reports of parents and caregivers to the lovely girls she spent time with. It became apparent that with the right family these girls would flourish. Sandy did not have to look far. Garett Davis, Sierra Forever Families Homestudy Worker had recently completed a homestudy for a single mother named Tammy Parker. Upon meeting Ms. Parker, Sandy was immediately struck by her gentle demeanor and thoughtful consideration of the right children for her family. It was decided that Tammy would meet the girls. So on a Saturday morning, Sandy took the girls for pancakes and they met Tammy. The girls seemed immediately drawn to her. “We arranged several additional informal meetings and it was clear these were Tammy’s daughters,” shares Sandy with a smile.

In May of 2010, Tammy welcomed the girls into her home, initially as a foster care placement. Over the months, the relationship grew and the girls began asking if Tammy would adopt them. This is not to say that there were not hiccups along the way, but Tammy met each with patience and grace. Sierra is proud to say that on June 4, 2012 these three lovely ladies officially became the Parker family.

THE HARSHBARGER FAMILY
Jacob, Nichole, and their son Cyrus (6) celebrate the adoption finalizations of their new family members Vanessa (4) and Dustin (3) on November 22, 2011.

THE LEAGUE FAMILY
Sean and Rebecca League are proud to announce the adoption finalization of their daughter Ember Lee League (15) on May 4, 2012.

THE HARNESS FAMILY
Jerald and Krista Harness celebrated the adoption of their two children, Ryley (8) and his sister Trinity (6) on May 30, 2012.
TIM (12) is a really well rounded guy with a wide range of interests. He likes sports, especially soccer and football. In his down time, you will find him watching The Food Network. He has been following the career of Bobbie Flay and looks forward to learning to grill on his own. He has a sister and younger brother who are very important to him, so any family that adopts Tim will need to value those relationships as well. He has been a Wendy’s Wonderful Kid since September 28, 2010.

Tim has been anxiously awaiting a family for a long time. He is well behaved and will easily make a fabulous addition to any family. Tim is excited and ready to find his forever family.

*Information current at time of newsletter production

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL SIERRA FOREVER FAMILIES AT (916) 368-5114 OR VISIT US AT SIERRAFF.ORG.

**AMBASSADOR FAMILY PROGRAM**

**BECOME AN AMBASSADOR FAMILY**...and help another child find their FOREVER FAMILY

Help Sierra Forever Families find loving families who can open their hearts and homes to children in foster care by participating in our Ambassador Family Program. There are a variety of ways to do this including:

- **SPREAD THE WORD** Sierra has family recruitment cards and other literature about programs and services. You can help “spread the word” by dropping off cards or brochures in your community or to those interested that you see at a social event or any other setting.

- **SHARE YOUR STORY** Sierra participates in a variety of community events where you can engage community members with your story. You can also attend Sierra’s adoption orientations or training sessions to talk with families and answer questions. Sharing your story through the media (i.e., article, interview, op-ed, testimonial) can encourage others to consider becoming a resource family as well.

- **PRESENT TO A GROUP** Join our Speakers’ Bureau and tell your story at your church, parent group, children’s events, community center, gym, social club, dinner party, etc.

Volunteers wishing to serve on Sierra’s Speakers’ Bureau will receive additional training. **Contact our Family Recruitment Coordinator, Cynthia Hutchison, at (916) 368-5114 if you have questions about becoming an Ambassador and to schedule an Ambassador Family Orientation.**

**SPECIAL THANKS**

We want to thank our Ambassador Families for all they are doing! Special thanks to:

Jeanne and Barbara Baine
Bonita Barnes
Anthony Blue
Pat and Janice Brady
Nadine and Joel Diefenbacher
Rebecca and Bob Fyfe
Denise Gardner and Stephanie Bailey
Jean Gifford and Jodi Barkley
Jody Gray
Melissia Islas
Cynthia and David Mack
Jennifer and Paul Mann
Don and Cindy Morris
Kirk and Julie Rimmer
Carla and Guy Terrell-Black
Melissa and Jorge Vidalon
Doreen Webber and Cindy Sparks
Michelle Williams
THE ART OF ADOPTION

Do you know an adopted child with a flair for art or poetry? HOMECOMING wants to hear from you!
To submit artwork or poems by adopted children, contact Sierra Forever Families at (916) 368-5114.

SEE MORE ARTWORK ON OUR WEBSITE AT SIERRAFF.ORG
WHERE THERE’S A WILL, THERE’S A WAY.
GIVE THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING…

Become a member of Tomorrow’s Legacy Club (TLC) by remembering Sierra Forever Families in your Estate Planning. In doing so, you will provide a lasting legacy to help children find forever families for years to come.

For additional information about TLC and ways to support, call Kimberly Cox at (916) 368-5114.

Turn that Clunker into a Caring Home

TURN AN UNWANTED VEHICLE INTO A DONATION TO SIERRA FOREVER FAMILIES TODAY!

Thanks to our friends at Car Program, you don’t have to worry about a thing. Call 24/7, and they will tow your vehicle the following day. You get the tax write-off and, thanks to you, Sierra receives a donation.

So if you have a vehicle collecting dust, no longer running or not needed, please call our toll-free direct line at 1-866-321-(KIDS) and schedule a pick-up today. Car Program accepts most vehicles, including cars, trucks, trailers, boats and RVs. Vehicles do not need to pass current inspections.
Sierra Forever Families Invited to Present at National Conference

Sierra Forever Families has been selected to present at the 38th annual conference of the North American Council for Adoptable Children (NACAC), taking place in Virginia this July.

NACAC promotes and supports permanent families for children and youth living in foster care in the US and Canada. The focus of the 2012 conference is *Celebrating Families: Valuable Lessons from Children, Parents, and Professionals*. With thousands of attendees anticipated, NACAC leadership intends to further the discussion of youth permanency and the strategies implemented in our nation through organizing a multitude of workshops, panel discussions, expert presentations, and valuable keynote speakers.

As part of the four-day conference, Sierra Forever Families will host the workshop *Damage Control: Utilizing Somatic Interventions to Address Secondary Trauma and Compassion Fatigue in Child Welfare Professionals*. Sierra Staff members, Stella Atienza and Adele Gray, Destination Family Team Members, and Glynis Butler-Stone, Program Director, will discuss the fiscal and human costs of secondary trauma and compassion fatigue experienced by service providers and caregivers. Integrating the most recent developments in trauma research with well established “body-based” interventions (e.g. selfmassage, yoga, acupressure), this workshop focuses on building resiliency, promoting wellness and recovery, and developing a workplace culture of self-care. The main goal of this workshop is to strengthen, empower and support those who serve our children, youth and families.

Sierra Forever Families is proud to be a part of the NACAC conference and to provide valuable tips and techniques to support our nation’s child welfare workers.

Permanency Support Services

The Permanency Support Services (PSS) Program is a new partnership between Sierra Forever Families and Placer County Children System of Care.

Through PSS, Sierra provides comprehensive specialty mental health services for pre- and post-adoptive and guardianship families. The focus is on issues related to trauma and permanency for children from 0-18 years old who have been removed from birth families. Specialty services will be provided based on the established medical necessity for mental health services due to behavioral, emotional and functional impairments meeting the Placer County Mental Health Plan eligibility criteria. Services will be provided in the home, office or community and are provided by a team consisting of a therapist, skills trainer and parent partner.

The PSS program includes: individual and family therapy, skills training and coaching, and linking to community resources.

**MEET THE TEAM (left to right in photo):**

BANETTA BACCHI comes to PSS as a Foster Parent Liaison with 25 years of experience fostering approximately 70 children. Banetta has adopted two sons as well. She facilitates parent support groups such as PRIIDE and Love & Logic. Banetta also organizes the post-adoption support groups open to all adoptive parents in Placer County.

KAREN DILIBERTI joins the PSS team as a clinician, bringing with her eight years of experience working directly with children and families in foster care and adoption. She focuses on attachment and trauma work and is a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist.

PAMELA CAMINO joins PSS as a Program Lead Clinician bringing with her eight years of experience working as a mental health therapist directly with school-age children and their families on trauma, attachment and grief. Pamela has bilingual skills and experience as a supervisor and program manager.

MEGAN LIU joins the PSS team as a Permanency Specialist, bringing with her two years of experience working directly with children in the mental health system, which includes children in foster care and adoption.
PlacerKids Open House

On May 10, PlacerKids—a partnership between Sierra Forever Families (Sierra) and Placer County Children’s System of Care (CSOC)—hosted an Open House at its new location. Helping to commemorate the celebration, members of the Auburn Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony to kick-off the event. Throughout the Open House, many of our families, community partners, and guests were treated to hosted tours and refreshments. Our special guests, the Sugar Plump Fairies, provided face painting and fun for the children.

The new larger facility provides additional training space, interview rooms, and increases access to therapeutic services for children and families. It is conveniently located by I-80 in the Train Station Building on Nevada Street, allowing easy access by Placer County residents.

Executive Director of Sierra Forever Families, Bob Herne shared, “PlacerKids continues to be a distinctive and successful collaboration between CSOC and Sierra, but it is our families who really make the most impact in the lives of the children we work with in the region. Our new office allows us to better serve children and families. We are excited for the community to visit us and to learn more about the benefits of youth permanency.”

Since 1998, more than 300 Placer County children and youth have found a forever family to call their own. PlacerKids specifically works with residents of Placer County who seek to provide permanence for a child or youth living in foster care. Through the unique partnership, an integrated program has been created that puts the needs of children and youth living in foster care first. Its purpose is to facilitate every child’s thoughtful and speedy placement with a permanent family, either through successful reunification or adoption. To ensure long-lasting connections, valuable therapeutic services are provided (at little or no cost) to children and families. The agency continues to host its Orientation on the third Thursday of every month. Monthly support groups are also provided at our new location.
WONDER Welcomes Florence Parks!

The Wonder Mentoring Program is a program which currently has 91 active matches of Explorers (children and youth in foster care) and Guides (adult volunteers) who together are experiencing a year-long journey of adventures in the arts, music, sports, nature, dining out and volunteer service. Wonder now welcomes Florence Parks as its new Program Coordinator!

“Mentoring is not just a job for me, it’s my passion. It’s been part of my life, my family’s life, it’s what we do and who we are,” says Florence.

She began mentoring informally as a volunteer at her daughter’s school. That experience led to a job offer from the school district and Florence was hired in February 2005 as a Student Assistance Counselor and Resource Specialist Coordinator for a middle school through the Solano Mentor Collaborative (SMC).

At that point in time, SMC was an organization in transition after the loss of the Governor’s Mentoring Partnership support and had only one remaining staff person to serve at-risk and high-risk youth. Florence was hired as a SMC program coordinator in December 2005. With her enthusiasm, drive, and grant writing successes, she was instrumental in the growth of the agency. With SMC, Florence proved her ability to manage and coordinate mentoring programs at multiple sites, and recruit, screen, and train volunteers. Today, SMC is an organization with 21 partner agencies and a staff of six.

“Mentoring is not just a job for me, it’s my passion. It’s been part of my life, my family’s life, it’s what we do and who we are.”

Florence met Julie Gustafson, former Wonder program coordinator, at the Summer Institute on Youth Mentoring and learned about Wonder. Due to its focus on serving children in foster care, Florence followed up on Julie’s invitation and applied to be a Guide for Wonder. As fate would have it, when Julie made a career change, Florence was positioned to apply and impressed the staff with her 13 years of mentoring experience.

“I am sad to leave the SMC, yet I am happy to know that it will continue to flourish,” she stated. “I’m excited to be part of Wonder. Mentoring is more than intervention for the children in foster care. The many successes are immeasurable when a caring adult takes the time to be with a child and believes in their unlimited potential and innate greatness.”

Florence received her Bachelor of Arts in Communication at California State University, San Francisco, and resides in Sacramento with her husband and daughter.

WONDER MENTORING ORIENTATIONS (Sacramento)

New Guide Orientations for our Fall 2012 class:

- Thursday, September 6 from 6-7pm
- Thursday, September 13 from 12-1pm
- Saturday, September 15 from 10-11am
- Tuesday, September 18 from 6:30-7:30pm

If you wish to attend the Fall 2012 Orientations, please RSVP to wonderinfo@sierraff.org
Air Systems Sets Higher Goal

Since 2004, Air Systems has been one of our major supporters of our Champions for Children (CFC) campaign. Each year they form their CFC Team and set-out to raise $5,000 to help place a child in a permanent, loving home.

Champions for Children is designed so individuals or teams of individuals, composed of company employees, service groups, churches or other organizations, commit to raise $5,000 or more in a year to help provide needed support to place a child into a permanent home. After logistical fees and government reimbursements, it costs Sierra approximately $5,000 to place a child. Our Champions teams can proudly share that their efforts are directly transforming lives!

Air Systems of Sacramento, Inc. was established in 1996 and specializes in fast track complete turn-key mechanical systems. Providing more than heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) services, Air Systems has the professional expertise to assist in the design and installation of sophisticated mechanical systems for office buildings, fabrication facilities, commercial and industrial applications.

The Air Systems Team has always made their Champions commitment personal. Employees generously give through weekly payroll deductions. Each year, more than half of their goal is raised directly through employees who give to support our mission.

To enhance their annual giving, Air Systems hosts an annual B-B-Q. It’s always a highlight of the summer season and a lot of fun. Clients and vendors are invited to attend. Sierra staff are also welcomed and a Sierra adoptive family is invited to be the featured guest and keynote speaker.

At a recent Air Systems staff meeting, a Sierra staff member shared updates about the agency. She noted that last year we provided services to 616 children and youth. Following the presentation, new payroll deduction commitments were made as, once again, the wonderful staff at Air Systems made permanency for children a priority.

We are thrilled to report Air Systems weekly employee giving commitment has increased beyond their original $5,000 goal. The Team set a new annual goal of $10,000 to help place two children in permanent, loving homes.

We salute Air Systems and all their employees! Through its years of support, nearly $62,000 has been raised to support Sierra Forever Families. Our friends at Air Systems have truly transformed many lives!

If you would like to be a part of Champions for Children or get more information, please contact Kimberly Cox at 916.368.5114 or kcox@sierraff.org

Your EVERYDAY GROCERY SHOPPING Can Become A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME GIFT

Everyday meals require lots of shopping! While grocery shopping may sometimes feel like a chore, now this common task can directly benefit Sierra Forever Families. Thanks to the generosity of Raley’s Family of Fine Stores and Save Mart you can turn an everyday act into a life-changing gift. When you shop at these stores, up to 3% of your purchase total will be donated to Sierra Forever Families. All you have to do is shop and swipe a card.

THE SAVE MART S.H.A.R.E.S CARD will arrive to you pre-registered and ready for immediate use. You don’t share any personal info. What a simple way to help kids!

YOUR RALEY’S AND BEL-AIR QUALITY OF LIFE CARD will arrive and all you have to do is simply register the card online. You can also opt-in to receive valuable weekly coupons in your email.

This is a simple way to support kids. Every meal you make can bring a child closer to having their own forever family. Please contact Kimberly Cox at Kcox@sierraff.org and request your card(s) today.

*Donations not accrued for alcohol, cigarette or postage purchases. All others apply and are sent directly to Sierra.
Sleep Train Foster Kids Program

SIERRA FOREVER FAMILIES HAS ENTERED INTO AN INCREDIBLE NEW PARTNERSHIP!
WE ARE ONE OF THE SELECTED PARTNERS OF THE SLEEP TRAIN FOSTER KIDS PROGRAM.

Sleep Train has been helping children in foster care for more than 25 years driven by a company philosophy that believes, “Not Everyone Can Be A Foster Parent, But Anyone Can Help a Foster Child.” It recognizes the hardships children in foster care face and, through partnering with reputable agencies, strives to help children beat the odds. Our friends at Sleep Train know little things can make a big difference so they hold drives throughout the year for folks to donate goods like toys, shoes, clothing, and school supplies. Sleep Train staff members then distribute these items to various organizations selected statewide.

Thanks to Sleep Train and those who donate, we have had the joy of receiving hundreds of toys that were given to the children we serve this past Christmas. Later this winter, we were delighted with a mountain of warm, snuggly pajamas. We have also received gift cards used to purchase items for the youth we serve. Recently, we received nearly 200 pairs of shoes of all sizes and styles to offer the children and youth we serve.

THANK YOU, Sleep Train for selecting Sierra Forever Families as one of your Foster Kids Partners! Your program is making a huge difference in the lives of the children who need it most.

All Sleep Train locations accept donations.

Upcoming Foster Kids Drive Dates:

• School Supply Drive: July 30–September 9, 2012
• Dollar Drive: September 17–November 4, 2012
• Secret Santa Toy Drive: November 5–December 16, 2012

ESSENTIAL SUPPORT

Sierra Forever Families gratefully acknowledges the 26 corporations and foundations that have contributed to our Annual Fund through grant awards from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012. The funds donated ($196,850) help provide essential support for programs and services to children and youth in foster care.

Supporting Permanency Services

Supporting the Placer County Destination Family Program
Placer Community Foundation Youth Development Program

Supporting Placer County Adoptive Parents
Placer Community Foundation Wellness Program

Supporting Recruitment of Families
City of Roseville Citizens Benefit Fund

Supporting the Wonder Mentoring Program

To learn more about becoming a supporter through our grants and foundation programs, please contact: Juli Kramer at 916.368.5114 or jkramer@sierraff.org.
Sierra Forever Families Celebrates the 10th Anniversary of Its LGBT and Single Parent Support Group!

Sierra Forever Families (Sierra) is a nonprofit agency whose mission is to transform the lives of children in foster care by building and nurturing permanent families. Sierra is a strong partner to the LGBT community. More than 20% of the agency’s FOREVER FAMILIES comes from this community. “We are excited this collaboration has created a forever family for so many children and we look forward to continuing our relationship with the LGBT community,” shared Bob Herne, Executive Director.

Sierra believes the family journey does not end when an adoption is finalized; rather, this is when the true journey begins and the real work continues. “We truly want our parents and children to be successful. Nearly a decade ago, we organized a support group specific to single and LGBT parents and their children,” explains Herne. For many families, there is a desire for resources and support after finalization. The monthly group provides both, and is also a huge benefit to the children. Herne continues, “Our parents also find it helpful to interact with other families to learn from the experience of others and to see situations through fresh eyes.” For this purpose, Sierra provides multiple support groups to assist our parents in successfully parenting children from the foster care system.

For nearly 10 years, the LGBT & Single Parent Support Group has touched the lives of dozens of parents and children. The monthly group is hosted by Kathy Steenberg, a licensed clinical social worker specializing in family training. “We have a great group of parents who meet each month. They share about the successes and challenges they are experiencing. In this way, they are able to support one another and share helpful tips on parenting,” Steenberg relates. The attendees represent new and seasoned parents, allowing for experienced parents to mentor new parents. Another great aspect of the group is the relationship building between the children whose parents attend the meetings. “It is wonderful to see all of the children together, playing and talking, drawing and laughing. Our families are connecting, and their children are finding a common bond,” Steenberg shares with a smile.

One parent stated, “I first came across the Single and Gay support group when I contacted Sierra about the possibility of adopting in 2008. I’m not really a support group kind of guy, but, I decided to give it a try. I found a great group of people, great discussions, stories, advice, encouragement, and, ultimately, great friends. Without this group’s support, I think things would have been much different for me. I’m now in my fourth year with the group and intend to be one of those who will continue long after my kids are grown, giving to the newbies what the group has given, and continues to give, to me.” Tony P.

Another parent shared, “I have found the group to be a great support in adapting to parenting. The members of the group have been a resource to me on many levels. There are so many stages in the process and the great thing about the group is that there are people from each of the stages to share their experiences, frustrations and successes. Both my son and I look forward to the monthly meetings. It has been a time for both of us to connect with others with whom we feel we can identify and share experiences. It is a great time of confidential story telling and socializing which is both fun and helpful. I think the group would also be an asset for anyone contemplating foster care or adoption. They would really get solid information to help guide their decision.” Steve B.

Sierra Forever Families would like to THANK all of our support group participants, both former and current, for creating a network of support for our families and continuing to make a difference in the lives of children who once lived in foster care.
FEATURED VOLUNTEER: LAUREL ATKINSON

MAKING THE MOST OF A SUMMER BREAK

LAUREL ATKINSON is a young lady with a big heart. Returning home for the summer from her first year at college, she decided to volunteer her time to work at Sierra Forever Families. We are thrilled to welcome her and appreciate her generous spirit and enthusiasm.

Laurel recalls, “I was really young when I first said I’m going to adopt.” As summer approached, she knew she didn’t want to waste her summer break just hanging out. Through a family friend she heard of Sierra Forever Families and—amidst finals and papers—made arrangements to offer her time to the agency. “I wanted to work at an adoption agency because in the future, when I adopt, I’ll know more about the process.”

In just a few weeks, Laurel has proven to be a dedicated worker and an asset to the agency. She assists in the Sacramento office with administrative work as well as aids the fund development and finance departments. “Laurel always has a smile on her face and is willing to learn new things,” said Sierra’s Public Relations Specialist Sara Hanson. “We’re so happy to work with her and touched to see someone so young with a passion for adoption.”

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Laurel grew up in the Folsom area and chose to attend the University of California, San Diego. Commenting on her first year, she stated, “I love it! I love my mom, dad and brother; but I like living on my own too.” Currently, she has an undeclared major, but foresees Mathematical Finance as her career path. And she’s well cut-out for such a choice. When asked what her favorite class was she stated, “Calculus II.”

Sierra would like to THANK Laurel for sharing her time and passion with us. We know you have a beautiful future ahead of you.
Through the daily donation of scrap copper from jobsites, Sacramento Area Mechanical Contractors are helping find forever families for children in foster care.

Champions for Children—with support from area contractors—have placed more than 50 children with FOREVER FAMILIES.

With your commitment of $5,000 in scrap copper per year you will:

• Assist in the placement of foster children in PERMANENT LOVING HOMES;
• Deter copper theft due to daily pickup;
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