

## From the Executive Director's Desk



# Voice

*When any young person finishes high school it is a cause for celebration and, for many parents, a sigh of relief. For foster youth, whose childhoods have been punctuated with upheavals and uncertainties, it is a special achievement.*

*As the nation marks National Foster Care Month 2004 this May, we have an important opportunity to express our appreciation to all those, from birth and foster parents to social workers and mentors, who have helped to guide these teenagers along their journey.*

*There is little that inspires as much pleasure as seeing a child step across the threshold of young adulthood with courage, confidence and purpose. Whether that "crossing" means college, technical school, a job, or a career in the military, we all know that the road to independence and adulthood can be as tricky as it is rewarding—for everyone. And for more than 20,000 young men and women who officially leave foster care to begin that journey this year, the trip will be especially challenging: Many if not most of these young people will have no one watching them with pride, or watching out for them, as they navigate life's twists and turns.*

*Over the nearly 30 years that Casey Family Services has worked with foster children and families, we have learned that children succeed in life most often because they have experienced strong and stable family support not only during childhood but also, and importantly, well into their young adult lives and beyond. We believe that every child needs and deserves a lifelong permanent connection to a family.*

*In this issue, we pay special tribute to the courage and resilience of our young transitioning foster youth, to the strength and commitment of their foster and adoptive parents, and to the growing legions of volunteers who have stepped in to play a critical and supportive role for youth at risk of veering off track.*

*The issues are complex; the challenges, very real. Yet the possibility of success is greater than ever. There is a building momentum in this country for a change in the way we see and invest in young people, especially those in foster care, and within that movement we can see and hear the faces and voices of foster youth and foster families. To all of them, we say a resounding, "Well done."*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Raymond L. Torres". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Raymond L. Torres