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**CASEY
FAMILY
SERVICES**

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THE CASEY Reporter

Established 1988

May 2009

Nakayla's Adoption Day as told to Cindy Lamontagne

I was very nervous going into my adoption day. To make matters worse, on the day of the hearing, our hot water shut off after my mom took her shower and we did not have any hot water. My dad, my brother, and I had to go to our friend's house to take a shower before the hearing. My hair was actually frozen on the way over. Needless to say this made a stressful day even more stressful, but thankfully we all got to shower and got to the court house on time. It's kind of a funny story now that it's over.

When we finally got to the court house, I did not know what to expect because different people had told me different things about the actual hearing. My dad told me it would be fun. Some other people told me I would have to speak in front of the whole court. Fortunately, I did not have to and I was very glad about that. I thought that they might ask me to explain why I wanted to be adopted. That question always seemed funny to me, because I have been a part of the Lacroix family since I was 4 years old. I



Dawn, David, and Nakayla LaCroix

guess if I had to answer this question, I would have just said because I love my family and they love me back. The other thing that I was nervous about was that my birth family would show up at the court house. I had to make the choice to not invite them because I did not want to be stressed out and their presence would have stressed me out. I was glad my mom did not show up because I wanted to celebrate this day with the Lacroix family. I feel like I am more like the Lacroixs than my birth family because I have lived there so long and sometimes I don't understand my birth family as well.

After all of my worrying, the whole court hearing was only about 5 minutes

long. At the end of the hearing, I was relieved to know that I finally had a permanent family that no one could change or interfere with after 13 years of being together. I was also very pleased that I would no longer have to have the label of being a "foster kid" and that felt good to me. I never, ever, felt like a "foster kid" in my home but sometimes other people can be mean when they learn this about kids in foster care.

My overall favorite part of the day was the little party at the courthouse after the adoption. It was so nice to have all of the people who have loved me and supported me over the years in one place. It was a really nice celebration. The cake

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From the Division Director's Desk: Edward C. Rennells Jr.

When people talk about diversity, NH is not usually the first place that enters their thoughts. We are a relatively small and homogeneous state, yet there is a lot of diversity in the work we do at Casey Family Services. There is diversity at Casey in the audiences we serve, the varied roles staff play, and the programs and services we provide.

At our heart, we are a child welfare agency. We are celebrating National Foster Care Month with our annual dinner honoring the foster families with whom we work. We also celebrate families year round. We will again hold a picnic this summer, along with inviting Casey families to take in a NH Fisher Cats baseball game. Before long, it will be back to



school, another setting where Casey has made its mark.

A Continuous Improvement Process for After School programs site visit had very positive findings regarding the after school programming on which we collaborate with the Franklin School District. The programming, funded in part by a 21st Century Community Learning

Center grant from the NH Department of Education, provides safe and structured time for students in grades K-12 that is affordable to working families. Those families are served through a varied list of services that range from parenting classes to a grandparent support group, to free income tax return preparation.

This summer in the Kearsarge region, and again next year in Franklin, we will be co-sponsoring workcamps. These week-long events will bring youth from all over the country to NH to do work on the homes of elderly or disabled people whose needs exceed their ability to do the work themselves.

Several Casey staff have taken on new roles

with the promotions of Meme Wheeler to deputy division director, and Regina Mattrella and Cindy Lamontagne to team leader. Let me express my thoughts on how happy I am that we have great people to promote from within. Meme has served as a team leader, most recently in our new reunification program. She also played a key role in starting our family resource center work in Franklin and has been a team leader in foster care. Regina and Cindy both bring experience as social workers to their new leadership roles. It is their understanding of the children and families we serve that will help Meme, Cindy and Regina provide strong voices for those diverse populations in the future.

Meet Our New Social Workers:

Rachel Boles

I am extremely excited to begin my journey as a Casey Family Services Social Worker. Child welfare has always been my passion. I received my bachelors in Social Welfare from the State University of New York at Albany (SUNY Albany). I attended Columbia University for graduate school in New York City and it is here that I attained my MSW. I grew up in New Hampshire and when I returned from the State of New York I worked



Rachel Boles

as a Family Based Service provider for DSS involved families. I am married with two beautiful boys ages 4 and 2 and I just moved into our first home that my husband and I had built. Life has been exciting and I look forward to working with all of you!

Lindsay Perham

My name is Lindsay Perham. I am looking forward to working with other service providers and connecting with families in the community. I have two degrees from Springfield College: a Bachelors degree in Rehabilitation and a Masters degree in Social Work. Prior to joining Casey Family Services, I was a clinician in Massachusetts and in southern New Hampshire.

In my personal time, I enjoy spending time outdoors, either hiking,



Lindsay Perham

biking, jogging or just exploring. I enjoy traveling and often spend weekends with my identical twin sister, Chelsey. At home, my mischievous cat Wasabi keeps me on my toes.

COMMUNITY AND FAITH BASED INITIATIVE UPDATE

By Jan Lessard, NH & VT Director of Bethany Christian Services, Used by permission

Spring promises to be a busy time for the staff and volunteers who support the goal of recruiting and retaining foster and adoptive families in NH via the Community and Faith Based grant.

On May 16th, Orchard Christian Fellowship's Makeover Ministry will join us in hosting the 3rd annual appreciation day for New Hampshire foster and adoptive families at Shiloh Community Church located at 55 Edmund Street in Manchester. Entitled "Around the World Block Party", the event starting at 1 p.m. will include a variety of

foods and activities for all members of NH foster and adoptive families. If you would like to attend this free event, please RSVP to Ann at 271.4953 or e-mail her at aabram@dhhs.state.nh.us by May 6th. Call Jan at Bethany Christian at 483.2886 or go nhfapa.org for more information.

If you would like to learn more about how your community- or faith-based group can be involved in helping out with these events or if you have ideas for others ways to join us, please contact Bethany Christian Services at 483.2886. We hope to see you this Spring!

Parent Appreciation Dinner May 15

To help celebrate National Foster Care Month, on Friday, May 15th we will gather to honor our foster and adoptive parents at our annual Parent Appreciation Dinner to be held this year at the beautiful Common Man Inn in Plymouth. Festivities will include raffle prizes, great food and an opportunity to hear the heartwarming story of an adoptive mother and child's journey to permanency.



Workcamp Improving the Homes of Local Residents

As many as 80 local residents will benefit from the work of 450 adult and teenage volunteers at the Kearsarge Workcamp, coming to Bradford, Sutton, New London, Andover, Warner, Wilmot, Sunapee, Springfield, Newbury, and Grantham in July 2009. The Workcamp will provide free home repairs through the Group Workcamps Foundation program, sponsored locally by Casey Family Services and Trinity Bible Church.



At each Workcamp, teenagers and adults, all members of church youth groups, volunteer

a week of their time to repair homes throughout the community. "This represents about 12,000

hours of volunteer labor worth at least \$80,000 to the community," said Ed Rennells, director of Casey Family Services, New Hampshire Division.

Repairs offered through the Workcamp include interior and exterior painting, weatherization, porch and wheelchair ramp construction, and other work. Residents interested in applying to receive assistance may contact Doug Dean of Trinity Bible Church at 927.4213.



Casey Promotions

We are pleased to announce Meme Wheeler as the new deputy division director for the New Hampshire Division.

Meme has been with Casey for over 11 years. She helped to develop the Family Resource Centers in Franklin, NH, and was a team leader in Foster Care prior to the last program she helped to develop, Family Reunification.

We are also excited to announce that Regina Mattrella is our new team leader, replacing Meme. Regina has been working for us for many years in Foster Care and most recently in Reunification. Regina was the first social worker with Individual Service Options cases.

We are happy to announce that Julie Skinner will be the team leader for Reunification. Julie has served for many years as a team leader in Foster Care and has experience in home based services from her position prior to coming to Casey.

Please join us in congratulating our newly promoted staff!

National Foster Care Month Web Info

Visit www.fostercaremonth.org to find out more about the many ways you can get involved and make a lasting difference for America's children.

- Over 1,146 children are in foster care in New Hampshire
- Over 513,000 children are in foster care in the U.S.
- Nearly half of the young people in foster care are over the age of 10.
- Each year, more than

20,000 young Americans age out of foster care, most without the appropriate resources, skills or options they will need to live independently.

THE FUTURE: If nothing changes by the year 2020:

- Nearly 14 million confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect will be reported;
- 22,500 children will die of abuse or neglect, most before their fifth birthday;

- More than 9,000,000 children will experience the foster care system;

- More than 300,000 children will age out of the foster care system, in poor health and ill-prepared for success in higher education, technical college or the workforce; and,

- 99,000 former foster youth, who aged out of the system, can expect to experience homelessness.

May is National Foster Care Month

Casey Family Services is celebrating National Foster Care Month this May. For us, this is an opportunity to thank foster parents for their amazing work and dedication to children and youth in care. One of the ways we show our gratitude is through our annual Parent Appreciation Dinner. On Friday, May 15 foster parents and staff will partake in an evening of dinner and entertainment at the Common Man in Plymouth.

May is the perfect month to spread the word about the need for foster parents in New Hampshire and across the country. As you may know, foster parents are the most effective recruiters. Remember, you don't need to be married, rich, or a homeowner to foster or adopt a child. You just need to care.

Franklin After-School Program Evaluated

This year, Franklin Celebrates, the collaboration between Casey Family Services and the Franklin School District to provide after-school programming in Franklin, underwent a vigorous evaluation process. The Continuous Assessment Process for After-School (CIPAS) consisted of a lengthy self-evaluation of such areas as: programming, management, community and family involvement, financing, research and evaluation, staffing and

training, and policy and advocacy. In February, a visiting site team on behalf of the Department of Education and 21st Century Community Learning Centers came to Franklin for three days. During this time they interviewed 34 students, parents, principals, community partners and staff. They observed programming and got a snapshot of what our program looks like and how it is integrated into the Family Resource Center and

the Franklin community. Their report outlines our strengths, challenges and recommendations.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with special emphasis on our strong community partnerships. The program is seen as “part of the scenery” in Franklin. However, our primary purpose in going through this process was to have an objective opinion on where we can improve and make our program stronger

and better meet the needs of Franklin children and families. The two major suggestions were rebuilding our Advisory Boards – one for the elementary and middle schools and one for the high school, and developing strategies for disseminating research and evaluation results to participants and stakeholders. This feedback has assisted us in refocusing our attentions and we are actively working to address these areas.



Above: Ryan Yonaitis shown in the red, competing against an opponent who is 52 lbs. heavier than him in the Gold Medal Match

Below: Ryan stands proudly with his silver medal.



Franklin High School Program News

Two Franklin High school students have received Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) credit for high school and college. Josh Sarett completed a criminal justice class at NHTI in Concord and plans on becoming a NH State trooper after he graduates. Spencer Burbank completed a course in concepts of fire science. He plans to continue his fire fighters education after school and hopes to one day return to serve the community of Franklin.

In other ELO news, the following students are working toward receiving an art credit in photography: Hailey Parenteau, Kaitlyn Sottile, Tammy Gargano, Alex Keeler Miller, Christian Ames, Dale Fragose and Lexi Vachon. They will be presenting their work at a photo exhibit June 8th. Location TBA.

Suzanne Bilodeau is working on completing her P.E. credit while studying karate with student teacher Ryan Yoniatis

No Limits rocked the house at the Pizza Market on March 15th. No Limits is a local 9 piece Christian rock band made up of middle and high home school students. The band members are Lindsay on lead vocals, with Annie, Abby, Kimberly and Katie on back up vocals, Chance on bass guitar, Austin on rhythm guitar and key boards, Micheal on lead guitar, and Aaron on the drums. This is a hard working straight edge band that seeks to be a positive role model for local youth. Future plans include recording their own original songs and auditioning for a chance to perform at this year's NH Soul Fest.

CPAS

The Collaborative Post Adoptive Services Project of New Hampshire (CPAS-NH) is in the final year of our grant and continues to have much success with the foster and adoptive parents throughout the State of New Hampshire.

CPAS continues to offer our Romantic Weekend Getaways for just couples (without the children!) We recently had two weekends in March at the Woodstock Inn located in Woodstock, NH. The couples who attended were treated to two nights' accommodations, full breakfast both Saturday and Sunday morning, as well

as a candlelight dinner at the Clement Room. These couples participated in our PREP training on Saturday and enjoyed some much needed alone time during the remainder of the weekend.

CPAS now only has two weekends remaining prior to federal funding ending in September. These weekends are scheduled for April 24th-26th and May 8th-10th and again will be held at the Woodstock Inn. Couples who attend will again receive two nights' accommodations, two full breakfasts, a candlelight dinner, as well as eight hours of training. These events fill

up fast, so if you have not already scheduled to attend please contact Erin Murphy as soon as possible! All of these events are at no cost to families and serve as a great opportunity to earn eight licensing hours with the great benefit of learning the PREP method of safe communication.

So whether it's some alone time you need with your partner, a weekend away with the family, or a one day training you are looking for, CPAS has something to offer for everyone.

Also, it is with great pleasure to announce that

although our federal funding will be ending in September we will be having several of our Romantic Getaways next year for foster and adoptive parents. These weekends will be open to all foster and adoptive parents, even if you have attended a CPAS training before. Please stay tuned as we will be announcing those dates and information in the upcoming months.

For more details, please call Erin Murphy at 224.8909 or email emurphy@caseyfamilyservices.org

Kid Kudos:

Kacie E. participated in extracurricular basketball this past season, and this spring she will be participating in extracurricular softball.

Kianna M. and Carolyn C. have been enjoying their weekly gymnastics lessons.

Ryan competed in the 2009 National Collegiate Tae Kwon do Championships in Rhode Island and won a silver medal! – Thanks to the Franklin Rotary Club for a very generous contribution to help Ryan pay his travel expenses.

Kudos to Erica S. for being brave and joining lots of activities at her new high school.

Will M for earning student of the month in February.

Jordan S. for making the softball team.

Corey has made progress in piano.

Stephanie W. for a successful basketball season.

Congratulations to Josh, who has been accepted to two colleges (so far) for Fall of 09!

Margaret is (finally!) living with the Albuquerque family. Welcome to Casey, Margaret!

Congratulations to Emily-Anne and Jasmyne on their adoption by Sheila!

Congratulations to Nakayla on her adoption!

Destiny - Great job on the volleyball and basketball team!



Nakayla's adoption day continued from page 1

my mom had made said, "The universe has a way of knowing when people belong together...Born May 18, 1992, Joined us May 1, 1996, A family forever on January 15, 2009." My mom read it out loud before she cut the cake and cried because she was so happy that this day had finally come. I also got a present from my parents that will always be special to me. It was a silver bracelet with the date of my adoption engraved on it and will always remind me of my special day.

One of the best things about being adopted is that now I don't have to make time to fit in all of the professionals who had to be in my life and I don't have to get outside permission or signatures to do things. Now I can just ask my mom and dad to do things like most kids do.



Relatives as Parents Group in Franklin

The Relatives as Parents (RAP) group is a monthly support group facilitated by Casey social worker Jenn Sumner and Thom Linehan of the UNH Co-operative Extension. This group was formed because many people in the Franklin community are raising their children's children or a relative's child. Anyone raising a relative can attend. Each session features a timely topic of discussion, dinner, a chance to connect with others, and childcare if needed. Topics such as communicating with the school, understanding this generation, and stress relief and self-care are all covered. One of the challenges that grandparents, especially, find when raising their grandchildren is the loss of their envisioned role with their grandchild. This group nicely links with the cooking activity at the after-school program at the Franklin Middle School. Middle school students prepare "take and bake" dinners for the group attendees – a welcome break for any parent. Anyone interested in more information around this group or similar groups in their area should contact Jenn Sumner at 934.3170.

www.caseyfamilyservices.org

All I Want is Love and A Home by Robert Pistorio

The first question you may want to ask yourself is: "What is the reason I am doing this?"

The second question you may want to ask yourself is: "What do I expect to get out of this?"

There are no trophies, medals or awards that will come your way.

You are going to bring a child into your life that will have some sort of problem whether it be emotional, physical, or psychological.

You have the opportunity to help change the life of this child. To teach values, trust, patience and to show them that there is hope for their future.

After you feel somewhat comfortable together you may want to ask: "What do you feel comfortable calling me? Whatever you and I are comfortable with that's what we will use."

You will have days that you will ask yourself: "What in God's name did I get into?"

Then after you count to ten and look into those little eyes and see a lost soul you will have answered your own question.

Don't let those feelings get you down. I believe we all experience those feelings at one time or another. Just know that you are doing the best that you can and there is always someone to help you when you are feeling that way, all you need to do is ask for help. If you have never experienced this, try to imagine not having any family around you, only strangers, and never knowing what to expect.

"Will they keep me here or will I go to another foster home? Should I unpack my bags or just take out what I will be wearing today?"

I, for one, am happy to say that I have never experienced those feelings.

When your child has developed trust in you and asks for a hug at night, that is your trophy. When your child asks you for a goodnight kiss, that is your medal. When your child introduces you to their friends and says this is my Mom/Dad, that is your reward: this child has grown to trust you and love you for giving them something better in life.

You have given this child the most important thing that will turn their life around.

You have given them Love and a place to call home.

Would you like to submit something to the *Casey Reporter*?

We always are looking for submissions and feedback. Send your articles, photos, poems, and ideas to Beth-Ann Bryar, resource coordinator, at BBRYAR@CASEYFAMILYSERVICES.ORG. Please be sure to put "For the Newsletter" in your subject line.

The *Casey Reporter* is published quarterly by the New Hampshire Division of Casey Family Services, Director Edward C. Rennells Jr.



THE DIRECT SERVICE AGENCY OF
THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

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Save the Dates

Concord Multi-Cultural Festival

June 20, 2009
4 to 8:30 p.m.

Franklin Area Children's Theater Presents Aladdin Franklin Opera House August 13 and 14

Check our calendar insert for more upcoming Casey events!



Scottish bagpipers entertained attendees of last year's third Multicultural Festival at the Concord State House Plaza.

Visit us online
TODAY

Contributors to this Issue:

Rachel Boles, Beth-Anne Bryar, Cary Gladstone, Henry Harris, Nakayla Lacroix, Cindy Lamontagne, Jan Lessard, Jennifer McAllister, Suzanne McDonnell, Robert Pistorio, Bernadette Pelczar, Lindsay Perham, Ed Rennells, Barbara Slayton, Cathy Smith, Lynn Stanley, Jenn Sumner, Erin Wilson

www.caseyfamilyservices.org

THE CASEY reporter

Established 1988

JUNE

4 **CPR and First Aid
Recertification**

Concord Office
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
or 5 to 9 p.m.

5 **CPR and First Aid
Full Certification**

Concord Office
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

6 **CPR and First Aid
Full Certification**

Concord Office
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

8 **S.A.F.E.**

Concord Office
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

23 **Foster and
Adoptive Parent
Support Group**

Concord Office
6 to 8 p.m.

Shaded areas
indicate foster
parent training hours
provided

JULY

3 **Holiday: Office
Closed**

13 **S.A.F.E.**

Concord Office
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

16 **Conversation on
Attachment**

Concord Office
6 to 8 p.m.

19 **Fisher Cats
Game**

Manchester
1:05 p.m.

AUGUST

10 **S.A.F.E.**

Concord Office
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

22 **Casey Picnic**

Ellacoya Park
11:30 a.m.

CONCORD-AREA CALENDAR

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THE CASEY reporter

Established 1988

JUNE

2 **Mandt Re-Certification**
Littleton Office
5 to 9 p.m.

6 **Mandt Certification**
Littleton Office
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

23 **Support Group**
Littleton Office
6 to 8 p.m.

JULY

3 **Holiday: Office Closed**

19 **Fisher Cats**
Manchester
1:05 p.m.

28 **Support Group**
Littleton Office
6 to 8 p.m.

Training: TBD
Littleton Office
6 to 8 p.m.

AUGUST

22 **Casey Picnic**
Ellacoya Park
11:30 a.m.

25 **Support Group**
Notchland Inn
6 to 8 p.m.

Training: TBD
Littleton Office
6 to 8 p.m.

Shaded areas
indicate foster
parent training hours
provided

LITTLETON-AREA CALENDAR

CASEY
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