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THE CASEY reporter

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What It's Like to "Join the Club" by Lisa DeRepentigny

It's official! I'm finally a member of the "CLUB". You know...the Mom Club. On March 4, 2010, with the swipe of a pen, William Francis Moore became William Francis Moore DeRepentigny. But to William and me, that signature only proved to everyone else what we already know...we are a family.

It was August 2005 when I first visited William. I knew that his social worker from the NH Division for Children, Youth and Families had met with him already and told him about me wanting to adopt him. I remember being nervous and excited all at once. I can't even begin to imagine what he was feeling! The first meeting was awkward but full of promise. We continued to get to know one another with regular visits, moving to overnights, then to full weekends. Never having a child before, the whole process was kind of surreal. Here I am getting to know an 11 year old boy who



It's all smiles for Lisa and William Francis Moore DeRepentigny and Judge Patten of Manchester District Court.

was going to move in and become my son. Holy cow!

But that's just what happened. William moved in on November 10, 2005 and we both began to settle in. It was hard for both of us at first. How do you become someone's mom overnight? How do you do that with a child you just met a few months ago? I had no idea what he liked to eat, what his favorite color was or even what he thought about me or becoming part of my family. It was also hard just becoming

a Mom. I only had a Mom. I had never been a Mom. Sure I had taken care of kids before but this was different. I had to be responsible for this boy – all of the time. There were no breaks. There was no sending him home to his parents because, that's right, I was his parent!

The early days were hard and there were a lot of things that we needed help with. That's when our amazing DCYF worker referred us to Casey Family Services. She knew that we needed additional services that Casey could

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

When Casey Family Services opened a family resource center in Franklin, it was with an eye toward the long term. We planned to be in, and partner with, the community for a long time. Recent economic times have certainly tested our ability to meet the varying needs of families, as people look to us for services they cannot find elsewhere.

The Franklin Asset Building Coalition, which Casey leads, started a free income tax site in 2003. In its first year, volunteers and Casey staff prepared 11 tax returns. This past tax season saw more than 300 filers have their tax returns prepared, with about half qualifying for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, and all for free. The effort saw more



than \$650,000 in federal tax refunds, including more than \$250,000 in EITC returned to the local economy. Why is a child welfare agency preparing tax returns? It is aimed at helping families become more financially stable in hopes of reducing the stress level in the households of our community's most vulnerable children.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation calls this work Family Economic Success (FES). The stated mantra to this child-centered work is, "Children do well when their families do well; families do well when they live in caring communities." In Franklin, we are using FES as part of a strategy to help families, and the community has responded. Casey Family Services staff has been joined by more than 20 community volunteers committed to helping their neighbors. In the past eight years, the tax campaign has returned federal income tax refunds of more than \$2.4 million, including about \$1 million in EITC alone, to the local economy.

This summer, about 400 youth and their adult leaders from church groups

around the country will add to the services Casey provides, in partnership with Hope Community Chapel, the Franklin School District, and NH Catholic Charities. They will perform repairs to the homes of elderly, disabled and low-income homeowners. Casey staff, including Henry Harris, Jenn Sumner, Lisa Tanguay, Cathy Smith, LeeAnn Childress, and Kattie McKinnon have done some of the home visits leading up to the week-long project, called Workcamp. Lynn Stanley, Jenn DeLorme, Christine Marie and Cary Gladstone are Casey staff who have been part of a community-based committee that has spent the past year-and-a-half planning the project. It is part of ongoing efforts, adding to the impact we have on Franklin.

Welcome New Administrative Assistant Lynette Diaz!

My name is Lynette Diaz and I am delighted and inspired to be working as an Administrative Assistant with Casey Family Services. During my time here so far, I have met a great group of co-workers who have warmly welcomed me. This is truly a special place.

I grew up as a military kid primarily raised in Virginia Beach, VA, by first generation Cuban-American

parents. In 1999, I began my studies in Media Arts and Design and Sociology at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA. While there, I spent the better part of four years surrounded by peers and mentors who shaped my ideals and ignited my passion for writing.

In 2004, I ventured out on a cross-country road trip and found my spiritual home in San Luis Obispo, CA.



During my five years there, I spent time working as an activities coordinator for a senior adult living community, and as a legal assistant for a local attorney. I also wrote world music reviews as a contributing writer for

Hopedance Magazine, a regional publication for the central coast of California.

In the summer of 2008, I decided to move back to the East Coast and landed in New Hampshire to be closer to friends and family. I spend most of my time writing, reading, hosting dinner parties, and going on spontaneous weekend road trips.

Accelerated Reunification Model (ARM)

In October, 2008 Casey Family Services began offering a model of reunification services that involved intensive contact and support to accelerate the return of children who had been removed from their families for the first time due to abuse or neglect. This model was developed in response to DCYF Director Maggie Bishop's goal to reduce the time children stayed in foster care once the safety issues that necessitated their removal had been adequately addressed. The phenomenon of "raising the bar" would occur when a child was removed for safety reasons (such as inadequate supervision, adult mental health issues preventing appropriate parenting, substance use by a caretaker) but were not returned for risk issues (Will the parent remain compliant with a case plan? Will a parent continue to attend therapy? What if the parent relapses in drug usage?)

Accelerated Reunification Model (ARM) services were

made available to the Concord and Laconia District Offices initially, with expansion to the Manchester District Office in September, 2009. Over the course of the first year the types of cases that were referred for services



showed considerable variety. Cases fell within the specific criteria as outlined in the model description (first time removal within previous 24 hours; anticipated reunification within 30 days; 60 days of post-reunification support) as well as cases outside these parameters. Such cases included children who had been in residential care for

long periods, previous out-home placements, and post reunification services exceeding 60 days. Although these cases fell outside the original criteria, in each instance a valuable service was provided and assisted DCYF in case

planning decisions for each family.

Using information on cases through December 31, 2009 (14 months of services) ARM services successfully reunified 64 percent of our cases to date with one case experiencing a subsequent removal of a child after reunification. Of the 36 percent of cases where reunification

was not recommended the primary reason in most instances was that reunification could still be achieved but needed a longer time frame than the ARM approach offered.

Over the year an additional service was identified and resulted in the development of a family preservation model in addition to ARM. These family strengthening services were developed by Casey to meet the needs of DCYF with families who did not meet the criteria for ARM but involved families with children at risk of out-of-home placement. Appropriate referrals are identified as new assessment cases where the out-of-home placement possibility is high due to risk factors but no imminent safety issue is present; and families that had experienced reunification subsequent to a placement but were again at risk.



**Casey
Co-sponsors
Concord
Multicultural
Festival June 19**

Downtown Concord will again serve as the site of the annual Multicultural Festival, taking place on June 19. Casey Family Services is a co-sponsor for the event, which brings together local residents to share their heritage. From Scottish bagpipers to Rwandan dancers, there are very entertaining examples of the rich diversity of New Hampshire's capital city. There will also be plenty to eat, and wares to buy including crafts and other items.

The fifth Concord Multicultural Festival will be held at the Statehouse Plaza from 4 to 9 p.m. More detailed information is available at www.multiculturalfestivalnh.org

Casey Seeks More Diversity in Recruitment

As more and more children enter the foster care system in NH from different cultural backgrounds, Casey Family Services has begun a new initiative to meet the need for increasing the cultural diversity of our foster parent base by reaching out to individuals from African American, Spanish-speaking and other multi-cultural groups to explore the

opportunity to become foster parents with us.

Efforts began in 2009 with a small group of our staff having a number of conversations with key community leaders to raise the awareness of the need. In addition, the distribution of information about foster care in the form of bookmarks, posters and other literature at local events has proven to be a great way to get

the word out, including having an information booth at the annual Multicultural Celebration in Manchester held on Martin Luther King Day.

If anyone would like to help us connect with different multi-cultural groups or individuals in their community, please contact Cathy Smith at csmith@caseyfamilyservices.org or Beth Bryar at bbryar@caseyfamilyservices.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

- There are 12 million foster care alumni
- There are 463,000 children and youth currently in out-of-home care
- There are 123,000 children waiting to be adopted
- There are 870 children in foster care in New Hampshire

Check out www.fostercaremonth.org



Veterans Count Helps NH Military Families

by Pamela Langone, Director of Communications, Easter Seals NH

Veterans Count was developed in partnership with ESNH, the NH National Guard, and the NH Department of Health and Human Services. The program provides a safety net to service members and families before, during and after deployment through a model that integrates the civilian social service system, local philanthropic funds, and DoD funding, administered through DHHS. Easter Seals manages an inter-agency network of Care Coordinators who serve more than 1000 individual cases and that number will likely grow to 2,000 in the coming year with increased deployments. Since ESNH launched the program, more than 1,500 military families have been served. Care Coordinators are central to this program, providing comprehensive support. This includes a detailed assessment of service member/family needs, and a care planning process that builds self-sufficiency by anticipating problems, supporting for strategic whole-family pre-deployment planning, and planning for services, including healthcare/mental health services, employment services, financial assistance and counseling, child-related services, other services based on individual needs. The Care Coordinator coordinates services with military, VA, and social service organizations. Philanthropic dollars directly provide financial support that may include food, home maintenance, housing, rent, fuel assistance, utilities, vehicle repair, gasoline, medical bills, and child care. For more information, contact Chrystn Pitt, Intake Coordinator, at 603.621.3642. The Web address for our Veterans Services programs is: http://nh.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=NHDR_VeteransServices

Free Tax Preparation Sees Record Year in Franklin

In Franklin, Casey Family Services led the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) site for the eighth year. Each tax season has seen increases in the number of filers having their returns prepared for free. From a first-year total of 11 in 2003, the 2010 filing season has seen more than 300 returns prepared. This has brought more than \$650,000 in federal refunds back to the local economy. That includes more than \$250,000 in Earned Income Tax Credits, the largest of several credits that the VITA site helps families receive. Over the eight tax seasons, Casey-led efforts have seen total federal refunds of \$2.4 million with nearly \$1 million in EITC!

The Child Tax Credit, retirement savers credit, and American Opportunity education credits are among the ways the site helps working families become more stable economically. Perhaps more importantly, it opens the door to conversations about funding for college, first-time home ownership, or simply putting money aside for emergencies. Financial institution partner Franklin Savings Bank continues to be part of the effort to help families build savings, offering their Smart CD with incentives for first-time home buyer or college savers. This year, for the first time, filers could split off part of their refund and buy US Savings Bonds for as little as \$50. It's all part of the services provided at Casey's Family Resource Center in Franklin.

What It's Like to "Join the Club" continued

help provide in order to make this process work. I knew that this meant more people traipsing through our lives but I didn't care one bit! These were going to be the people who helped William and I get to the end...to the actual adoption. And that's exactly what the staff at Casey did. We were fortunate to work with an unbelievable social worker and wonderful family support specialists. William and I were given the support we needed whether it was emotional support, training, social skill building, or educational advocacy.

So after 4 years, 3 months and 22 days, we gathered at the Manchester District Court to make this thing official. William and I had asked some people to come and share the moment with us. So along with our family and friends, who have always supported and loved us, and the incredible team of professionals who truly made the day possible, we waited to be called into the courtroom. As I looked around the waiting area, I couldn't help but notice that the other waiting families had babies who they were adopting. They too were waiting to "join the club." The thing about the club is this: It doesn't matter if you give birth yourself or adopt an infant or a teenager. Once you become a member of the Mom Club you are a member for life!

Casey Foster Parents Help with Haiti Relief

Ken and Michelle Peters have been with Casey Family Services since 2002 and have been both foster and adoptive parents for over 15 years. The Peters have been helping children and families in the Dominican Republic for more than 20 years and during their current trip have been applying their experience to help in the earthquake-devastated Haiti. Ken Peters, the executive director of Open Arms Outreach, Inc. a nonprofit, charitable, faith-based organization, based in Belknap County, New Hampshire, is currently in the Dominican Republic with his teenage son, Leon Peters. Leon is finishing his senior year of high school through his voluntary work in the Dominican Republic. Ken Peters and his agency helped to build a clinic in the Dominican Republic 10 years ago and are now using this clinic as a home base to help those in Haiti.

Internationally, Open Arms Outreach plans regular trips to the Dominican Republic usually on a quarterly basis. Teams of 6 to 12 go with the primary mission of delivering needed medications to the Ebenezer Clinic. Secondly, Open Arms Outreach ministers within the churches and in the community, and has discovered in their journeys the massive needs of the many homeless children in the Santo Domingo area. In partnership with the Dominican Republic government, local Dominican Republic churches and ministries, and volunteers, Open Arms Outreach is caring for homeless children and ministering to at-risk families.

Locally, Open Arms Outreach provides supportive housing in the Belknap County area at the Joseph House in Lakeport at 756-8 Union Avenue which is centrally located in the heart of Laconia, NH near the shores of Lake Opechee. It offers large furnished apartments affordably priced to refugee and asylee families who have begun their journey as New Americans.

Within the residence nutritional food distribution including fruits, vegetables, cheese, bread and meat are offered free of charge. Transportation to vital services including doctors, schools and human services are provided. Job referrals, language instruction, church, and community gatherings for acculturation are coordinated in the community as well as office help with the phone, fax, copier, and internet access. The building offers free wireless connectivity. Also provided are clothing, furniture, other essentials, and most importantly hospitality.

The goal of Open Arms Outreach is to offer supportive housing, helping transition New Americans by establishing basic needs and opportunities in an environment of hospitality, education, and peer support. The hopeful outcome is a strengthened family ready to contribute to American society.

Workcamp Improving the Homes of Local Residents

Dozens of local residents will benefit from the work of 400 adult and teenage volunteers at the Twin Rivers Workcamp, coming to Franklin this summer. The Workcamp will provide free home repairs through the Group Workcamps Foundation program, sponsored locally by Casey Family Services and Hope Community Chapel from July 5-10.

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.



Casey staff members Bernadette Pelczar, Katie Hersom, LeeAnn Childress and Russ Wiles (l-r) pose in front of the many boxes of food they helped fill while volunteering for the Capital Region Food Program last holiday season.

Kid Kudos

Blake was in his first play, *Oliver Twist* and did an excellent job reciting his lines! Way to go Blake!

Hailey has successfully earned her eight puzzle pieces for good behavior in preschool! Go Hailey!

Kianna has been excelling in her horseback riding lessons, even after a fall! Great job Kianna!

Kacie is working hard at bringing her grades up. Keep up the good work!!!

Congratulations to Margaret, Jackie, and Brooke for completing the Red Cross Baby Sitting Course.

Kudos to Brittany P for joining spring track, Des D. for making the school gymnastics team and to Ashtian S. for making the softball team!

William Moore was adopted on March 4!

Jordan earned a NHEAF scholarship!

Sara has been accepted to 4 colleges and counting!

Erica completed driver's ed classes!

Casey Training Corner

In an effort to help our foster families obtain the required 48 hours of in-service training they need during each 2 year license period, we have created a Training and Event Calendar that will be sent out to everyone. This calendar will include the dates for both optional and mandatory Casey trainings such as MANDT and First Aid/CPR classes, as well as special events for our families.

Also, our newly re-organized lending library for families has been moved to a new location on the bottom floor of the Concord office. The materials are sorted by topic and include sections for children and teens. Feel free to stop by and browse the next time you are in the office.

And remember, up to 50 percent of your required in-service training hours may be obtained by reading approved books and watching videos. Be sure to keep a log of your training activities each month and send this into Casey so we can add this information to your file.

If you have an outside book, video or workshop that you would like to include as part of your in-service training, simply check with your social worker in advance for approval.



www.caseyfamilyservices.org

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
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Save the Dates

Foster Parent Dinner
June 12, 2010

Casey Family Picnic
August 28, 2010

Diversity Journey 2010
October 7-8, 2010

Casey Holiday Party
December 5, 2010

The new Casey Training and Events Calendar will be sent to you shortly!

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TODAY



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