

# Fostering Hope

Coalition Newsletter

Fall / Winter 2018



FOSTER & ADOPTIVE  
CARE COALITION

## Grant Wishes for Children Impacted by Foster Care

The holidays are coming and so is Little Wishes! This year the number of kids in foster care is higher than it has been in decades. Why? The opioid epidemic. The Coalition has received thousands of Little Wish requests like baby dolls, hoodies, action figures, ride-on toys for toddlers and bicycles for older kids. Children are dreaming of trips to Sky Zone, City Museum, and a St. Louis Cardinals game. Books, Lego sets, Uno, and Hot Wheels are also on our children's wish lists.

How can you make the holidays brighter for these kids? Grant a Little Wish! You can grant wishes online at [www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org) before December 19th. The gift will be delivered to the child in time for the holidays.

Granting Little Wishes as a tribute is a wonderful way to "gift" your favorite friend, teacher, or family member - *and* delight a child! Watch the countdown to grant every wish by December 20th at [www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org). Thanks to KSDK 5 On Your Side for championing Little Wishes!



FOSTER & ADOPTIVE CARE COALITION  
FOR EVERY CHILD... A PLACE TO CALL HOME

[www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org) | 1750 S Brentwood Blvd., Suite 210, St. Louis, MO 63144 | 314.367.8373



# From the Board President



Dear Friends,

You deserve a “thank you.” We began 2018 with a healthy measure of uncertainty. An ongoing opioid epidemic, underfunded child welfare system, and a shortage of foster homes all threatened our kids’ chances of growing up with safe, loving families. We found that our community never gives up on children.

Thanks to your generous support,

children and families served by the Coalition continue to thrive. Our Dennis and Judy Jones Family Foundation Foster Care and Adoption Program continues to be the leading recruiter of foster families in the region. Project SOAR gets kids out of institutions and into specially-trained families prepared to help children overcome their trauma. Family Works STEPS creates long-term stability for children in our community with complex medical and mental health needs.

The Coalition is now considered a national leader in family-finding. The internationally-renowned Council on Accreditation (COA) recently awarded the Coalition its prestigious “Innovative Practices” Award. COA singled out 30 Days to Family® as 2018’s most creative

and effective solution to a complex problem in social services. More than 20 sites around the United States are replicating this groundbreaking model.

Thank you for investing in this work. These successes are only possible when our community comes together. The Coalition runs on the strength of its volunteers and donors. Whether you are helping at Refresh or sharing your passion for our work in the community, you are part of a movement to change the way children experience foster care. We could not do this work without you.

Thank you for caring about our kids.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Phillips".

-John Phillips, Board President

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## Volunteer Spotlight: Karen DeStefane

The Coalition is proud to shine our volunteer spotlight on Karen DeStefane! Since 2011, Karen has volunteered in a variety of ways. We can count on Karen to spend many hours in the “Holiday Hub” during December making sure that granted Wishes arrive in time for the holidays for children in foster care. Karen also loves the Cinderella Project. Before prom season, the Coalition invites girls in foster care to be a VIP – Very Important Princess. The conference room is filled with private cabanas and each girl has her own personal shopper to help her choose the perfect dress and accessories for

prom. Karen is a wonderful cheerleader for every girl who comes to find a dress. She makes each one feel beautiful and special! She is an expert at finding that perfect dress - a huge plus. And yes, there’s more! For the past five years, Karen has served on the annual “A Sizzling Celebration” committee, helping plan a super fun and unique gala to raise funds to support the Coalition’s programs. Karen not only shares her time, energy, and expertise with the Coalition, she also gives her heart. Thank you, Karen!



# Building Self-Esteem and Confidence Through The Cinderella Project

The Coalition is gearing up for Cinderella Project 2019! The Cinderella Project provides prom dresses to girls in the St. Louis metropolitan region who are currently in foster care and have a financial need. The girls are referred to the Cinderella Project by case managers and high school counselors.

With the help of everyone in the community, the project has been



*"What I enjoyed the most about this project is that I was able to get a beautiful dress that I wouldn't have gotten without this program. Thank you so much!"*  
– 2018 Dress Recipient

extremely successful. We need your help again! We are now collecting new and gently-used dresses at our resale boutique, ReFresh. Drop-off sites will be listed on our website beginning December 1st and more added through January. Visit [www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org) or [www.refreshstl.org](http://www.refreshstl.org) for more information on the Cinderella Project.

**SAVE THE DATE**

*Hope in a Handbag*

**APRIL 25, 2019 • 6PM-9PM**

**HILTON ST. LOUIS FRONTENAC**

GRAB YOUR GIRLFRIENDS FOR THE BEST NIGHT OUT IN TOWN! THERE WILL BE DESIGNER HANDBAGS, SPARKLE AND SHINE, TREATS, SWEETS AND EVEN WINE!

 **FOSTER & ADOPTIVE CARE COALITION**  
FOR EVERY CHILD... A PLACE TO CALL HOME

# AFTER 10 YEARS IN FOSTER CARE, DAE'YONA FINDS A FOREVER FAMILY



Late one winter night in 2008, 7-year-old Dae'yona and 8-year-old Darian came into foster care because their mom was addicted to heroin and struggled with mental illness. They were immediately split up and placed with strangers.

Their caseworker turned to a daring new program to find forever families for the toughest-to-place children in foster care, Extreme Recruitment®. She reached out

to the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition and met Edna, who was pioneering the groundbreaking Extreme Recruitment® model.

In short order, Edna doubled the number of potential relatives to take in the siblings. Then she doubled it again. Soon, she had created a burgeoning family tree and found a cousin who would consider adoption. But a few weeks later at Dae'Yona's next court appearance, tragedy struck. Each of the children's foster parents refused visits with the prospective adoptive relatives. They convinced the judge that the kids were better off aging out of foster care rather than finding a forever home. They convinced the judge to kick Edna off the case. She was not even allowed to say goodbye to the children.

After 10 years with no news, Edna received a call from a colleague with the terrible news that Darian was in prison. Kicked out of her foster home years prior, Dae'yona was 17 and desperate to find a family before she "aged out."

Edna was quickly re-invited onto the case. The situation was dire; Dae'yona had spent more than half of her life in foster care. Nearing 18 years old and struggling in school, Dae'yona was considered "unadoptable" by many agencies.

It took Edna two weeks to find an aunt,

Stephanie, who was willing to consider taking Dae'yona.

Under the caring guidance of her aunt and the behind-the-scenes workings of the Coalition's Educational Advocacy team, Dae'yona attended summer school. She became a straight-A student and a cheerleader. Her coworkers at her part-time job loved her.

The Coalition helped the new family adjust and thrive. We facilitated hard conversations about living with past trauma, setting boundaries and expectations. We brought cutting-edge, trauma-informed parenting techniques into their home, and helped them apply these techniques in real-life situations.

Edna even negotiated a reunion between Dae'yona and Darian. Dae'yona worried that if only she helped Darian believe they would one day find a forever family, that maybe he wouldn't have gone to prison. She wished she could have helped him keep his hope, helped him hang on a little longer.

Today, Dae'yona talks about her adoption day the way most people recall their wedding, or the birth of a child. She's thrilled but not surprised by her adoption. She always knew she was worthy of a family. She never gave up hope. ■

## GIVE THE GIFT OF FAMILY

Changing the world happens slowly, but you can change the world for a child in foster care right now.

Please donate today using the enclosed envelope, or online at

[WWW.FOSTER-ADOPT.ORG](http://WWW.FOSTER-ADOPT.ORG)

# Make a Child's Birthday Special

*"Birthdays were a time when I was painfully aware that I didn't have a place. I was just a lost child in the system. When my birthday was remembered, a lot of times I wasn't asked what I wanted, I just was given whatever they picked out. The Birthday Buddy program makes a difference because it shows that someone cares about you, wanted*

*to do something special for you, and took the time to get you what you really wanted for your birthday." - Former Youth in Foster Care*

Our Birthday Buddy program matches donors with children in foster care who are likely to get nothing or almost nothing for their birthday. Many of these youth are living in an institution

or an apartment-like setting. Others are living with foster parents who have big hearts, but are just financially unable to get their foster children what they'd really like for their birthday. Visit [www.foster-adopt.org/birthday-buddies](http://www.foster-adopt.org/birthday-buddies) to sign-up and view a list of foster children hoping to be matched with a Birthday Buddy.

# A Great Start to the School Year!

Over 700 children impacted by foster care went back to school equipped to succeed with new backpacks and school supplies, thanks to many wonderful friends. We are incredibly grateful to Vantage Credit Union, CenturyLink Business, Mercy Hospital St. Louis's HR Team, Equifax, Thirty-One Gifts, Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH), Fuego Attic Salt, Secure24, Warehouse of Fixtures, FirstBank, IBM, Matter Family Office, Brighton Agency, MOMS Club of Kirkwood, and all the amazing individuals in our community who donated backpacks and school supplies.

We're also very grateful to Shoe Fly for giving gorgeous new athletic shoes



to the children who attended our Back to School Bonanza event, and HealthWorks!

Kids Museum for hosting the Bonanza giveaway event.

# Volunteer with the Coalition

There are lots of ways that you can help support children in foster care!

**ReFresh** – volunteer at our ReFresh resale boutique which provides clothing to youth in foster care at 90% off.

**Events** – help at Coalition fundraising

events such as Hope in a Handbag, Boutique Blowout, and Trivia Night.

**Foster Friends** – supervise and play with the kids while their parents are in training or taking an afternoon off.

**Court Appointed Special Advocate** –

help ensure that children do not languish in foster care by advocating for them at court hearings.

Visit [www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org) to see a full list of volunteer opportunities with more details.

# Anyaii's Adoption Day



*"I was in a home... I wasn't expecting it at all. But mom just came over, and she hugged me. And she said it was gonna be okay." -Anyaii*

In case you missed it, the KSDK 5 On Your Side Team just featured an incredible story. Anyaii, the 400th child matched with a permanent family

through A Place to Call Home, was adopted earlier this year.

Thank you to everyone in this community who opened their heart in some way to our kids! Visit our Facebook page to see the 5 On Your Side video of Anyaii's journey to adoption!

## National Recognition, Local Impact

**G**reat news! We recently received word that the internationally-renowned Council on Accreditation (COA) has awarded the Coalition its prestigious "Innovative Practices" Award! COA singled out 30 Days to Family® as 2018's

most creative and effective solution to a complex problem in social services.

Thank you for investing in this important work. Donors like you have provided the resources to develop and implement daring solutions like 30 Days

to Family®. We hope you feel proud today – this award is equally yours!

You can read more about the award and 30 Days to Family® on the COA website at [coanet.org](http://coanet.org).



## Jr. Board Trivia Night: March 2, 2019

The Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition is celebrating its 30th year of finding families for kids in foster care in 2019. Celebrate this momentous milestone at our annual Trivia Night, hosted by the Coalition's Junior Board. This year's theme will be Famous Families, so make sure you and your team are dressed to the nines as your favorite celebrity family. Join us for a night of fun, food, and drinks on Saturday, March 2nd at the Immaculate Conception Church in Maplewood. For \$30 per ticket or \$240 per table (8 people per table), you will enjoy: the best Trivia Night in town, open bar, team prizes, and great auction items. Doors open at 6pm, and trivia will begin promptly at 7pm. Head over to our website for tickets and sponsorship info.

[WWW.FOSTER-ADOPT.ORG/TRIVIA/](http://WWW.FOSTER-ADOPT.ORG/TRIVIA/)

# 10 Years of Extreme Recruitment®

**W**e're celebrating 10 years of finding families for older youth, sibling groups, and kids with special needs through our flagship program, Extreme Recruitment®! Last year, this amazing team matched 94% of children served with a permanent family.

10 years ago, while watching Extreme Home Makeover, Melanie Scheetz, our Executive Director, realized that impossible tasks required daring and creative solutions. Instead of recruiting families for our community's most vulnerable kids in the traditional linear manner, she decided that the Coalition would flip the script, taking an intensive, all-hands-on-deck approach to finding family.

It worked. By pairing private investigators with specially-trained recruiters, the

Coalition was able to find permanent, loving families for the children who are least likely to find homes. Recognized by TIME Magazine and the New York Times, our innovative methods started humbly right here in St. Louis.

We could not have done it without you.

Advocates, volunteers, and donors like you give us the time and resources to try daring solutions to the most complex problems in foster care. Thank you for investing in this work. And thank you to this amazing team for always living up to our vision:

**For Every Child ... A Place to Call Home**



*Extreme Recruitment® Staff*

## Foundations Transforming Foster Care

**We're grateful to the following foundations for their commitment to transforming foster care:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| AMC Cares Charitable Fund                                    | Norman J. Stupp Foundation                  |
| American Direct Marketing Resources                          | Old Newsboys                                |
| Anonymous Family Foundation                                  | Pfizer Foundation                           |
| Bank of America Foundation                                   | Ravarino Family Foundation                  |
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| The Community and Children's Resource Board of St. Charles   | Stifel Foundation                           |
| Cornelsen Charitable Foundation                              | St. Louis Community Foundation              |
| Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption                          | St. Louis County Children's Service Fund    |
| Dennis & Judy Jones Family Foundation                        | St. Louis Mental Health Board               |
| Herbert A. & Adrian W. Woods Foundation                      | State Farm Insurance Foundation             |
| Herman T. & Phenie R. Pott Foundation                        | Tegna Foundation                            |
| Jefferson Foundation   | The Guth Foundation                         |
| Mary Ranken Jordan and Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation | The Saigh Foundation                        |
| JST Charitable Fund  | The Shepherd Foundation                     |
| Kuhn Foundation  | The Sunshine Foundation                     |
| Lucky's Farmer's Market Charitable Foundation                | Ticket to Dream Foundation                  |
| Maximus Foundation, Inc.                                     | Trio Foundation of St. Louis                |
| Missouri Foundation For Health                               | Vassia Family Charitable Foundation         |
| Music That RECLAIMs  | Wells Fargo Foundation                      |

*\*Represents all gifts given from October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018*

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FOSTER & ADOPTIVE  
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