



ENCOURAGING INNOVATION



Gordon Johnson

The trend toward privatization of traditional government-operated foster care systems has opened the doors of the child welfare system to fresh ideas, greater innovation and new voices – all while increasing accountability and improving outcomes.

I spent nearly 20 years leading state-run foster care systems, the last seven as Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. I loved the work and was rewarded with the knowledge that we had helped rescue so many children and alter their lives for the better. But I was constantly frustrated by the inability to change what I knew to be the inherent weaknesses in those bureaucracies and implement the reforms I knew were needed.

When I became President and CEO of Jane Addams Hull House Association I was given the freedom and support to create innovative child welfare programs that involved the local community and provided a safer and more nurturing environment for victims of abuse, neglect and abandonment.

At Neighbor To Family we are blessed with the independence and flexibility to welcome new ideas and implement innovations that are changing the face of the nation's child welfare system. Our philosophy of keeping sibling groups together, including natural parents in treatment teams and professionalizing foster parents has revolutionized foster care and is being

replicated nationwide.

Now we are instituting an NTF version of the wraparound theory of child welfare and making the community an even greater part of our program by inviting neighbors, clergy, extended family and others onto our family treatment teams. Dr. John VanDenBerg, one of the national leaders in designing wraparound models, is helping us implement our latest innovation.

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WELCOME AUGUSTA

Neighbor To Family's newest program in Augusta, Ga., accepted its first sibling group – two boys aged 11 and 5 – on June 26. NTF has now expanded to five Georgia counties since we began in Fulton County in 2002.

NTF-Augusta Executive Director Joseph Powe says he plans on serving approximately 60 children by the end of the first year. A dozen prospective foster parents, representing eight foster homes, attended a recent orientation and are undergoing screening and training. Powe hopes to have homes for 20 children by the end of September.

Prior to taking in the first siblings, Powe got NTF established in Augusta by providing crisis management services for county foster parents, taking emergency phone calls from foster parents and responding to their homes within 45 minutes to resolve the situation.

Powe was well suited to handling crises, having come to NTF from New Orleans where he was director of a private foster care program when Hurricane Katrina hit. "The storm came on a Monday but we had all of our foster parents and children evacuated by the Saturday before," he said. "You've got to have a disaster plan because you just never know."

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Augusta Executive Director Joseph Powe.

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Luckily his home survived the storm but he spent the next several months monitoring and relocating foster parents and children who had been scattered all over the country and could not return because their homes had been destroyed or badly damaged. "We had no power and no cell phone service but for some reason text messaging worked so I communicated with the foster parents that way," Powe said.

After making certain all the foster parents and children had adequate housing and were connected with the appropriate governmental agencies in their new homes, Powe left to join NTF. He had worked with NTF Vice President Terence Johnson at Boys and Girls Town in Omaha and had admired the NTF model. "In New Orleans we didn't keep siblings together," he says. "That was definitely a big reason why I wanted to join NTF."

Powe, 38, has a master's degree in human services from Bellevue University in Omaha and received his bachelor's degree from Tarkio College in Tarkio, Mo. He also has friends in high places. He and former White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan have been close friends since their days in junior high and high school in Austin, Tx.

The headquarters for the Augusta program is on the second floor of an historic downtown building, at 810 Greene St. NTF now serves more than 300 Georgia children with nearly 100 professional staff and another 100 foster parents.



NTF's newest program has opened its office in an historic downtown Augusta, Ga., building.

RECLAIMING OUR CHILDREN



Arthur Jackson III (center), Senior Pastor of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Carol City, and his Chief Ministerial Officer G. Vincent Lewis (right), join NTF President Gordon Johnson in announcing the church's new Foster Parent ministry. The ministry will assist NTF in recruiting and training new foster parents in the Miami-Dade County area. The announcement was made at the "Reclaiming Our Children" conference in Palm Coast, Fla.

FOSTER PARENT



NTF-Daytona foster parent Maritza LaSalle is recognized as 2006 "Parent Advocate of the Year" by Ron Zychowski, President of Community Based Care of Volusia and Flagler Counties, Inc.

HIGH FIDELITY WRAPAROUND



John VanDenBerg

Neighbor To Family is once again proving its commitment to constantly improving services to the communities it serves by implementing High Fidelity Wraparound principles in our programs.

The Wraparound concept of enhanced teams working to meet the unique needs of each child and family has been piloted in Miami-Dade County and will be used in NTF programs in Daytona, Orlando, Georgia, and in other NTF sites.

The evidence-based practice of the Wraparound process consists of identifying the individual strengths, culture and needs of the family and children and finding the services and people in the community that are best suited to address those needs.

One of the keys to Wraparound is that the Wraparound Team includes the family and natural supports for that particular family, as well as professionals from all systems working with the family. Natural supports can include extended family, clergy, friends and other people or groups in the community that the family trusts and can assist in meeting a family's complex needs.

Kimberly Welles, Executive Director of NTF in Miami, says High Fidelity Wraparound will eventually be utilized with all

of the families of the more than 900 children NTF serves in Miami-Dade County.

"It's a very holistic approach where more people and more of a family's natural supports have a voice at the table and work together to create more effective treatment plans and make significant changes in a family's life," Welles says.

Dr. John VanDenBerg, a national expert and leader in the Wraparound process, is the supervising consultant assisting with integrating Wraparound into NTF's current programs. He and his staff have been working in Miami-Dade and other NTF sites since last November.

"Wraparound is based on a theory that originated in Belgium more than 200 years ago," VanDenBerg explains. He led the implementation of the first major state-wide Wraparound project in Alaska in 1986 and has studied and written on the process extensively.

One of the main goals in the Miami-Dade version of Wraparound is to make certain that children are receiving the most appropriate treatment and that, whenever possible, they are receiving that treatment in their community rather than in a group home or other institutional setting.

"We need a continuum of individualized services and supports for children in the community," VanDenBerg says. The more complex the needs, the more individualized the services have to be. Wraparound is a key part of the continuum of individualization. The process works in tandem with other supports such as Family Team Conferencing. In addition, the process further enhances the innovative work of NTF in keeping sibling groups together.

EXTRA MILE AWARD WINNERS



Najwa Dali, Vice President of Human Resources, left photo, and Shaun Johnson, Executive Director of the DeKalb County, Ga., program, received the President's Extra Mile Award in Orlando on May 22nd. The Award is presented quarterly to employees who exhibit extraordinary dedication and service to Neighbor To Family

FAMILY ADDITIONS

NTF WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYEES HIRED MARCH 1 – MAY 31, 2006

BALTIMORE

ANTIONETTE MCKENNEY
ROXANE NICHOLSON

LAMONT MITCHELL
DEBORAH MORRIS
KEVIN RUSHING
ANDREA SHOATS
ERICA TOOKES

YISSEL ROSARIO
RICHARD SPEARS

CLAYTON COUNTY, GA

JIMMIE GRAY
NINA JOHNSON
ROSITA LUNDY
ROSELYN MCLAREN
VINNIE ROBERTS
JACINDA ROGERS

FULTON, GA
VALENCIA BREEDLOVE
ALICE GAILES
VALERIE HARRIS
BEVERLY JOHNSON
ANTONETH JOHNSON
DIANE LUBERT
CAREN MITCHELL-CREWE
JOI SHOWELL
MONIQUE SUGGS

MIAMI NORTH, FL
JUANI ANDERSON
NAMON BANKS
MICHAEL BATUR
LAUREL BAXTER
KENDRA COPELAND
NANCY DORMUS
TIMOTHY FOSTER
CARLOS GARCIA
BETSY ANN JEAN-CHARLES
WIDLYNE LOPEZ
PAULA MAYA
JANICE MONESTINE
AYASHA NASAI
OLOLADE ODUMUYIWA
DAVID OKON
ALFREDO PEREZ
KARLA QUERO
PHYLLIS REID
WESTON REID
ISABEL SEMIDEY
NIQUITA STANLEY
DORINE SWABY
RAUSHANAH THOMAS
LATRICE WALDEN

CORPORATE

JOLENE ROUTIER
MARK JONES
CHERYL LONDON
KAREN CHRAPEK

GWINNETT, GA
DEBORAH CHARLES-BAPTISTE
ATOYA COLEMAN
NADINE DAVIDSON
CHARLINE HARVEY

DAYTONA BEACH, FL

MEGHAN BUDVARSON
GLADYS GERTMAN
COURTNEY LING
ANITA ROBINSON

MIAMI CENTRAL, FL

JEFFERY COACHMAN
DEBRA HARRIS
KAREN HAYES
JOSELIE HEREFORD
JABARI HUGHES
JOHN HYACINTHE
JUDITH KAPLAN
TANIKA PRESTON

DEKALB COUNTY, GA

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BRENDA CONWELL
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HELEN HUTTO
LEVI KELLY
GERTHEL LEWIS

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Gordon Johnson

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NTF is expanding, and privatization is succeeding, because of the ability of the private sector to adapt to the needs of children and families, rather than trying to make them adapt to an antiquated bureaucracy. Also, private agencies, like NTF, are accountable in ways a government agency could never be. With us, failure is not an option.

All of us at NTF can be proud of how we continue to lead the way in embracing innovation and putting it to work for the families and children we serve – reducing time in foster care, providing safe and nurturing foster homes, healing the physical and emotional wounds of children, and rebuilding and strengthening families.

NTF and many other community-based agencies across the nation are proving day in and day out that privatization of child welfare is making lives better for children and families. Our willingness to question old beliefs, encourage new thinking and open our doors to the communities we serve is replacing despair and complacency with hope and optimism.

Privatization works for children and families.



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