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# The Focus

Family Focus, Inc.

November 2009



## Family Focus Offices

**Minneapolis:** 2800 University Ave, SE #204 Minneapolis MN 55414

**Duluth:** 11-15 Buchanan Street #212 Duluth MN 55802

**Austin:** 204 Oakland Avenue W Austin, MN 55912

**Rochester:** 401 16th Avenue NW #106 PO Box 6349 Rochester MN 55901

## Message from the Executive Director/President—Debra Langer

**Congratulations!**  
Family Focus is celebrating our 10th year anniversary in 2010!



We look forward to working with you in 2010!

We are very excited to be celebrating 10 years of service to families and children! The incredible services provided by foster families, adoptive families, the Board of Directors and staff has lead us through exciting and challenging times!

award. If you know of an outstanding foster parent and would like to submit their name for 2010, please fax your nomination to 612/331.3520.

I would like to congratulate this year's Melin Foster Parents of the year award winners; Bob & Sandy Brower (metro), Margie & Ted Johnson (southern) & Tara & Dale Graves (northern). We appreciate the wonderful work these families have done.

Our September DHS file review went well. We would like to thank our foster parents for their timely submission of progress notes, medical forms and education hours. Providing these necessary forms in a timely manner will ensure a smooth file review in the future.

Once again, thank you for all your hard work with families & children!

Fall is the time of year the Family Focus Board of Directors reviews the nominations for this

## Our 2009 Donors

Thank you to our 2009 individual donors:

- Ardell & Judith Brede
- Deepa Roongta
- Peter Michaud
- Doug & Mary Watson
- Denise Morcomb
- Julia Willey
- Paul Zimmer
- Sandy Fiecke

### Our Sincere Gratitude...

To the Frank & Irene Maistrovich family who have shared their generosity with Family Focus.

## Special Thanks to... Events for 2010

### Special Thanks to our Donors:

Minneapolis Foundation- Camp Grant  
 Pohlad Foundation- Camp Grant  
 Northland Foundation-Adoption Grant  
 Cirque Du Soleil-Tickets  
 Tix For Tots—Tickets  
 Minnesota Zoo—Ticket  
 Minnesota State Fair—Tickets

### Fall Brunch:

Kowalski's Deli (Eden Prairie)  
 Caribou Coffee (Larpenteur Ave., St.Paul)  
 Wuollet's Bakery  
 Marshall's Farm Market—(Eden Prairie)  
 Game Works • Pump It Up • Cub Foods  
 PT Pastrami & More- (Oakdale)

### Upcoming Events/Happenings for 2009/2010 at Family Focus

**Tuesday, December 8, 2009 ~**  
Metro Share & Support 10-12 p.m.

**Saturday, December 12, 2009 ~**  
Family Focus hosts Holiday Brunch. (see invite-page 2)

**March 23-26, 2010 ~**  
117th Annual MSSA Conference

**Saturday, April 24, 2010 ~**  
Family Focus Required Spring Workshop (Metro)



## Family Focus Board of Directors

**Paul Zimmer ~ President**  
**Pete Michaud**  
**Deepa Roongta**  
**Katy Gorman**  
**Sandy Fiecke**  
**Marilyn Gow**  
**Julia Willey**  
**Larry Calguire**  
**Janet McKay**  
**Carol Erdall**

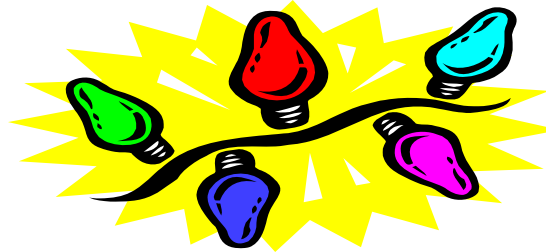
## Family Focus Families Are Invited To Our Holiday Brunch!

Family Focus is pleased to invite all foster families to our Holiday Brunch!

Our Holiday Brunch will be hosted by Corey & Shelli Pittman and Bob & Sandy Brower (both are Metro Area Foster Parents).

All you need is to bring yourself! In addition to a wonderful pancake breakfast your family can enjoy having your photo taken with Santa and/or a family picture. The Brower family will also have a framing project for younger children to take their photo home in.

We look forward to seeing you all there and kindly R.S.V.P with Melissa or Sara by calling 612/331.4429.



**When:** Saturday, December 12, 2009

**Where:** Trinity Episcopal Church  
1415—Sixth Avenue South  
Anoka, MN 55303

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.— 1:00 p.m.

**Directions:**

<http://trinityanokamn.org/drivingdirections.html>

## 3rd Annual Family Focus Fall Brunch—Metro

The 3rd Annual Family Focus Fall Brunch—Metro was held on October 24, 2009 at Southwest Community Church in Minneapolis. We had a great turn out this year with many delicious food items brought by each family. A special "thank you" to the Pittman and Brower family who worked for two days to prepare wonderful main dishes and desserts.

Magician Justin Alan ([www.magicjustin.com](http://www.magicjustin.com)), once again had a captive audience during the brunch and was enjoyed by everyone.

John from the MN Lynx (MN Women's Profession Basketball Team) stopped by and had some wonderful Lynx merchandise to give to our youth.

All in all, the event was a great time

for foster parents, kids and staff!

*Submitted by Melissa Rauch*



## Adoption Trainings

Adoption has been a growing part of Family Focus. To date, Family Focus has trained over 140 prospective adoptive parents. We have also implemented some post adoptive services to all families. To inquire about adoption services in the Duluth area please call 218/740.3146 or you can email [family@mnfamilyfocus.org](mailto:family@mnfamilyfocus.org).

To inquire about Metro Area or Southern Area adoption services you can contact the Metro Office at 612/331.4429 or you can email [family@mnfamilyfocus.org](mailto:family@mnfamilyfocus.org)

Trainings for the Metro and Southern area are held once per month on a Saturday from 10:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.

The following dates are available for you to choose from:

December 5, 2009

Jan. 9, 2010 & Feb. , 2010

March 20, 2010 & April 10, 2010

May 15, 2010 & June , 2010

July 10, 2010 & Aug. 14, 2010

Sept. 18, 2010 & Oct. 9, 2010

Nov. 13, 2010 & Dec. 11, 2010

## Metro Happenings

*Submitted by : Carol Erdahl*

For those of you that have visited the Metro Office, you've had the privilege of meeting our "front line" staff, Sara Komoto and Melissa Rauch. Sara, Project Assistant, and Melissa, Executive Assistant to Deb Langer, are the ones that answer the phones and know just about everything there is to know about Family Focus! Sara and Melissa keep things running smoothly when the social workers are running around in circles! We are grateful for their help, service and commitment to our agency.

Don't forget our monthly Share & Support meetings! We provide both



Joan, Melissa, Janet, JoAnn, Deb, Barb, Sam and Liz (Interns)

missing from photo: Sara, Carol, Marina and Carry

evening and daytime meetings—rotating every other month for your convenience. It is a chance for foster parents to connect with one another to share ideas, frustrations or experiences of being a foster parent. We usually find ourselves having a lot of fun and engaging in laughter at these groups!

We would like to acknowledge the wonderful work that two families have provided to children over the last several years: Doug & Cindy Greigore and Anthony & Kimberly Daugherty have pursued other avenues. We wish them well!

## Duluth Happenings

*Submitted by: Rebel Gustafson*

The Duluth office consists of three case managers/social workers- Heidi Burton, Mary Hofmann and Amber Male, who have a foster care caseload as well as an adoption caseload. Our office also has a home based therapist, Joan Najbar and myself, Rebel Gustafson, the Division Director. Cassandra is our part time office support employee.

Our Duluth office has 14 very special foster families that are spread out throughout three different counties. This year, Tara and Dale Graves were

the Duluth area recipients of the Melin Foster Parent of the Year Award! Congratulations! Duluth has four other licensed families that are in the process of adoption. Two families have recently retired in the past 3 months and we will miss the Prachar and Pylkka families. Thank you for your dedication to MN youth over the years! Mary and Amber have just returned from maternity leave. Congratulations to Amber and her beautiful boy, Baxtyn and to Mary and wonder twin boys, Tyler and Sam.



Mary, Rebel, Heidi, and Joan

Missing from photo  
Amber and Cassandra

## Rochester/Austin Happenings

*Submitted by: Taryn Sellers*



Katie, Taryn, Kelsey, Lynsie, Trudy

Missing from photo  
Nikki, Elaine, Robin

Greetings from Austin/Rochester!

It is our pleasure to announce that Lynsie Moritz has joined us in the CTSS department at Family Focus as a Home Based Counselor/Skills Worker. Lynsie has worked as an Elementary School Counselor in Winona and will bring a lot of education and experience to our staff. Please join us in welcoming Lynsie to our team!

By now you have met Katie Jacobi. She joined our team as Foster Care Case Manager in June. She works out of the Rochester office and has been a great asset to our team. By the time this is published, Katie will be on maternity leave with her first child! We wish her happiness and look forward to her return in January. We are positive that 2010 will be a great new year! Happy Holidays!

## Family Focus Adoption Updates

Adoption is happening at Family Focus! Recently the Department of Human Services accepted a grant to provide adoption services that Family Focus submitted. This means Family Focus can provide adoption services to most families adopting Minnesota youth under state guardianship for no cost. In return, the State will reimburse Family Focus. I just recently completed adoption services for the Jacobson family. They adopted a sibling group of three boys all under the age of four. During the adoption process the mother became pregnant and gave birth to another little boy. Chrissy and "the boys" are doing well.

*Submitted by: Rebel Gustafson*



Joel and Abby Peterson have been foster parents with Family Focus since 2007. In August of 2008, little Jazmin was placed in their home. Family Focus is pleased to announce that in September 2009, Jazmin became a permanent member of the Peterson Family!



**Promoting Life Long Relationships!**

## Melin Foster Parent of the Year Awards!

Fall is the time of year the Family Focus Board of Directors reviews the nominations for the Kathy & Steve Melin, Foster Parent of the Year Award. Our annual foster parent of the year award was dedicated to the Melins for their heart felt work with a foster youth who was involved in a tragic farm accident. The Melins coordinated a fund raiser with Family

Focus staff, facilitated funding for a wheel chair ramp and stayed with him in the hospital during his recovery. The Melins were an inspiration to all of us!

The 2009 recipients of the Melin Award were Bob and Sandy Brower, White Bear Lake; Margie and Ted Johnson, Mankato; Tara and Dale Graves, Duluth.

Congratulations and thank you to the families! We are grateful to all of the foster and adoptive families who have made Family Focus successful!



## New Website

We have been working hard with Esultants Web Design to create a new, user friendly website. We are planning on being able to launch the website by December 1, 2009. The website will include a foster parent forms section where foster parents will be able to download medical forms, respite forms, progress notes and many more.

*Submitted by: Sara Komoto*

## Foster Parent Reminders:

**Education hours** (25 primary/14 secondary) are due December 31, 2009.

Please document your hours and hand them into your social worker!

**Child restraint training** for parents with children under 8 years OR under 4 feet 9 inches is required every 5 years. You can find a location for this training by logging on to:

[www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us/AdvocForms/ChildCareTrainingSchedule.doc](http://www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us/AdvocForms/ChildCareTrainingSchedule.doc)

*"Happiness is not so much in having as sharing. We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."*  
-Norman Macewan



## Tips for Holiday Stress

This is the season for yummy treats, family visits, and. . . . stress???

Research shows that adults, especially women, tend to have increased stress during the holiday season. In addition to normative work stressors and household stressors, there is now the addition of financial stressors, time and energy spent planning events, and guilt around keeping up with traditions. Here are a few reminders to help you keep stress at bay this holiday season:

1. Breathe... Take five minutes a day to focus on your breathing. Taking a few moments helps you to refocus your energy and attention.
2. Spend less. Buy one less Christmas gift for each person on your list. Only buy items on sale. Use cash instead of credit cards to keep costs down in the long run. Stick to a list.
3. When you are scheduling activities, make sure to schedule time for yourself as well. Stick with the traditions that you enjoy. Skip the ones that seem like more work than fun.
4. If you do not want to go to an event, **STAY HOME!** If you are going out of obligation, chances are it will increase your stress level. Politely call the host and let them know you are busy that evening offering no explanation!
5. Cut out the extra's. You do not have to send a holiday card to everyone you know; cut your list down to close friends and family. Change up your holiday menu. Order a pie instead of making one. Skip making what always seems to be left over.
6. Keep Moving! Exercise is a great

stress reliever! Spend time with family participating in an activity outdoors instead of sitting around a table of goodies. It will be twice as good for that waistline!

7. Pace yourself. Leave early and anticipate delays. Murphy's law is that there is almost always a delay when you short-change yourself of time.

*Submitted by Taryn Sellers*

**Happy Holidays from all the staff at Family Focus. May you love, laugh, and be blessed this Holiday Season!!**



*"There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child, there are seven million."* Walt Streightiff

## Welcome Interns

Family Focus is fortunate enough to have two interns on board with us this school year. I hope many of you will have the opportunity to meet Liz Elhers and Sam Gajewski and give them a big welcome. Both Sam and Liz are interning from St. Catherine's School of Social Work and are MSW students. They come with much enthusiasm and will offer a fresh new feeling to the agency. While interning with the agency, Sam and Liz will be doing some licensing work, therapeutic skills work and leading two groups for teens. We really hope they enjoy their work experience with Family Focus!

*Submitted by: Barb Londo*

Samantha Gajewski and Elizabeth Ehlers



### ~Teen Groups~

Sam and Liz have coordinated a teen group, "Not Another Teen Group" which started on November 7, 2009. They have lots of fun ideas and activities planned. If you have not seen the flyer and would like your teen to participate, please contact Sam or Liz

