



## FAMILY MATTERS

Garfield County Department of Human Services

Issue 4

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### November 2011 RRHY Awareness Month

By Brenda Wagner

This November was filled with events focused on increasing community education and awareness on a population that tries to be invisible, our runaway and homeless youth.

Children make up 27% – the fastest growing segment – of the U.S. homeless population, and there’s no end in sight. The recession has forced many families out of their homes, making these youth just another group on the long list of victims, moving from couch to couch, shelter to shelter. But for many, economic stresses are just another ingredient in dysfunctional home lives, leading many to run away. They escape their home only to find new dangers and challenges. As many have pointed out, it’s not that these youth are living on the streets – they’re surviving, at best. These youth often blend in with their peers. Youth homelessness is largely the result of family breakdown and dysfunction, as well as, foster

care and juvenile justice involvement.

This year the Garfield County Youth Leadership Team (YLT) passed out over 500 green lights bulbs, literature, an

conversations about our runaway and homeless youth and gets others motivated to help make positive changes in their communities.

The YLT also participated in the Grand Opening of Urban Peak’s drop in shelter in Denver. This inspired our youth to want to advocate for similar services in GarCo.



2011 Youth Mural Project

program brochures at each of the City Market and Clark Stores here in GarCo.

The Green Light Project is a national project that spreads awareness in a big way! Turning Colorado green for the month of November initiates

On November 4, 2011, four youth leaders from Garfield and Montezuma county passed out 200 more green light bulbs and spoke to over 400 people about why Runaway and Homeless Youth Month is so important. This kick off event was at the Denver Art Society on 734 Santa Fe. Blvd. Not only did they talk to passer-byers, but they had conversations with representatives from the Governor’s office and one youth took time to be interviewed by KDVR. Their work was exceptional and their leadership qualities shined as they became ambassadors for all runaway and homeless youth!



At least 1,500 youth and young adults ages 12 to 24 are homeless in Colorado right now!



#### Inside this issue:

### THE COLORADO PRACTICE MODEL

By Joyce Glahn-Christensen

For more than two years, the Division of Child Welfare (DCW) staff and the Mountain and Plains Child Welfare Implementation Center (MPCWIC) have been working together to develop a Colorado Practice Model (CPM) for

the practice of child welfare in the Colorado counties. These practices are intended to support families in achieving positive outcomes. This effort is to have a clear, consistent, and cohesive approach to practice and service delivery

throughout the state.

The Implementation across the state will be phased over a three year period. Colorado counties and DCW staff have worked together to develop the practice model. The val-

STEPS	3
Mural Project	3
National Adoption Month	4
Family Fall Festival	5
Upcoming Events	6
Employee of the Month	6



## Child Welfare Data Update

**By Matthew McGaugh**

A data report has been created to analyze rates of success we are having when contracting for CORE services. We will now be able to distribute data reports for our CORE providers that correlate their services with our desired case outcomes.

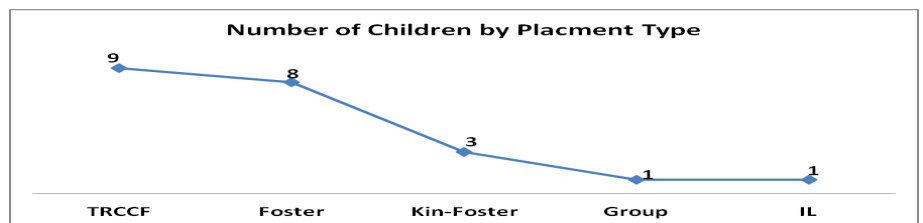
Identified outcomes such as; achieving identified permanency goals, rates of re-occurrence of abuse, placement, or DHS involvement are all tracked from case closure. This information can benefit both our providers and our agency as we work towards positive outcomes for our families.

Sometime in January or February 2012, a year's end data report will be distributed to staff with a variety of information from 2011 (and years prior for comparison).

This data report will include information on overall case numbers and outcome information relating to out-of-home place-

ments.

This is a chart showing "placement type" numbers for the 22 children in Garfield County currently has in care.



## Colorado Practice Model Cont. From pg 1

ues that make up the frame work are:

- Safety
- Child centered
- Family focused
- Collaborative partnerships
- Organizational competence
- Cultural responsivity
- Free flowing communication

The practice process includes:

Prevention: a strategy that reduces the likelihood of child maltreatment, out of home placements; increases family strengths for the children, youth and families referred.

Referral: a report to the county department or Tribal Child Welfare agency of alleged child maltreatment, or a request for services for a child, youth or family.

Assessment: engaging families and community to gather information to identify the safety, and risk needs and strengths of a child, youth, family, community to determine the actions that are needed.

Service Provision: any intervention, activity, or support that improves safety, per-

manence and well being for a child, youth or family, based on their culture, strengths, and needs.

Case Closure: Safety, permanence, and well being of the child or youth has been achieved and there is no longer a need for ongoing services, a formal end to Child Welfare involvement.

One group of 13 Colorado Counties have begun the implementation of the Practice Model. A second group will begin implementation in early 2012. We expect that this will be an easy, almost seamless evolution that started with Family to Family (remember that?) Team Decisionmaking Meetings, Family Group Conferencing, Differential Response/Family Assessment Response.

We will continue to engage families, encouraging Family Voice and Choice to support families in providing safety, permanence and well being for their children and youth.

DR Updates:

The initial research data is in for Colorado's Differential Response Demonstration Project. This information is being analyzed by the Project "data guy" The initial results look good. All indications are that children are NO LESS SAFE in those cases that have gone into the Family Assessment Response, FAR, track. We will be sharing more information as we receive it.

The Division of Child Welfare is preparing recommendation for the State Legislature to compose a bill which will make it legally possible for counties, other than the Five DR counties in the Demonstration project to begin including the FAR response to Child Welfare referral. This includes eliminating the need for a finding at the conclusion of an assessment.

Over and out for this quarter.



## What is the Mural Project

By Amanda Cleveland shared from the Colorado Rural Collaborative December 2011 newsletter

The month of November each year is "National Homeless Youth Awareness Month." Agencies across the Nation hold events to bring community awareness of this ongoing problem. Many events held around the state will include proclamations signed by their local government officials, highlight youth-driven projects to seek the public's attention, and of course, The [Green Light Project](#). (Green lights are used as a symbol of recognition to this problem by lighting up the front porches).

Colorado has a special committee consisting of many youth serving agencies, both urban and rural, that met once a month to plan for the awareness activities during the month of November. One of the annual events is a creative youth project for our young leaders to help to raise awareness in a fun and imaginative way. This year the national theme is "Making the Connection." By com-

binning this theme and other ongoing themes of youth homelessness and efforts of awareness, Amanda Cleveland, Urban Peak Denver and The Colorado Rural Collaborative, designed and led a mural collaboration project that agencies from across the state could participated in. The most resonating idea was to refer back to the "Making the Connection" theme by combining 9 agencies individual 3 foot squared tiles of art into one large and powerful composition that once united stands 9 feet tall.

**Thanks to Montrose and Garfield County Youth Leaders for participating in the Colorado Mural Project. Fantastic job!**

The final work displayed at Denver's Kickoff Event at the Denver Art Society on the [Santa Fe's Art District, First Friday Art walk](#). It

stood tall and shined bright for thousands of people to experience it. The mural was

accompanied by a booth which was facilitated by staff and Rural Collaborative Youth Leaders. To advocate for the [Green Light Project](#), the youth passed out over 200 free green light bulbs and spoke directly to at least 400



groups, individuals, families, and their urban peers that happen to be at the First Friday Art Walk on November 4th. Youth also passed out literature on youth homelessness, silicone bracelets with critical contact information imprinted on them for youth in need, and 5 inch stickers of the Colorado Mural Project as a keepsake and reminder of what November is all about.

## Strategies Towards Education/Employment Progress & Support (STEPS) By Brenda Wagner

The Garfield County STEPS program continues to provide case management services and supports to youth between 13yo and 21yo who are homeless or run-away. Although our funding remains limited, the STEPS program has been able to help approximately 100 youth and families over the last 3 years.

We are preparing for our severe weather plan by purchasing winter clothing and coats for youth in need and volunteering at various community agencies to con-

tinue our outreach and education. Members of the YLT will pass out literature, brochures, and bracelets to help get our youth to a safe place.

The STEPS program can help with life skills, finding shelter, making permanent connections, employment, finishing high school or starting college, obtaining medical and dental care, getting in touch with a thera-

**"Any runaway or homeless youth can call 1-800-runaway for immediate help no matter where they are"**

pist, addressing substance abuse issues, support with criminal issues, transportation, food, hygiene items, clothing, among other things.

Danielle Campbell is the new case manager for the STEPS program and YLT coordinator. Welcome Danielle!

Call 970-625-5282, x 3129 for more info!



# Connie Vigil Helps Garfield County Celebrate National Adoption Month

By Connie Vigil

Thank you for inviting me to attend your Fall Family Festival and National Adoption Day celebration. I feel very lucky to be asked to come and celebrate with you.

I am the Adoption Program Administrator for the state of Colorado. As part of my job, I work with the counties to help them finalize and support the adoptions of children who are placed from our system. Colorado is a state-supervised, county-administered system. Your county and government impart services intended to protect children from harm and to assist families in caring for and protecting their children. Garfield County is always looking at new and better ways to assure that the services that children and families need are state-of-the-art. Right now, Garfield County is one of 5 counties chosen to pilot the process of Differential Response in working with families when they first come into the system. Your county was chosen through an application process because of your county's dedication to innovative and collaborative practice. Keep up the good work.

Another way that your community is looking to provide the best services to its citizens is by creating a consortium of counties. This consortium creates more resources across a larger area and with more and varied services for families and children. This plan is also cost-saving for all of the counties so that the available resources are shared rather than each county having to "reinvent the wheel" for the citizens of their communities. At any time in the year almost 6000 children are in foster care in Colorado. Another 4000 are placed out of home into

relatives' care. Every year a small percentage of the parents of those children lose their parental rights through the court process for various reasons so that the children become free for adoption. Of those children who become free for adoption, in Colorado over 60% are adopted by the caregiver in whose homes they living at the time of the termination of parental rights. Every year, in Colorado the counties finalize the adoptions of over 1000 children. Thank you, thank you for your willingness to become the family for these children. They needed you and you stepped up to the plate.

I have seen wonderful articles and heard stories about the folks in your area who have provided the care for these children. Your town has offered extra resources to the families and the children. You have also give your time and services to make sure that Glenwood Springs and Garfield County is a wonderful and safe place in which children and families can grow and thrive. As you know or may have guessed, there are never enough people and families to give their homes and hearts to become foster and adoptive families for the children who are in need.

Colorado has many ways of recruiting more families to provide foster care and adoption for the children in our care. Glenwood Springs and Garfield County has hosted the Heart Gallery for several years. I hope that you were able to look



Connie Vigil Speaks at the Family Fall Festival

at this exhibit while it was here last year and two years before. The Heart Gallery is an exhibit of photographs by professional photographers who volunteer their talents and time to make very compelling portraits of Colorado's waiting children. As a result of this exhibit, 40% of these featured children were placed in their adoptive homes. Garfield County DHS works every day to make sure that the children who live in your community are safe and well-cared for. When these children have to be removed from their parents' care, members of your community step up to the plate to provide the care for the children to provide a safe living situation for the children. Thank goodness for all of these folks in your community.

Today we are celebrating families and we are celebrating the act of adoption. What a worthwhile and happy reason for celebration. This is why I love my job.



# Fall Family Festival

## By Mikki Baumann

In the United States, there are more than 107,000 children in foster care who need permanent, loving families, and many of these kids have been waiting years to be adopted. National Adoption Day is sponsored by a coalition of national partners: The Alliance for Children's Rights, Children's Action Network, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and the Freddie Mac Foundation.

In partnership with the Eagle County Department of Human Services and the Pitkin County Department of Human Services, the Garfield County Department of Human Services held an Adoption Cele-

bration on 11/11/11 at the Glenwood Springs Community Center to draw attention to the need for Foster/Adoptive Parents as well as highlight local families

that have chosen to expand their families in this special way. We were honored to have Connie Vigil the

State Department of Human Services Adoption Program Administrator join us in our celebration. We could like to extend special thanks to the following wonderful people for making our event quite impressive: Emily Tracy, of The Adoption Exchange for having a booth at our event and supporting us, Kim DuBois of Pitkin County DHS and DJ Andre DuBois for pro-

viding the awesome DJ'ing and music free of charge, Jessica Hernandez and Dancers of Sol De Mexico for donating their beautiful dancing and time, Ladybug Express for donating the fabulous floral arrangement, the teen band from Yampah Mountain High School for donating their musical talent and time, Juicy Lucy's restaurant for donating the gift certificate, Susan Garcia, Brenda Wagner, Matt McGraw, Renee Farris, Rachele Mettauer, Leo Medrano, Milcah Valiente, Meghan Backofen of the GCDHS recruitment and retention team for all of their hard work and the Wisdom Family for donating their time and talent.

We look forward to celebrating National Adoption Day with you next year!

"We look forward to celebrating National Adoption Day with you next year!"



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### *Upcoming Garfield County Events:*

2012: DHS Team to present on new best practice models, programs, and practice changes within our child welfare division to community agencies, schools, and law enforcement;

Please contact Brenda Wagner at 970-625-5282, 3106 to schedule a presentation for your staff!

April 2012: 4th Annual Child Safety Fair in honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month

May 2012: Foster Parent Appreciation Month and Celebration

May 23-25 2012: Child Welfare Conference in Keystone, CO

## **Meet Garfield County Child Welfare Employee of the Month, Kappe Stutsman, Life Skills**

### **What led you to work in child welfare in Garfield County?**

What led me to work in the child welfare in Garfield county, was the need to find an occupation in which I could provide for the needs of my family yet, allow me to help others and to be around children, both of which I enjoy.

### **What is your professional background? (Education and Employment)**

I graduated from Mesa State College with Bachelors in Mathematics and an Elementary Teaching License with a Dual Emphasis in Pre-K through 2. I then ran a licensed home day care for approximately ten years. I then had to leave day care to seek employment opportunities that allowed me to provide more for my family. I have since waited tables, cleaned, been a substitute teacher, paraprofessional and was a fire alarm system test & inspection technician.

### **Tell us about your family.**

I have been together with my husband for

twenty years. I have a wonderful step-daughter, Ashley, who just moved over to the Western Slope recently with my adorable grandson, Andrew and her fiancé, Ryan. I have three of great boys, all who enjoy playing several sports and the outdoors; Layton, who is a freshman at Rifle High school, Dalton & Holden are twins and are in fourth grade and attend Graham Elementary.

### **What do you like to do in your non-working hours?**

During my non-working hours, I enjoy being with my family

the most. I enjoy watching my boys play sports, supporting them in their schools and other activities. I enjoy going camping, fishing, hunting and just being in the mountains. I also enjoy yard work and sewing.

### **What's your favorite part of the job?**

My favorite part of the job is working with children, youth, and families along with my fellow coworkers. I enjoy helping people period, no matter who they are or with whatever it is they need support with. I may not know it all or have all the answers or all the skills, but I will gladly do what I can. I enjoy just being there to help and be a part of a team.

### **Tell us about your career goals.**

My career goals involve getting better at my job so that I can be more efficient at helping the families we serve and more of an asset to my coworkers.



Kappe Stutsman, Life Skills Worker, on the Life Resources team