



Agency HAPPENINGS

CYFS Summer Wine Down Raffle Successfully Raises Funds for the Just Like Me Campaign

A heartfelt thanks to all who purchased raffle tickets for our CYFS Summer Wine Down Raffle! Together, we raised over **\$13,000** for our **Just Like Me Fund** which will bring great joy to the youth we serve! As Heather Goff, Director of Family Centered Foster Care and Intact Services stated, “our Just Like Me (JLM) program makes such a difference for the kids we serve! It gives them opportunities to just be a kid and do some fun and enriching activities that would not have otherwise had the opportunity to try. For example, we recently used JLM funding to help a sibling group who do not live together spend a day together at Great America amusement park creating a life-long memory! Just Like Me also provided much wanted dance lessons for a little girl who that is extremely shy, and the fund helped one of our high school girls afford to go to the Homecoming dance. Without your contributions, we couldn’t make these dreams happen and we are all so very grateful to those who help bring some much-needed joy to the children we serve!”

Thank you Sponsors!

Lenny the Lawyer

John Graham & Associates

F &M Bank

Kuhl Insurance

*An update on our
Wine Tasting event...*

The event has been rescheduled for **Friday, June 17th, 2022!** Mark your calendars! We want to thank our sponsors who are committed to the event and carrying over their support with the new date!

Agency HAPPENINGS *(cont. from previous page)*

CYFS Recognized by Human Rights Campaign Foundation for LGBTQ+ Inclusion Efforts

CYFS has been recognized in the **Human Rights Campaign Foundation's third annual report "2021 Change-Makers"**, as one of 119 child welfare agencies across the country who have worked with the HRC Foundation's All Children All Families program to enhance inclusive services provided to the LGBTQ+ community, specifically youth in foster care and the adults who care for them.

CYFS is recognized for achieving the **Solid Foundation for Inclusion Seal**. As Board President Michael O'Melia stated, "so much of how we see ourselves reflects the ways that others view and interact with us. That's why it's so important that CYFS has achieved the Solid Foundation for Inclusion Seal. This recognition verifies our progress in providing affirming and inclusive services to all clients, many of whom identify as LGBTQ+. The careful work of the CYFS team to scrutinize and update agency policies, procedures, and practices helps to ensure that our words and actions echo our core values to honor each person we serve with dignity and respect."

CYFS is already engaged in activities to pursue the next level of recognition from HRC in the coming year - the "Innovator Seal of Recognition." Be on the lookout for communication about the progress we are making on this goal!



CYFS Bloomington Behavioral Health & Counseling Offers New Youth & Family Stabilization Program

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions is pleased to announce that our behavioral health team in Bloomington has launched a new program — **Youth & Family Stabilization**. The services provide youth with significant mental, emotional, and behavioral challenges coordinated intensive services from a team of professionals. The program is designed to provide both in-home and community-based services to increase stability for McLean County youth and their families. The program includes our Child and Family Peer Professional, Brian Hanson, whose primary role is to serve as the "go-to support" for families whose children meet the qualifications to

be a part of the program. Brian describes his role like this, "When your child is physically ill, you go to the doctor, and they provide the direction of what needs to happen for your child to be well. For mental health, it isn't always that black and white, nor is there a quick fix. My role is to help support families as they navigate the myriad of services that can help support their child and at the same time, with my own personal experience of having a child with similar complexities, I am here to help support them through this journey."

The Youth & Family Stabilization program is providing families who have children with significant mental, emotional, and behavioral challenges the consistent support required for their child to heal, cope, and thrive, and we look forward to sharing additional highlights of outcomes as the program continues to progress.



Program SPOTLIGHT

From the Voice of Foster Parents...How Fostering Transforms Their Lives Too

At CYFS we have the privilege of working with amazing, caring, and committed foster parents. Their patience in building relationships with children who have experienced trauma, their willingness to be a stable and caring adult in a scary time for a child, their commitment to parenting youth who are healing, and their support of children's connections to their birth families makes them true heroes to us. From the newest foster families to our most experienced, we celebrate them all and the extraordinary difference they make.



New foster parents Mary Beth and Drew Klinedinst worried that as foster parents they might get too attached to a child and would have a hard time letting go, but as they learned more, they came to understand that foster parenting was an opportunity to positively pour into the lives of children when they need it most. "When my husband and I considered all the people throughout our lives who provided us with the support, love, and encouragement we needed, we realized that we could do this for other," recalled Mary Beth. "We have served on mission trips for our church, which we love doing, but being a foster parent allows us to provide a positive impact daily. It also helps teach our own children that the world is much bigger than ourselves and that we can make a difference in the lives of others." And that is exactly what they have done since last February. Along with their biological children ages 2 and 5, Mary Beth and Drew have been fostering sibling boys ages 4 and 1, and they just recently began caring for the boys' baby sister, who is 3 months old. "Having five kids under the age of 5 can be overwhelming at times," shared Mary Beth with a smile, "But CYFS has been a great support for us on

this journey. For us, being able to show these children love, is so worth it, because these kids are truly worth it."

While the Klinedinst's are in the beginning of their foster parent journey, Sister Kevin Ritterbusch, has already made a life-long impact. She began fostering in 1994, and after 27 amazing years, we recently celebrated with her as she retired from her role of foster parent. Sister Kevin became a foster parent for girls after spending most of her life as a teacher, and what a beautiful journey it has been for both Sister Kevin and the many girls she has cared for over the years. "So many of the girls had untapped potential and were graced with such talents like singing or playing the piano", recalled Sister Kevin. "I loved getting them enrolled in art lessons, or taking them to see a musical." But one of the best parts of fostering for Sister Kevin has been enjoying visits with the girls as adults when they come back to see her. "The girls will eagerly search for their framed photo still hanging up to show their own children," shared Sister Kevin. Sister Kevin has similar sentiments as Mary Beth and Drew regarding how fostering has impacted her life. "Although being a foster parent is not always easy, it is a terrific way to help and nurture young people, especially ones who are hurting and need it."

CYFS is currently serving over 1400 children in foster care and the need for foster parents in the communities we serve is great. We need families for infants, children with medically complex needs, sibling groups, teens, and even short-term emergency placements. If you or someone you know has ever considered becoming a foster parent or would just like to learn more, sometimes the hardest step can be making that first call. Our staff are here to answer any questions you might have, lead you through the process, and if you decide foster parenting is a fit for you, we will be here to support you along the way.

MAKE A *difference* FOR LIFE.

Become a foster parent and make a difference in a child's life — and your own!

Call Sarah Hoover today at 309.786.0770 or email her at shoover@cyfsolutions.org to begin a conversation.



THE CENTER FOR
YOUTH & FAMILY
SOLUTIONS
cyfsolutions.org

2610 W. Richwoods Blvd
Peoria, IL 61604

Volunteer OPPORTUNITIES

Be a CYFS Secret Santa

Can you believe the holidays are right around the corner? We are often asked what type of support we need during the busiest season of the year, especially for the children we work with. One of the best ways you could help support our programs and brighten a child's Christmas is by becoming a CYFS Secret Santa! The process is so simple! We pair you with our office closest to you and connect you with one of our CYFS elves so that you can directly help purchase a special gift for a youth in need. If you want to get started now, simply call Celeste Matheson at 309.323.6619 or e-mail her at cmatheson@cyfsolutions.org. We thank you in advance for being part of the solution!

