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# News and Notes

## Youth Alternatives Foster Care Program

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### DHS Accountability: Another View

( Editor's note: This is a re-print of an editorial by Lucky Hollander from the Bangor Daily News.)

Since December there have been media reports about a group who organized a march from Ellsworth to Augusta to call attention to the "mistakes, missteps and dishonest practice and policies" of the Maine Department of Human Services . A press release said "Advocates for change at the DHS want to send an urgent message to state leaders: The time for reform is now." Certainly I have supported and organized around scores of such messages - why not this one?

I have worked in almost every aspect of child protection services, and think I understand the complicated issues confronting anyone who works to assure the safety of children and their families. I listen with respect when parents tell their stories. I believe them to be telling the truth from their perspective. I cringe at the mistakes sometimes made by caseworkers, psychologists, and other professionals working with children and their families. I think about my own mistakes - what I would do differently if I had a second chance with some of the children I have served.

I believe, however, that re-

sponsible advocacy requires those who seek positive change to rise above individual stories and anecdotes and collect sound data and analysis that can lead to significant improvement. In order to do that, advocates and policy makers must use the information they get to promote changes that adhere to the fundamental principles of safety, stability and sound practice. We cannot advocate for change based on anecdotes alone - because we cannot assume those individual experiences tell the whole story. I have seen many inadequate attempts to reunify children with their parents and insufficient support to

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**Youth  
Alternatives, Inc.**

Volume 1, Issue 3

March 2004

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### YA All Stars

- ☺ Stephanie C. was hired for part time employment through Maine Medical Center's Vocational Services. She has been working with her employment specialist, Jana Tarpinian, for several months, and recently got a job in food services at the hospital.
- ☺ Tomas T. started kindergarten!
- ☺ Welcome back foster parents, Nichole and Joey Allen!
- ☺ Welcome to new foster parents, Mike Daigle and Michelle and Michael Tapley!
- ☺ A foster parent Pre-service training has begun with 8 families working with YA.

### In Memoriam

Judy Day, a YA foster parent died February 27, 2004. She had been battling cancer for sometime. Judy had been a foster parent for nearly six years. She will be remembered for her compassion and com-

mitment to foster children. Any one wishing to make donations in memory of Judy may contribute to the Calvary Bible Church Building Fund, 67 School Street, Porter, ME 04068 or the Sacopee Rescue, PO Box

367, Parsonsfield, Maine 04047. Judy will be sorely missed by all of us at YA.



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# Training Corner

## April Trainings

- 4/2 **The Body Keeps the Score: The Integration of Body and Mind in the Treatment of Traumatized People** 8:30-4:30  
Village by the Sea, Wells
- 4/6 **TCI—Day 1\*** 8:30-4:30  
United Way Board Room
- 4/7 **TCI—Day 2\*** 8:30-4:30  
United Way Boardroom
- 4/7 **Birth Control & STI Update** 9-4  
Concord, NH
- 4/8 **CPR\*** 9-12 :30  
YA 4th Floor Conf Room
- 4/8 **CPR Challenge\*** 12:30-1:00

YA Fourth Floor Conf Room

- 4/8 **First Aid\*** 1-4:30  
YA 4th Floor Conf Room
- **4/14 All Foster Parent Day\* 9-2**  
**Keeley the Katerer (Required)**
- 4/15 **AFHD, Aspergers, OCD and Tourettes** 7:30-3:30  
Eastland Park Hotel, Portland
- 4/16 **Attachment & Loss with Lawrence J. Cohen, Ph.D.** 9-3  
Lost Valley Lodge, Auburn
- 4/21 **How to Talk to Kids About Death** 7:30-3:30  
Sheraton, South Portland
- 4/20 **CPR\*** 9-12 :30  
YA 4th Floor Conf Room

- 4/20 **CPR Challenge\*** 12:30-1:00  
YA Fourth Floor Conf Room
- 4/20 **First Aid\*** 1-4:30  
YA 4th Floor Conf Room
- 4/27 **TCI Refresher\*** 8:30-4:30  
YA 2nd Floor Conf Room
- 4/29 **Allegation Prevention and Awareness** 6-8 pm  
Casey Family Services, Portland  
(Sign up with your case manager)

\*Trainings at YA. To sign up for a training contact Jessica Brakeley at [registration@youthalternatives.org](mailto:registration@youthalternatives.org) or call her at 874-1175, x110. For information about the other trainings, please contact your case manager.

## Welcome Back Sea Dogs!

The Welcome Back Sea Dogs Dinner is April 6, 2004 at the Portland Expo to benefit Youth Alternatives. Foster children and their families are invited to attend free of charge. The evening begins at 5:30 with fun for the whole family, followed by a ball-park, family style dinner. Members of the Sea Dogs will be available for conversation, to sign autographs, and

for pictures. Slugger, the Director of Crowd Entertainment, will be also be in attendance! Speak with your case manager about tickets.



## Camp to Belong

Camp to Belong, an overnight summer camp that seeks to reunite siblings in and out of care, will have its first season in Maine. It will be held August 14-19 at Camp Wigwam in Waterford. Any foster child who is separated from siblings may attend. If needed, the Camp to Belong program will fly separated siblings from out of state to attend. The camp will have typical summer camp activities such as swimming, boating, hiking, and mess hall dining. It will also include the making of family scrapbooks and keepsake pillows for siblings to exchange and share. For more information, go to the Camp to Belong website at: [www.campbelongmaine.org](http://www.campbelongmaine.org). If you are interested in having your child attend, please contact your case manager.



## NYSP Summer Camp Available

The National Youth Sports Program (NYSP) is a free 5-week summer sports instruction, education enrichment program for children, ages 10-16. Transportation is provided. The 5-week program is at the USM's Portland Campus from June 21—July 23, 2004. For more information or to receive an applica-

tion contact:

Chris Beaudoin, PhD  
207-228-8230

[Beaudoin@usm.maine.edu](mailto:Beaudoin@usm.maine.edu)

For more information about NYSP visit their website at: [www.nycorp.org/nysp\\_overview.htm](http://www.nycorp.org/nysp_overview.htm)

## DHS Accountability (Continued from Page One)

parents struggling to care for their children. No one wants DHS accountability I have seen many inadequate attempts to reunify children with their parents and insufficient support to parents struggling to care for their children. No one wants DHS accountability any more than I. However, to claim that DHS single handedly destroys families over-simplifies a very complicated problem. The fact is, this movement should not be directed at DHS - it should be directed at all of us.

Who are we? Child advocates who are not persistent enough in researching and pushing for sound reform; the media who sometimes sacrifice the complex truth for sound bites and catchy headlines; legislators who, after numerous commissions and investigations, fail to fund meaningful reform; and community members who watch the debate from the side lines and think it is not their problem. Ironically, as some citizens take aim at DHS, there is significant, sound reform happening within their Bureau of Child and Family Services. I wonder how much effort the organizers of the March for Accountability have made to find out what DHS is doing to address many of their legitimate and important concerns. Here is a snapshot of some of the goals DHS has developed to create serious systemic changes right now:

1. Assert the leadership role of child welfare professionals by providing supports that enhance professionalism, skills and cultural competency that result in positive outcomes for children and families.

Perhaps the most exciting and comprehensive shift in values and thinking within DHS is the commitment to implement Family Team Meetings. Based on the principles of Respect for Fam-

lies; Responsibility; and Understanding, the Family Team Meetings are becoming the focal point of all work done by DHS with families. Heavily supported by extensive training and supervision, all DHS workers will be expected to work together with families to assure safety and stability of children. Parents are asked whom they would like on their team, and what the desired outcomes will be. The team then helps the family develop a plan based on the family's strengths. 2. Broadening family involvement from (the time of the) report to the best outcome for child and family. Outcomes in this area include: increasing reunifications of families; increasing safe and responsible placements with relatives; increasing the placement of sibling pairs together; and increasing cases where birth families participate in planning and decision-making. 3. Improving community connections and collaboration. Outcomes include: increasing the number of family foster homes in the home communities of children being placed; making sure all adolescents leaving care have the life skills and community supports they need; and increasing the number of children placed with their extended family members.

4. Improve the experience of children in care while achieving better and faster permanency outcomes. Outcomes include: reducing the average length of stay in foster care; placing fewer children in residential and group care; safely and responsibly reducing the overall number of children in care; and increasing the number of adoptive placements for children age nine and over.

These are only a few of the goals DHS has been working deliberately and consistently to achieve in the

past three years. The fact is, most children in placement need to and will go home. But there is also the other side, which must be acknowledged and addressed, regardless of all the efforts toward reunification. Some children will continue to love and cherish their parents, and parents will love and cherish their children, but tragically, for many complicated reasons, reunification will not be possible.

At the end of the day, after the situation is given every possible chance, it is the staff of DHS who must make the hard decision, with the courts, that some children will not be safe and protected at home. It is an unpopular truth that we have to face and be willing to say out loud.

*Lucky Hollander is the vice president of Advocacy & Prevention Services at Youth Alternatives.*

"...responsible advocacy requires those who seek positive change to rise above individual stories and anecdotes and collect sound data and analysis that can lead to significant improvement."

**EXPLORE the world.  
HELP those close to home.**

Please join YOUTH ALTERNATIVES, INC., for an unforgettable evening in support of Maine's children and families.

PASSPORT TO OUR FUTURE brings local businesses and individuals together for an auction, benefit, showcase and entertainment.

HURLEY TRAVEL EXPERTS, Key Sponsor  
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**MARCH 25, 2004**

HOLIDAY INN BY THE BAY | PORTLAND, MAINE | TIX 874 1175 X 170

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## Paperwork Checklist

### Daily:

- Daily log
- Medication administration report
- Medication count logs (for schedule II-V class drugs)

### Bring to doctors/dentists:

- Medical/dental form
- 30 day psychotropic medication form

### As needed:

- Incident report (within 24 hours of incident)
- Permission to administer psychotropic drugs (every time a new psychiatric medication is prescribe or the dosage is changed on current drug)
- Supervised visit and supervised telephone call forms
- Over-the-counter medication log
- Refusal to take medication form
- Medication Destruction Form
- Respite Form

