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## **May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month**

### **\*\*\*Local Foster Parents Celebrate Fostering Over 90 Children\*\*\***

#### **Family Resource Center of South Florida Applauds All Foster Parents & Encourages the Public to Consider Fostering Children in Need**

Miami, FL – May 4, 2012 – **May is National Foster Parent Appreciation Month**, an opportune moment to recognize the many foster parents and families that lovingly care for children in need in the Miami-Dade area. **Family Resource Center of South Florida (FRC)**, one of the state’s leading child welfare private, not-for-profit organizations, is celebrating all of its foster parents this month, as well as sharing some exceptional foster care stories.

One of the many foster parents making an incredible impact in our community is **husband and wife pair Lisa and Jorge Alvarez**. **Together they have fostered over 90 children** in the last 12 years. Their story began back in 1998 when the couple decided to adopt a baby after several unsuccessful attempts to get pregnant. They secured a license with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to become adoptive parents. After waiting two years, with no luck, their mentor suggested fostering to adopt. The first baby they fostered ended up being adopted by his aunt. However, they got lucky with the second child placed with them, baby Natasha, whose public adoption they finalized just after her 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

In the months that followed, Lisa learned there were many more children in need – babies being released from hospitals with no home to go to. Upon learning there were so many children in desperate need, especially babies, Lisa decided to commit her life to fostering children. Five years ago she took on fostering children with special medical needs, becoming licensed as a Medial Foster Home. One of these special needs foster children, Desi, a child born with many health challenges -- including Hydro-Cephalous, cerebral palsy and chronic lung disease -- was the second child adopted by Lisa and Jorge. Desi has endured open-heart surgery and brain surgery twice, with the loving support of his adoptive parents.

The number of children Lisa and Jorge have cared for now exceeds 90. They are truly exceptional foster parents and wonderful community role models. This is just one example of the many generous foster parents the Family Resource Center supports with child welfare services everyday.

“Family Resource Center is deeply committed to supporting foster families with child welfare services including home licensing, case management, parenting classes and ongoing education and resources”, explained Dr. Oren

Wunderman, Executive Director of Family Resource Center. “We recognize the invaluable role they play during one of the most vulnerable time in children’s lives – foster parents are the unsung heroes of our community.”

As a thank you to area foster parents and families, FRC is applauding foster parents and sponsoring programs including a **Foster Family Appreciation Getaway at the Miami Metro Zoo** on Saturday May 19 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. This event will be filled with fun activities for foster care children and parents alike.

Family Resource Center provides child welfare and advocacy services to over 1,000 children annually in Miami-Dade. For those individuals interested in becoming a foster parent, Family Resource Center offers a 12 week M.A.P.P. (Model Approach to Positive Parenting) Course that meets one to two nights a week for a total of 33 hours. This program is an in-depth training that includes among other topics, mutual selection, two family consultation visits and preparation of a family portfolio. To learn more about the requirements for fostering, a licensing specialist can be reached at (305) 960-5546.

If you would like to learn more about Foster Parent Appreciation Month, or would like to schedule an interview with Dr. Wunderman of Family Resource Center, or one of the many exceptional foster care families, please contact Christina Daigneault at 917-207-4686. We have families inspired to share their stories. Kindly note, both English and Spanish speaking families are available.

#### About Family Resource Center

Family Resource Center of South Florida, Inc., a non-profit organization, was founded in 1978 by a group of concerned community leaders. FRC’s mission is the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect by strengthening families. The agency provides integrated care for children in the foster care system, parent education classes, mental health services, substance abuse counseling, adoptions, and aid in the licensing and oversight of foster homes.

FRC has been recognized by *Florida Trend* magazine as one of the top 100 BEST PLACES TO WORK in the state in both 2010 and 2011. Business Leader Magazine also recognized the agency as one of the Top 20 Small Businesses in South Florida for both 2010 and 2011.

#### About the Executive Director, Dr. Oren Wunderman

Oren Wunderman, Ph.D., has worked in non-profit child welfare agencies or mental health centers for most of the last thirty years. He is licensed as a Psychologist, Marriage and Family Therapist, and Mental Health Counselor. He earned his Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral degrees from the University of Miami. He has taken coursework in non-profit management from the Harvard University School of Business and the Florida International University School of Business. For the past 15 years, he has been a yearly guest lecturer in the subjects of Child Abuse and Forensic Psychology at the University of Miami, Departments of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, Miami Children’s Hospital and several local Community Mental Health Centers.

Dr. Wunderman has been with FRC for the past 15 years, 10 of which he has served as the Executive Director. During his tenure, Dr. Wunderman has enabled FRC to triple in size while expanding the complexity and scope of services. He extols to the staff the values of Transformational Leadership, whose cornerstone beliefs are: (1) Treat the clients respectfully, always caring for them as though they were loved members of your family, and (2) Always preserve a fundamental humility and awe about the vital services provided to troubled clients.

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