



For Immediate Release

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November is National Adoption Month

Family Resource Center of South Florida, Inc. Helps Families Navigate the Public Adoption System & Finalize Adoptions

*****Single Mother to Adopt 5 Children on National Adoption Day*****

Miami, Florida – October 15, 2012 – In anticipation of National Adoption Month this November, Family Resource Center of South Florida, Inc. (“FRC”), one of the state’s leading child welfare organizations, is gearing up to help more families navigate the public adoption system, finalize adoptions, and build loving families.

Single Adoptive Mother Keeps Family of Five Together

In a moving story of love and sacrifice, FRC is helping one Miami resident adopt five (5) children on National Adoption Day – November 16, 2012 at the Miami Children’s Museum. Katrina Deshazior is 32 years old and is the maternal aunt of the children. The children are F age 1, M age 2, F age 3, F age 14 and F age 15. They are all siblings. Katrina has been caring for the three youngest children, who were placed with her for foster care, and was moving forward with adoption. When she found out that the two older sisters’ initial placement fell through, she stepped forward and agreed to take them as well, keeping all of the siblings together in one united home. She credits her strong support system of friends and neighbors for her ability to take on the care of five children as single adoptive mother.

A Local Example of Public Adoption – “Angels in Adoption”

Another example is Miami-based Vladimir Diaz & Maria Del Mar Velasco. This couple turned to Family Resource Center in 2009 with a wish to care for children in need and build a family. They decided that the first step for them would be to become licensed and serve as foster parents with the hope that they might be able to adopt one of the children they fostered. In 2009 they became licensed to foster through Family Resource Center and, soon after, had an infant placed with them. This child and another infant placed soon after were ultimately reunified back with their biological parents. The third baby that came into their life, Anisa, became free for adoption after only six months. The couple was thrilled and adopted her one year ago on National Adoption Day, November 18, 2011. Their little girl is now one and a half years old. Even though they were able to make their dream of adopting come true, they continue to foster other children and provide needed love and care.

The Diaz-Velasco family was just recognized by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption as “ANGELS IN ADOPTION” in Washington D.C. during their annual gala on September 12, 2012. This honor was due to their work to increase public awareness of foster care and adoption from the public adoption system throughout South Florida. They were nominated for the award by U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-20).

The Benefits of Public Adoption

In Florida, on any given day, there are approximately 750 children available for adoption from foster care without an identified family. Public adoption offers many benefits to those wishing to adopt and helps provide a safe haven to the most vulnerable children in the foster care system. In addition to offering individuals and couples facing infertility or other roadblocks a path to creating a family, some of the benefits to public adoption include: state covered court costs, 100% paid tuition for children who attend an in-state college or university, financial subsidies, and medical benefits for children who have special needs.

Why Public Adoption is Important

FRC's core mission is to rehabilitate and keep families together. However, of the approximately 1,000 children served annually, one-third will become free for adoption. A forever home is one the most important and rewarding gifts a person can give. Studies consistently show that the success rate of children who have been adopted increases dramatically compared to those who remain in foster care. Reports continue to surface nationwide about the impact of the weak economy and the rise in child abuse and neglect cases. Florida is no exception to this trend. With one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, Florida's children are suffering. Since 2010, the abuse hotline has seen the average number of monthly calls increase by over 1,600. So far in 2012, the hotline is getting 37,829 calls per month on average.

FRC Executive Director, Dr. Oren Wunderman recently commented, "As child abuse and neglect continues to be pervasive in our community, the need for loving homes is of paramount importance." "We are proud to help shepherd families through the process of licensing, foster care, and/or public adoption – providing parenting skills classes and resources each step of the way."

How Family Resource Center is Making an Impact

Throughout the month of November, FRC will be spearheading a public awareness campaign to help demystify public adoption, as well as highlighting some inspiring local families who recently turned to public adoption to build a loving family.

In 2012 FRC completed 51 adoptions, exceeding their goal of 41 set forth by Our Kids. On November 16 (8am-12pm) at the Miami Children's Museum, FRC, Our Kids, and other area child welfare agencies will celebrate National Adoption Day by completing over 50 youth adoptions and bringing families together to mark this special day.

If you would like to learn more about public adoptions, request an interview with Dr. Wunderman of Family Resource Center, or spotlight some of the recent inspiring adoption stories please contact Christina Daigneault at 917-207-4686.

About Family Resource Center

Family Resource Center of South Florida (FRC) is a non-profit organization founded in 1978 by a group of concerned community leaders. Its 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. In the last year, FRC provided services to more than 2,500 children, adolescents, and adults.

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.

FRC Executive Director Dr. Oren Wunderman has worked in non-profit child welfare 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 continuing education coursework in non-profit management from Harvard Business School 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.

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