

family matters

children's home society OF FLORIDA

winter 2007 central florida edition

Playground!

With the recent completion of the Crisis Nursery “**Renovated with Care**” renovation project, it seemed as though new playground equipment was only a dream for 2006. Little did we know, the **CoreNet Global** local chapter’s recent “Community Reinvestment Challenge” was looking to provide a new backyard dream-land to the children of the Crisis Nursery! Through the help and support of **CoreNet Global**, the children placed in the care of the Crisis Nursery now enjoy new playground equipment, including the unique, award-winning “Nest” play structure, a cement basketball court, an interactive garden area, a gas grill for cook-outs and a gazebo. The children also benefit from new cement pathways, beautiful landscaping, an irrigation system and a fresh coat of paint on the entire house.

Dozens of sponsors and volunteers came forward to help transform the Crisis Nursery backyard. All together, the project received \$100,000 from in-kind donations, more than \$18,000 in financial contributions and a total of 850 volunteer hours. In addition, the local chapter of CoreNet will complete another critical project by updating bathrooms throughout the entire shelter!

For children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect, experiencing a safe environment that allows them to “just be children” doesn’t happen very often. Because of the CoreNet volunteers, hundreds of youngsters cared for at Crisis Nursery will now find a place to simply be a child.

One of our children finding safe harbor at the Crisis Nursery drew a picture of the new playground and took it to “Show and Tell” at school. Her big smile spread across her little face illustrated just what an amazing impact our caring community has on our children’s happiness.

A special thanks to **Massey Services, Crescent Resources, Turner Construction, Sterling Silver Landscape, Little Architects, Tinklepaugh Surveying Services, Home Depot Supply, Panattoni Development, Imperial Landscaping, Valley Crest, Tom Hurst, Convergys, Kohler, Nood, Gene and Lisa Goodmaster, The Budd Group, and the Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission** for making our children’s dreams come true.



▲ Our beautiful new playground

◀ CoreNet Global Volunteers Celebrate!



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Embracing Children.
Inspiring Lives.

Important Dates

Volunteer Orientation

February 15 and 22

March 14 and 22

April 11 and 19

Call (407) 895-5811 to RSVP

March 27

Legislative Day in Tallahassee

April

Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month

Turning Lives Around TBA

May

Foster Parent Appreciation Month

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner TBA

Monthly:

Tours of CHS Emergency Shelters

Call (407) 895-5814 for dates

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Family Matters is a regular publication of Children's Home Society of Florida. Children's Home Society of Florida is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to *Embracing Children. Inspiring Lives.*

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2006 Dream Car Giveaway winner

ON DECEMBER 2, Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS) friends gathered at Mercedes-Benz of Orlando in Maitland, eagerly awaiting the drawing of the winning raffle ticket for the Mercedes-Benz Dream Car Giveaway. **John Lord**, CHS supporter, became the proud owner of the new 2007 Mercedes-Benz C230 Sport Sedan. With the generosity of the Central Florida community and the help of **Mercedes-Benz of Orlando in Maitland**, we raised **\$64,000** to provide assistance to Central Florida's most vulnerable children.

John, past President of Bank of America, and his wife, Carolyn, have been longtime supporters of numerous worthy causes and missions. In fact, Carolyn chaired the CHS Board of Directors in 1993. "We have had a longstanding commitment to investing in our community," John says, "but we've never received a return on our investment quite like this!"

Be on the lookout this summer for details on how YOU could be the next winner of the Mercedes-Benz of Orlando in Maitland and CHS' 2007 "Dream Car Giveaway."



▲ Lucky winners John and Carolyn Lord

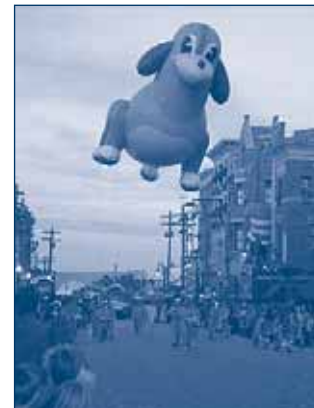
A Family Affair goes to Universal Studios and raises \$45,000!

FILLED WITH PLENTY OF HOLIDAY SPIRIT, hundreds of our friends recently enjoyed a fabulous day, beginning with a delicious gourmet lunch, followed by a fun day at holiday-decorated **Universal Studios**. And, on December 9, CHS' A Family Affair guests had another surprise treat, as they munched on dessert and sipped coffee at a special viewing area to watch the giant balloons in the MACY's Holiday Parade at Universal Studios.

Each year at A Family Affair, CHS honors a new recipient of the R. David Thomas Child Advocate of the Year Award. Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's Restaurants, was an adopted child and vocal advocate for children's issues. Winners of this prestigious award make exceptional contributions to the support the well-being of child abuse victims, and past recipients include Dick Batchelor, Bob Opsahl and Linda W. Chapin. For 2006, we honor **Dixie Goolsby** for her leadership and commitment to our Crisis Nursery renovation project.

A special thank you to **Universal Orlando** for generously hosting this incredible event, as well as the sponsors and individual ticket holders for

Steve Najjar ►
handles one of
the MACY's Day
Parade balloons



helping us raise \$45,000 to provide safe days and nights for child victims of abuse and neglect.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our Presenting Sponsor: **Steve and Kim Najjar**; Gold Sponsor: **Financial Business Services, LLC**; VIP Sponsors: **Essian Construction, Publix Super Markets Charities Inc., and Reunion Resort & Club of Orlando**; and Table Sponsors: **Accredited Surety & Casualty Co., Aon Consulting, AmSouth Bank, Darden Restaurants Foundation, Foley & Lardner LLP, Greenberg Traurig, P.A., Holland & Knight, LLP, Insight Financial, Leader Foundation, Mercedes Homes, Metric Engineering, Inc., Rexel, Smart City Telecom and Tri-City Electrical Contractors, Inc.**

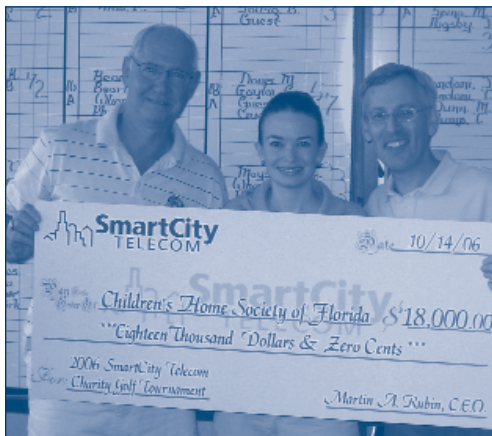
Bringing joy back to the holidays...

DURING THE SEASON OF HAPPINESS and cheer, some of our children have known only violence and fear. Thanks to the generosity of 147 organizations and individuals, CHS collected 12,506 toys at our "North Pole" toy distribution center, which was donated by Colonial Properties Trust. Three thousand children had three gifts to open during the 2006 holidays.

This year, David had one wish for the holidays—a CD player. Just recently, CHS case managers reunified David with his mother after a long battle to stabilize their family. David's mom shared that each night when she goes into David's room to kiss him goodnight, he's listening



▶
Children at our shelter say thank you for their gifts



▲ *Smart City CEO Marty Rubin and Tournament Chair Dave Campbell present CHS' Jessa Heisey with the donation.*

Smart City Telecom raises \$20,000 to protect children

SMART CITY TELECOM EMPLOYEES, vendors and customers teed it up for a good cause, and raised more than \$20,000 to provide safe days and nights our children. The sixth annual charity tournament, part of an ongoing company commitment to benefit CHS children, was held October 14. In addition to the annual golf tournament, Smart City Telecom supports CHS through its "Good Samaritan" program, recognizing public-minded individuals by making donations to CHS in their name.

to the CD player he received, thanks to the generosity of the community.

Several groups replaced tears with smiles this holiday season at our emergency shelters for children who have been abused, abandoned or neglected. **Lifetouch** brought professional photographers to both of our shelters to take beautiful holiday photographs of our children, and, for the sixth year in a row, **Debbie Theroux** catered a holiday dinner for our precious children! **Jewish Family Services** provided a buddy for each of our children and also presented the Crisis Nursery with a

professional closet-space planner to improve our much-used clothes closet! **Full Sail** adopted three CHS families, and the **Master Custom Builder Council** adopted four families to help our children really feel home for the holidays!

Our friends at **AAA**

South also came to our aid, adopting 75 of our foster care children for the holidays to make their wishes come true.

A special thank you to **Smooth Jazz WLOQ 103.1**, **Tri-City Electrical Contractors**, **Pinnacle Direct Funding**, **HD Supply**, **Tempus Resorts**, **Sea World Adventure Parks**, **Women of Alaqua**, **Best Buy**, **Florida Municipal Power Authority** and the **Central Florida Christmas Celebration** for their overwhelming commitment to make the holidays a special time for our children by being our top 10 wish granters this season.

Giving back to make a difference

FANNY MORALES KNOWS FIRSTHAND how CHS embraces children and inspires lives. As an infant, Fanny found her "Forever Family" through the adoptions program at CHS. Years later, she started volunteering with Lilley House, one of our 24-hour emergency shelters for children, on a regular basis. Fanny says she "...just wanted to help the organization that put her with the most loving, wonderful parents a child could ask for."

After Fanny heard about our need to secure toys for more than 3,000 children in December, she decided to support the holiday drive by asking her fellow church members, friends, family and co-workers at Polytechnic University for toy donations. When she noticed the donation boxes seemed a little empty, she started sharing her story with her students and her church family. If it weren't for her adoptive parents, she explained, she would have been one of the children at CHS longing for a family for the holidays. Soon, the boxes started filling up with toys and donations. Fanny even went to her pastor, who not only informed his congregation of the holiday drive, but also provided flyers and handouts for those interested in becoming a volunteer, a foster parent or an adoptive parent. We thank Fanny for her continued efforts to be an advocate for our children all year round!

For more information on volunteering and making the difference in the life of a child, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at 407-895-5814 or cfvolunteers@chsfl.org

Embracing Children. Inspiring Lives.

There are so many ways you can help CHS turn lives around. We kindly request all items are purchased new.

Items that are always in need include:

Furniture/Accessories for Children in Need:
New Car Seats (all sizes)
Cribs/Bassinets
Play Pens
Highchairs
New child-sized duffle bags
(up to 200 quantity)

Home Improvement for Lilley House

Screen Porch
New Playhouses for toddlers
Wall-mounted, non-glass mirrors

Many individuals and companies also look for ways to get their entire workplace involved. Fun ideas include birthday parties and baby showers, which can be held at your office, or volunteer activities at our emergency shelters such as outings (movies, bowling, etc.) or "spruce up" days. Individual volunteers are always needed for our emergency shelters, Perinatal Program and MODEL Mentoring Program.

From the CEO

My recent experience serving on Governor Crist's bipartisan transition team reinforced my commitment to continue pushing for critical improvements in the lives of Florida's children and families. We must bring forward new ideas in order to build upon successes of the past. As you know, CHS is committed to driving changes that will break generational cycles of child abuse and neglect—while continuing to provide our current, life-changing services to our clients who need us. We remain focused upon the child next door who is beaten and abused, the single mother struggling to feed her children, the teens in our own community who need guidance and love, and on countless others we serve daily.

As we do each year, CHS will host Legislative Day in Tallahassee, and we invite you to join us. This annual advocacy day consists of face-to-face conversations with legislators from every community we serve. Board and auxiliary members, direct services volunteers, clients and staff rally together to talk with senators, representatives and their aides about the crucial importance of CHS and issues facing our state's children and families. If you have a passion to improve care and services for Florida's children and families, please join us. You don't need any political experience—just a desire to improve the lives of at-risk children and families in your own community. To fight for children whose voices can't be heard without you.

This year, CHS will focus on key issues to better the lives of Florida's children and families, including:

- Increased funding for proven prevention programs like Healthy Families.
- Sufficient funding to protect at-risk children in each of Florida's communities.
- Improved support of foster parents.
- Improved contracting and monitoring of the child protection system to focus on the "well-being" of clients in a manner that is fair and equitable for all service providers.
- Stronger adoption legislation.
- Freedom to allow CHS and other agencies to assist employees in paying for mandated automobile insurance coverage if they transport children.

Please mark your calendars for March 27, 2007, and join us in Tallahassee for Legislative Day 2007.

Contact your local CHS division for more information, and get ready to make a difference as we bring child welfare issues and concerns to our legislators. See you at the Capitol!

Dave Bundy



Tax-free rollovers: Another way to help children and families

RECENTLY SIGNED, "The Pension Protection Act of 2006" includes a great charitable giving opportunity for owners of regular and Roth IRAs. Now, donors ages 70 1/2 and older can rollover up to \$100,000 each year from their IRAs during 2007 to CHS—without paying any income tax on the withdrawal. The amount rolled over to CHS will not be included in your federal taxable income.

When making your charitable rollover to CHS, remember: Your IRA trustee distributes the gift amount in your name directly from

the IRA to Children's Home Society of Florida, Inc. If you withdraw the cash from your IRA and then send it to us, you'll have to pay income tax on the amount withdrawn, so let the IRA trustee handle the distribution. In line with the new law, the rollover must be made to Children's Home Society of Florida, Inc., not to Children's Home Society of Florida Foundation. This designation is to ensure you receive the proper tax treatment.

The tax-free rollover opportunity offers one more quick, simple avenue for you to make a

big difference in the lives of the many children looking for a brighter tomorrow.



◀ *Tax-free rollovers to CHS will change the lives of children who hope for a brighter tomorrow.*

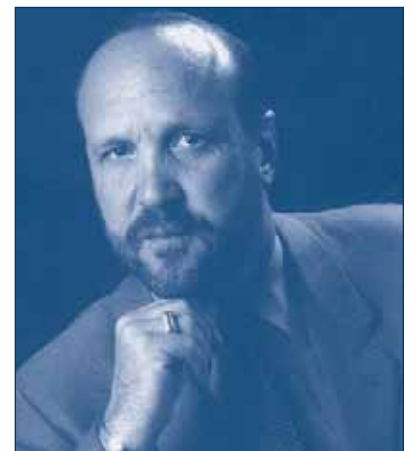
Foundation Chair changes lives with \$25,000 gift

THOUSANDS OF PARENTS in our state reject, neglect, abuse and take advantage of their children, robbing them of the love, affection, nurturing and guidance they deserve—and need—to become good citizens who will contribute to society, says Ron Book, CHS Foundation Board Chair.

To help drive change for these youngsters, Ron made a \$25,000 gift to the CHS Foundation, adding to its financial resources that help CHS serve children and families.

"The children we serve are beaten up, rejected, lost, left feeling no one cares for them," Ron says. "They have no one else to take care of them, and we need sustained assistance to make a difference in their lives."

Bob Giese, President of the CHS Foundation, hopes Ron's generous gift will act as a catalyst for others to help children and families. No matter what size the gift is, he says, it makes a tremendous difference in the lives of those we serve.



▲ *Ron Book, CHS Foundation Board Chair*

BUY OUR LICENSE PLATE... HELP SAVE A CHILD

In the time it takes to get in your car, fasten your seatbelt and pull out of your driveway, the Florida Child Abuse Hotline receives another call. Every five minutes, another child's abuse or neglect is reported. In 2004, 111 children died from abuse or neglect.

The "Stop Child Abuse" license plate helps prevent child abuse through programs of Children's Home Society of Florida and The Florida Network of Children's Advocacy Centers. Every tag purchased provides another \$25 to protect children.

More than a half million Floridians purchase tags featuring animals, marine life and environmental concerns, raising over \$11.25 million for these causes in 2005.



Surely we can protect our endangered children as well as we protect our endangered wildlife.

Join the drive against child abuse – Get your STOP CHILD ABUSE license plate today.

Visit your local tag office or go to www.chsfl.org/stopchildabuselicenseplate for more information.



1485 S. Semoran Blvd., Suite 1448
Winter Park, Florida 32792
321.397.3000 • www.chsfl.org

CHS strives to break the cycle, change lives

STEVEN WAS ONLY TWO MONTHS OLD when his father became frustrated with his crying. So, he threw the innocent baby on the floor, killing him. Even though baby Steven was rushed to the ER, it was too late.

Two-year-old Jacob was riding in the car with his mother behind the wheel. She crashed into a motorcycle. Jacob died. Later, toxicology reports showed she had heroin, oxycodone, cocaine and alprazolam in her system.

Melissa's father was preparing her bath when he grew tired. So, he left his 9-month-old baby in the tub with the water running while he went to lie down. He awoke half an hour later to find Melissa floating facedown in the bathtub, the water still running.

In 2005 alone, 97 children in Florida died as a result of child abuse or neglect. Nearly all the deaths were preventable.

CHS provided safe shelter for nearly 5,000 children last year. Many would not have lived through the next night in their own homes. Like so many children we serve, 5-year-old Thomas found his safe haven at one of our emergency shelters. Prior to coming to CHS, Thomas endured pain and suffering at the hands of his mother—his scalp was even stapled together after she smashed a beer bottle on his head.

Fortunately, Thomas was rescued from his abusive environment, and caring CHS staff nurtured him the way a child deserves. Because of the attention and love Thomas has received, he's now a happy, helpful, bright-eyed boy who loves to smile.

While we are thankful that we're able to protect children with support from our generous donors, we want to do more. We need to do more. Prevention programming is the solution that will save children's lives, teach

them to trust and, ultimately, break the tragic cycle of child abuse. And you can help.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Eighty-three percent of innocent children who died in 2005 from abuse and neglect were under 5 years old. Please join us in the fight against child abuse. We encourage you to wear a blue ribbon throughout the month in honor of these children, and we invite you to get involved, to help change the future for other youngsters. Perhaps you'd like to volunteer, become a foster parent or mentor, or contribute financially. Whatever your passion is, please use it to make a difference in the life of a child.

**Facts and statistics obtained from the Florida Child Abuse Death Review 2006 Annual Report, submitted by the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee.*

Heartfelt thanks to our donors

A special thank you to all our generous supporters who embrace children and inspire lives!

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*These individuals and organizations are members of the CHS Turning Lives Around Society who have made a five-year commitment of \$1,000 or more to support our most vulnerable children today and in the future.

**This list represents all donors who have given more than \$1,000 from January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006. Future gifts will be recognized in our next issue.

Finally a family again

AFTER NEARLY SIX YEARS, Shannon and Kelly Howard, along with their children, Cameron and Sierra, are finally a family again. But the road wasn't easy.

The treacherous trail began after a series of neglect allegations forced the state to take custody of their toddlers, all the while working on a case to terminate Shannon's and Kelly's parental rights. And then their case got transferred to CHS—and everything changed.

"Once it got to CHS, people cared—they literally cared," Kelly says. "They sat with us for three hours to hear our side of it all." After their first caseworker read the case and saw Shannon and Kelly with their kids, he knew it wasn't a termination case, Kelly says. And together, they were determined to reunite the family.

"CHS never let us down," Shannon says. "They saw how much we wanted to be a family."

Many times, Shannon says, she doesn't know how she would have made it through without her caseworker's support and encouragement. "If we called her for anything, she'd say, 'I'll be there in an hour,' drop everything, and show up on our doorstep. She really cared," Shannon says. "CHS doesn't give up—they never give up."

Prior to being transferred to CHS, Shannon and Kelly say they weren't told what to do to bring their children home; during inspections, everything seemed to go fine—until



▲ *Kelly and Shannon Howard with their children, Cameron and Sierra*

court time. But even then, they don't recall anyone telling them how to fix any of their problems.

"We didn't know what was wrong," Shannon says. "And then, when it got to CHS, they would come in, tell us what to do, what to change. If we weren't doing what we were supposed to do, they'd work with us until we got it right."

And, finally, after years of fighting, changing, improving and facing disappointments amidst small successes, Shannon and Kelly were reunited with their children. Now, Shannon says, life's a lot more fun! But she knows, deep in her heart, she wouldn't have the pleasures of making her children dinner, taking them to water parks or watching them play if it weren't for CHS.

"CHS is the only reason we have our kids back," she says. "They take time to help the family—they do everything they can. They all care so much."

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Give and receive!

When you support CHS through a Charitable Gift Annuity, you help make a difference in the lives of Central Florida's children and families – and YOU receive lifetime payments! Contact us to learn more about changing the future of our community through planned giving.

And as you review your financial plan this year, please consider leaving a legacy for generations to come through a bequest to the Central Florida Division of CHS. Call 407-895-5809 for any additional information.



Executive Director's Message

At CHS, our "New Year's Resolutions" are the same every year. We strive to protect children from abuse and neglect. However, our prevention programs continue to struggle to find funding.

Many of the families we serve are one step away from a potentially harmful situation. Consider what could happen in this recent client's circumstance: A single mom addicted to cocaine finally decided she needed help. She found a residential substance abuse treatment program to attend for 30 days, but she needed a safe place for her children to stay. CHS was here to help.

While most of you are familiar with our Crisis Nursery and Lilley House, you may not be aware of our "Community Bed" program at our shelters. Whereas the majority of children at our shelters have been removed from their homes by the state of Florida due to abuse or neglect, our "Community Bed" program is an abuse-prevention program for families to voluntarily bring their children to our shelters.

When parents recognize they are struggling to adequately care for their children due to the trauma of domestic violence, substance abuse or medical crisis, they may seek our help. Parents can voluntarily bring their children to our shelters for care while they work on improving the family's living situation. The families receive case management services that provide much-needed support and counseling, and also link them to community resources. Fortunately, we have a grant to provide day care assistance for parents who need day care once their children are returned home. The goal for our community children is to successfully reunify them with their families as quickly as possible.

These children, who range in age from infants to 11, receive the same quality care as children removed by the state. They play "Red

Light, Green Light" and "Duck, Duck Goose," eat lunch together, go to the park, climb the jungle gym, and ride bikes. All these activities are under the watchful eyes of our 24-hour-a-day caring professional childcare staff and volunteers. And parents can visit every day if they want to spend time with their children.

Consider this: a child in foster care costs the state about \$11,000 per year—but we can help children and families before foster care is needed, for a fraction of that cost. In fact, we can resolve these issues in days instead of years. The average length of stay in our shelters is about 15 days. At \$130/day, the cost of one child's stay is only \$2,000.

Our "Community Bed" program is fully funded by the generosity of the community. Please help us prevent child abuse, keep families together and make a difference in our Central Florida community. Please call 407.895.5814 on more ways to help us prevent child abuse.

Warmest Regards,
Andry Sweet




How can you help prevent child abuse?

Sponsor a Community Bed for a Year: \$22,000

Sponsor a Child's Stay at the Shelter: \$2,000

Sponsor a Safe Day and Night of Care: \$130



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