

Advocates

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*Citizens
Advocating
Safety and
Permanence
for Children*

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2009 REVIEW BOARD AWARDS

REVIEW BOARD MEMBER OF THE YEAR

Mary Elizabeth Ouzts, Edgefield County, Review Board 11B, was selected as the 2009 Review Board Member of the Year. Nominated by the Edgefield County Department of Social Services County Director and staff, Mary Elizabeth is known for her compassion and selfless support of children in foster care and those who serve them. Department of Social Services staff reported that they appreciated Mary Elizabeth for attending court, collecting items needed for children entering foster care, providing Christmas gifts for children in foster care through her Garden Club, calling to check on cases, and simply asking “what can I do for you?” Mary



Mary Elizabeth Ouzts and State Board Chairperson Sissy Brock

Elizabeth has served on her local review board for over fifteen years and she is a true advocate for children.

REVIEW BOARD OF THE YEAR

Review Board 16A, York and Union Counties, was selected as the 2009 Review Board of the Year. Members of Review Board 16A are Dorothy Dixon, Karen Walto, and Martha Haynsworth of York

County; and Janet Sherbert and Patricia Owens of Union County. Review Board 16A was nominated by the York and Union County Department of Social Services County Directors, and staff from Intensive Foster Care and Clinical Services. Review Board 16A was nominated in part for implementing two service projects for children in foster care, hosting Heart Gallery events, and promoting the recruitment of foster and adoptive homes.



Review Board 16A board members: Dorothy Dixon, Pat Owens, Janet Sherbert, and Martha Haynsworth.

REVIEW BOARD HONORED WITH FPA ANNUAL PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The South Carolina Children's Foster Care Review was awarded the 2010 Foster Parent Association's President's Award at a conference held on April 23, 2010 in Greenville. General Counsel and Interim Director Michelle Dhunjishah, Program Director Beth Green, and Program Supervisor Stephen Clyburn were present to receive the award and an inscribed desk clock. The Review Board is greatly honored to be recognized for the many hours of service our volunteers provide to the community.

REVIEW BOARD STAFF NEWS AND UPDATES

We are please to welcome the following new staff to the Review Board:

Originally from Texas, Mary Smyrl joined our staff in March. Mary has a wealth of experience and knowledge from her child welfare and customer service background, which is being put to good use as our SC Heart Gallery Program Assistant. Please read Mary's article on page five to learn more about her unique perspective.

Toya Scott joined the Review Board in June, coming from Region II Adoptions, where she served as an Adoption Specialist. She is a 2004 graduate of Vorhees College and in 2006 she obtained her Master's degree in Psychology. Toya serves as a

Coordinator for Review Boards 1B, 7A, 7C, 9D, and 14B.

Robin Redding joined the Review Board staff on June 2, 2010. Robin earned a MWS from USC, and has a wealth of experience in program services and quality assurance for Child and Adult Protective Services, Foster Care, and Adoption Services. Robin serves as Coordinator for Review Boards 3A, 4A, 5B, 5E, and 13A.

Sylvia Shingler joined the Review Board staff in August, transferring from the Office of Small and Minority Business Assistance in the Governor's Office. Sylvia earned a Bachelor's Degree from SC State

University. She has worked in Economic Services and Foster Care Services for the Department of Social Services, and is the former Mayor of the Town of Vance. Sylvia serves as Coordinator for Review Boards 2A, 2B, 9B, 9E, and 11B.

Our new staff attorney, Eden Hendrick, joined our office in September. Eden received her B. A. in Public Relations from the University of Georgia in 2002 and her J.D. from USC School of Law in May 2005. Eden served as an assistant Solicitor for Richland and Kershaw Counties for the past five years. She and her husband Matt have a 9 ½ month-old son named Jack.

STATE BOARD MEMBERS

Martha "Sissy" Brock, 5th Congressional District, Chairperson (local review board 7B)

Charles (Chuck) Koches, *1st Congressional District* (local review board 9B)

Jo Hecker, *2nd Congressional District* (local review board 5B)

Carolyn Payton-Pinson, *3rd Congressional District* (local review board 10B)

Monica Hill, *4th Congressional District* (local review board 7C)

Vacant, *6th Congressional District*

Vernon McCurry, *Member at-Large* (local review board 13C)

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A REVIEW BOARD VOLUNTEER?

- ◆ You need to be at least 18 years of age and able to commit to spending one day per month reviewing cases. You will be asked to work with others in the child welfare system to bring about positive change for foster children.
- ◆ Each review board members is appointed by the Governor, upon the recommendation of legislative delegations, and is required to reside in the judicial district of the review board of which he or she is a member.
- ◆ For more information, please call the Governor's Office Foster Care Review Program at (803) 734-0480, or contact your local legislative delegation.

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time, they just have the heart."

Elizabeth Andrew

COMMITTED TO KIDS! SMILING NEW FACES

Review Board Member Orientation was held March 15, 2010 for eight new local review board members and one new staff member; June 14, 2010 for three new local review board members and two new staff members; and again August 23, 2010 for four new local review board members and one new staff member.

Orientation training is mandatory for all new incoming board members and is offered at least four times each year. If you have review board members who have not completed this training, please encourage their attendance. Volunteer Guardians ad Litem, Guardian ad Litem staff, and other child welfare professionals are also welcome to attend.

The next New Member Orientation will be held on Monday, November 15, 2010. Please call (803) 734-0480 to reserve a space.



June 14, 2010 Orientation
Cindy Jackson, RB 1B; Robin Redding, RBC; Bill Walters, RB 2A; Toyia Scott, RBC; and Erica Sanders, RB 2A



March 15, 2010 Orientation
Standing: Andrea McCoy, RB 5D; Amber Wallace; Ivy Wright-Coleman, RB 9D; Mammie Harris, RB 12A; and Mary Kolarek, RB 2B.
Seated: Mariana Gardner, RB 10C; Mary Smyrl, SC Heart Gallery; Kathleen Hamilton, RB 15C; and Heather Dempksi, RB15C



August 23, 2010 Orientation
Betty Elmore, RB 3B; Dorothy Weishuhn, RB 3B; Sylvia Shingler, RBC; Carolyn McComb, RB 15B; and Carole Self, RB 7C

FOSTER CARE REVIEW NEWS AND VIEWS: PACKET-LIGHT PROJECT

By: Beth Green, Program Director

The Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) have embarked on an exciting new pilot project. The goal of the Packet-Light Pilot Project is to determine if quality foster care reviews can be conducted without the transmission of large volumes of documents. The impetus for the project was the reality of budget cuts, which have resulted in limited staff and resources for the FCRB and DSS.

At the core of the pilot project is an enhanced DSS Form 1597 (Summary Sheet). When completed correctly, this enhanced form provides additional information preventing the need for submitting copies of letters of invitation, case plans, progress reports, and most court pleadings. Certain documents, such as court orders, complaints for removal, psychological evaluations, reports from Adoptions, and relative home studies, will continue to be submitted for consideration.

The pilot project has been implemented with three local review boards, four counties and the respective Adoptions and Intensive Foster Care and Clinical Services Offices. The participating counties are Calhoun, Orangeburg (Review Board 1A), York and Union (Review Boards 16A and 16B).

The pilot was implemented in August. After three months, the pilot will be assessed by surveying participating review board members, review board coordinators, and DSS caseworkers and supervisors. The survey results will determine if this initiative should be replicated in other counties. Stay tuned for outcomes of the Packet-Light Project.

FOSTER FACTS: 2009—2010 ANNUAL REPORTS

By: Lisa S. Vosburgh, Data and Research Administrator

Each year about this time, the Review Board is busy collecting, editing, and analyzing data for annual reporting. In addition to the Annual Report prepared for the Review Board State Board of Directors and submitted to the Governor and General Assembly, we also produce an annual Accountability Report and Activity Report. The 2009—2010 Annual Report has been distributed and is available on our website at <http://oepp.sc.gov/fcrb>.

The Review Board portion of the annual Accountability Report has been completed. The Accountability Report is, based on Malcolm Baldrige criteria of 1) Leadership, 2) Strategic Planning, 3) Customer Focus, 4) Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management, 5) Human Resource, 6) Process Management, and 7) Business Results. The Accountability Report summarizes the agency's performance for the previous fiscal year, and is submitted annually to the Governor and the General Assembly for review.

The FCRB portion of the Activity Report has also been completed. The Office of State Budget, in conjunction with the Governor's Office, updates the Agency Activity Inventory annually to assist in development of the Governor's Executive Budget.

RECORD BREAKING ADOPTION DAY IN SUMTER

On Wednesday, June 2, 2010, The Honorable George M. McFaddin, Jr., held a special Family Court day to finalize thirty-three adoptions for families. Judge McFaddin began holding "adoption days" a couple of years ago as a result of meeting with local review board members from Lee and Sumter counties. Judge McFaddin set aside an entire Family Court day so these children and families could realize their dream of being "forever families".

A video interview with Judge McFaddin can be found at WLTX.com at the following web address: <http://www.wltx.com/video/default.aspx?bctid=89651299001>.

SOUTH CAROLINA HEART GALLERY

By: Mary Smyrl, Program Assistant



South Carolina's Waiting Children
www.scheartgallery.org
 803-734-2595

I joined the South Carolina Heart Gallery as Program Assistant in March, and the six months that have passed since that time have been quite an adventure. After seeing the job posted on the South Carolina State Government website, I wondered "What is the Heart Gallery?" It sounded like something medical, but it was part of the Children's Foster Care Review Board. Having a background in social services, I was intrigued and went online to investigate. From the first moment I viewed the children's portraits on the website, I was hooked. Looking at the beautiful faces of the children who are waiting for their "forever family" is mesmerizing. I found myself wondering if this child or perhaps that child would fit into my own family. What would my son think about having a sibling? As an only child he used to long for a sibling, but now at 12, I wondered if he would still feel the same enthusiasm. But wait, I'm preparing for a job interview, not trying to adopt a child! So I sent my application in and hoped to be called for an interview.

When I received the call, I was ecstatic. I reviewed my work history, my goals, and the skills that I knew I could bring to this position. I wondered how could I convey that this job appeals to me not only professionally, but also personally? Would it be appropriate to say in the interview that I am adopted, and have two adopted brothers, or would that be unprofessional? When my interview finally arrived, I decided to mention at the end that I am adopted and felt a special connection to this type of work.

Fortunately for me, I was offered the job and happily accepted! And since March 2nd I have had the privilege of trying to make a difference in the lives children in foster care who are legally free for adoption. I have met the children at photo shoots, seen the hope in their eyes, felt their excitement (and sometimes reluctance) at being photographed. I have interviewed them for the biographical information we include on the website and heard their hopes and dreams and aspirations. I have met the photographers who donate their time and talents to make these amazing photographs. I have seen the generosity of local review board members, who in addition to volunteering their time to review cases, also donate snacks, drinks and their time for the photo shoots. I communicate with prospective adoptive families every day, through email or telephone, and put them together with the hard working DSS Adoption Specialists who have dedicated their careers to help children in foster care find permanent homes and families

We all have big dreams for the Heart Gallery children. As we reach out through our website, photo exhibits, open houses and media exposure to the families of South Carolina - to families all over the country - I believe we can all make their dreams of a "forever family" a reality. Won't you help? Visit us at www.scheartgallery.org where children are waiting for that forever family.



Roper Hospital reception and exhibit.
 Millie Qualls, SC Heart Gallery Coordinator;
 Barbara Acobe, RB 9D; Beth Green, Program
 Director; Anthony VanDross, RB 9D; and Millie
 Green



Heart Gallery Exhibit
 Rose Hill Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC



Permanent Heart Gallery Exhibit
 Jason's Deli, Charleston, SC

REVIEW BOARD ROUNDUP:

By: Review Board Coordinators, Program Staff, and Review Board Members

- ◆ **Review Board 1B:** Review Board members completed their service project of providing school supplies for children in foster care from Dorchester County.

Toyia Scott

- ◆ **Review Board 6A:** On August 9th, 11 Lancaster County foster care youth enjoyed fine dining at *The Fairway Room* at Lancaster Golf Club as culmination of their everyday etiquette independent living skills lessons. Thanks to the collaboration and the sponsorship of Doris Hood, Herman Young, Gwen Brown, Vicki Hinson, and Ms. Evelyn Springs at *The Fairway Room*. The youth enjoyed a delicious multi-course meal and an opportunity to practice the etiquette lessons they had learned earlier in the week at the Independent Living Group meeting. As was hoped, the youth gained new experiences, learned new life lessons, and had a fabulous time enjoying delicious food and one another's company. One young man wrote in response, ". . . thank you for the excellent and great time learning about fine dining and fine table manners. I would like to also thank you for the experience I will never forget." *Kate Bozik*

- ◆ **Review Board 7A:** Review Board members recently completed their annual "back to school" service project. Board members donate book bags filled with school supplies for children in foster care in Spartanburg county.

Toyia Scott

- ◆ **Review Board 7B:** Board members have attended court and community partner's meetings, attended the Heart Gallery photo shoot at the Greenville Zoo, collected school supplies, and collaborated with community partners to hold "Fun Day" - a community awareness event highlighting foster care and child abuse prevention.

Stephanie Spink

- ◆ **Review Board 7C:** Board members collected school supplies for children in foster care in Spartanburg County. *Toyia Scott*



7C Review Board Members: Monica Hill, Zora Massing, Carole Self, and Maryann Riley

Hats off to Local Review Boards **3 A (Clarendon & Williamsburg Counties)** and **12B (Marion County)** for providing cold drinks and snacks for the SC Heart Gallery photo shoot on August 12th. It was a hot day in Timrod Park, so the refreshing treats were enjoyed by the children, photographers and volunteers. An extra special thanks to the board members who traveled to Florence and spent the day serving as assistants to the photographers. They are **Mary Long (5E), Jane Benton (3A), Carolyn Parker (3A), Raleigh King (3A) and Ezekiel Washington (12B)**. I'm not sure who had more fun... the children or the board members.

A heartfelt thank you to the **SC Heart Gallery Foundation** for providing lunch for everyone involved with the Heart Gallery photo shoot held in Florence on August 12th. The Foundation, which was recently established to support the SC Heart Gallery, provided a \$125 Papa John's gift card. Needless to say the 30 children, the photographers and volunteers for the event enjoyed the pizza. The support of the Foundation and its members, **Scott Stephens (13C), Jane Daniel (13C), Tammy Kowaleski(13C) and Clark Smith (Fox Carolina)**, is greatly appreciated.

Beth Green, Program Director

REVIEW BOARD 16A DONATES LAPTOP



Members of Review Board 16A, York and Union counties, recently presented a laptop and printer to Intensive Foster Care and Clinical Services for a child in foster care, who was in need of these items to continue her education. Eric McNair, Service Coordinator with Intensive Foster Care and Clinical Services wrote "we are all so excited and proud of the gift of our caring Board." Board members were excited to fulfill this child's needs! Way to go!

Pictured left: Pat Owens, RB 16A; Janet Sherbert, RB 16A; Dorothy Dixon, RB 16A; Sharon Lee, IFCCS; Phil Neely, IFCCS; and Eric McNair, IFCCS.

REVIEW BOARD ROUNDUP (CONTINUED):

- ◆ **Review Board 9A:** Board members have continued to recognize caseworkers for exceptional case presentations. Board members enjoy giving restaurant gift cards, and caseworkers are very appreciative for being recognized for the work they do on behalf of children in foster care.

Michelle White

- ◆ **Review Board 10B:** Board members donated funds to help with summer camp for children in foster care in Anderson County. Board members routinely attend court and assist the Coordinator with advocacy, and individual board members participated in the Anderson Children's Policy Council.

Stephanie Spink

- ◆ **Review Board 10C:** Chairperson Jill McDonald faithfully attends the community partner's meetings to represent both Anderson county review boards. Board members have assisted the coordinator with child specific advocacy, and several have participated in the Anderson Children's Policy Council.

Stephanie Spink

- ◆ **Review Board 12B:** Board members have attended community partner's meetings. The board very generously contributed financially for food for the Heart Gallery photo shoot held in Florence. Mr. Washington also attended the photo shoot and was a personal assistant, escorting children on their photo journey.

Stephanie Spink

- ◆ **Review Board 13B:** In January Brenda Lipe arranged a "Winter Blast" party at *Climbin' High*, a rock climbing and adventure gym, in Simpsonville. Children in foster care in Greenville County enjoyed three hours of playing and eating donated pizza, sandwiches, and snacks. Review Board member Courtney Madden was even able to convince her husband, Sean, to design the poster for the event.

Anne Maertens

- ◆ **Review Board 13C:** Board member Vernon McCurry arranged for his Rotary club to sponsor and fund the Greenville Foster Parent Association's Shoe Night at Shoe Carnival. Children enjoyed a night of fun and were able to pick out a new pair of shoes to start their school year off right!

Several members from Review Board 13C also serve on the SC Heart Gallery Foundation. The Foundation was a selected charity for the BMW

Pro-Am golf tournament held in May. The Foundation has also partnered with Heart Gallery staff, Edwin McCain, and Greenville's TALK Magazine to create an ad for the SC Heart Gallery and SCDSS Adoptions and Foster Care.

Anne Maertens

- ◆ **Review Board 13D:** Review Board member Heather Purtle recently offered her store, *The School Spot* on Woodruff Road in Greenville, as a Heart Gallery venue. Heather also spoke to the Greenville County Legislative Delegation, sharing her personal experience of becoming knowledgeable about the abuse and neglect that some children suffer and her journey to adopt two children from foster care.

Tammy Kowaleski, RB 13C, Courtney Madden, RB 13B, Heather Purtle, RB 13D, and Susan Turner, RB 13D, donated their time, talent, and resources for the Heart Gallery photo shoot at the Greenville Zoo in April.

Anne Maertens

- ◆ **Review Board 14B:** Members from Review Board 14B collected school supplies and donated them to children in foster care in Beaufort and Jasper counties.

Toyia Scott

- ◆ **Review Boards 16A and 16B:** Board members hosted an open house for the new DSS building in York County, providing tents, refreshments, and music for a very successful event. There is definitely nothing stronger than the hearts of volunteers. Board members also continue to donate funds to provide children with educational field trips, books, and toys throughout the year. Thanks to all our board members for contributing to these funds!

Michelle White



Local review board members are always welcome to submit items for the newsletter. If you have news or information for the next edition of the newsletter, contact Lisa Vosburgh at (803) 734-0217, or e-mail at lvosburgh@oepp.sc.gov

RICHLAND COUNTY REVIEW BOARDS PROVIDE CHILD CARE

By: Rachel Silver, Review Board 5C, Richland County

Our Richland County Foster Care Review Board Child Care Program began its fourth year of service in January with 27 children and 11 volunteers in attendance.

Once again, Chris Miehl provided a delicious hot dinner. Both kids and adults enjoyed spaghetti and all the trimmings!

Mr. McClerklin from DSS and Columbia International University intern Anthony Church took a group of young men to the snack bar for some “guy time”, which we understand was a great success.

The Richland County Foster Parent Association provided large blue tarps

and water color supplies—the children really enjoyed this activity. The Association also purchased a large storage cabinet for toys and supplies, which will make things go so much easier. Thank you RCFPA!

A special thanks to all of you, our volunteers, who not only make this possible, but who make it such a wonderful experience for our children. January’s volunteers included: Ernest McClerklin, DSS Management; Review Board Coordinators Kate Bozik and Emily Dixon; and volunteers Caroline Hatchell, Ferne Kantsiper, Jade Johnson, Chris Miehl, Corinne Robinson, Kathy Trice, Rachel Silver, and Anthony Church.



LEGAL LINES: LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By: Michelle Dhunjishah, Interim Director and General Counsel

The 118th Legislative Session, which ended in June, proved to be a very positive one for policy change on behalf of South Carolina’s children and families involved in the foster care system. The most significant pieces of legislation enacted were:

South Carolina Education Bill of Rights for Children in Foster Care (South Carolina Code Annotated Section 59-38-10, Senate Bill 1134) This bill, sponsored by Senators Peeler and Ford, requires school districts to have procedures in place to ensure seamless transitions between schools and school districts for children in foster care. The new law requires the school districts to immediately enroll children who are in foster care, establishes a two-day time frame for a school to request records for a child who transfers in and a two-day time frame to

transfer student records to a new school or district. The law also requires the child stay in the same school if at all possible and ensures that if a child misses school due to a certified court appearance or related court-ordered activity, the absence is excused and the child shall be allowed to make-up all assignments and required seat time.

Early permanency (Senate Bill 1172) This bill strengthens existing law by expediting children’s cases when the child has entered foster care due to aggravated circumstances such as torture, abandonment, sexual abuse, and severe abuse and neglect. The new law also requires birth parents to exercise due diligence in completing their treatment objectives within a year of his/her child entering care if the expectation is to have the child returned home

within 18 months of entry into care. The law also simplifies the statutory language regarding placement plans.

Adoption protections (also Senate Bill 1172) The new law prohibits non-licensed entities from advertising adoption services within the State and requires that the adoption of a South Carolina child must be initiated and finalized in South Carolina, unless it is step-parent or family adoption.

Senate Bill 1172 was a very comprehensive piece legislation that made it through the legislative process very quickly thanks to leadership from Senator Fair and Representative Brady who both serve on the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children, as well as several other members of the Senate and House who supported this bill.

MANY THANKS TO THE STAFF AT ROPER HOSPITAL FOR ORGANIZING AND HOSTING THE HEART GALLERY RECEPTION AND EXHIBIT IN FEBRUARY. THE VENUE, THE ENTERTAINMENT, AND THE FOOD WERE ALL SUPERB!



REVIEW BOARD CALENDAR

State Board of Directors	Fri Oct 22	Edgar Brown Building Columbia
Veterans Day	Thurs Nov 11	State Office Closed
New Member Orientation	Mon Nov 15	10:00 am - 3:00 pm Edgar Brown Building
Thanksgiving	Thurs Nov 25 Fri Nov 26	State Offices Closed
Christmas Eve	Fri Dec 24	State Offices Closed
Winter Holidays	Mon Dec 27 Tues Dec 28	State Offices Closed

**SOUTH CAROLINA CHILDREN'S FOSTER CARE
REVIEW BOARD—OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

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Through Partnerships***

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VISION STATEMENT

South Carolina will make child well-being a top priority by assuring safe, permanent families for all children in foster care.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the South Carolina Children's Foster Care Review Board is to provide external accountability for the foster care system and to advocate on behalf of children in foster care.

Advocates is published semi-annually by the South Carolina Children's Foster Care Review Board, Office of the Governor. The deadline for submission of articles for the next issue of *Advocates* (Winter 2011) is January 21, 2011.

Anyone wishing to submit an article should contact *Advocates* editor Lisa S. Vosburgh by calling 803-734-0217, or send an e-mail to lsvosburgh@oepp.sc.gov.

The publisher reserves the right to make the final determination as to the content of each issue. Articles submitted are subject to editing and are not guaranteed inclusion.

NOTICE:

**If you no longer wish to receive this publication, please notify us in writing by
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