



April 2009

**The Mission of RFL is to engage foster care youth, private citizens and public resources to assist Pinellas County foster youth in a successful transition to adulthood.**

### Upcoming Community Meeting

Ready for Life is having a community meeting on **Thursday, May 7th at noon at Feather Sound Country Club**. This meeting is to introduce community volunteers to RFL as well as emphasize the importance of the partnerships RFL has with service providers and the young adults that will be aging out or have recently aged out of the foster care system. The work that Ready for Life, Inc. is doing not only values but is being guided by the "**Youth Voice**".

If you are interested in attending this meeting contact Kathy Mize at 727-631-1778 or e-mail [kmize@readyforlifepinellas.org](mailto:kmize@readyforlifepinellas.org).

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### Ready for Life's "Youth Council"

By: Carrie Mahler, Youth Leader

The youth council continues to move forward and grow. Two meetings have been held and a third is scheduled for May 2009. At the last meeting, on April 29th, the youth provided some insight as to the specific needs and questions they have regarding the transition from foster care to adulthood. This information will be provided to the committees and the youth are looking forward to being able to provide additional insight in the future. At the next youth council meeting the youth will be organizing the structure of the youth council and appointing youth to the leadership roles.

The youth are looking forward to working more closely with the committees and will soon have additional youth present at each committee meeting, in addition to the Ready For Life Youth Leaders who are already present at the committee meetings. The youth council is off to a great start and the youth are very enthusiastic and eager to let their voices be heard. The youth council is always seeking current and former foster care youth between the ages of 17 and 23 who would like to get

involved and make a difference.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about the youth council go to our website at [www.readyforlifepinellas.org](http://www.readyforlifepinellas.org) or call (727) 631-1778.



### "April's Story"

April is nineteen years old and was born in jail. She was put into foster care because her Mother was incarcerated. Throughout her time in foster care April was in 33 placements and had two failed adoptions. One of her placements was with relatives where she was abused emotionally and physically. At the age of sixteen after so many placement disruptions April was sent to a camp that was run by Eckerd Youth Alternatives.

This camp changed April's life forever. It was at this camp that April felt loved and cared for and finally felt a sense of belonging. April was also one of the oldest girls there so she realized that she needed to be a role model. April began writing and telling her story while she was at camp. She also went through leadership training. April graduated from high school with a 3.5 grade point average and then moved to the St. Pete area. She lives in an apartment and is participating in Gulf Coast's Transitional Living Program

April attends St. Pete College and wants to major in Journalism. Her goal is to go to USF when she completes SP College. April works as a Youth Leader for Ready for Life. She has learned how important it is to have a voice and enjoys telling her story so that others can understand more about foster care. When asked what is the one piece of advice you would give to a young person about to age out of foster care what would it be? She replied "**I would want them to know that you are not any different because you came out of the foster care system and it doesn't define who you are.**"

Written by: Damien Jones, RFL Youth Leader

### Ready for Life's "Community Committee's"



The following is a list of committee's and the committee chairperson. Every committee is made up of community volunteers, providers and youth that have recently aged out of the foster care system. If you are interested in learning more about getting involved on a committee contact RFL!

- Communication / Marketing - Marty Normile
- Website - Justin Elza
- Community Connections - Darrell Brandimore
- Education - Carol Conaway
- Employment - Pete VanSon
- Health - Julie Klavans

- Housing - Chris Burke
- Legal - Marty Rice
- Life Skills - Skip Tylman
- Transportation - Marcie Biddleman

No foster youth should be discharged from foster care without access to higher education, employment, medical insurance, safe, stable and affordable housing and a permanent connection. To get involved with Ready for Life go to our website at [www.readyforlifepinellas.org](http://www.readyforlifepinellas.org) or call (727) 631-1778.

Making a difference one young person at a time!

Sincerely,  
Kathy Mize  
Ready For Life, Inc.

**Our New Location:**

**2731 13th Ave. North  
St. Petersburg, FL33713**

**Thank you to the Children's Home Society for providing RFL office space at the Family Visitation House. Please contact us to take a tour and learn more about the vital role that the Children's Home Society plays in our community.**

[Forward newsletter](#)