



July 2009 Ready for Life E-Blast

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

"Journal Project"

Ready for Life is sponsoring a "Journal Project" with foster youth who are turning 18 years old this summer. The project is funded by the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County and will involve up to 20 Pinellas County foster youth. The project is staffed by Gary Sanford and is attempting to capture youth's thoughts, experiences, suggestions and emotions as they prepare to begin their transition from foster care as well as during their first couple months following their transition. It is Ready for Life's intention to use the journal entries to educate social service providers and community members about the challenges and successes these youth encounter during their transition. We are most grateful to Juvenile Welfare Board and participating youth for this opportunity to capture the youth voice.

Quotes from journal entries...

"I dropped out of school in 9th grade which was one of the biggest mistakes of my life! I really wish I would have stayed in school but nothing I do can change the past but everything I do effects my future."

(17 YEAR OLD SINGLE MOTHER OF 2 SMALL CHILDREN)

"February 16th is such a defining day because my dad went to work and never came back. Before my dad had left, my mom's mental health condition was bad but after that things really hit the fan. I felt that as the oldest child in the house it was my job to take care of my siblings (15, 14 and 12 years old)."

(17 YEAR OLD FEMALE)

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RFL Committees:

Communication / Website
Community Connections
Education
Employment
Health
Housing
Legal
Life Skills
Transportation

For more information or to get involved contact us at 727-631-1778 or go to www.readyforlifepinellas.org

Special Thanks to the Following...

Community Foundation of Tampa Bay
Progress Energy
St. Pete Times
Private donors
J Allan Studios
Follow Through Foundation
N.E. St. Pete Exchange Club
Lisa Marone
Pampered Chef
Eckerd Community Alternatives
R.E.S.P.E.C.T.
Juvenile Welfare Board
Camelot Community Care
GulfCoast Jewish Family Services
Family Resources, Inc.
All Committee Members
Youth Council Members

"I can't wait to be 18. It's so exciting but nerve racking at the same time. There are so many things that you can do and things that need to be done. You also have more responsibilities to take care of yourself. You can't rely on other people. You have to make your own choices and decisions."

(17 YEAR OLD FEMALE)

"I'm really kinda nervous about my future. From what I understand, I don't have a good chance at success but really I'm the one who has the last word. I will work hard to prove people wrong."

(17 YEAR OLD MALE)

Committee Highlight: Employment Committee

Committee Members

Pete Van Son, Chair

Will Davidson, Decision HR

David Hood, Northwestern Mutual Financial Network

Scott Clendening, Commercial Partners Realty, Inc.

Chuck Adair

Ed Peachey, Worknet Pinellas

Damia Kelly, Gulfcoast Jewish Family Services

Carrie Mahler, Former Foster Youth

Kathy Mize, Ready for Life, Inc.

The Employment Committee is working on the following areas so the youth can go to the RFL website and access:

- Jobs - a job board that has current openings with local companies.
- Articles relating to all aspects from pre-employment through post employment.
- Templates to use for resume building, thank you letters and follow up contacts.
- Interviewing preparation information.
- How to determine your career goals- personal skills inventory.

The Employment Committee is focused on providing information and resources to assist the youth in all aspects of the employment process. Most youth that transition out of care have not had experience in writing a resume, filling out a job application, interviewing for a job or determining their skills for a specific career path. The Employment section of the website will be a place youth can go to answer their questions, obtain useful information and resources and look at job postings. The committee is seeking individuals / companies that will post jobs on the RFL website. If you or your company is interested in learning more about RFL or would like to post a job on the job board please contact Kathy Mize at 727-631-1778 or go to www.readyforlifepinellas.org and go to the employment button.

The committee's are the backbone of our organization and they each have a daunting task to look at issues that impact the transition process. Every committee has community volunteers, service providers and young adults that have recently aged out of foster care so that everyone's voice is heard. This initiative is truly a community effort!

Ready for Life will highlight a committee in each newsletter issue and will provide regular updates on the progress of each committee.

A Community Effort to Support the Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care....

Eckerd Community Alternatives (ECA) continues to recognize the importance of support for youth preparing to transition out of foster care as well as those who have already aged out of the foster care system. This year ECA will provide the following:

- Additional funding for Camelot Community Care to increase number of Independent Living staff.
- Additional funding for Scholarships that support the youth that are 18 - 22 years old.
- Continuation of funding for Ready for Life (RFL) for stipends for three paid youth positions employed by RFL, which supports the Department of Children & Families' Operation Full Employment initiative, and for funds to support RFL Youth Council's outreach effort.

RFL would like to thank Eckerd Community Alternatives for their ongoing support for the youth that are transitioning out of care. Our community is fortunate to have a lead agency that is committed to supporting not only the children that are in care but also our older youth that are now adults and on their own.

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.

You can get involved in many ways....

- Volunteer to serve on a committee
- Make a Donation to support RFL's work with the youth
- Serve as a "Life Coach"
- Assist with our newsletter and communication efforts

To get involved with Ready for Life [visit our website](#) or call (727) 631-1778.

Making a difference...one young person at a time!

Kathy Mize
Ready For Life, Inc.

Our Location

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.

**Ready for Life, Inc.
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