



June 2009

**Our First Six Months...**

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.

**Our First Six Months...**

Since Ready for Life, Inc. (RFL) began in January 2009 we have made great strides to establish ourselves as an innovative organization in Pinellas County focused on strengthening support and resources for youth transitioning out of foster care. By mobilizing community members, local providers and foster youth, RFL has been able to accomplish the following:

- Hired three former foster youth as Youth Leaders
- Gathered information from over 50 foster youth
- Engaged over 75 community volunteers to serve on a committee
- Initiated 9 committees that are comprised of former foster youth, community volunteers and service providers
- Developed a database of over 300 community supporters
- Presented to over 750 community members through outreach efforts
- Met with local providers to gather data and identify gaps in services
- Developed a Youth Council that has had three meetings
- Obtained website and accounting services pro bono
- Disseminated 4 newsletters to over 350 individuals
- First fundraiser sponsored by the Tampa Bay Creative Network
- Website developed to serve as a central "hub" of information / resources [www.readyforlifepinellas.org](http://www.readyforlifepinellas.org)
- Received funding from the Tampa Bay Community Foundation, St Pete Times, Progress Energy, Follow Through Foundation, Juvenile Welfare Board, Eckerd Community Alternatives, N.E. St. Pete Exchange Club and private donors
- Formed partnerships with Camelot, Gulfcoast, Family Resources, Brookwood, ECA and JWB
- Implemented a "Journal Project" funded by JWB

It is our sincere belief the above accomplishments will strengthen the services in our community for youth transitioning out of the foster care system. The synergy created through our collaborative efforts not only improves outcomes for local youth but also gives

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[Join our Mailing List!](#)

- 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](http://www.readyforlifepinellas.org)

**Special Thanks to the Following...**

- Tampa Bay Community Foundation
- 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

community and consumers a voice and role to empower our larger community to become part of the solution instead of passive observers.

## Committee Highlight: Transportation Committee

### Committee Members

Chris Allen, Chair

Gabrielle Donaldson, PSTA

Jonathan Browy, Fifth Third Bank

Elizabeth McMahon, BB&T

Peg Martinus, St. Pete High School

Cassidy, Former Foster Youth

Damien Jones, Former Foster Youth

Kathy Mize, Ready for Life, Inc.

The issues being discussed by Ready for Life's Transportation Committee are:

- Public Transportation Options
- Private Transportation Options
- Obtaining a driver's license & drivers education
- Purchasing a vehicle, scooter, motorcycle
- Vehicle maintenance, insurance, safety

Transportation is a huge issue for the youth aging out of foster care. The majority of the youth aging out of care do not have a drivers license. The public transportation system is their main means of transportation. It is the goal of this committee to provide as much information and resources on our website for all of the areas above. The committee has already met with Pinellas County MPO and the Community Transportation Services regarding accessing reduced cost bus passes. If a young person is eligible for this pass they can obtain a bus pass for \$4.20 a month (\$50 a year) as opposed to \$55 a month. This community collaboration will streamline the process for our youth to get the reduced cost pass. Partnerships are also being formed with PSTA and other transportation organizations.

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.

## Forever Family



Gulf Coast Community Care is seeking loving adoptive families for children waiting in foster care. Joshua is a polite fifteen year old, looking for an active family who shares his interests in sports and amusement parks. Joshua considers himself loyal and honest and looks for friends who are good listeners. This special young man needs dedicated parents to guide him through his teenage years. If you are interested in learning more information about Joshua or the adoption process, please contact Abby Blackwell, Recruitment Specialist at (727) 456-0600 X 2139. Photo by Therese Hounsell Photography.

For more information about Joshua and other children available for adoption, go to

[www.heartgallerykids.org](http://www.heartgallerykids.org)

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.

Get Involved by:

- Volunteering
- Make a Donation
- Serve as a "Life Coach"

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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