

CHILDREN FIRST QUARTERLY

Children First FFA Newsletter NO. 6

May 2017

FORMER FOSTER CHILD VOTED ONTO CFFFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

It is always a good thing to have an understanding of what goes on in the agency you are fostering for, and there has been “quite a buzz” going around about decisions made by our Board of Directors that you might find quite moving. Take a look at a letter that was composed by the Board President, Jack Witt. This letter not only speaks about the responsibilities of the board members, but how the agency is unique in bringing a former foster child onto the board of directors. A decision that will bring enrichment and vision to the future of Children First.



I've been on the board of directors for CFFFA for over 10 years now. The running joke is that around 7 years ago I missed one board meeting and when I came to the next meeting I found out I had been elected as board president. I've been careful to not miss any other meetings since that day! All kidding aside, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve CFFFA in this capacity. The board of directors meet together once each quarter and typically communicate with each other via text or email over developments that arise between the quarterly meetings. At our regular meetings we are given an overview of the activities that are going on in foster care, ITFC, THP, THP-Plus FC, Lassen Counseling and Children First Counseling Services. Our job is to insure that the agency is operating within the scope of its purpose as a California non-profit corporation and in compliance with county, state and federal standards that govern the work that we do. We look at opportunities to grow our programs including staffing, budget and approving new leases of office space to accommodate that growth. It is also the board of director's responsibility to review and approve the financial reports for the agency and insure that the funds are being accounted for properly and used wisely.

We were excited to bring Josh Wagner onto the board of directors last November. Josh is married to his lovely wife Aimee, he is a military veteran and is currently pursuing his education through Chico State University. He happens also to have been raised in foster care. We are grateful for Josh's intellect and character which bring additional wisdom to the board, but his personal experience in foster care has deepened our perspective and value for the work that this agency does to secure the health and protection of vulnerable children.

I'm proud of the people we have serving on the board of directors. Our plans are to add one additional board member this spring and we will be excited to introduce him to you soon. We are confident that under the visionary leadership of Executive Director Logan working with our compassionate and competent staff, and relying on you, our caring and devoted foster parents, we will continue to be highly effective at rescuing, protecting and improving the lives of at-risk children throughout northern California.

Jack C. Witt
Board President

In This Issue

- The agency has voted its first former foster child into their Board of Directors.
- Continue to learn about former foster child, Joshua Wagner and how he reunited with his brother in the Military after being separated in foster care for over a decade.
- Looking for some summer fun? Read more to find out about exciting family opportunities.
- First Cleaning Service-Connecting the pieces, building a future...A new company started under the organization of the agency.

IT DOESN'T END QUITE YET, TAKE A LOOK AT THE INSIDE COVER FOR INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE OF JOSHUA WAGNER. HEAR HOW BEING IN FOSTER CARE SHAPED HIS FUTURE AND HOW HE WAS ABLE TO REUNITE WITH HIS BROTHER AFTER BEING APART FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS!

Born on July 16th 1988, in Yuba City, California, Joshua Wagner lived with his mother until he came into foster care at a young age, just 2 years old. Joshua, his sister and his older half brother, Justin Wagner were placed in foster care in Yuba County. Although there is not much memory there because he was young at the time, he can recall being separated from his brother, Justin Wagner, at the airport. This was the best memory he had of his brother, and it was something to hold onto. Justin was sent to live with his biological father while Joshua and his sister would remain in a foster home. Joshua and his sister would later reunite with his mother after being in care for almost two years. Even when children are sent home, reunification can fail and children will return to Child Welfare Services, this was the circumstance that Joshua would again face at the tender age of 13.

Joshua explains that when he entered foster care for the second time, he was illiterate. Reading and writing were a struggle for him but with much persistence on his part, and guidance from his foster family, agency social workers, and teachers, he eventually became fluent in both. Joshua was thriving while in care and was learning about educational skills and work ethics at the same time. He had a job mowing lawns at the age of 14, and serviced 15 to 20 homes on a regular basis. Joshua loved sports, and wanted to participate on the school's sporting leagues, and for those of you who have children that play, you will know that this can be quite expensive. With the help of Executive Administrator, Mike Logan, Josh was able to earn money by doing odd jobs for the agency to participate in the school's sporting leagues. In 2002, Josh joined the California Youth Connection (CYC) and advocated at the State Capital for a bill to be passed that would enable foster children to be eligible to receive their driver's license. Joshua would later graduate Corning High School with a 3.85 Grade Point Average.

His one year experience at Butte College after graduating high school was unfortunately described as a "rocky one". Joshua felt that he had a lack of guidance and that he was making poor decisions. He felt unmotivated. There was a short time when he was homeless, and lived with a friend in a camper trailer with just an extension cord for a power source.

Thankfully, Joshua had a pestering need to change something and felt that if he didn't, he would either end up dead, or in prison. It was then when he came to the conclusion that he needed more discipline, and the military was just the place for Josh to receive that. Before making the final decision, Josh sought the advice of Executive Administrator, Mike Logan, who has an extensive military background. Mike played an instrumental part in Joshua's successes, and advised him that

if he chose to serve his country, to also be sure and gain a skill to bring back with him when he was done. That is exactly what Joshua did. He enlisted in the Military just 6 days after he turned 19 years old.

After enlisting, Joshua was sent to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where he attended boot camp, and was an honorary graduate. He then went to Fort Lee, Virginia, where he acquired cooking skills in a tech school. Joshua's next stop would be in Ft. Lewis, Washington, his home base. Shortly thereafter, he was deployed to Iraq in the year of 2010 as one of the most experienced field cooks there was.

Spc. Joshua Wagner, served as a cook from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Iraq.



Joshua was there for five months with a couple of his buddies until the base closed down. During this time in his life, Joshua had made contact with almost all of his six half siblings from his mother's side of the family, something he was now content with doing.

In 2010, Myspace was the way to keep in contact with family and friends, and this was how Joshua would reunite with his brother, Justin Wagner. The brother that he came into care with as a young boy. The brother that he last remembered being separated from at the airport when he was just 4 years old, the brother who would remarkably be in Iraq, serving his country in the military at the same time as Joshua. Nobody would have ever guessed!

Prior conversations were had between the two about Joshua enlisting since they reunited, and when Joshua signed up, his brother was proud.

Since Justin's commission, he was appointed to an officer, so the two would have plenty to discuss during their calls and emails while in Iraq. When the two realized they were in a spot where they could possibly see one another, both had an unwavering feeling to connect. After hearing their story, Joshua's commands and Justin's superiors were willing to try



just about anything to make it happen. With the approval they needed, the brothers simply had to wait for an opportunity to reunite. After working with his command, Joshua Wagner was able to pack his bags and take a flight to his brother's duty station at an operating site in Iraq. They spent two days catching up on friends, family and work. Even though it was a short reunion, the brothers made sure to plan future trips and promised to make those plans when both returned to the United States.

Joshua would spend the next 2 years after that in active duty, and 2 more years in the reserve. Today you can find Joshua building a future, planning his education, and working hard to build a stable foundation to share with his new wife, Aimee Wagner. Joshua describes himself as being goal oriented and a rational thinker, quite the change from the young boy who felt like he had no direction or drive. He gives credit for those instrumental in his success to Mike Logan and Aaron Sanders,



two people who are great leaders, ones who had the potential to see in Joshua what he wasn't able to see in himself at the time in his life when it was needed the most.



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SOME SUMMER FUN!

Children First Annual Foster Parent Appreciation Event

Location: Water Works Park, Redding

Dates: Saturday, June 17th & Thursday, July 13th.

More info to come

- **Camp Horizon**

Made possible by a YMCA grant and tremendous community support, the Shasta Family YMCA Camp McCumber is hosting a specialized overnight camp for youth in foster care.

Location: Camp McCumber
Shingletown

Dates: August 6th-11th 2017

Contact your social worker for more information

Redding Recreation Summer Activities:

- **Summer Play Days**

Summer Day Camp

Ages 10-17

Times: 8am-4:30pm

Location: Varies depending on the week (See below)

- **Paintball Palooza**

Date: June 22, 2017

- **River, Rafting & Water Play**

Date: July 7, 2017

- **Whiskeytown Lake**

Date: August 3, 2017

- **Outdoor Exploration Camp**

Ages 11-15

Why spend the summer inside when you can learn science outside and explore the lake and trails?

Session 1: 06/12-06/16

Session 2: 07/10-07/14

Session 3: 08/07-08/11

Contact: The Redding Recreation Department at 530-225-4095 to find out more.

child ♥ family
placement happiness
court case worker plan
heart **Foster care**
support healing trama
home hope ♥
♥ loved ♥
safe ♥

"NOT FORGOTTEN"
A FOSTER CARE AWARENESS EVENT

Friday, May 12th
11:30am-7pm
Redding Memorial Veteran's Hall

For more information
Ready for Life Foster Family Agency
530-222-1826
readyforlife.net

COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Children First Foster Family Agency, Beini Vista, Inc.,
Environmental Alternatives, Shasta County HHS/Children's Services,
Hill Country Clinic, Shasta County Probation
Krisita Foster Homes, Department Juvenile Services
Mountain Circle Family Services, Inc., Youth & Family Programs



I have a firm belief that the best thing for most people to have is a job. A job, in my opinion, allows people to feel productive and useful. For many years now Children First Foster Family Agency has had the opportunity to take care of hundreds of children, but our ability to help them ended as they age out of foster care when they turn 18 years old. It wasn't until the last 3 years that we were able to assist young adults at this critical place of getting started in their life. The THP-Plus FC (Transitional Housing Program Plus Foster Care) allows us to actively guide the lives of participants between the ages of 18-21. It is an exciting way for young adults to get their first home, finish school or start attending college. Many of our young adults also get jobs, but we find that they are missing some of the competencies necessary to keep and advance in those jobs.

I have personally seen lives change when a person starts their first job. That is why we started **First Cleaning Service**; a company that has been created under the organizational structure of Children First. We started this company to provide a way for the participants in THP-Plus FC and those in the ILP (Independent Living Program) to enter the work force, while being trained in social and self-management competencies that will benefit their working careers over their lifetime.

Starting this new company is important because many of our youth are not prepared to work. They either have not worked before or they have few skills to enter the job market. Currently **First Cleaning Service** has two agreements with large apartment complexes to clean vacated apartments. The participants have also cleaned homes that were being vacated and needed extensive cleaning. Our employee-participants receive vocation-based training on effective cleaning, time management, and the proper use and disposal of cleaning solutions, but they also receive ongoing training in what are referred to as soft skills. Soft skills include customer service, being respectful, communication skills, conflict resolution, being on time and following through. These social competencies provide the best indicators of employment and relationship success. Currently we have 3 participants who are working in this new company and hope to add more as the work increases.



Cleaning Technician, Alex McCollum

This has been a vision for many of us at Children First and there is an excitement within the agency about being involved in a program of this kind. The idea of creating a cleaning company was sparked by some staff who have been very involved with the THP youth. Special thanks to Janice Saelee who is our THP-Plus Director and Kemberly Coley, a social worker for the THP-Plus FC program. All of us at Children First believe that this is the time to address these employment needs and prepare our youth for the next phase of their life.

“Many of our social ills disappear when people find meaningful employment”

Mike Logan, Executive Administrator

Contact Us

Please call us for more information about our programs and services.

Children First Foster Family Agency

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If you would like to make a donation,
Visit us at:



www.childrenfirstffa.com



Connecting the Pieces, Building a Future, First Cleaning Service....