

# The Alliance

SUMMER 2010

## INSIDE

- 2 Foster Child to Foster Parent**
- 3 Painting for Prevention 2010**
- 4 Child Abuse Increases as Economy Falls**
- 5 2009 Child Abuse Report Issued and more...**

## The Cost of Child Abuse in Pennsylvania

Child abuse and neglect cost Pennsylvania \$3.55 billion annually – \$2.11 billion a year in direct costs and \$1.44 billion a year in indirect costs – according to the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA).

“The costs that matter most, of course, are the physical and emotional harm that befall the victims of abuse and neglect, and the scars they carry with them for life,” PFSA Executive Director Angela Liddle said.

“We calculated the dollar cost of abuse and neglect to underscore the fact that the burden of child abuse and neglect falls on every Pennsylvanian,” she added. “Many people can’t or choose not to see the problem, even though it occurs in every county in Pennsylvania and in every kind of community.”

Liddle spoke at ceremonies in the Capitol as part of the observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month. She said PFSA arrived at the \$3.55 billion figure by totalling the costs of all of the services required to deal with the victims of child abuse and neglect and the offenders who commit abuse and neglect. The breakdown of direct costs is as follows:

- State and county services to families, \$1.3 billion.



**Angela Liddle, PFSA Executive Director, announces the results of research into the cost of child abuse at the state Capitol in April.**

- Mental health services to victims, \$69.8 million.
- Medical care to victims, \$11 million.
- Public services (police, fire, paramedic, ambulance, and helicopter transport services), \$17.2 million.
- Foster care services, \$715.9 million.

Indirect costs are as follows:

- Special education, \$5.47 million.
- Juvenile justice system, \$59.9 million.
- Lost productivity to society, \$157.4 million.
- Quality of life, \$1.2 billion.
- Adult criminal justice system, \$18.2 million.

## Mission

*Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance protects children by teaching citizens to recognize and report child abuse and neglect by providing information, educational materials and programs that promote positive parenting.*

*continued on page 4*

# Foster Child to Foster Parent

by Chyrel Simmons, Dauphin County

In 2007, I accomplished a life dream of becoming a foster parent. Having been a foster child from the age 12 to my graduation from high school, I've always wanted to return the blessing. I am so thankful that I have been able to do this.

My foster parents, Diane and Charles Cummings, inspired me. They were a young couple who had a modest three-bedroom home in Millbrook, New York. The family included Diane and Charles, their daughter Stacy, (four years younger than me; we shared the same birthday) and their dog, Lady. Personable, caring people, the Cummings family opened their home and provided a safe, peaceful haven where I was able to flourish and mature. Going into their home I was an angry adolescent, but with their consistent interest and concern, I learned that discipline wasn't a bad thing; it created an environment for me to learn appropriate self-expression and to be the best I could be. I've accomplished many of my dreams – writing and publishing a book, owning a performing arts repertory, and advancing in my career. I have always wanted to give the same loving, caring, structured home life to my children – whether biological or through foster care.

The first children I received in placement were with me for short periods of time, but I learned from each experience. For example, I once had two siblings, eleven and two years old, with blond hair and blue eyes, who were in my home for a year. The experience taught me a lot about caring for culturally and ethnically different children. I also learned that love, caring, consistency and structure were important to any child.



**Chyrel Simmons with sons Jonathan Michael, 15, Sayvon, 10 and Jahmir, 11, on their adoption day – September 1, 2009. Everyone had matching t-shirts including Dauphin County Judge Todd Hoover.**

In September 2007 a sibling group of three was placed in my home, a 13-year-old female and her two brothers, eight and seven. When I agreed to the placement, I was strictly a foster parent and had no thought of adopting any of the children who came through my home. That changed in the two years I fostered my boys, Jahmir and Sayvon. On September 1, 2009, they became Simmons through adoption.

I chose to adopt my boys because I had put so much love and nurturing into them, and I had come to love them as my own. Together, we – the two boys, my biological son Jonathan Michael and the boys' teen sister – had gone through many good and hard times. We had bonded and built healthy family relationships, and we had overcome many hurdles together.

Both boys came to our home with behavioral and emotional issues, along with diagnoses of ADHD. Over the first year of living with us, many changes occurred with the boys, and behaviors began to improve. I worked hard on changing their diet, we established house and social rules and we worked at better communication. As individuals and as a

*continued on page 5*

## An Act of Kindness

In the Winter 2010 issue of this newsletter, we featured an article written by Stacy Butler, who was then incarcerated at SCI Cambridge Springs. Stacy wrote of the pain she felt in leaving her children, particularly her daughter, who was born while she was incarcerated. Stacy wrote about her commitment to recovery from chemical addiction and her desire to stay "on the right path."

After the newsletter was mailed, an anonymous person sent a letter to our office, including a money order made out in Stacy's name. "I was touched by the column written by Ms. Butler," the letter began. "I would like her to receive this money order. ... I wish her well and from my experience raising three children I would recommend that she join a non-judgmental church as an added support group for herself. I also found it helpful to have set up a back up system for myself. As a parent we learn never to say never, so I had a pact with a neighbor – if I ever felt at the end of my rope I would go to her house and she would go to mine." This caring person went on to "wish her serenity since she and her children have suffered more than enough."

In all the years we have published "The Alliance," this is the first time we have gotten such a personal – and touching – response to a parent's story. Stacy was released from prison at the end of April and returned to Berks County, where she resides in a halfway house as she finishes her sentence. She is employed full time and is back in touch with her family and children; she also remains in contact with PFSA staff for support and information. She was deeply grateful for the warm wishes of the anonymous letter writer. "I just can't believe that someone who doesn't even know me could be so generous and thoughtful," she said. "I hope that I can do the same for another mother someday." ❖

# Painting for Prevention 2010

This April marked the third year that PFSA observed Child Abuse Prevention Month with a “Painting for Child Abuse Prevention” project. The project is designed to build public awareness of child abuse and the important role of family support programs in prevention.

Local family service organizations came up with ideas for the design of the murals, and artists from Heart to Art (a woman-owned arts education organization) created sketches on mural boards. Then, members of the community, families, children and teens collaborated to paint the murals. This year, the events were held in Harrisburg (at the Dauphin County Courthouse), Bristol, Bucks County (Grundy Recreation Center), and Greensburg, Westmoreland County (Seton Hill University Visual Arts Center). We estimate that more than 2,000 people painted on the murals. ❖



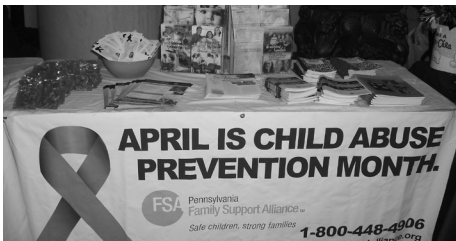
*The Greensburg mural was created with the help of students in the Seton Hill Art Therapy program.*



*This young painter adds her touch to the Bristol mural.*



*Beth Burkhauser of Heart to Art works with a group of young teens at the Harrisburg mural.*



*PFSA distributed hundreds of brochures and thousands of blue ribbon pins at the mural events.*

## PFSA Board of Directors News

New to PFSA's Board of Directors:

- Charis Mincavage, Esq., a member of McNees Wallace & Nurick LLC, Harrisburg, has held volunteer leadership positions within the American Cancer Society and was a recipient of the YWCA's Tribute to Women of Excellence award in 2002.

Completing terms of service on PFSA's Board of Directors:

- Virginia Henning, CPA., The Foundation of the PA Medical Society

- Dale Mitchell, Mitchell Independent Consulting
- Yolanda Perez-Rivera, Harrisburg Area Community College
- Mark Van Blargan, Esq., McNees Wallace & Nurick
- Bob Woods, United Way of York County

These outstanding professionals have completed six years of service as Directors and have guided the organization through the identification of a new name and accompanying

branding initiative, expanded program services and advocacy and enhanced governance. Their dedicated leadership resulted in full certification and recertification through the Standards for Excellence Program, an ethical accountability program for non-profit organizations through PANO, Pennsylvania's Association of Nonprofit Organizations. We thank them for their commitment to families in Pennsylvania! ❖

# Child Abuse Head Injuries Rise as Economy Falls

The number of abusive head traumas among infants and young children appears to have risen dramatically across the United States since the onset of the current recession in 2007, new research reveals.

“Abusive head trauma – previously known as ‘shaken baby syndrome’ – is the leading cause of death from child abuse, if you don’t count neglect,” noted study author Dr. Rachel P. Berger, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. “And so, what’s concerning here is that we saw in four cities that there was a marked increase in the rate of abusive head trauma among children during the recession compared with beforehand.” The hospitals studied were located in Pittsburgh, Seattle, Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio. Only cases of “unequivocal” abusive head trauma were included in the data.

“Now we know that poverty and stress are clearly related to child abuse,” added Berger. “And during times of economic hardship one of the things that’s hardest hit are the social services that are most needed to prevent child abuse. So, this is really worrisome.”

Throughout the study period (December 2007 through December 2009), Berger and her team recorded 511 cases of trauma. The average age of these cases was a little over 9 months, although patients ranged from as young as 9 days old to 6.5 years old. Nearly 6 in 10 patients were male and about the same proportion were white. Overall, 16 percent of the children died from their injuries.

The authors found that the changing economic situation did indeed appear to be associated with a shifting rate of abusive head trauma. While the average number of such cases per month had been just shy of five, that figure rose to more than nine cases per month once the downturn got under way.

To learn more, visit [www.healthfinder.gov](http://www.healthfinder.gov). ❖



## The Cost of Child Abuse in Pennsylvania

*continued from page 1*

“Certainly, prevention is worth it in its own right,” Liddle said, “but you can also see that effective prevention could potentially result in a significant reduction in costs currently borne by the people of our Commonwealth.”

For a complete copy of the report, visit [www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org) or call 800-448-4906. ❖

## Top Ten Reasons to Schedule a PFSA Mandated Reporter Training

10. If you have questions after the training is over, you can call our office for technical assistance.
9. We offer three subjects: “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse,” “Responding to Disclosures to Child Abuse,” and “Recognizing and Responding to Child Neglect.”
8. Your staff will receive comprehensive resource materials to use on the job after the training.
7. Training is available seven days a week, during the day as well as the evening.
6. Face-to-face training with experts in the Child Protective Services Law allows for questions and answers as well as discussion of case studies and possible scenarios.
5. PFSA training is approved by the Department of Public Welfare, the PA Keystone Stars program, and the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Social Work for continuing education credit.
4. Our expert trainers can customize the training content to meet your needs.
3. Large organizations can schedule multiple sessions.
2. We’ll set up the training at a location and time according to your schedule.
1. Our training is FREE! A deposit holds your date and is refunded when training is completed.

# Pennsylvania Releases 2009 Annual Child Abuse Report

Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare recently released its annual report on child abuse in our state. The report includes statistics about child abuse and neglect, including reporting, investigations, substantiated reports, perpetrators, some information about the children whose lives were impacted by abuse, and much more.

Included in the report are these findings:

- Forty-three children died due to child abuse or neglect in 2009; 36 of the children who died were age 4 or younger; an additional 60 children suffered a near fatality as the result of abuse.
- There were 3,943 substantiated reports of child abuse.
- Sixty-three percent of the individuals who committed abuse against a child had a parental relationship to the child.
- Sexual abuse and exploitation remain the highest category of abuse, with 62 percent of all indicated reports falling into that category.

Following national trends, the Commonwealth's rate of substantiated child abuse has declined; 258 fewer cases were substantiated in 2009 than in 2008. While child fatalities decreased by 7 from the previous year, there remains much room for concern – nearly one-third of the counties in Pennsylvania buried children due to child abuse. In 2009, our state lost the equivalent of two elementary school classrooms of children due to maltreatment!

The majority of substantiated reports of abuse involved a single parent household. The second-highest living arrangement was children living with two parents. These statistics remind us of the importance of ensuring that parenting support and education programs are available to families in every community across the Commonwealth.

To view the entire report, visit [www.dpw.state.pa.us](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us). ❖

## did you know?

You can actively participate in protecting children from abuse by:

- ✓ Encouraging elected officials to adequately fund child abuse prevention programs that are proven effective.
- ✓ Learning how to properly recognize and report child abuse. Visit our website ([www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org)) for suggestions and to learn about training.
- ✓ Calling ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313 if you fear a child in your neighborhood is not safe.
- ✓ Volunteering to serve on a Citizen Review Panel. These panels allow citizens to take an active role in child abuse prevention by making recommendations for improvement in child protective services. Contact [PACRP@pitt.edu](mailto:PACRP@pitt.edu) for information.
- ✓ Offering support and help to struggling parents – a kind word can go a long way.

For more information, visit [www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org) ❖

## Foster Child to Foster Parent

*continued from page 2*

family we decided what changes should be prioritized and what could wait. With openness, love, rules, structure and boundaries, we established a good balance to our family life and all of us have adjusted well. I noticed their sense of belonging beginning to take shape.

Now, I don't call myself and don't allow myself to be called the adoptive mother – I am "Mom" to one and "Mommy" to the other – Jahmir and Sayvon are my sons. Since September, the boys have had to readjust to being "really" a part of the family. Sometimes, especially after their teen sister left the

home, they struggled with testing limits and rules to see what they could do to cause me to send them away. It has been nine months since the adoption, and they seem to now sense that their life has become permanent. Trust me – they are both boys and they do act like boys – mischievous, not always truthful, getting in trouble on the bus, messing up in class, fighting. But I can also say that my sons have made serious leaps and bounds in their development.

Jahmir and Sayvon have changed the dynamics of my family, and I am now the mother of three boys with three very

different personalities. Our home is never dull and as a family we are always growing, readjusting, learning patience, love and respect while we support, encourage and inspire each other. In that, we are happy to have the support of family, friends and our community to help us.

*Chyrel Simmons is the Director of Family Services at the Community Action Commission in Harrisburg, an affiliate of PFSA. Chyrel provides training, under the auspice of PFSA, on how to help foster parents and birth parents work together in support of children. ❖*

## Board of Directors

**President Emeritus, Graham S. Hetrick**, Coroner,  
Dauphin County

**President, Ruth Williams**, Alternative Rehab  
Communities, Dauphin County

**Vice President, Raffy R. Luquis, Ph.D., CHES**,  
Associate Professor, Penn State Harrisburg, Dauphin  
County

**Secretary, Britta Schatz**, Penn National Insurance,  
Dauphin County

**Treasurer, Virginia Henning**, The Foundation of the PA  
Medical Society, Dauphin County

**Jeannette Archer-Simons**, Archer-Simons Consulting,  
Dauphin County

**Bernadette Bianchi, LSW**, Executive Director,  
Pennsylvania Council for Children, Youth & Family  
Services, Dauphin County

**Leena S. Dev, M.D.**, St. Christopher's Hospital for  
Children, Philadelphia County

**Sabina Grant-Spencer**, Principal, Susquehanna School  
District, Dauphin County

**Maryrose McCarthy**, Director, University of Pittsburgh –  
PA Child Welfare Training Program, Northumberland  
County

**G. Anthony Meadows, CPA, CITP**,  
Boyer and Ritter, Cumberland County

**Charis Mincavage, Esq.**, McNeese, Wallace and Nurick,  
Dauphin County

**Dale Mitchell**, Director, Mitchell Independent Consultant,  
Montgomery County

**Yolanda Perez-Rivera**, Professor, Harrisburg Area  
Community College, Dauphin County

**Barry S. Ramper, II**, President/CEO, Homeland Center,  
Dauphin County

**Carolyne L. Smith**, President, Partnership of Packer,  
Oesterling & Smith Inc., Dauphin County

**Richard (Rick) D. Steele**, Acting Director, PA Juvenile  
Court Judges' Commission, Northumberland County

**Mark Van Blargan, Esq.**, Chair, Healthcare Group,  
McNeese, Wallace and Nurick, Dauphin County

**Robert Woods**, Executive Director, United Way of York,  
York County

**Angela Liddle**, Executive Director



Pennsylvania  
**Family Support Alliance™**

*Protecting children from abuse*

2001 North Front Street Bldg 1 Suite 210  
Harrisburg, PA 17102

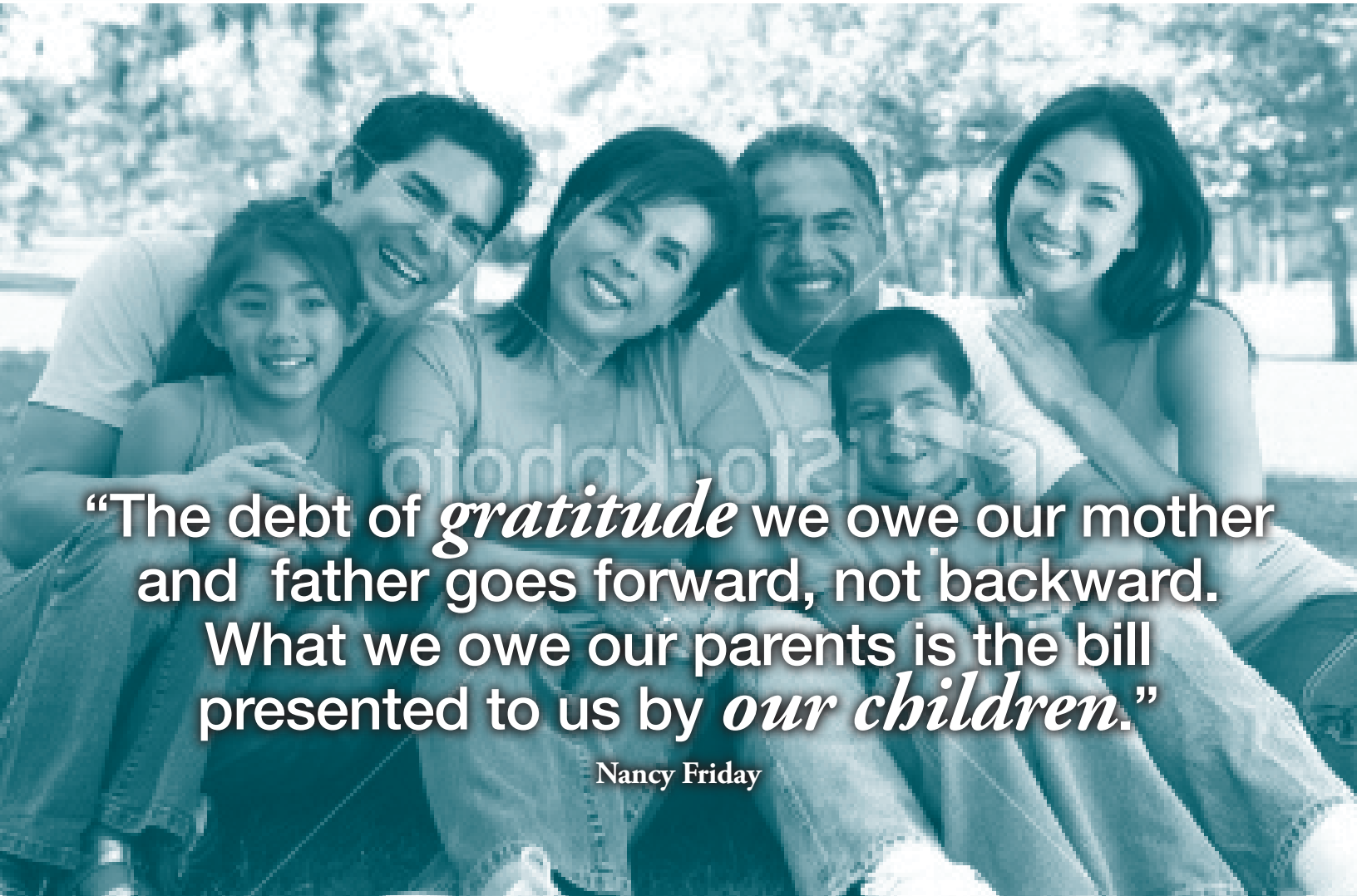
To be removed from our mailing list please contact us by email at  
[info@pa-fsa.org](mailto:info@pa-fsa.org), by phone at 1 (800) 448-4906 (in PA) or (717)  
238-0937, by fax at (717) 238-4315, or mail at 2001 N Front St  
Bldg 1 Ste 210 Harrisburg PA 17102.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Harrisburg, PA  
Permit No.14



*“Visit us at [www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org)”*



**“The debt of *gratitude* we owe our mother  
and father goes forward, not backward.  
What we owe our parents is the bill  
presented to us by *our children*.”**

Nancy Friday