Director's Message

By Shelly Willis, Executive Director

As Family Education and Support Services closes our 2012-2013 fiscal year, I look back at where we started and I am amazed at our progress. In just over 10 years we have grown from 3 staff and one volunteer offering five classes a month, to now having 10 staff, 25 volunteers, and 22 contracted providers teaching, facilitating or Instructing 45 classes a month.

We were proud to partner with many community agencies such as the South Puget Sound Community College, the Squaxin Tribe, North Thurston Public Schools, Tenino School District, United Way of Thurston County, and the Olympia School District to provide parent education classes for all parents dedicated to helping their child thrive in our community. Both the Parenting Tools Series and the Winning At Parenting programs were collaborative efforts that helped strong families stay strong!

In the past year, we welcomed families from all cultures, economic levels, and family types. Parents were able to drop in on Wednesday nights for FREE Zumba®, or attend a Parents Helping Parents Support group. We offered mainstream universal parenting support, and we were also able to help families who faced crisis. We served families struggling with divorce, domestic violence, chemical dependency and even child abuse and neglect. In addition, when children were unable to live with their parents we provided support, training and case management for both Relative and Foster parents. This past year we served over 5,500 individuals and evaluations indicate we have had a profound impact on those we served.

I was touched and warmed with the results of our first inaugural "Seeds of Hope" auction which raised over $25,000 to help us continue to offer family strengthening support programs in our community. It was a wonderful testament to the relentless compassion we so often whiteness sin our community and a tremendous affirmation for staff and volunteers who give so much of themselves to ensure we offer quality and valued services.

On behalf of the staff, board and volunteers of FESS I thank you for joining us in helping us to promote family resilience in our community. If you have an interested in volunteering or learning more about our services I hope you will call us!
A family that plays together ...  
by Dr. Diana Yu

A family that plays together - stays together. A family that dances together - sweats and sticks together! Did you know that a group of local Zumba® dance instructors have been hosting free classes at FESS on Wednesday nights? No experience is necessary and you can join in at the level you enjoy and feel comfortable in.

Regina McAllister has infectious energy and plays Latin and more fast-paced Samba music. Carmen Borja has endless salsa, merengue and other popular tunes. Diana Yu leads the warm-ups and cool downs and modifies the dances for a lower impact workout (that saves her knees.)

We would love to see more families join in since we are doing this for you. There is even talk of using both studios, one for lower impact and kids and the other for the teens and adults who want to get more of a workout. Whatever your comfort level, you can come join in the fun.

You don’t need child care because we want to get the kids in on the action also. Just make sure this activity is appropriate for your child(ren). The music is loud. The group is large and some kids may not be comfortable in that environment. If you want a good workout and your child is not comfortable without you, maybe you can trade off – one time with the adults, one time with kids.

So pack those shoes, towels and drinking water. Bring yourself down to FESS from 6:45 to 7:45 PM every Wednesday and get ready to shimmy and shake yourself to wellness. It’s all for fun and fitness.
**Seeds of Hope Auction raises over $25,000**

Family Education and Support Services would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of our inaugural "Seeds of Hope" Auction held on May 4th at the Hands On Children's Museum. Thanks to the generosity of OBEE Credit Union who serviced as our primary Sponsor, our partner Hands on Children’s Museum, and Ramblin Jacks, and the considerable contributions of Krysta Byrne of HOOPLA Events, we were able to raise over $25,000. Over 100 people attended and were entertained by Jerry Farmer, our Master of Ceremonies, and our Auctioneer Mark Streuli. Proceeds will directly support the health and well-being of the families in our community by providing scholarships for low-income participants and supporting the costs associated with providing child care.

**Shelly Willis receives awards**

FESS director Shelly Willis was recently honored with two well-deserved awards. The first, United Way of Thurston County’s Community Impact Award, is given annually to a person or team who provides leadership to make significant progress and impact on conditions relating to improving health, education and income. Shelly was recognized not only for her directorship at FESS, but also her support for the Thurston Early Childhood Coalition, Zonta board member, professor at South Puget Sound Community College, and the advisory council for the Thurston Thrives Initiative.

Shelly was also presented with a coin from Thurston County Prosecutor Jon Tunheim to recognize her for her efforts to raise awareness about child abuse in this county.

**Congratulations, Shelly!**
Our great friends at Jubilee are sponsoring a Summer Picnic for Kinship Families. The event will be held at Woodland Creek Park in Lacey on Saturday, June 22, 2013. Jubilee is providing a BBQ meal and free t-shirts for all the kids. Long's Pond will be open for all the little fishermen and women - and we'll have our own fishing guides available to help! Cabela's has partnered with Jubilee and donated five fishing poles for this fun event. Thank you Jubilee and Cabela's!

Congratulations to the winners of our Tenth Annual Voices of Children Contest: Sarel, Charli, James, Ashanti, Beverly, and Jordan! The contest drew almost 50 entries from across the state. Children created pictures or wrote about what it means to be raised by a relative. Winners include TwinStar Credit Union has once again supported this project by providing the prizes for our eight winners. The lucky kinship kids will each win $100 and a free night for their family at Great Wolf Lodge. Thank you TwinStar for ten years of support for our Voices of Children Contest. On July 11, a ceremony will be held honoring the winners, their caregivers, and all who care for relatives.
Ana Gunderson Intern at FESS

We were very pleased to welcome Ana Gunderson, a South Puget Sound Community College student, who did her internship at FESS in April and June.

As we all know, internships are excellent opportunities for students to gain practical experience in a professional setting. As an organization, we also benefit from gaining a fresh look at our organization through the eyes of an Intern, and we get an extra pair of hands helping strengthen our organizational structure. Collaborating with South Puget Sound College has been a mutually beneficial partnership.

Ana became a part of our team from her first day at the administration office. During her internship, she contributed with her impressive computer skills, showed great initiative and motivation, and proved to be impressively flexible as she contributed to our planning of our inaugural “Seeds of Hope” Auction. Ever ready to help, Ana demonstrated professionalism and commitment, performing tasks accurately and on time.

We were glad we had the opportunity to get to know Ana and wish her well in her professional career!

Thank you to our donors

Over two hundred individuals, families, and organizations supported Family Education and Support Services in the last fiscal year. Many, many thanks to all of you. In March, April and May 2013, the following individuals and groups contributed money or supplies to FESS (not including the many wonderful donors at our Seeds of Hope auction:

Carrell Simmons  Jerri Smith
David Rothschild  Judy Norton
Nancy Koptur  Rosa Verancdio
South Puget Sound Area Service Committee  James and Susan Raymond
Jane Nowitz  Total Systems Integrators, Inc.
Kathy Vermillion  Zonta Service Foundation of Olympia
Cheryl Haskins  Janice and Timothy Suess
Gail Dahlhoff  Madeline White
Vanessa Green  Lisa Sutton
Junsada Crawley
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