Director's Message

By Shelly Willis, Executive Director

On June 11th, Tonia Morrison and I were each honored by the Behavioral Health Resources Foundation at their annual Phoenix Awards Celebration. Tonia, Lead Staff for our Parents for Parents program was recognized for her personal and professional contributions in aiding women through recovery and into healthier lifestyles.

I was recognized for the delivery of a Clean and Sober parenting class to the pregnant/post partum women participating in the "Harvest Program", an out-patient chemical dependency program for women. We are proud to be honored by our community partner BHR!

The Clean and Sober parenting class is particularly near and dear to my heart. Alcohol exposure is the leading preventable cause of birth defects and developmental disabilities in our country. According to the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, “Substance use disorders can have a profound influence on the lives of individuals and their families, particularly their children."

Substance abuse contributes to obstetric and pediatric complications including:
- Fetal Alcohol Disorders
- Premature delivery
- Low Birth Weight
- Developmental Delays

For more on how our program has affected families in our community, see page 4.

I hope you all have a safe and fun summer!
Welcome President Jennifer Williamson-Forster

Our new Board president Jennifer Williamson-Forster will begin her term on July 1, and our past president Jay Mason will stay on to guide and support her - thank you Jay, for your outstanding leadership! This is the first year we have had 3 board members meet their term limits so we will also say goodbye to Nancy Koptur, David Rothschild and Tanya Murray. According to our by-laws each must take a year off before consideration of continued board participation. Each of these individuals has contributed greatly to the success of FESS and we are grateful for their genuine concern for the well-being of our organization.

Generations United honors Kinship Program

FESS will be honored in July with an award from Generations United for our outstanding Kinship Care support model. This honor will include an opportunity for three FESS staff (our Kinship team) to go to Honolulu, Hawaii, to attend a national conference on intergenerational care and to receive the donation. Generations United's mission is to improve the lives of children, young, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all.
FESS Programs Around the Sound

Seven kinship families will be receiving home visits from two nurses in the Masters program at the St. Martin’s school of nursing. We are honored to partner with Dr. Louise Kaplan, Director of the Nursing Program. This home visitation program will benefit our kinship caregivers, the children in their care, and the nursing students as families are screened and offered health information and nurses are learning about how to best support kinship families.

On June 27 FESS will host our annual “Dynamic Dads: Train the Trainer” as we invite men and women who are teaching, or are interested in teaching, fatherhood classes across the state. We will engage in a one day discussion and sharing of ideas. The training will be held at FESS's Olympia office from 9 AM to 2 PM.

FESS is in the middle of completing a six-week Winning at Parenting class at the Squaxin Tribe.

Twelve dads recently graduated from the Spanish Language Dynamic Dads class in Shelton. Many thanks to leader Dr. Jose Vasquez for bringing this important resource to Spanish-speaking fathers in our community.

Thank you to our donors

Many, many thanks to all of our donors and volunteers. In April and May of 2015, the following individuals and groups contributed money or supplies to FESS:

Bayside Quilting
South Puget Sound Service Committee
Ann Jackson
Michel Nelson
David Rothschild
Tim and Jan Suess
Northwest Family Services
Marilyn Nelson

Marc Daigneault
Garfield Guild Children’s Hospital
Nancy Koptur
Siobhan O’Connell
Olympia Federal Savings
Samba Olywa
Olympia Family Theater
Clean and Sober parenting helps women in recovery

At right is an example of a homework assignment completed by one of our clean and sober parenting students. This parent recalled getting married and wishing she had made a better choice about moving away from the support of her family. At the five year mark she spoke about abandoning her goals of school and career. At the one year ago point she recognized her alcohol addiction and her need to ask for help and go to treatment. She reflected that she had lived her life to make others happy and had built resentment that manifested in justifying her use of alcohol.

"Thank you so much for this class: it has changed my life!"

Save the date: Seeds of Hope Auction October 8, Red Lion

Last year we welcomed over 150 individuals who enjoyed good food, good music and contributed over $30,000 towards the provision of parent education and support services for ALL families in our community-regardless of their economic status. We hope you will join us this year as we raise our goal to $40,000, as our community needs rise with a spike in child abuse and neglect. We need your help. Make a difference in our community, find heart-warming inspiration, and enjoy good fun as we celebrate SEEDS OF HOPE on October 8th, 2015 at the Red Lion. To learn more call 360-754-7629 or email Executive Director Shelly Willis at: Shelly@FamilyESS.org
I had a chance to interview Rosa during a rare break from her job as administrative assistant in FESS’s Kinship program.

Rosa has been with the Kinship program at FESS for four years. She arrived here from Mexico about twelve years ago and has been an invaluable asset to the entire program, but most particularly in helping us reach out to the Spanish-speaking community. In addition to serving as translator and communicator for Kinship and other FESS programs, Rosa performs data entry, kinship navigation, general administration, and helping with the Kinship closet and other needs of Kinship clients. Rosa also volunteers at CIELO, where she is a volunteer coordinator.

Rosa’s family here in Thurston County consists of her husband and two boys, ages 21 and 18. Most of her extended family is still in Mexico.

When I asked her what was the best part of her job, she had two answers:

“When a family walks out feeling they have someone who really cares and is helping them. I want them to look into my eyes and see compassion and connection.”

She paused, and added, “My job is helping me to appreciate what I have and not complain about the little things.” Well put, Rosa!