



CHILDREN'S
HOME SOCIETY
of Washington

Press Release

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Celebrate Washington State Reunification Week June 13 – 19, 2010

People change and families reunite. Catalyst for Kids announces the state's first annual Reunification Week.

Seattle, WA – Monday, June 07, 2010 – Every year thousands of families across Washington State are reunified after successfully navigating their way through the child welfare system. In Washington in 2008, 67% of the children who exited out-of-home care were reunified with parents or guardians. (Source: DSHS Children's Administration Annual Report, 2008).

To honor and celebrate these families and to shine the spotlight on reunification, Washington State is planning its first Reunification Week, which will take place the week of June 13-19, 2010. Washington State Reunification Week recognizes the accomplishments and dedication of families who have worked hard to regain custody of their children and gives hope to families who are currently in the child welfare system with the knowledge that it is possible to resolve their problems and get their kids back. This celebration also inspires the community with the reality that people *can* change, that families *can and do* reunite, and that safely bringing families together is appropriately the primary goal of the child welfare system.

“This year’s launching of National Reunification Week reflects the growing recognition that – in almost all cases – the very best home for children is with their own parents,” says Nancy Roberts-Brown, Director of Catalyst for Kids, an initiative of Children’s Home Society of Washington. “We celebrate this achievement, and we celebrate, as well, the many families who make the daunting life changes necessary to provide their children with safe and nurturing homes.”

Reunification with family is the preferred outcome for children removed from their homes and placed in foster care. Reunification takes work, commitment, and investment of time and resources by parents, family members, social workers, attorneys, courts and the community.

Shrounda Selivanoff recently reunited with her daughter after losing her due to drug and alcohol abuse. Now she is a veteran parent, working with other parents involved in the child welfare system. . “My parent advocacy work reminds me who I am. I like to be reminded of it every single day,” says Shrounda. “It’s about giving people the vision that they, too, can get their child back. When meeting with other parents, I bring what I used to be, and I bring who I am to become. Today, I am unstoppable.”

Led by Catalyst for Kids, the advisory committee for the coordination of National Reunification Week also includes the Children’s Administration, the Office of Public Defense, Casey Family Programs, and several veteran parents.

A celebration will take place on Thursday, June 24 at the King County Youth Services Center honoring 5 families who have reunified with their children. A judge will dismiss their cases during the celebration. For more details, contact Kelly Bray at Children's Home Society of Washington at (206) 695-3234.

About Catalyst for Kids

Catalyst for Kids, an initiative of Children's Home Society of Washington, is a coalition of child welfare professionals, consumers, advocates, and decision-makers who are partnering for systems changes that foster justice and improve outcomes for all children and families in the child welfare system. Catalyst's work contributes to and leverages statewide efforts to achieve reduced length of stay in foster care, increased rates of reunification, reduced re-entry into foster care, and outcome equity among all races and ethnicities. For more information, visit www.catalystforkids.org.

About Children's Home Society of Washington

Children's Home Society of Washington's (CHSW) mission is to develop healthy children, create strong families, build engaged communities, and speak and advocate for children. CHSW is Washington's largest statewide non-profit children's organization, serving over 39,000 children and their families through early learning, adoption, out-of-home care, family support, child and family counseling, and advocacy programs. For more information, visit www.childrenshomesociety.org.

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