2017 ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION OF GEORGIA
44th ANNUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 24-26, 2017

FACING OUR CHALLENGES and REAPING THE REWARDS

JEKYLL ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER
75 NORTH BEACHVIEW DRIVE
JEKYLL ISLAND, GEORGIA 31527
From the President

Welcome Friends and Colleagues,

We, the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia’s (AFPAG) Board of Directors, would like to welcome you to our 44th Annual Education Conference. We deem it a privilege and an honor to have an active role in shaping the future of adoptive and foster parents and children in the State of Georgia through advocacy, education, and networking with parents, DFCS staff, local agencies, and other professionals.

Our theme is “Facing Our Challenges and Reaping the Rewards”. As child caregivers and DFCS staff, we face many challenges in our journey caring for Georgia’s children. But at the end of the day, we all must agree that the rewards are much greater than the challenges we have faced along the way.

This year we will hold our election for the President, Treasurer, and Region Vice Presidents that are in odd number regions. Please visit our web-site at WWW.AFPAG.NET to get an application if you are interested in seeking a position.

Remember the people you elect will be the people that will represent you. Again, AFPAG values you!

We hope you will enjoy the beautiful surroundings of Jekyll Island. The conference committee has worked very hard to make this 44th conference a wonderful event for you. We invite you to share your experience with your peers during the breaks, at informal group discussions, and anytime you can. Please let someone you meet know that you are very proud of the care you give to Georgia’s children.

OUR MISSION

To empower, support, and advocate for foster and adoptive families who enrich the quality of life for Georgia’s children.

OUR GOALS:

- To provide ongoing and meaningful support for foster and adoptive families;
- To advocate for change to protect the rights and welfare of foster and adoptive families;
- To promote cultural awareness;
- To encourage community awareness and education through collaboration and partnership with other child welfare and community organizations;
- To develop and provide appropriate training for foster and adoptive families as well as local and state DFCS staff.

Thanking you in advance for your support! See you at the conference.

Sincerely Yours,
Hotel Information

You will need to make your own hotel reservations. Tell them you are with the Adoptive/Foster Parent Association of Georgia (AFPAG) Conference, February 24-26, 2017.

All hotel reservations must be made by the cut-off date listed by the hotel below to ensure you get the conference rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Cut-off Date</th>
<th>Room Description</th>
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Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia
2017 Annual Education Conference
February 24 – 26, 2017
Jekyll Island, Georgia

Thursday February 23, 2017
12: 00 p.m. to 3: 00 p.m. AFPAG Board Meeting
12: 00 p.m. to 6: 00 p.m. Exhibit Set Up
12: 00 p.m. to 6: 00 p.m. Early Registration

Friday February 24, 2017
7: 00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Registration
7: 00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Exhibits Open
9: 00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Open Ceremony
10:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. BREAK
10:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Break-out Workshop Session A
12:15 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Lunch (on your own)
1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. General Session #1
3:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. BREAK
3:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. Break-out Workshop Session B
4:45 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. Annual Business Meeting

Saturday February 25, 2017
7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Registration
7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Exhibits Open
8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. General Session #2
9:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. BREAK
9:45 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. Breakout Workshop Session (C)
11:15 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. BREAK
11:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Awards Luncheon
1:30 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. BREAK
1:45 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. Breakout Workshop Session (D)
3:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. BREAK
3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. General Session #3

Sunday February 26, 2017
Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia
2017 Conference Registration Sheet
Jekyll Island, Georgia

PLEASE USE SEPARATE FORM FOR EACH PERSON REGISTERING

Name: _________________________________________ Email ________________________________
Address: _________________________________________ City ________________________________
Zip ________ Ph. _______________ County ___________________________ Region__________

PLEASE CHECK ONE
Adoptive Parent: _____ Foster Parent: _____ DFCS Staff: ___ Private Agency ------ Other:------

Friday’s Workshop Session (A)
Workshop - 1st Choice _________________________ 2nd Choice ______________________________

Friday’s Workshop Session (B)
Workshop - 1st Choice _________________________ 2nd Choice ______________________________

Saturday’s Workshop Session (C)
Workshop - 1st Choice _________________________ 2nd Choice ______________________________

Saturday’s Workshop Session (D)
Workshop - 1st Choice _________________________ 2nd Choice ______________________________

Sunday’s Workshop Session (E)
Workshop - 1st Choice _________________________ 2nd Choice ______________________________

ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST ATTEND ALL GENERAL SESSIONS, OPENING CEREMONY, AND AWARDS LUNCHEON.

Registration Fee: $125.00 per participant: Only checks and money orders will be accepted.

Registration cut-off date February 1, 2017.

Extra tickets for the Awards Luncheon: $35.00.

On-site registration fee: $175.00, No personal checks will be accepted.

All return checks will be charged $45.00. No refund will be given after FEB 1, 2017.
Make check payable to AFPAG Conference.

Mail Check to AFPAG CONFERENCE: ATTENTION: Eunice Daniels
101 Windsor Road
Savannah, GA 31419

2016 AFPAG Conference Information

Please choose two selections for each workshop session and record the workshop number in the order you prefer for each workshop selected. Be sure to record your first choice and then your second choice. Remember to register early for the best selections of workshops as classes are size limited.

EXAMPLE


IF YOU ATTEND ALL THE FOLLOWING:

Opening session, general session, awards luncheon, closing session, and your assigned workshops, you will receive a total of 15 credit hours of training.
Registration includes: Registration fee, workshop materials, goodie bag, awards luncheon ticket, and a one year membership to AFPAG.
All extra tickets for the awards luncheon are $35.00.

NO CHILDREN WILL BE ALLOWED IN ANY CONFERENCE SESSIONS OR WORKSHOPS!

This conference provides a great opportunity to learn and address issues such as childcare, new policy changes, and working in true partnership with those agencies that support us as we care for the needs of the children in DFCS custody. The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia will not provide childcare for any children accompanying you to the conference. Please contact your local DFCS caseworker to assist you arranging suitable respite care for your children.

OTHER HELPFUL TIPS

✓ Complete the sign in sheet during each workshop.
✓ Make sure you receive your workshop sticker to get credit for attending the workshop.
✓ Please attend only the workshops you were assigned because space is limited.
✓ Complete the workshop evaluation sheet and make sure to give it to the workshop monitor.
✓ There will be a table with the reimbursement forms. Please take one. There will be a DFCS staff member at the table to assist you on how to complete the form.
✓ Please stop by our vendor tables and the DFCS tables. They are here to help you.
If you have any questions or concerns, don’t hesitate to contact our office:
912-920-8362

2017 AFPAG Conference at a Glance:

Thursday February 23, 2017
12:00 to 3:00 p.m. AFPAG Board Meeting
12:00 to 6:00 p.m. Exhibits & Vendors Set-Up
12:00 to 6:00 p.m. Early Registration

Friday February 24, 2017
7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Registration (pre-registered and on-site registration)
7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Exhibits Open
9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Opening Ceremony; Keynote Speaker: Dr. John DeGarmo
10:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. Break

10:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Breakout Workshops (A)
A-1. Why Should I Foster a Teenagers?
A-3. Let’s Talk Adoption
A-4. The Right to Be Heard
A-5. How to Meet and Advocate for Your Foster Child’s Healthcare Needs
A-6. Educational Rights for Children in Foster Care
A-7. We Don’t Look Like What We Have Been Through
A-8. Foster Care Support Foundation
A-9. Early Detection of Developmental Delays and Disabilities
A-10. The School System and Mental Health Issues of Children

12:15 p.m.-1:30 Lunch On Your Own

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. General Session #1 Presenter: Debra Ross

3:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. BREAK

3:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. Breakout Workshops B
B-1. Preventing Adoptions Disruptions: How to Prepare For and Cope with Trauma Issues and Your Adoptive Child.
B-2. Credit Reporting and Your Youth in Care
B-3. Case Law Updates for Foster and Adoptive Children
B-4. Advocacy 101
B-5. The Importance of Maintaining Sibling Connections
B-6. The Power of Habits: Understanding your Habits
B-7. Allegations: It’s Not If but When
B-8. Navigating Health Care Services for Your Child
B-9. Partnering with Birth Families-Creating Healthy Connections
B-10. What’s Georgia Center for Resources and Support (GACRS) All About

4:45 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.                                       AFPAG Annual Business Meeting

Saturday February 25, 2017

8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.  General Session #2: Presenters: Judy Nino and Fabienne Michel
What’s New in the Child Care Services through Child Care and Parents Services, (CAPS).

9:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.                                                                                                                                     BREAK

9:45 a.m. to 11:15 p.m.                                                                                      Breakout Workshops (C).
C-1.  Post Adoption Service through Assistance
C-2.  ADHD Nuts and Bolts
C-3.  Transforming Trauma: Healing for Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse
C-4.  Complex Trauma Informed Approach to Children in Foster Care
C-5.  Burnout and Stress for Foster Parents
C-6.  Early Detection of Development Delays and Disabilities
C-7.  When Words Are Not Enough
C-8.  Why Should I Want to Be a Foster Parent: “Pros and Cons”
C-10.  Georgia’s 360 Families - Amerigroup

11:15 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.                                                                                                                                   BREAK

11:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Awards Luncheon:                                                                                                                         BREAK
Speaker: Mr. Bobby Cagle

1:30 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.                                                                                                                         BREAK

1:45 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.                                                                                     Breakout Workshop (D)
D-1.  ADHD: Digging a Little Deeper
D-2.  We Don’t Look Like What We Have Been Through
D-3.  Credit Reporting and Your Youth in Care
D-4.  Empowerment: Through Our Eyes
D-5.  Adoption Subsidy and Federal Tax
D-6.  Allegations: It’s Not If but When
D-7.  Unpacking the Emotional Suitcase
D-8.  Early Learning and Development
D-9.  Foster Care Support Foundation
D-10. The School System and Mental Health Issues of Children

3:15 to 3:30                                                                                                                                   BREAK

3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.                                     General Session 3: DFCS Policies Update: Presenter: Candis L Jones
Sunday February 26, 2017

8:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.  Non- Denominational Service

9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.  Breakout Workshops (E).
E-1.  ADHD Nuts and Bolts
E-3.  Empowerment: Here Are My Rights
E-4.  Transforming Trauma Healing for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse
E-5.  Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
E-6.  Unpacking the Emotional Suitcase
E-7.  Education Clinic
E-8.  Georgia’s Foster Parents Bill of Rights
E-9.  Constructive Conflict Resolution

10:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.  BREAK

10:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.  Closing Session: Remarks, Grand Prize Drawing, Silent Auction Winners

Thank you for attending the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia’s 44th Annual Education Conference.
If you have any comments, concerns, or questions, please contact our office: 912-920-8362 or email us at verdell.daniels@yahoo.com
A – 1. WHY SHOULD I FOSTER A TEENAGER?: This workshop will provide information on why you should foster or adopt a teenager. The benefits of fostering a teenager can be wonderful. You will hear from youth that are in the foster care system tell their story of why they would like to have a foster home instead of a group home setting. Foster parents will see the benefits of venturing out and having that special teenager as an addition to their family. Presenters: Estelline Beamon and Teresa Reeves

A – 2. ADVOCACY 101: In this workshop, participants will develop the tools for advocating for all children. This workshop will start with problem identification and then move on to laws or rules that cover the problem and how to find a solution. Presenter: Josh Kroll.

A – 3. LET’S TALK ADOPTION: Whether you are a prospective adoptive parent, a resource parent, or a partnership parent, you want to attend this workshop if you have children placed in your home who you desire to adopt. Participants attending this workshop will gain knowledge regarding the requirements and the process to adopt children from Georgia’s child welfare system. The primary focus will be on laws governing adoption policy in Georgia and Georgia’s best practice supported by adoption policy. Presenter: Ms. Deborah Burrus

A – 4. THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD: This workshop will teach foster and adoptive parents about their rights to be heard in juvenile court, about the court system, and the legal part of the child welfare system. This will include a candid discussion on how to be an effective witness and more. Presenter: Attorney Jerry Bruce.

A – 5. HOW TO MEET AND ADVOCATE FOR YOUR FOSTER CHILD’S HEALTHCARE NEEDS: Learn how you can ensure that your foster and adopted child’s healthcare needs are met with healthcare providers and care management organizations. Presenter: Attorney Tom Rawlings

A – 6. EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE: Children in foster care consistently experience some of the lowest educational outcome of all youth. Research demonstrates that every time a child changes schools, he or she loses up to 6 months of his or her education, and many foster youth may change schools 10-15 times throughout his or her education. Furthermore, many foster children suffer from the emotional ramifications of the incidents that led to their placement in foster care, and this can lead to acting out and avoidance of school. Come learn how you can be a good educational advocate for your foster or adoptive child. Presenter: Attorney Craig Goodmark.

A – 7. WE DON’T LOOK LIKE WHAT WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH: In this workshop you will learn about the Browns very busy, noisy, disruptive and challenging life. Charles and Suzette will share their many skills and techniques they used from their survival kit during their parenting journey. Come see if they really don’t look like what have been through. Presenters: Charles and Suzette Brown
A – 8. FOSTER CARE SUPPORT FOUNDATION: FREE CLOTHING, TOYS, AND INFANT EQUIPMENT PROGRAM: The Foster Care Support Foundation was started in the presenter’s garage in 1996 to help stable families embark on fostering without the fear of the financial burden that continuously caring for multiple children could cause. Through its volunteer driven program, Ms. Ewald has utilized and educated the communities, corporations, faith based and civic organization on the need to help this underprivileged youth population. All conference attendees are encouraged to attend this workshop and learn how the Foster Care Support Foundation can help you serve your children. Presenter: Rachel M. Ewald

A – 9. EARLY DETECTION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS AND DISABILITIES: The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) in collaboration with Georgia Division of Family and Services (DFCS) is leading a training initiative for educating parents on the early signs of developmental disabilities, delays and chronic health conditions in children 0-5 yrs. In this workshop, you will improve your knowledge and awareness of developmental delays to better identify signs of concern and how to connect to appropriate screenings and interventions. A review of the most common developmental disabilities and a developmental milestones tracker for caregivers will be included in this presentation. Presenter: Rita Young

A – 10. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES OF CHILDREN: The presenter will focus on children’s mental health. Most teachers don’t feel equipped to meet their student’s emotional needs. Across the United States, up to one in five children suffer from a mental disorder in a given year, according to the Center for Disease and Prevention. This equates to more than 17 million young people who meet criteria for a disorder that affects their ability to learn, behave and express their emotions. Presenters: Janice Miller-Walker and Angela Harris

Workshop Description Session B
Friday February 24, 2017
3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

B – 1. PREVENTING ADOPTIONS DISRUPTIONS: HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND COPE WITH TRAUMA ISSUES AND YOUR ADOPTIVE CHILD: Adoptive children are routinely told that when they are adopted they have found their “Forever Families”. Yet increasingly, adoptive parents are taking their children to DFCS and saying that they cannot continue to parent their adoptive children. This situation re-traumatizes children who have already been traumatized by parental abuse and neglect, by years in foster care, and by termination of parental rights. Learn what steps you can take to prepare for a lifelong relationship with a child adopted out of foster care, and how to prevent the disruption of an adoptive placement. Presenters: Judge Kristi Lovelace and Therapist Bonnie Lockwood

B – 2. CREDIT REPORTING AND YOUR YOUTH IN CARE: This presentation will discuss the important of ensuring our older youth in care are aware of their score and are connected to a specialist through the GATY/SE Independent Living Program. Presenters: Devin Martin and Erika Dennis

B – 3. CASE LAW UP-DATES FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE CHILDREN: Come to hear and learn about recent appellate laws in Georgia and even nationally that might impact you, your child, or your case. This workshop will be structure as a lecture with plenty of room for discussion. Presenter: Judge William Bartles
B – 4. A PRIMER OF HOW THE LEGAL SIDE OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM WORKS: Many foster and adoptive parents express frustration with the legal side of the child welfare system. This workshop will provide a very basic, broad overview of the current laws and structure of the legal side of the child welfare system. There are many procedural and constitutional rights of all parties which the courts must consider and manage. **Presenter: Attorney Jerry Bruce**

B – 5. THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING SIBLING CONNECTIONS: This session will help caregivers understand the need for siblings to be placed together. Participants will learn the long-term impacts of sibling connections and what happens when those bonds are severed. Participants will learn ways to partner with the Division, relatives, and other caregivers to maintain a healthy and solid relationship of siblings in their care. **Presenters: Deborah Burrus and Candis Jones**

B – 6. THE POWER OF HABITS: UNDERSTANDING YOUR HABITS: Participants will learn how to understand their habits and how this understanding can help or hinder the promotion of social-emotional competence in your child. **Presenter: Dr. Natasha La Marr.**

B – 7. ALLEGATIONS: IT’S NOT IF BUT WHEN: One of the most dreaded areas in fostering is the fear of an allegation. Many foster/adoptive parents have been lost in the system because of an allegation occurring. To become familiar with the fact that “it is not if but when” an allegation will occur has proven to have saved many foster parents from giving up. Knowledge of the dreaded allegation has been a key to saving homes. The presenter has experienced allegations made about her home and developed a workshop to encourage and show support that there’s foster life after an unfounded allegation. **Presenter: Betty Hasting**

B – 8. NAVIGATING HEALTH CARE SERVICES FOR YOUR CHILD: The workshop will provide an in-depth overview of the services the WPAC team provides to DFCS staff as well as foster/adoptive parents who experience difficulty navigating Amerigroup services, access to Babies Can’t Wait services, and ensuring the health needs of children in foster care are being met timely. **Presenter: Kristen Toliver**

B – 9. PARTNERING WITH BIRTH FAMILIES-CREATING HEALTHY CONNECTIONS: This is a workshop that focuses on dispelling the myths associated with birth families and working on strategies to start making a connection. It explores the benefits including reducing the stress on already traumatized children, modeling parenting for birth parents, and gaining access to a deeper level of understanding as to the dynamics of the birth family which contribute to child behaviors. Foster and adoptive parents are encouraged to ask questions and share experiences in partnering, both positive and negative. **Presenters: Rebecca Davidson and Regina Frasier**

B – 10. WHAT’S GEORGIA CENTER FOR RESOURCES AND SUPPORT (GACRS) ALL ABOUT?: This workshop provides you with an opportunity to learn more about the Georgia Center for Resources and Support services and resources that are provided to families who foster and/or adopt. You will experience a Parent Café, view a video of the GACRS November Adoption Month event, get to know more about Resource Advisors and how they assist families, and learn how easy it is to access training whether live, instructed led or one of the Center’s Virtual Certificate trainings. You also get the chance to win a wonderful care basket to help you maintain a self-care perspective! **Presenter: Brenda Gillespie**

Workshop Description Session C
Saturday February 25, 2017
10:45 to 12:15

12
C – 1. **POST ADOPTION SERVICES THROUGH ASSISTANCE:** Meeting a child’s needs does not simply end after an adoption finalization court hearing. There comes a time when families require post adoption services to assist with their needs long after an adoption has finalized. Families need support services to help with the demands of parenting special needs children. This workshop will focus on the Post Adoption Services offered through the Adoption Assistance program in Georgia. Topics will include coverage on all available Post Adoption Services. In addition to Post Adoption Services through DFCS, there will also be a presentation from Systems Methods Inc. (SMI), the financial system vendor and partner to Georgia’s DFCS. **Presenters:** Adrian Owens and Leah Waters

C – 2. **ADHD NUTS AND BOLTS:** While all of us have heard a generalized idea of what ADHD is and what to look for, when we are face to face with it, we often are left feeling overwhelmed and confused. We want to provide the best care for our child but we don’t even know what questions to ask. This presentation will focus on understanding ADHD, what the child is experiencing, treatment options, strategies for dealing with the behavior, and helping children learn to cope. **Presenters:** Chris and Jen Cannington

C – 3. **TRANSFORMING TRAUMA: HEALING VICTIMS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE:** A significant percentage of children in foster care have been the victim of sexual abuse or exploitation. This workshop will provide foster parents with a better understanding of the psychological impact of childhood sexual trauma, as well as associated symptoms and behaviors. Participants will receive information on resources, treatment options, and practical strategies to help children heal. **Presenter:** Renee Sylvester

C – 4. **COMPLEX TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH TO CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE:** The term complex trauma describes the dual problem of children’s exposure to multiple traumatic events and the impact of this exposure on immediate and long-term outcomes. Typically, complex trauma exposure results when a child is abused or neglected, but it can also be caused by other kinds of events such as witnessing domestic violence, ethnic cleansing, or war. Many children involved in the child welfare system have experienced complex trauma. In this workshop, you will learn about the current science and how the child welfare system is shifting in response to this new information and how it can impact your foster or adoptive child. **Presenters:** Judge Michael Key and Attorney Michelle Barclay

C – 5. **BURNOUT AND STRESS FOR FOSTER PARENTS:** This session will focus on emotional challenges, difficulties, and trials that foster children, biological family members, and foster parents all face. During the presentation, participants will learn about the realities of burnout, stress, trauma, loss and grief for all involved when dealing with displacement and reunification, as well as become equipped with strategies designed to best address the stress that comes with this time of loss. **Presenter:** Dr. John DeGarmo

C – 6. **EARLY DETECTION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS AND DISABILITIES:** The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) in collaboration with the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is leading a training initiative for educating parents on the early signs of developmental disabilities, delays and chronic health conditions in children 0-5 years. In this workshop, you will improve your knowledge and awareness of developmental delays to better identify signs of concern and how to connect to appropriate screenings and interventions. A review of the most common developmental disabilities and a developmental milestones tracker for caregivers will be included in the presentation. **Presenters:** Rita Young
C - 7. **WHEN WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH:** While apologizing may not always make us feel good about ourselves, there are substantial benefits to apologizing. Learning to express and receive sincere apologies helps us to build better relationships with our partners, children and co-workers. Join us for this interactive and insightful workshop as participants learn the “language of apologies”. This is an interactive workshop for all foster and adoptive parents, to help both men and women learn what words need to be said to express healing when talking to children. **Presenters: Debra Ross and Greg Warren**

C - 8. **WHY SHOULD I WANT TO FOSTER: PROS AND CONS:** The presenter is a former foster child who thought she never wanted anything to do with fostering or foster care, but after 30 plus years of having over 450 children pass through her home, she has knowledge of why fostering is so important to the parents as well as the children coming into care. Fostering is not always a rewarding experience as there are pros and cons in this often difficult and problematic area, but attendees will be shown that fostering can often be a tool to help get a child on the right road and can have many gratifying and rewarding outcomes. **Presenter: Betty Hasting**

C - 9. **THE POWER OF HABITS: UNDERSTANDING YOUR HABITS:** Participants will learn how to understand their habits and how this understanding can help or hinder the promotion of social-emotional competence in your child. **Presenter: Dr. Natasha La Marr.**

C - 10. **GEORGIA’S 360 FAMILIES – AMERIGROUP:** Georgia’s Child Welfare System underwent a major change with the transition of foster care and adoption assistance to Amerigroup for their health care needs. Learn the facts and get key information on this program. Participants will be able to interact with the presenter by asking questions and sharing their opinions. **Presenter: Ronald Dunham**

**Workshop Descriptions Session D**
**Saturday February 25, 2017**
**2:45 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.**

D – 1. **ADHD - DIGGING A LITTLE DEEPER:** Everyone seems to recognize the obvious symptoms of ADHD, but what about the lesser known symptom? As parents of children with ADHD, we know we need to parent differently but this is often challenging. Research tells us that ADHD children do not respond to typical parenting strategies, but what does that mean? We encounter behavioral issues, address them and try to think outside the box and still wonder why we feel like a broken record. This workshop will focus on symptoms of ADHD and helping parents identify what are typical childhood behaviors and what are symptom related behaviors. We will provide some strategies for addressing these behaviors to bring about different outcomes for you and your family. **Presenters: Chris and Jen Cannington**

D – 2. **WE DON'T LOOK LIKE WHAT WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH:** Charles and Suzette fostered and adopted nine children. After the death of a friend they got guardianship of two adopted teens. Then eight years ago, they became kinship parents to their granddaughter. Life for the Browns has always been busy, noisy, disruptive and challenging to say the least. There were good times, bad times, stressful times, crying times, praying times and all sorts of times, but through it all, they raised their children. Their children are all young adults and are doing well. The Browns will share many skills and techniques they used from their “Survival Kit” during their parenting journey. **Presenters: Charles and Suzette Brown**
D – 3. CREDIT REPORTING AND YOUR YOUTH IN CARE: This presentation will discuss the important of ensuring our older youth in care and aware of their credit score, and are connected to specialist through the GARY/SE Independent Living Program. **Presenters: Devin Martin and Erika Dennis**

D – 4. THROUGH OUR EYES: This presentation is for all child care providers. In this workshop, participants will have the opportunity to take a look at the child welfare system **(FOSTER CARE)** through the eyes of a foster child. You will hear how they view the current foster care system. **Presenter: Empowerment**

D – 5. ADOPTION SUBSIDY AND FEDERAL TAX: In this workshop, you will learn the basics of adoption assistance for children adopted from foster care. Topics include eligibility, benefits, taxes, and more. Participants will receive state specific information and will come away with concrete information and strategies to better advocate for foster and adoptive children with special needs. There will also be an overview of the Federal Adoption Tax Credit. **Presenter: Josh Kroll**

D – 6. ALLEGATIONS: IT’S NOT IF BUT WHEN: One of the most dreaded areas in fostering is the fear of an allegation. Many foster/adoptive parents have been lost in the system because of an allegation occurring. To become familiar with the fact that “it is not if but when” an allegation will occur has proven to have saved many foster parents from giving up. Knowledge of the dreaded allegation has been a key to saving homes. The presenter has experienced allegations made about her home and developed a workshop to encourage and show support that there’s foster life after an unfounded allegation. **Presenter: Betty Hasting**

D – 7. UNPACKING THE EMOTIONAL SUITCASE: When young women do not have a healthy way of processing and redirecting emotions, suppression tends to be a common solution. For these young women, each emotionally traumatic experience is shoved into their Emotional Suitcase. These young ladies carry that suitcase wherever they go. Over time the suitcase fills up with a plethora of negative experiences and becomes too heavy to carry, too messy to sort through and too hopeless to unload. With no hope, relief, or help in sight they turn to at-risk behavior such as drugs, bullying, gang life, and sometimes suicide to avoid facing that “EMOTIONAL SUITCASE”. In this interactive workshop, the presenter will break down the Emotional Processing System and provide practical steps to help unpack the emotional suitcase. **Presenter: Tierica Berry**

D - 8. EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: This workshop offers participants an overview of the importance of quality early childhood education and its correlation to healthy brain development. Participants will explore the science around brain development in children ages 0-5 as well as the some barriers encountered by children experiencing trauma. **Presenter: Donjai Calhoun**

D - 9. FOSTER CARE SUPPORT FOUNDATION: FREE CLOTHING, TOYS, AND INFANT EQUIPMENT PROGRAM: The Foster Care Support Foundation was started in the presenter’s garage in 1996 to help stable families embark on fostering without the fear of the financial burden that continuously caring for multiple children could cause. Through its volunteer driven program, Ms. Ewald has utilized and educated the communities, corporations, faith based and civic organization on the need to help this underprivileged youth population. All conference attendees are encouraged to attend this workshop and learn how the Foster Care Support Foundation can help you serve your children. **Presenter: Rachel M. Ewald**
D - 10. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES OF CHILDREN: The presenter will focus on children’s mental health. Most teachers don’t feel equipped to meet their student’s emotional needs. Across the United States, up to one in five children suffer from a mental disorder in a given year, according to the Center for Disease and Prevention. This equates to more than 17 million young people who meet criteria for a disorder that affects their ability to learn, behave and express their emotions. Presenter: Janice Miller- Walker and Angela Harris

Workshops Description Session E
Sunday February 26, 2017
9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

E – 1. ADHD NUTS AND BOLTS: While all of us have heard a generalized idea of what ADHD is and what to look for, when we are face to face with it, we often are left feeling overwhelmed and confused. We want to provide the best care for our child but we don’t even know what questions to ask. This presentation will focus on understanding ADHD, what the child is experiencing, treatment options, strategies for dealing with the behavior, and helping children learn to cope. Presenters: Chris and Jen Cannington.

E – 2. THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: THE PIPELINE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING: Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. It has occurred in all 50 states, and foster children are particularly vulnerable. This presentation will increase your knowledge on what human trafficking is. Participants will learn tactics often used by traffickers to lure victims. Participants will also learn strategies to help keep children from becoming victim. Presenter: Dr. Karen Lambie

E – 3. HERE ARE MY RIGHTS: This workshop was created by youth who have experience in the foster care system. This training is to help youth and adults support some of the current laws and policies that will help youth transition in and out of care. Presenter: Anthony Stover

E – 4. TRANSFORMING TRAUMA: HEALING VICTIMS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE: A significant percentage of children in foster care have been the victim of sexual abuse or exploitation. This workshop will provide foster parents with a better understanding of the psychological impact of childhood sexual trauma, as well as associated symptoms and behaviors. Participants will receive information on resources, treatment options, and practical strategies to help children heal. Presenter: Renee Sylvester

E – 5. FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME: Come learn what (FAS) Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is. It is a group of signs and symptoms that appear together and indicate a certain condition. The signs and symptoms are birth defects that results from a woman’s use of alcohol during her pregnancy. Participants will learn the signs, symptoms, and where to get help from. Presenter: Marjorie Jones
E – 6. UNPACKING THE EMOTIONAL SUITCASE: When young women do not have a healthy way of processing and redirecting emotions, suppression tends to be a common solution. For these young women, each emotionally traumatic experience is shoved into their Emotional Suitcase. These young ladies carry that suitcase wherever they go. Over time the suitcase fills up with a plethora of negative experiences and becomes too heavy to carry, too messy to sort through and too hopeless to unload. With no hope, relief, or help in sight they turn to at-risk behavior such as drugs, bullying, gang life, and sometimes suicide to avoid facing that “EMOTIONAL SUITCASE”. In this interactive workshop, the presenter will break down the Emotional Processing System and provide practical steps to help unpack the emotional suitcase. 

Presenter: Tierica Berry

E - 7. EDUCATION CLINIC: This ‘clinic’ is designed as an open forum to speak directly with EPAC representatives to discuss real academic challenges faced by foster children, foster parents, and case managers. EPAC staff will be on hand to answer questions and to provide real time information relative to the EPAC status of children and youth referred to EPAC. Presenters: Jennifer Williams and Victoria Green

E - 8. GEORGIA'S FOSTER PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS: This workshop is an open discussion on the Georgia Foster Parent Bill of Rights and its strengths and weaknesses. Participants will receive vital information on Georgia’s Bill of Rights and contact information for your Region Vice President. This presentation will also include the grievance procedure for both DFCS and Private Agencies Caregivers. Handouts will include a copy of the Bill of Rights and the Grievance Procedure. Presenter: Verdell Daniels

E - 9. CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION: Conflict is inevitable but how we handle it isn’t. Participants will learn positive techniques to use when you find yourself in a conflict and tempers are flying. We will discuss why people get upset, why we get upset, and what we can do about it. 

Presenter: Paul Blough
Adoptive Parent of the Year Application

Name of Nominee: ________________________________________________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________ State _________________________ Zip __________

County: ___________________________ Ph. ____________________ Region: ___________

Name of Nominator:
____________________________________________________________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________ State: ____________________ Zip: ___________

County: ___________________________ Ph.: ____________________ Region: ___________

References for Verification:

1. ____________________________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________________________

What makes this Adoptive Parent/Family the best in Georgia: (Use a separate sheet of paper if needed)
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Is the nominee a member of any civic organization or club?
The Nominee must be in good standing with AFPAG and their local agency. All applications must be postmarked by February 1, 2017. The winner will be selected by the AFPAG Awards Committee. The winner must attend the Awards Luncheon. Please mail your application to:

AFPAG Conference
101 Windsor Road
Savannah, GA 31419

Foster Parent of the Year Application

Name of Nominee: ____________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________________ State _______________ Zip ____________

County: ____________________________ Ph. ______________ Region: _______________

Name of Nominator: ___________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________________ State: __________________ Zip: __________

County: ____________________________ Ph. ______________ Region: _______________

References for Verification:

1. __________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________________

What makes this Foster Parent/Family the best in Georgia? (Use a separate sheet of paper if needed)

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Is the nominee a member of any civic organization or club?

____________________________________________________________________________
The Nominee must be in good standing with AFPAG and their local agency. All applications must be postmarked by February 1, 2017. The winner will be selected by the AFPAG Awards Committee. The winner must attend the Awards Luncheon. Please mail your application to:

AFPAG Conference
101 Windsor Road
Savannah, GA 31349

Caseworker of the Year Application

Name of Nominee: _____________________________________________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________ State _________________________ Zip __________

County: ___________________________ Ph. _____________________ Region: ___________

Name of Nominator: ___________________________________________________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________________________________

City: ________________________________________ State: ____________________ Zip: ___________

County: ____________________________________ Ph.: ____________________ Region: ___________

References for Verification:

1. _______________________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________________________________

What makes this person the BEST caseworker in Georgia? (Use a separate sheet of paper if needed).

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Is the Nominee a member of any civic organization or club?

__________________________________________________________________________________
All application must be postmarked by February 1, 2017. The winner will be selected by the AFPAG Awards Committee. The winner must attend the Awards Luncheon. Please mail your application to:

AFPAG Conference
101 Windsor Road
Savannah, GA 31419

Association of Excellence Award Application

Name of the Association: _____________________________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________ State: ___________________________ Zip: __________

County: ___________________________ Ph.: ___________________________ Region: __________

Name of Nominator: ____________________________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________ State: ___________________________ Zip: __________

County: ___________________________ Ph.: ___________________________ Region: __________

References for Verification:

1. __________________________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________________________________

What makes this Local Association the BEST in Georgia: (Use a Separate Sheet of paper if needed)

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All Applications must be postmarked by February 1, 2017. The winner will be selected by the AFPAG Awards Committee. The winner must have a representative at the Awards Luncheon. Please mail your application to:
AFPAG Conference
101 Windsor Road
Savannah, GA 31419

Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia
Presents
The Winnie Levinson Scholarship Application

This year the Adoptive/Foster Parent Association of Georgia will award 2 scholarships in the amount of $1000.00 each.

The Winnie Levinson Scholarship is awarded to deserving students who are Georgia residents and are in foster care. PARENTS MUST BE A MEMBER of the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia (AFPAG.) The Winnie Levinson Scholarship is sent directly to the student to be used for any educational purpose the student may encounter. It is payable in two payments; one at the start of the fall semester, and one at the start of the spring semester. Proof of enrollment is required before payment can be issued.

The applicant need not attend a traditional college. Attending a technical school, business school or a post-secondary school would also qualify for the scholarship. We encourage all that qualify to apply. The following is a list of all the information we need to process the application.

✓ Personal Data – Name, Address, Phone Number and E-Mail

✓ Recommendations from three people who do not reside with you and have known you for a minimum of one year, and one recommendation from your local DFCS on their letterhead.

✓ A short (500 word) essay on why you should receive this scholarship.

✓ A copy of your transcript of your high school grades.

✓ A letter from one of your parents stating why you should receive this scholarship.
You can apply by mailing the above information to: AFPAG
101 Windsor Road,
Savannah, Georgia 31419
Or: E-mail it to- verdell.daniels@yahoo.com

Speakers’ Biographies

Michelle Barclay, Esquire: Michelle Barclay has been the staff to the Supreme Court of Georgia’s Commission on Justice for Children’s since 1996. Before becoming a lawyer, she was a nurse, specializing in ICU and trauma care at both Grady and Emory Hospitals. Her degrees include a Juris Doctor from Emory University School of Law. She is also co-founder (along with her husband Andrew Barclay) of the Barton Child Law and Policy Center at Emory University.

Judge William Bartles: The Honorable Judge Bartles is the Juvenile Court Judge of Henry County. He received his Law Degree from the University of Georgia. Judge Bartles have done many workshops and presentation all across the U.S.

Estelline Beamon, BSW, MPA: Estelline Beamon is a State of Georgia, GA-RYSE Independent Living Specialist in Region 12 of the Division of Family of Children Services. Ms. Beamon has worked at the Division with foster care youth transitioning to adulthood since September 2003. Prior to working with the Division, she worked as the Program Specialist/Tutor Coordinator serving youth in the Upward Bound/TRiO Program at Savannah State University preparing youth to successfully matriculate and graduate from institutions of postsecondary learning.

Tierica Berry: Ms. Berry is an emotional success strategist and women’s empowerment leader and founder of a women’s standard. She spends most of her time delivering staff development training and youth presentations. With heavy emphasis on emotional success, Ms. Berry has managed to motivate and redirect some of the most troubled youth with her engaging and relevant programs. In partnership with Hustle University and the Make Way Program, her organization services various types of youth organizations from public school districts to youth detention centers. She has received national recognition for her creative writing program, the Anthology Project, and as a publisher/author of multiple empowerment books.

Paul Blough: Mr. Blough is CEO and founder of Blough Tech, a nationally recognized IT service company focused on helping small business solve their problems through technology. Mr. Blough and his wife Kim are 25 plus year veteran foster parents, have had over 110 plus children in their home and have adopted six. They are actively involved in trying to break the cycle that leads many foster children to repeat the mistakes of their birth parents. Mr. Blough also serves on the board of directors for both the local and state foster parent organizations. He has also been a part of church ministry since he was 15 and currently is the pastor of Barnett’s Creek Baptist Church.

Charles and Suzette Brown: Debra Suzette Brown and Charles Allen Brown have been married for 30 years. Mrs. Brown has an Associate Degree in Business Management and a BA in Psychology. She has
been employed with Families First - Georgia Center for Resources and Support for over five years. Mr. Brown has an Associate Degree in Photography from the Atlanta Art Institute and has been employed with the Atlanta Public School System. They are raising their 8 year old granddaughter.

**Jerry Bruce, Esquire:** Jerry Bruce has been a parent attorney, Guardian ad Litem, delinquency and adult prosecutor, delinquency and adult defender, Special Assistant Attorney General representing DFCS, and a juvenile court judge – essentially every job an attorney can do in Georgia’s Juvenile Court. He is currently involved in child welfare law and policy work for state agencies, educational institutions, and regularly presents and trains on child welfare issues.

**Deborah Burrus:** Deborah Burrus is the DFCS Permanency Director for the State of Georgia. Ms. Burrus has worked passionately in the field of child welfare since 1992. Most of Ms. Burrus’s tenure has been spent working in adoptions. Currently, as the Permanency Director, Ms. Burrus is responsible for leading her team’s efforts to achieve timely and safe permanency outcomes for children in foster care. In this position, she oversees the Adoption Program, Guardianship Program and the recruitment of adoptive homes. Ms. Burrus has served on the National Foster Care Managers Board and has a Bachelor’s of Science Degree from Auburn University.

**Donjai Calhoun:** Ms. Calhoun is the Head Start Collaboration Manager at the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. He supports the well-being of children in foster care ages birth through five by connecting them to Head Start and Early Head Start Programs statewide. He is most passionate about ensuring all children have access to quality early childhood education that will promote healthy brain development and ultimately increase their chance for successful adulthood. He has 12 years of early childhood development and youth programming experience.

**Chris and Jen Cannington:** The Cannington were foster parents and now they are adoptive parents of two ADHD children. Mr. Cannington has personal insight into living with this line of illness as he has struggled with it himself. Mr. Cannington has used his personal experience to help children cope and understand ADHD from the inside out. Mrs. Cannington is a licensed Professional Counselor. She has worked in Community Mental Health with both Adult and Child and Adolescent Population. She has spent the last 8 years working with the Department of Juvenile Justice.

**Verdell Daniels:** Mr. Daniels was born in Eastman (Dodge County), Georgia. He graduated from Peabody High School and attended South College and Savannah State University. Mr. Daniels holds an Associate Degree in Business Administration. He is an U.S. Marine Corp veteran, retired from CSX Railroad and is currently the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia’s President. The Daniels have been foster parents since 1987. Mr. and Mrs. Daniels have been married for 42 years. They have five biological children, two adoptive children and have been foster parents to over a 150 children.

**Rebecca Davidson:** Ms. Davidson has worked 18 years with DFCS (14 years with the Social Services side). Currently she serves as Social Services Supervisor for Resource Development in Region 2. She has worked all over the state of Georgia in many different roles including Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services.

**John DeGarmo:** Dr. DeGarmo wrote his dissertation on “The Challenges that Foster Children Face While in Rural School” and is the author of “Fostering Love” and “One Foster Parent’s Journey”. Dr. DeGarmo is also a dynamic and informative speaker and trainer on the foster care system, traveling across the USA on regular basis. He has spoken with and trained foster parent associations, business, and numerous
nonprofit organizations. He is also a regular contributor to several publications and newsletters throughout the USA and Europe on the topic of foster care. Dr. DeGarmo has been a foster parent for over twelve years.

**Erika Dennis**: Ms. Dennis is the newest Credit Report Specialist to GARYSE/ILP team. She has worked in the consumer finance industry for the past few years to promote both financial stability and independence amongst families and individuals. She has extensive background in reading and interpreting credit reports as well as resolving inaccuracies when necessary. Ms. Dennis holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting with a Minor in Management from Georgia Southern University.

**Rachel M. Ewald**: Mrs. Ewald is the founder and Executive Director of the Foster Care Support Foundation. The Ewalds fostered 50 children which prompted her to create the Foster Care Support Foundation in 1996. They started the foundation in their garage. The Foster Care Support Foundation has served over 3,500 families since it’s inception. Mrs. Ewald served on the Governor’s Office of Children and Families Advisory Board under Governor Sonny Perdue and now serves in the state CAPTA committee. She is the recipients of numerous awards, stemming from her accomplishments through child advocacy.

**Fabienne Michel**: Ms. Michel currently serves as the District 2 CAPS Field Program Specialist. She relocated to Georgia from New York City nine years ago. She first worked with the Department of Family and Children Services as a Gwinnett County Social Services Case Manager. During her tenure in Gwinnett County, she moved up to Supervisor, Administrator and Acting Program Director. Ms. Michel has over 15 years of experience in the field of social work. She is a graduate of Fordham University’s School of Social Work. She is married and has three children.

**Regina R. Fraser**: Mrs. Fraser is originally from Evansville, Indiana and graduated from the University of Southern Indiana. She moved to Hinesville, Georgia in May 2004 and began working with the Division of Family and Children Services in August 2004. She has worked in all Social Services Program areas: Child Protective Services Investigations, Family Preservations, Foster Care, Resource Development and began as the Region 12 Resource Development Supervisor in July 2015.

**Brenda Gillespie LMSW**: Mrs. Gillespie is the Program Manager for the Georgia Center for Resources and Support. She is an LMSW, having graduated from the University of Georgia’s School of Social Work. She retired from DFCS in 2004. She led the development of IMPACT, a continuum of services for prospective foster and adoptive families. She was a consultant for EMBRACE (the Foster Family Foundation of Georgia Inc.) and program director for Miriam’s Way (a Faith Based community organization). Mrs. Gillespie is the mother of three and the grandmother of four.

**Craig Goodmark, Esquire**: Attorney Craig Goodmark is currently running his own small private education law practice, having previously worked for nine years at Atlanta Legal Aid Society. He received his education at University of Florida School of Law and Wake Forest University, earning a bachelor’s degree in history.

**Victoria Green**: Ms. Green is an EPAC Education Support Monitor for Region 12. Ms. Green received her Bachelor’s Degree in Music Therapy and her Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Georgia. In addition, she holds an Educational Specialist degree from Georgia Southern University. Ms. Green has dedicated her career to educating and serving children. She has worked both as a music teacher and a professional school counselor for a number of years in the Glynn County School
System. Ms. Green has worked as an Adoption Specialist, Recruiter, Trainer, and most recently as a Glynn County Permanency Case Manager.

**Angela Harris:** Ms. Harris is a Licensed Counselor who studied through Georgia Southern University and South University. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Justice Studies and a Master’s Degree in Professional Counseling. Ms. Harris has 20 years of experience with the state of Georgia, and in other various settings working with individuals, couples, and families. She has extensive experience with high risk populations, at risk youth, difficult adjustments, trauma, victims of abuse, depression, anxiety, and impulse control problems.

**Betty Hasting:** Ms. Hasting has been a foster parent for over 27 years. She is past president of the Tenn. State Foster and Adoptive Association. She has served on the National Foster Parent Board of Directors. Ms. Hasting has served in every area of foster care and from her own experiences, bring reasons as to why we must “KEEP ON FOSTERING”.

**Candis Jones:** Candis Jones began her career with the State of Georgia in 1997 in the Department of Corrections. In 2002, she transitioned to the Division of Family and Children Services. Mrs. Jones has served in several positions with the Division, from the Office of Family Independence to the Office of Child Welfare with a bulk of her tenure in Child Welfare. She also served as Director of Thomas County DFCS. In December 2015, she became the Director of the Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Unit in where she has been working feverishly to develop a strong and supportive network for Georgia’s caregivers and children.

**Marjorie Jones, LPN:** Mrs. Marjorie Jones is a Certified Nurse’s Assistance. She was employed for eight years at Memorial Mission Hospital in Ashville N.C. Mrs. Jones served five years in the U.S. Army as an Administrative Assistant. She was station at Fort Carson, Colorado and in Germany. After her tour of duty was over, she and her husband lived in Fort Hood, Texas for 28 years. During that time, she furthered her education by obtaining a Nursing License at Temple Junior College and at the University of Texas. Mrs. Jones is a foster and adoptive parent and a member of the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia’s Board of Directors.

**Judge Michael Key:** The Honorable Judge Michael Key has served on the Juvenile Court bench in Troup County, Georgia, since 1989 and is a partner in the law firm of Key & Gordy, P.C. A graduate of Emory University School of Law, Judge Key served in the U.S. Air Force from 1971-1975. Judge Key is the past President of the Juvenile Court of Judges. He is a member of the Georgia Child Support Guidelines Commission and served as chair of the Georgia Commission on Family Violence.

**Josh Kroll:** Mr. Kroll is the Project Coordinator of the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center, a program of the North American Council on Adoptable Children. He has worked at NACAC for over 17 years, almost all those years as either program assistant to the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center or Project Coordinator for the project. In his years working with the Adoption Subsidy Resource Center, he gained an extensive knowledge of federal and state laws and policies that he draws upon to answer thousands of inquiries from parents, workers, and administrators.

**Karen Lambie:** Now retired, Dr. Lambie taught for a total of 32 years at both elementary school and University Levels. She has a PH.D. in educational psychology from the University of Georgia. Before retiring in 2010, she made the decision to dedicate the rest of her life to work for social change and raise awareness concerning human rights violations. She serves on the Board of Directors for Savannah
Working against Human Trafficking (SWAHT), volunteers for Prevent Child Abuse Bulloch County, Ambassador of Hope for Shared Hope International, served on the Board of Advisors for the Malaika Foundation for Disadvantaged Girls in Kenya and is a foster Parent for Bulloch County DFCS.

**Natasha LaMarr:** Dr. LaMarr has a doctorate in Counseling Education and Supervision. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Prepared Enrich Facilitator, with a certification in Marriage and Family Therapy. She is an approved clinical supervisor and a national certified counselor with over 15 years of experience working with families, couples, teens, adolescents, and children. She has also worked in higher education as a professor at Mercer University, Devry University and Bauder College. The focus of Dr. LaMarr’s research has been on the effects of journal, marriage and family, integrating spirituality into counseling and the dissolution of marriage with in the community.

**Bonnie Lockwood:** Mrs. Lockwood has a Master’s of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling from Georgia State University. She has been a Licensed Professional Counselor in Georgia since 1994. She has served as the Director of Cornerstones Counseling Center since 1997. Mrs. Lockwood has studied and worked with attachment disorders for several years. She also specializes in addiction and child welfare work. Mrs. Lockwood is married and has two teenage girls.

**Kristi Lovelace:** The Honorable Judge Lovelace practices law in central Georgia. She is certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist by the National Association of Counsel for Children, represents parents and children, and works as a municipal court judge.

**Devin Martin:** Mr. Martin is a graduate of Alabama State University where he received his Bachelor Degree in 2003 and a Master’s in 2006. In 2007, he joined the Department of Human Services, where he worked seven years with the Office of Inspector General as a Criminal History Specialist. Mr. Martin joined GA/RYSE Independent Living Program as a Credit Report Specialist in 2014. In his new role, he helped to create the blueprint and foundation of initiating and completing the credit reporting process to serve foster youth through the State of Georgia.

**Judy Nino:** Mrs. Nino currently serves as a CAPS Field Program Specialist assisting multiple Districts in South Georgia. Mrs. Nino has over 28 years of experience in providing services to Georgia families while working with the Department of Family and Children Services. Her work experience includes functioning as an OFI and Social Services Case Manager as well as serving as a Supervisor at Ware County DFCS in both program areas before moving up to Child Care Field Program Specialist.

**Adrian Owens:** Mr. Owens has been employed with the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) for 12 years. He began his career with DFCS in Gwinnett County in 2003 in the adoption unit. In 2005, Mr. Owens joined the DFCS State Adoption Unit as a Policy Specialist. In 2008, Mr. Owens became Program Manager in the Social Services Administration Unit (SSAU) and in 2012, he became the SSAU Director. Mr. Owens and his staff provide management and oversight of the IV-E Adoption Assistance program, post—adoption contracts and services, adoption assistance policy, Interstate Adoption/Foster care (ICAMA) Medicaid, training and consultation and adoption records management.

**Tom Rawlings:** Tom Rawlings has a long record of using his legal and advocacy skills on behalf of those who most need help, especially children and families. For the past 12 years, he has served in numerous policy, legal, and court leadership role. As the first full time, Juvenile Court Judge for Georgia’s Middle Circuit, he started an innovative mental therapy program for children and youth in his court and their families.
**Debra Ross, MSW – Program Coordinator/ Parent Coach:** Debra Ross, MSW has worked in the field of Social Work for more than 30 + years. She has worked in both the private and public sector providing a unique approach to ensuring the prevention, protection and preservation of parents and children. Her creative approach and innovative strategies along with years of child welfare experience help to make her an exceptional advocate for families and children.

**Anthony Stover:** Mr. Stover is the Courts Training Coordinator for MAAC/Georgia Empowerment. He is also in the United States Navy Reserve.

**Renee Sylvester, MA, LAPC:** Mrs. Sylvester has been working with families involved with child welfare system in Georgia since 2007. During that time, Mrs. Sylvester has provided the families skills and resources needed to provide children with safety, stability, and permanency. Mrs. Sylvester has also been employed as an adjunct instructor with South University, where she taught Lifespan Development and Human Sexuality.

**Teresa Thornton Reese:** Ms. Reese is an Independent Living Specialist for the Division of Family and Children Services. She has worked for the Division of Family and Children Services since November 2000. Throughout Ms. Reese’s career in DFCS, she worked as a Social Services Case Manager in Foster Care prior to moving to current position in June 2013. She is a graduate of Mercer University in which she received a Women’s Back to School Scholarship and was selected for Governor’s Internship.

**Kristen Toliver:** Mrs. Toliver is the Wellness Programming Assessment and Consultation (WPAC) Director at the Division of Family and Children Services, where she oversees the physical and behavioral health needs of children in the agency’s custody. She graduated from Clark Atlanta University with a bachelor’s degree in Social Work in 2000 and later earned a master’s degree in Social Work. Mrs. Toliver has been with the Division of Family and Children Services for over twelve years in the positions of a Case Manager, Supervisor, Administrator, Field Program Specialist and Program Director. Mrs. Toliver is dedicated to improving the well-being needs of children in the foster care system.

**Leah Waters:** Mrs. Waters has been with the Department of Family and Children Services for 14 years. Mrs. Waters started off as a Foster Care Case Manager before being promoted to Adoption and Resource Development Supervisor where she spent most her DFCS career recruiting Foster and Adoptive Families and working to finalize adoptions. Mrs. Waters joined Social Services Administration Unit (SUAU) working in the title IV-E Adoption Assistance in February 2014. In addition to managing the contract with Ga. Center Resources and Support, Mrs. Waters assists with policy consultation, ICAMA Medicaid and approves Special Services Adoption Assistance requests.

**Jennifer Williams:** Ms. Williams is the Assistant Program Manager for the Educational Programming Assessment and Consultation Unit of Georgia’s Division of Family and Children Services. Ms. Williams is the direct supervisor for a team of 15 Education Support Monitors who serve as educational advocates for children in foster care throughout the State of Georgia. Ms. Williams is a strong advocate for the education of children and has 20 + years of experience working with populations of children and youth most vulnerable to academic failure. She holds an undergraduate degree in English from Clark University and a Master’s in Public Administration from Troy University. Ms. Williams is currently working towards her PhD in Public Policy and Administration.
**Rita Young:** Ms. Young is a private consultant, who specializes in training, project management, and stakeholder engagement. Her professional goal is to support the private and public sector with the latest information, programming and products to create efficiencies and foster innovation in serving and supporting individuals with disabilities. As an experienced coach and facilitator, Ms. Young formerly directed Partners in Policymaking, a well-recognized leadership program for families and individual with disabilities. Ms. Young also directed a justice-training program. As a public policy director, she worked with the Georgia General Assembly to advocate for funding for home and community base services.