



Volunteer Emergency Families for Children Metro-Richmond & Tri-Cities Region

Family Newsletter

Volume 8, Issue 3

April, 2007

Greetings

Hello everyone,

As you all know, in February, Lisa Simes resigned from VEFC to accept a position with CASA. Even though you all should have received a letter with updated contact information, I want to give it here as well.

For the rest of this fiscal year, Pat Spory, VEFC Assistant Director of Programs, and I will be your staff points of contact. Pat will be working with the agencies and Pam Woltz to make placements and is available to you should something come up and you need to reach VEFC.

I will be the point of contact for council meetings and will coordinate the recruiting and training of new VEFC host families.

Pat and I look forward to meeting all of you at the June picnic! In the meantime, please feel free to contact either of us with any questions, comments or concerns you may have. Thank you all for your commitment to the children we serve through VEFC.

Sincerely,

Kym Ludwig
VEFC Director of Programs
703-606-8853
kludwig@vefc.org

Pat Spory
VEFC Assistant Director of Programs
540-636-9858
pspory@vefc.org

Thank You, Lisa

I wanted to take a few moments in this newsletter to thank Lisa Simes for all her hard work and dedication to VEFC. Lisa was first hired as our VEFC PLUS Coordinator, and really grew that program into something that kids will remember their entire lives. Once we decided that VEFC needed to concentrate on its shelter care programs, Lisa became our Richmond Metro Area Program Coordinator. With all of her help, Lisa turned this area into one of the strongest, most committed, in the state.

It is with mixed emotions that we say goodbye to such a dedicated staff person. Lisa, we want you to grow professionally and use your talents to help others, but we will miss you so much here at VEFC. We thank you for all your hard work and look forward to our continued relationship with you as a VEFC Host Family. Thank you!!!

Kym Ludwig
VEFC Director of Programs

Do you have a new cell phone number or email address? If any of your basic information has changed, please let us know so we can still reach you!

Reminders

Reporting a placement: Please remember to contact the VEFC Central Office at 804-379-7767 within 24 hours of taking a placement. This helps us to keep accurate records and allows us to make adjustments for any changes in placement dates that occur after your last conversation with the program coordinator or volunteer placement coordinator.

Family Availability: Please let us know of any plans to be out of town and/or unavailable to take a placement. It saves time when we are making placement phone calls to know if a family is unavailable for a specific length of time.

Goodbye

“It’s never easy to leave VEFC.” So proclaimed a wise colleague of mine and she couldn’t have been more right...

It was one of the toughest decisions I have ever made, but in late January, I accepted the volunteer coordinator position for Henrico CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate).

Through my association with VEFC over the past nine years, I have had the privilege to meet the most caring, kind, big hearted people anyone could ever hope to meet - first as the VEFC PLUS Mentoring Program Coordinator and later as the Metro-Richmond and Tri-Cities Shelter Care Program Coordinator.

Throughout my tenure with VEFC, I was constantly inspired by the willingness of our volunteers to juggle their own busy schedules to help children in crisis. From the VEFC family who happily offered to shelter 3 siblings even while supervising 20 plus Boy Scouts on a day retreat (“we’ll just take them along”) to our wonderful Community Council members who give of their time so generously – all of you, families, leaders, staff, you are all amazing people that have made the world a better place, one child at a time.

Although my career path has changed, I will remain a VEFC advocate for life and hope that you will stay committed to this wonderful organization as well.

I know our paths will cross again and please remember that I am just a phone call away if you ever want to share a great VEFC story!

Lisa Simes

Help Wanted

VEFC Metro Richmond Community Council has the following volunteer opportunities open:

Training Coordinator: Volunteer mails out information to all people inquiring about becoming a VEFC host home volunteer, keeps a log of interested people, and notifies them of upcoming training dates.

Church Coordinator: Volunteer contacts local churches to book speaking engagements for VEFC staff. Volunteer is also responsible for updating church contact information.

All materials and postage are provided by VEFC.

The local community council meets monthly to help promote the mission of VEFC within the community. There are other positions available. We welcome new ideas. If you would like a complete list of our volunteer opportunities to see how you could be of help please contact our council chair, Herb Senning, at herb.sening@anthem.com or 550-7687.

In-Service Training: Our local council would like to sponsor a training session sometime in the next few months. If you have any ideas for topics that would be helpful, please let Kym know.

Annual Picnic

You’re all invited... ..

To the Annual VEFC

Family Appreciation Picnic

Sunday, June 10, 4:30 p.m.

Brandermill Picnic Pavilions at Sunday Park

Come enjoy a cookout with all the fixins’, door prizes, play area for kids and pontoon boat tours. Bring some bread to feed the ducks or fishing gear if you like to fish. It’s a great time to enjoy the outdoors and share stories with other VEFC families.

Invitations and RSVP cards are in the mail. If you have any questions, contact Diane Conley at 272-3654 or conleyfd@aol.com.

Hope to see you there!!!

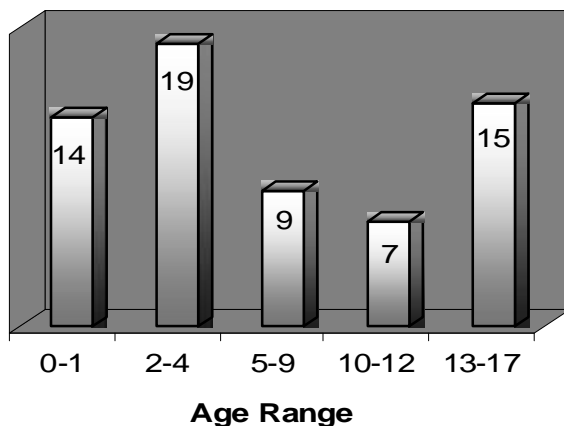
Placement Activity

For the first three-quarters of our fiscal year, July 1, 2006 through March 31, 2007, we received 112 placement requests and filled 64 of them. 47 were boys, 17 were girls. The most common reason that a placement was not filled was because the agency found another place for the child, or the request was cancelled. We never had to turn an agency down because we didn't have a VEFC family available. That's an amazing statistic! Thank you families for being so willing to serve.

Activity levels varied a lot during the nine month period, as you can see below:

Month	Requests	Placements
July	7	3
August	20	9
September	12	8
October	23	17
November	13	4
December	10	8
January	9	7
February	8	2
March	10	6

Most of the placements were young children or teenagers:



Host Family Spotlight

I am SO glad there is a VEFC!! This sums up the feelings of Carol Kidd when it comes to our organization. Carol and her husband Bill have served as a host family for the past year.

Carol is a North Carolina native but moved to Richmond almost 40 years ago when she married Bill, who grew up here. Last year, while watching the Call 12 Helpline on Channel 12, she heard about VEFC's need for help. She called the station, got the information, and the rest is history!

Carol and Bill have had three placements. While each placement was different, they were all alike in the way they left the couple feeling....like they received much more than they gave. It gave them a wonderful feeling to be able to spend quality time with the children and treat them as special people. They truly appreciated being able to give the children a safe, clean and loving home, if only for a few days.

So, for the children we serve and the host families who serve them, we all continue to be *SO glad there is a VEFC!!*

To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you lived. This is to have succeeded.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ask Joan

Dear Joan,

Recently, we had a 16-year-old girl stay with us for two weeks. Even though my family enjoyed her stay, we all noticed that in some ways she seemed a lot younger than other 16-year-olds we know. Will this be common in all of our teen placements?

Dear Reader,

Even in the most stable family situations, teenagers often mature at different rates. Family configurations, support and surroundings all affect how children grow up. Imagine then the effect that abuse or neglect has on a growing child—emotional development is often interrupted. The child may act older or younger than they actually are as a way of coping and compensating for their circumstances. Perhaps they believe that adults won't expect as much from them if they act younger, or maybe the teen has never been involved with an adult who modeled appropriate adult behaviors for them. It's enough of a challenge to grow up with a family that supports you and take responsibility for your care. The absence of these things makes the process even harder.

Often the best way to build rapport with teenagers, who often are very guarded, is to “meet them where they are.” Find out what they are interested in and ask them why—show that you are interested in their world. Unfortunately, adults often have a negative opinion of teens, finding them difficult to deal with and understand. Sometime, the best first step is just listening to them with an open mind, regardless of your opinion of the subject matter. Every positive conversation that a teen has with an adult, especially a teen who has had an abusive childhood, will help them feel more open and secure. That validation, in turn, will help give them the confidence they need to mature and take chances, a little bit at a time.

Joan Daly is a member of the VEFC Community Council and a qualified mental health provider. She recently received her M.A. in Community Counseling from Northeastern Illinois University, and works for The Virginia Institute of Systemic Treatment, providing intensive in-home therapy for children ages 8 to 18. Her clients often have truancy problems, behavior problems, repeated involvement with the judicial system, or are at risk of being removed from their homes.

Joan has three children (including two teenagers) and has lived in Virginia for almost three years. She previously worked as a freelance graphic designer and illustrator. Joan has agreed to write a column for our newsletter addressing issues of interest to the VEFC families. We welcome your questions for Joan. Please feel free to email them to kludwig@vefc.org.

Jimmy's Story

Jimmy came to Molly and Irene's house for a week of respite from his foster family, to whom he was very attached. Because they had a weeks' notice, they were able to clear their schedules somewhat to make this a true vacation for him and do some fun activities. They were warned by the social worker that he was shy and backward but they did not find that to be true at all. The social worker spent time helping him get settled in and checked on him part way into the placement. He proved to be very open, outgoing, and fun-loving. He really hit it off with Molly's mother, who came to visit during Jimmy's stay. When he called home to talk with his foster family he told them what a great time he was having. Molly said she learned more about skateboarding than she ever wanted to know! At the skateboard park where they took him, he overcame his “shyness” and walked up to a group of older boys, saying, “Hi, I'm Jimmy and I'm just learning how to skateboard. Can you help me?” Jimmy was a joy to have around.

John's Story

John, a 6-year-old boy, came to his VEFC family directly from his elementary school, where it was discovered that John was a missing child from Rhode Island. Apparently he was abducted by his mother when he was 2 1/2 years old after the court gave his father full custody. He and his mother had been on the run every since. John's mother was subsequently arrested and John stayed with his VEFC family until he could be taken back to his father. He was very scared and alone as he had few memories of his father. Those he did have were mostly unpleasant stories his mother had told him. He expressed his fears to the VEFC mom, who took him under her wing, letting him talk and sharing with him that it was okay to be a little scared, and that she was there for him in his time of need. When the time came to meet the social worker at the airport for his flight home, he asked the VEFC family to go to the airport with him so he would have some familiar faces around him. The family was sad to see him go, but glad they were there for him when he had no place to turn.