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August 2010

Miami Child Advocate Newsletter

Vol 1, Issue 1



# MiamiCAN

Raising  
Community  
Awareness of  
Children's Needs



## Welcome!

Welcome to MiamiCAN (Miami Child Advocate Newsletter), a Foster Care Review initiative to keep you informed of issues our children are facing and to provide quick links to resources that will enable you to [Take Action](#) through volunteering, speaking up or donating to support our efforts. We will also highlight solutions and success stories and keep you up to date on the happenings of FCR.

## Trafficking Here in Florida?



If you saw the recent movie "Taken" you no doubt remember the sensation of your heart pounding as you cheered Liam Neeson in his pursuit to protect his beloved daughter who had been kidnapped to be sold into sexual slavery.

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## Quick Links

[Take Action!](#)

## [Donate Today](#)

Of course that was a movie and the script could be written so that the offender was on the other side of the globe, the bad guys were punished and all was well in the end. But in reality, it is much more complex and closer to home.

Thankfully, the issue has received increased attention recently. The [U.S. Department of State's 2010 Trafficking in Persons Report](#) includes a first time ranking of the United States and its counter trafficking activities. It recognizes the U.S. as a source, transit and destination country for trafficking in persons for both labor and forced prostitution. In fact, the ease of transport and access to ports in South Florida has made it a prime location for several types of trafficking activities. [Shared Hope International](#) recently produced "The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking" which contains a section detailing the shocking extent of domestic minor sex trafficking in South Florida.

Homeless and runaway youth are prime targets for those who wish to profit from enslaving another human being. Here in Miami, Kristi House has taken the lead against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children ([CSEC](#)) with the creation of Project GOLD which aims to:

- Empower and raise awareness among at-risk girls,
- Identify and assist those who are in need of case coordination and mental health services; and
- Strengthen the local capacity to address the issue of CSEC.

Through Project GOLD's comprehensive approach of prevention, intervention, recovery and advocacy, Kristi House has been able to bring the community together to tackle the issue head on. In fact, Kristi House is presenting on the subject in October as part of the **Juvenile Court Lecture Series**. We applaud Kristi House for taking steps to protect our children! We encourage you to learn more by visiting [www.kristihouse.org](http://www.kristihouse.org).

## Milk and Cookies for a Better Future



Few things bring people together like the simple love of milk and cookies which is exactly what will be served at several "Milk Parties" scheduled in September throughout the state by [The Children's Movement of Florida](#). The Movement is a bi-partisan effort with the goal of ensuring that children's needs are prioritized, especially when allocating Florida's resources.

Florida trails other states on several measures of child well-being. To the leaders of the movement this is unacceptable. With an emphasis on needs during the earliest years of development, pillars of the movement include increasing access to health insurance coverage, screening for and treatment of developmental delays, opportunities for parental skill-building and providing the highest quality pre-kindergarten and child care programs.

The movement is armed with powerful statistics to show that putting children first simply makes fiscal sense. For example, some studies show that for every \$1 invested in high-quality early education programs, more than \$4 is saved in future costs borne by society at large. Their strategy has already garnered support from opposite ends of the political spectrum and almost \$1 million in funding from private sources.

Find out about the ["Milk Party"](#) scheduled near you or learn more by visiting [www.childrensmovementflorida.org](http://www.childrensmovementflorida.org).

## Real Life - Stories From Our Reviews



Natalie entered foster care as an infant. By the time she was 12, she had already seen the only parent in her life walk away and had experienced the recent heartbreak of rejection by a family who had planned to adopt her. It was only natural for her to shun the idea of adoption altogether. When FCR's Citizen Review Panel heard this, they refused to consider changing her goal of adoption and instead advocated for her to begin counseling to address the trauma of these experiences in hopes that she would once again open up to the idea. Natalie agreed to go.

In the meantime something astonishing was about to occur. A woman who had hoped to eventually adopt began a relationship with Natalie as a mentor. As time went on, Natalie's attitude shifted, the wall she had built around her heart began to crumble, and she was adopted shortly after turning 13! **What a beautiful reminder of why we are here and how a few caring people can make a real**

## *impact on the life of another!*

### FCR Happenings

#### Welcome to our newest volunteers!



Since January, 12 new volunteers have been assigned to a citizen review panel and have begun to review cases. Another 11 have completed pre-service training and will soon join them. What an exciting new group we have, including executives in the fields of business, healthcare, architecture and construction, attorneys and entrepreneurs. Many are parents and several are former foster children themselves. It is a great assortment of individuals who will bring a multi-faceted array of experiences and perspectives to our panels. Diversity is the cornerstone that makes our reviews thorough and effective.

We can't say enough to express our appreciation of each and every one of our volunteers who make FCR's work possible!

#### Announcing the newest members of FCR's Board of Directors!

We are excited to announce that we have four new members on our 2010 board of directors. Welcome:

Father of three, **Mario Rodriguez**, Lead Principal for Ernst & Young's Risk Advisory Services practice in South Florida.

Miami native **Jean Bell** who previously served on the Board of Directors of Miami Bridge Youth and Family Services. She is currently Sr. Vice President at Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

Author, **Dick Hrebik**, a retired career Marine, legal administrator and college professor. His travels have taken him to just about every corner of the globe.

**Brooke Pallot**, Strategic Sourcing Manager with The McClatchy Company. She is passionate about children's issues, especially foster care.



Our annual November fundraising luncheon at **Joe's Stone Crab** is quickly approaching. An invitation will be heading your way soon. We hope to see you there!

Thank you for reading the first issue of our MiamiCAN. We appreciate your comments and suggestions, and contributions to our newsletter. Feel free to contact us at [info@fostercarereview.org](mailto:info@fostercarereview.org).

Foster Care Review believes that the wellbeing of all children - those in Miami-Dade County and beyond- must remain first and foremost in the minds of our community. In our 20-year history, our volunteers have demonstrated this commitment by reviewing the cases of more than 41,000 foster children, advocating for the safety, wellbeing and permanency of each child during the review process, for improvements in the foster care system, and for civic engagement on behalf of the future of all children in the community. With your help, we can accomplish this and more.

Sincerely,

Ana Maria Pozo  
Executive Director  
Foster Care Review

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