



Angel Meeting Tuesday June 14th, 2022

Guest speaker was Cynette Houston with Kinship. They serve families who are supporting children who have no parental support. They only work with families who are NOT involved with the court system. They meet with families and help them to establish legal consent for services. They encourage and assist. They receive referrals from partners within the community. Cynette explained that they have various needs as each family is unique. These caregivers have support from Kinship Care, and they have support groups too. Kinship covers all of Pinellas County. They encourage and assist caregivers to have a relationship with the birth parents.

Amanda Vanlaningham with Florida Support Services spoke about the Level 1 licensing process that has been modified to help these family members. In the past, these families did not get the same funding as foster families, but the support is increasing both monetarily and in kind. It will take time though.

Kelly Johnson with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, CPI Division, added that FSS provide immediate support after a removal now, which never happened before. They are following what they do in Jacksonville, and it is working. FSS have many programs and they support the Sheriff's Office. The partnership is working well. Kelly spoke about the preservation aspect that FSS uses for removals. In Jacksonville they have a mobile Teams unit who go out within 48 hours. They are trying to implement the same in this area.

FSS and the Sheriff's office are also evaluating each removal from May 1st - June 30th, 2022, to establish how they may have prevented the removal and looking at how to flag and prevent complex cases. There have been 11 removals in Pinellas in the past month. Four with the Sheriff's Office and seven with DCF. Pinellas County has a higher number of complex cases and FSS is helping to strategize. Kelly mentioned that removals are decreasing because more services are available which allows them to make better assessments. Kelly said that lack of staffing for mental health services is a major problem and one of the priorities of FSS is to get involved before a crisis lockout. She also said that mostly 2-5-year-old children are being removed currently.

Bobbi Stevens with Healthy Start said that they are doing home visits and are taking referrals. They are fully staffed now. The nurses are working well with the families and care plans are in place. Many other agencies cannot accept referrals due to staffing issues. They are seeing more critical need families who are living in hotels and in serious need of housing. She explained about babies born to mothers addicted to drugs but that every baby is a new starting point and about reunification.

Byron with Friends of the Children shared that they will be having an achievement celebration for all 51 children. The high schoolers are getting laptops from the Angels. Angels also provided a special tricycle for an obese child, and he is so happy. Rick with Friends of the Children said that their main challenge now is to pay a living wage to the mentors who are with these children from age 4 through 18. The cost of living is so high now that they are trying to find ways to compensate and fundraise.

Lisa Perry with Better Together explained that they are a nonprofit and their aim is to divert children from going into care by partnering with churches. They have host families who have the children for 30-90 days. They currently have 20 host families in Pinellas and the Sheriff's Office has used them for cases that are non-abuse cases. The program is growing and is a wonderful resource.

Ruth with PACE Center for girls said that four girls are graduating tomorrow. Also, a success story of a girl who re-enrolled after living with her grandma. FSS involvement is part of this success.

Connie with Hero to a Child thanked the Angels for a bike that we gave to a girl through our Opportunity Outreach Program who was recently taken into care. She is delighted and living with a family member. The family have three other children and they are not receiving any funding for her yet, but she was relieved to hear that FSS are making positive changes.

Ashley said that the Angel Center is partnering with Family Support Services Suncoast starting July 1st, 2022, for the purpose of utilizing our Center to full capacity. The hours will be expanded from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday thru Friday and 10:00 am to 6:00 pm on Saturdays. We just hired a new visitation specialist, and Ashley will oversee all the operations and staff at the Center.

For the first four months ending April 30th, our "year to date" numbers are:

- Revenue: \$98,302
- Expenses: \$160,004
- Net Loss: \$61,702

Helen talked about the Gala and encouraged participation from everyone in the auction items and promoted ticket sales from July 1st, 2022. Asked agencies and members to have their baskets/items by the September Meeting.

Sandy spoke about the EXPO event on August 4th and reminded the agencies to sign up.

Sandy thanked all the agencies and meeting attendees.