

Foster Friends of NORTH CAROLINA

Providing A Brighter Future To Foster Children

FFNC Celebrates Successful 1st Year of JOURNEYS® Mentoring Program

January 2009 (Guilford County, NC)—To commemorate National Mentoring Awareness Month and the success of the first-ever mentoring program specifically designed for youth in Guilford County foster care, Foster Friends of North Carolina (FFNC) recently honored 12 individuals serving as mentors to 13 youth participating in its JOURNEYS Mentoring Program.

At the 1st Annual Celebration Dinner earlier this month, Melissa Fourrier, Executive Director of FFNC, thanked the following mentors for their service to the program: Kim & John Bowers, of High Point, and Sheryl Austin, Kathy Capps, Marty Daufelt, Sue Frye, Greensboro; Dotty Maurer, Zoe Neely, Dawn Reed, Kay Sparrow, Lori Wainright and Barbara White, all of Greensboro.

“We are very proud of our mentors. These are compassionate people who have given thousands of hours over the last 18 months to provide support for these vulnerable young people who are faced with the challenges of coping with adolescence while living away from their families, schools and communities,” said Fourrier. “We believe the strong bonds and consistent support from caring adults who are helping them connect with their community will be able to also help guide these youth in making better decisions about their lives.”

Nationwide, about half a million children experience foster care each year. Children are placed in foster care if abuse or neglect is substantiated. Guilford County has an average about 500 children in care. Unfortunately, many of the teens experience higher rates of high school failure and dropout, homelessness, joblessness, and incarceration than their peers. According to the national mentoring advocacy organization, MENTOR, however, youth with consistent mentors obtain better grades, are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, or get in trouble with the law. They are also more likely to pursue and accomplish life goals.

FFNC’s JOURNEYS Mentoring Program seeks to assist these youth in planning for personal, educational and social success by connecting them to a caring adult mentor and exposing them to cultural and educational programs. Youth in JOURNEYS are between 11 and 17 years old and most are unlikely to be reunited with their families until they are adults. In a survey conducted by FFNC of their social workers and foster parents, respondents attributed the mentoring program with helping many of the JOURNEYS youth improve their academics, self esteem, interpersonal skills and overall outlook on life.

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“FFNC joins new President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle in encouraging Americans to consider mentoring at risk youth as a way to serve our county,” added Fourrier. This month, the President and his wife Michelle spoke in strong favor of mentoring programs to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day and National Mentoring Month, which is January. FFNC is hosting a series of informational sessions for interested JOURNEYS Mentoring Program volunteers beginning in February. The dates and times are: February 19 at Noon-1 PM and 6:30-7:30 PM; and March 5 & 19 at Noon-1 pm & 6:30-7:30 PM at the FFNC Office, 603 Dolley Madison, Suite #204, 336.834.9919. Please RSVP to lori@fosterfriendsnc.org. Refreshments will be served.

In addition to the JOURNEYS Mentoring Program, FFNC has awarded more than \$70,000 since 2005 for a variety of services that help youth to attend camp, join the YMCA or athletic teams, take music or sports lessons, participate in school trips, purchase eyeglasses and hearing aids, prom dresses and tuxedos, pay for senior expenses, yearbooks and school photographs that can enrich a child’s life while he or she is in foster care. With the help of the Grateful Hearts, FFNC distributed over 500 backpacks filled with school supplies in the last two years. With the Junior League of Greensboro, FFNC sponsored an art and essay contest for children in care to share their experiences in a book that was published in 2008.

FFNC’s Annual Event is the UnitedHealthcare NC Marathon, which takes place on May 2 in downtown High Point. For more information about FFNC, its programs and how to volunteer, please check our website, www.ffnc.org, or contact Lori Wainright, Operations Manager, 336.834.9919. Our address is P.O. Box 49605, Greensboro, NC 27419.