



FALL 2009 NEWSLETTER

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FAITHBRIDGE WELCOMES NEW CHURCH PARTNERS

This fall, three metro Atlanta area churches joined the FaithBridge family, partnering with us to solve their communities’ foster care crises and extending our organizational reach to Fulton and DeKalb counties.

In August, Perimeter Church in Duluth became FaithBridge’s fifth partner church and the first in Fulton County. The foster care ministry will become part of Perimeter’s existing adoption ministry, Promises686, whose name comes from Psalms 68:6, “God sets the lonely in families (NIV).” The ministry’s mission is to mobilize and support Perimeter families and the surrounding community to serve the needs of orphans.

“Thanks to FaithBridge Foster Care, when an abused, abandoned or neglected child shows up at our church, we know what to do,” said Tim Rider, foster care advocate for Perimeter Church. “Through our foster and adoption ministry, Promise686, we are part of the foster care crisis solution, and we desire to deploy people in the communities we serve.”

In October, two DeKalb churches formed a coalition called Decatur Churches United for Foster Care. First Baptist Church of Decatur and All Souls Fellowship Church made the commitment together to serve area foster children—together.

“We had no idea there was a foster care crisis in our own community,” said Pastor Shayne Wheeler of All Souls. “Although we desire to make a difference we are not equipped to launch a foster care ministry without the system to succeed. We do not want to just create another foster care model but a community model that will service and support families to care for children and the biological family. Working together, First Baptist of Decatur and All Souls Fellowship Church can serve greater and more effectively than alone.”

Like our other church partners, these churches are in the middle of fall awareness campaigns as well as recruiting and training events. If you know someone in DeKalb or Fulton County who has been interested in getting involved with FaithBridge, now may be the time. Interested parties can contact these new church partners to find out more.

AT A GLANCE

promise686

Perimeter Church
 9500 Medlock Bridge Road/141
 Duluth, GA 30097
 678-405-2000
Pastor: Randy Pope
Foster Care Advocate:
 Tim Rider, 770-270-1798
 trider@seatecsite.com
www.perimeter.org
www.promise686.com



All Souls Fellowship
 647 E. College Ave
 Decatur, GA 30030
 404-270-9900
Pastor: Shayne Wheeler
Foster Care Advocate: Tara
 Koski, 404-378-6273
 tara_koski@yahoo.com
www.allsoulsfellowship.org



First Baptist of Decatur
 308 Clairemont Avenue
 Decatur, Georgia 30030
 404.373.1653
Pastor: Julie Pennington-Russell
Foster Care Advocate:
 Molly Turner, 404-931-6486
 mollysturner@yahoo.com
www.fbcdecatur.org

FAITHBRIDGE NAMED FEATURED PARTNER IN GEORGIA'S RAISE ME UP CAMPAIGN

FaithBridge joins area child welfare agencies in a public awareness campaign which calls attention to the struggles faced by our nation's foster children.

Have you seen the ads on TV or in the paper? Sponsored by Casey Family Programs, Raise Me Up is a national effort that offers people real opportunities to make a difference in the life of a child in their community, through education, volunteering and outreach. It features powerful TV, radio and newspaper ads that highlight the real difference people can make. There are three principal elements of the Raise Me Up campaign.

AT A
GLANCE

- **Raise Your Hand:** Connect visitors with local volunteer opportunities
- **Raise Awareness:** Learn more about helping to strengthen children and families
- **Raise Your Voice:** Provide ways for people to get involved in efforts to improve the child welfare system

To learn more or to see the ads, visit www.raisemeup.org

On October 14, Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue, joined by First Lady Mary Perdue, kicked-off the state's Raise Me Up campaign at the state Capitol. The campaign is a collaborative effort between Casey Family Programs, the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) and a host of local community partners—including FaithBridge. The multimedia campaign encourages individuals and communities to get involved with a message that states, “You don’t have to raise a foster child to raise them up. You just have to raise your hand and say you’ll help.”

The campaign kick-off event included brief words from the Governor, the signing of a proclamation for permanent families for Georgia’s children and youth, and perhaps most memorable, testimonies from two foster care alumni: Brittany Jean and Crystal Williams. Williams is a poet who closed the ceremony with a poem written for the occasion (at right).

“FaithBridge is excited to be part of this important campaign to raise awareness about the foster care crisis in Georgia and across the country,” said Bill R. Hancock, FaithBridge founder. “Working with Georgia Department of Human Services, Casey Family Programs and other area partners, we believe that we can begin to realize significant progress in our goal of changing the way America does foster care.”

ABOUT RAISE ME UP

Raise Me Up is sponsored by Casey Family Programs, the largest national foundation whose sole mission is to find permanent homes for children in foster care, and is featured in three major markets this fall: Philadelphia, New Jersey and Georgia. Advertisements direct people to the Raise Me Up website (www.raisemeup.org) where they can learn how to make a difference in the lives of foster children through local partner organizations.





RAISE ME UP

By Crystal L. Williams

I am NOT a case number in a file
piled high
while lies arise
all eyes on me.
I cry, you see
The surface me
Complete with flaws and stereotypes
Don't believe the hype!
Wipe away all the lies and see the me beneath
I'm trying to be unique
To reach my potential peak
Its essential, seek to speak life into me
Then I'll be
All that I can be
Like the army
So don't forget to arm me
With the weapons that I need
To seek the lead
To be effective in this fight
Called LIFE.
The battle's in my mind
To redefine my mental.
And my credentials
Don't exactly qualify me to be labeled essential
to society
But YOU can change me, help me, RAISE ME UP
'Cause this phase is up
Yeah I was a foster child, so what?
At some point I must grow up.
And show up at a graduation
where I wear a cap and gown
While others nap
I'm crowned the QUEEN of my DESTINY.

An alumna of the Georgia foster care system, Crystal Williams recently graduated from Emory University and is an artist who weaves together inspirational spoken words and dramatic arts to bring about change in the child welfare system.

Defying the critics
Outlasting the misfits
Not falling victim to statistics
Realizing, I'm rising
Despising failure
Not compromising
I am rising
Sizing up the lies
I gotta make sure all that dies
Cause I realize, all that it is too heavy to carry with me
Weighing me down
So I'm laying it down,
IT'S TIME TO GO HIGHER.
Ignore the liars,
This former foster kid is on fire
Inspired
To rise higher
So give me a lift
Shift your focus to address ALL of ME
Even the flaws
And equip me for the cause
Change the laws
To see me as more than a "clause in section five"
I WILL SURVIVE
I WILL ARISE
Address me as the greatness that I am,
Don't label me crazy
Or assume that I'm lazy
'Cause I'm not asking you to praise me
I'm just asking you to RAISE ME UP.

- Reprinted with permission by Crystal L. Williams; visit our website for a video performance of Crystal's poem

MEET THE HOLLOMANS

November is National Adoption Month, so we wanted to share with you the story of one special family—the Hollomans. Todd and Naomi, plus their children Angela and Samuel, became a forever family this fall. You can read more about the Hollomans and other FaithBridge families on our website.

THE HOLLOMANS: A NEW FOREVER FAMILY

Did you know that there are 129,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families? Todd and Naomi Holloman knew that there was a need for adoptive parents for foster children, and in 2008, they decided to foster and adopt two of them. Naomi recalls, “We were not able to have children and wanted to adopt, but not necessarily a baby. We wanted to take children who needed a good home out of the system.”

Through some friends at church who were foster parents, the Hollomans learned of two foster children who would become adoptable. Todd and Naomi knew in their hearts that these were the kids God had for them. They contacted FaithBridge Foster Care, attended training, completed a home study and became approved foster parents less than two months later.

As their desire to be parents became reality, they faced many of the challenges and anxieties that all first-time parents face: *Am I going to be a good mom? Can I handle this?* The Hollomans are the first to admit that adding two children to their lives was a big change. However, one year later, they are also the first to say that just as their family grew, so did their hearts and their faith. Both Naomi and Todd agree that they have “grown by leaps and bounds.”

Over the next ten months, the Hollomans invested themselves into the lives and well-being of their children. They felt it was important to treat the children as their own from the beginning, although it was not yet official. As Todd and Naomi helped the children through struggles with anxiety, grief and loss, they explained to them repeatedly that they would take care of them and love them forever.

“We’re your forever mommy and daddy,” they kept telling them. It never clicked though. Both children, but especially their daughter, had experienced so much anxiety and loss throughout their lives. She associated any court with pain, so Todd and Naomi explained that on the day of the adoption finalization, the judge would tell them that she could live there forever. However, it still did not seem to sink in.

Nearly one year after the official foster placement, the two children signed their name changes into effect at the pre-adoptive signing. In September, the adoption was finalized, and the Holloman family grew to include Angela, age six, and Samuel, age four.

The day after the adoption finalization is the one they will always remember as the day Angela understood that she had a forever family. Naomi recalls, “The next day at school, she showed her adoption certificate to her teacher and said, ‘I’m adopted. That means I don’t ever have to leave my mommy and daddy again. I don’t ever have to leave.’”

This new family celebrated the adoption with a church dedication service and their daughter’s baptism. Todd describes this as an amazing experience that was the perfect ending to the past year. “It made it final,” he says. “It made us realize, ‘These kids are [ours], [ours] to teach and [ours] to lead.’”



To hear more about the Hollomans, visit our website where you can watch a video about their journey and spiritual growth.

MEET OUR 2009 FAITHBRIDGE FAMILIES

FaithBridge exists for one reason: to change the way America does foster care. How do we do that? Through caring Christian families who, with the support of their local church, commit their time, talents and homes to the service of their community's children. Please join us in welcoming, and praying for, the new foster families below.

Steve & Marcia Allen, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Marc & Mary Lynn Arsenault, Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church
Derek & Jessie Banta, Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church
Andrew & Oksana Berkuta, First Baptist Church Woodstock
John & Jane Blakely, Corridor Church
Adam & Cindy Buckler, First Baptist Church Woodstock
James & Marissa Bottoms, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Jeff & Robin Burris, Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church
Erin Collins, Vineyard Community Church
Tim & Cindy Conley, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Robby & Trina Cox, Atlanta West Pentecostal Church
Matt & Angela Cremers, NorthStar Church
Dave & Christie DeDona, Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church
Sandra DeHotman, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Jill Dittus, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Jim & Tiffany Fredrickson, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Dean & Janice Fuqua

Scott & Sandi Gaither, Graceland Church
Bart & Coley Glasgow, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Marti Groce, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Jerry & Heather Harding, Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church
Jeff & Jenny Hodges, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Cindy Irish, Orange Hill Baptist Church
Doug & Julie Kirby, Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church
Brandon & Ashley McGraw, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Glenn & Jennifer Miller, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Chuck & Sandy Mignonet, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Todd & Lauren Miles, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Eric & Kathy Munn, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Todd & Sandra Nighman, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Shannon Rastogi, First Baptist Church Woodstock
Jeanne Sheahan & Bob Baker, Perimeter Church
Tim & Bonnie Sheley, Holy Spirit Catholic Church
Joe & Scarlett Yow, First Baptist Church Woodstock
(This list current as of October 31, 2009)

WHAT'S NEW ONLINE

RESOURCES

Last spring, Bill R. Hancock conducted a workshop based on the Family Dynamics Institute's *Fantastic Families* series, and we highlighted the lessons in our e-newsletter. You can access all six lessons in the Resources section of our site.

EVENTS

Do you want to learn more about FaithBridge Foster Care? Are you ready to participate in IMPACT Training? Check out our Events calendar to find a training session that meets your schedule.

NEWS BRIEFS

Summer came and went too quickly this year. So quickly, that we didn't get out a summer newsletter. Just in case you missed them, here are the highlights of several of our summer events.

MAY

The FaithBridge Community Enjoys a Special Family Reunion

More than 50 members of the FaithBridge community gathered at the Indian Hills Country Club on Saturday, May 16 for a family reunion celebration. The event was an opportunity for foster families to mix, mingle and get to know one another in a relaxed, fun environment as part of National Foster Care Month.

"We often hear from our foster families that they are interested in meeting other members of the FaithBridge community," said Bill R. Hancock. "We decided that a family reunion was a great way to bring everyone together."

The rain didn't dampen the festivities, which included plenty of activities for the kids: a bounce house, a D.J., a caricature artist and a visit from the Fun Bus. During a special ceremony, each foster family received a stone engraved with the FaithBridge logo, along with a set of smaller stones representing the number of foster children in that family. Bill Hancock also shared a touching letter from a biological mother explaining how grateful she was for the foster mother who cared for her children (at right).

The family reunion was well-received by everyone who attended and plans are underway to make it an annual event. Suggestions for next year's event can be shared with any FaithBridge associate.

JUNE

FaithBridge Hosts Second Annual Charity Golf Classic

On June 9, 48 golfers participated in the second annual FaithBridge Foster Care Charity Golf Classic at Bridge Mill Athletic Club. The 18-hole tournament took place on Bridge Mill's beautiful par-72 course in Canton, Georgia, which features rolling terrain and a variety of landscapes.

Golf Classic sponsors included Hilton Atlanta, Philips Arena, Massage Envy, Edwin Watts Golf, HoneyBaked Ham and other local restaurants and retail establishments. The event raised over \$5,000 to fund the needs of foster children in our community.

AUGUST

Get on the Bus Campaign to Recruit New Churches

On August 25, FaithBridge Foster Care kicked off a new campaign called *Get on the Bus* with a special luncheon at Villa Christina in Dunwoody. Pastors and lay leaders from 16 Georgia churches attended the event, which is part of a wide-reaching effort to bring together church leaders and encourage them to create independent foster care ministries.

Terence Chatmon, chief church relations officer and the sponsoring executive of the event, spoke about the significance of the campaign's name. "We are on a journey to change the way foster care is practiced in this country," he said. "We're

encouraging others to 'get on the bus' with us as we move forward in mobilizing and equipping local churches to create foster care ministries."

Attendees also heard from Pastor David McNeely of Perimeter Church, whose church is currently building a foster care ministry, and Pastor Craig Ormsby of First Baptist Church Woodstock, whose church has an active ministry.

"We have partnered with FaithBridge, who have held our hands all along the way," said Ormsby. "We've been involved in the foster care ministry for a little over a year now and have had the privilege of serving over 40 children in the homes of our church families."

The message shared by FaithBridge and its partners clearly resonated with attendees at the luncheon, many of whom pledged to take up the cause at their own churches. "I am a foster care social worker and have had a long-time interest in finding ways for the church to be involved [in foster care]," said Carrie Zook of Grace Evangelical Church in Tyrone, GA. "FaithBridge seems to address so many needs of this crisis."

Visit our site to watch the video highlights of the luncheon and to find future 'Get on the Bus' event dates.

OUR THANKS ARE NOT ENOUGH

As we head into the holidays, it's the perfect time to reflect on all the things we're grateful for—like our foster families, volunteers and friends like you. We often try to convey how much we admire and appreciate the individuals who step up and help our communities' children, but sometimes our words are not enough. Instead of writing our own thank you this holiday, we share the note below and reiterate to all foster moms and foster dads – you're truly amazing!

I just want to say "Thank you" for all that you are doing for my children. Thank you for opening your doors, but most importantly your heart to us. You are truly my angel that God sent to help us in our time of need. It's not much but I want you to know that I truly appreciate you. I know that my babies can be a handful at times! Thank you for having the patience to love them and protect them and care for them and pray over their lives. Thank you for being a great mom to them now that I can't. Thank you for loving them and treating them as if they were your own.

You have been such a wonderful person and example for me to do better. Thank you for not judging me, but praying for my family and giving me hope for my family and future. Thank you for praying for me. I will never forget what you've done for me and my children. You made me believe more because you are doing His work. You are like no foster mother that I've known. You're truly an amazing mom!

- A note received last Mother's Day from a biological mother to a FaithBridge foster mother

MEET OUR STAFF

The following associates joined FaithBridge this year. Please join us in prayers of thanksgiving and intercession on behalf of these caring individuals who work tirelessly to serve our community's foster children.

Leslie Bailey Family Consultant

Leslie Bailey is responsible for managing all aspects of a child's placement into the FaithBridge system. Previously, she was a case manager for Cobb County Department of Family and Children Services where she established safe and stable homes for children at risk. Leslie graduated from Kennesaw State University in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a concentration in criminal justice.

Chuck Campbell Community of Care Consultant

Chuck Campbell has over 25 years of experience in ministry and corporate environments. He has been a part of the governing board of his church and worked to develop leaders in the capacity of elders, deacons, teachers, and support people in order to increase effectiveness of ministries. Chuck is responsible for managing the core team training and volunteer programs for all FaithBridge partner churches.

Terence Chatmon Chief Church Relations Officer

Terence Chatmon joined FaithBridge Foster Care bringing with him over 25 years of experience in corporate affairs and ministry. He has held senior-level positions at several Fortune 500 companies and most recently served as vice president of community outreach for Focus on the Family. Terence is responsible for cultivating and developing relationships with church partners, both across Georgia and across the nation.

Julie Kirby LCSW, Foster Family Engagement and Compliance Consultant

Julie Kirby manages two roles at FaithBridge Foster Care: Foster Family Engagement and Compliance. She is responsible for managing the approval process for all foster families, which includes conducting home studies and overseeing the completion of all required paperwork. In addition, she ensures that FaithBridge complies with all state and local regulations. Julie has over 20 years experience in the mental health field with a specialization in child welfare. She received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Albion College and her Master of Social Work from Wayne State University in Michigan. Julie is also the adoptive mother of two sons.

Courtney Runyan Family Consultant

Over the last five years, Courtney Runyan has worked in a variety of child counseling and advocacy roles. Most recently, she completed an internship at SafePath Children's Advocacy Center where she was responsible for assessing child and family needs and developing appropriate treatment plans. In May, she received her master's degree in professional counseling from Georgia State University.

Alex Yeganegi Home Study Specialist

In her role as Home Study Specialist, Alex Yeganegi assists foster families with the completion of their foster home study and approval. She conducts interviews with families and provides tactical support to FaithBridge foster family consultants. She is a recent graduate of University of Georgia, where she received a Bachelor of Arts in English literature and language. Before joining FaithBridge, she worked at Discover Staffing, where she held a variety of administrative roles. A skilled communicator, Alex is also fluent in French and Farsi.



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