

Aviva Children's Services Volunteer and Visitation Programs
for Child Protective Services

Kids at Heart
SPRING 2006



**Aviva
Children's
Services**

Mission Statement

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The mission of Aviva is to enhance services that improve the quality of life for children who are victims of neglect, abuse, and poverty, and who are in the care of Child Protective Services.

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Foster Care Is More than Providing a House

Did you know that there are over half a million children in foster care in the United States? The numbers for Arizona were 9,536 on March 31, 2005. Most of these children were placed in foster care due to parental abuse or neglect. About one third of children in out-of-home care lived with relatives. Approximately 49% of children were reunified with their parents.

But what happened to those who were not reunified? Non-relatives adopted 37%, and 32% were adopted by relatives. But that left 31% of children waiting for an adoptive home.

The largest groups of children who are placed into foster care are, not surprisingly, the age groups that are difficult for any parent to handle—the toddlers and the pre-teens. But while toddlers are often placed in foster care and then adopted, the same is not true for the group of pre-teens. They often are placed in group homes until they "age out" of the system at the tender age of 18.

What happens to all those 18-year-olds? Do they suddenly become adults, and can they suddenly manage to live independently, to pay their bills, go to college or find and hold a job?

Of course not. They are just like ordinary 18-year-olds who need parents to help them with their college application, to support them while they look for

What can we as a society do for our older foster children? How can we encourage them to stay "in the system" and take advantage of the benefits that are available to them?

The best way is to become a mentor: to help an older teen prepare for independence. This may take a few years! But the effort is worth it.

their first job, or even help them fill out forms for getting a bank account or apartment. Many parents continue to provide financial and emotional support for their teenagers. But the 18-year-old foster teenager has nowhere to turn.

Now there is another option for 18-year-olds. They can choose not to age out until age 21. By staying in the system for three more years, they can continue to receive support, mostly of a financial nature. Even though many are eager to "get out of the system," those who do are less likely to graduate from high school.

In the United States, it is calculated that less than half of the 18-year-old emancipated youths graduated from high school. Fewer than one in eight graduated from a four-year college, and two-

thirds of them had been unable to stay in a job for a year. Only one out of five was self-supporting.

The *Arizona Republic* last month ran an article on Jenez Bell, an 18-year-old who had been in the system since she was 7. She aged out and found herself alone, pregnant and broke. Fortunately, she was able to go into a transitional living program that can accommodate 20 women. The counselors on staff there are able to offer help with living skills. Bell said she is grateful that when she comes "home," there is someone to listen to her. "I think just knowing someone cares about me and is here for me is making a big difference."

Aviva Children's Services is always looking for mentors, and teens form the most difficult group to match. There is even a special mentor group for those who grew up "in the system" themselves. *In My Shoes* is a program that matches those who have "lived" the experience of being a foster child with a young adult who is currently in foster care and in the process of transitioning. Former foster children who have become successful and mature are the best role models! (However, if you are not a former foster child, we still want you to mentor!)

Please do not be deterred by these grim statistics: mentoring and general assistance can accomplish great things!

May Is National Foster Care Month

This month we thank the foster parents and anyone who helps foster children—mentors, Life Book writers, caseworkers, etc. We want to acknowledge their work, and for that purpose we will have some handsome blue ribbons for you to wear during the month of May! These are available at the Aviva office. If asked, please explain that the ribbon means that they too can help, either by becoming mentors or volunteers, by donating gently-used clothing, or by becoming foster parents! For information on *In My Shoes*, visit the website, www.inmyshoesinc.org, or contact Christa Drake at (520) 323-0886, ext. 234.

Sources: National Foster Care Month website and The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, and the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, Arizona Department of Economic Security Division of Children, Youth and Families Administration for Children, Youth and Families - Child Welfare Reporting Requirements October 1, 2004 - March 31, 2005, Arizona Republic, William Hermann, February 21, 2006.

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If you have article contributions or ideas for our Fall/Winter 2006 issue, please contact Bonnie at 327-6779, ext. 13. All articles and photos by Aviva staff unless otherwise noted.

“Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes, and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted.”

Garrison Keillor

Almost 30 Years of Aviva's Growth

In 1978, a series in the *Tucson Citizen* exposed major inadequacies in Arizona's foster care system. The ensuing community criticism led to an investigation that revealed a serious lack of resources and subsequently created offers from the community to help. The CPS Volunteer Program, which spawned as a very small, grass-roots piece of the solution, began in the kitchens of Georgia Vancza and Anne Sankey. It grew quickly in the first two years — from “a few folks helping out” to around 150 volunteers. CPS confirmed its value and ensured its continuation in 1980 by contracting for paid leadership and by placing it under the auspices of La Hacienda Foster Care Resource Center.

In 1989 a transportation and parent-child visit and supervision contract was added, and a few staff were hired to perform these functions on a larger and more regular basis than was possible utilizing only volunteers. Ten years later, in 1999, when La Hacienda was acquired by a large, national agency with a different focus, Aviva Children's Services was created. The goal was to allow the Volunteer and Visitation Programs to operate locally and independently to best meet the needs of Pima County CPS.

The Volunteer Program staff has increased from two full-time positions split among four persons to five full time positions. Several program functions have been added as needs and opportunities have emerged, including soliciting monies to help fund special needs of CPS children not met by State funding, and coordinating the acquisition and disbursement to CPS of various resources.

While in-kind community resources have increased, the available number of volunteers to fill our traditional roles — mentors, tutors, social worker assistants, life book writers and related functions — has not increased. With the percentage loss of available volunteers (stay-at-home-moms) and with increased competition for volunteers among Tucson's

many worthy agencies, we struggle to maintain the numbers we began with many years ago. This at a time when Pima County's population has doubled, now reaching nearly one million, including a commensurate number of needy children and families.

We need your help in recruitment. We need you to alert us to people who might like to join us and help them make the contact with our program.

The Visitation Program is growing by leaps and bounds. The Child Welfare community has observed the important link between family reunification and frequent, good quality parent-child visits. With the resulting demand by the courts, visitation has increased from a one-hour visit per week per family to three or more hours per week for each, and we have many more families in need.

Until recently, visitation was the reward for parents who

followed their case plans — now visitation is viewed as the legal right of separated children and parents, only to be denied when there is proof it is detrimental. The thrust is to make visits family-friendly in spirit and when possible, in location. The goal is when safe, to move visits out of CPS offices, and into public places and family homes.

The Aviva Visitation Program, currently under the supervision of Cathy Tullgren, is scheduling 250+ visits per week — 1000+ per month—and we have a two-month wait to fill the waiting list of CPS visit requests. Our visit supervision staff has increased from 16 part-time persons in 1999 to 45 at the current time, with the intention of continued hiring. The office support staff has jumped from one person in the late 1990s to five at present.

So, we need your help there as well. We need our friends to think about contacts they have who might be able and willing to work as visit supervisors. You can help abused and foster children by helping us serve them better!



**by Anne Sankey,
Executive Director**

Sun Riders Care about Tucson's Children!

In 1982 the Sun Riders Motorcycle Club contacted the Child Protective Service (CPS) Volunteer Program (then under the auspices of La Hacienda Foster Care Resource Center), wanting to help kids and to create a positive image for the good-guy bikers. That first year the club collected 200 toys and \$179 in cash. Those figures rose steadily through the years. The amazing 24-year, accumulative total is 71,000 toys and \$383,698! So it was no surprise that Anne Sankey, Executive Director of Aviva, nominated this group on June 6, 2005 for the Southwest Gas "Right from the Start for Children" award. Although the Sun Riders did not win, they placed in the top five nominees, which says a lot about this group that cares so much about Tucson's children.

The annual Toy Parade is not a minor event. Planning by a volunteer group of 20 incredibly talented, committed, and altruistic club members begins immediately after the event ends in December of each year. Money is raised all year with road rallies and other events for the parade, with all of the proceeds going to Aviva. Volunteer hours average over 90 per year for each of the chairs of the event and about 40 for each of the club's members.

Planning for this successful parade includes publicity, choosing a grand marshal and securing corporate sponsors. Many police escorts are required to cover the 10-mile route. More than 4,000 motorcycle participants must be registered and coordinated. Start and finish sites must be located – sites with enough space

to accommodate the motorcyclists and spectators as well as vendors. A semi-truck must be on site for depositing and hauling toys to a CPS building for wrapping. Needless to say, this is a huge undertaking.

Having all of the toys the Sun Riders collect for children at the holidays is wonderful. Equally beneficial to the children is the money that is raised and deposited into the Aviva Children's Services Abused Children's Fund. The funds are used to support children placed in homes and shelters that are not subsidized by the state foster system. The funds pay for such things as educational supplies and fees, clothes and whatever is necessary to provide the most "typical" childhood that children in CPS custody can experience. The money also provides for food and activities during supervised visits between the parents and children, or between siblings who are living in more than one foster home or shelter. For example, a meeting at the zoo or the children's museum. The biggest demand, however, on the fund is for the purchase of cribs, beds and mattresses.

There are close to 3,000 children in out-of-home placements in Pima County and roughly 950 of those children are placed with relatives. The grandparents or aunts and uncles sometimes don't have beds for the children, or the funds to purchase them. Likewise, when children are reunited with their parents and are starting over in a new apartment, often there isn't enough money after paying all the deposits to purchase furniture.

In addition to the beds, the funds provide for teenagers who are learning to live on their own. Their requests are mostly for bikes for transportation to work and for futons or sofa sleepers since they can only afford studio apartments. Teens are assisted with graduation costs, yearbooks, prom dresses and fees for special supplies necessary to complete and pass classes.

Aviva is thankful for the Sun Riders Motorcycle Club. Folks like these help make the lives of the children who suffer from neglect, abuse and poverty better.



Who Are the Sun Riders?

by Kim Beck, Newsletter Editor

There's an engineer, a school bus driver, a small business owner, a printer, a truck driver, a homemaker, a marketing specialist, a cabinet maker, a retail clerk and many more. They like to get together and ride, which always consists of having fun. They also like to help people. This includes the children who utilize the services of Aviva.

I paid a visit to interview this group one day in early March as they prepared for their 11th Annual Spring Blast Off Suitcase Run. I spoke with the group's historian, Kerry Deblois, as he took pictures (including the group shot above). A

leather-clad burly biker walked by in a skirt. It was part of the job that day—gathering donated clothing and wearing it as they rode from one destination to the next. This "fun-raiser," while one of the more unusual, is one of many ways this group helps the children of Aviva. Deblois says the group wants the money they raise to be used locally. He also says the group of around 25 members, at any given time, is family-oriented and their fundraising focuses on kids—particularly—with the toy parade, which is in its 25th year. Keep up the good work, Sun Riders!

For information on the Sun Riders group and the great work they do, go to www.sunridersmc.org

Thank You Volunteers!

We hope you aren't disappointed that the complete list of our wonderful donors and volunteers is not printed in this issue. Due to space constraints, please accept this collective expression of our gratitude to each and all, so that we may bring you more pictures of the activities in which you participate. We are blessed to have so many wonderful volunteers who sew, knit, crochet, quilt, haul, sort, file, mentor, tutor, write and scrapbook and work alongside case managers to help them with their heavy loads.

If you are a volunteer and would like more information about volunteering in other areas, please contact Claudia or Bonnie. Those of you who sew bags or blankets might make wonderful tutors or Life Book writers. Those of you who drop off tons of donations might enjoy working in our donation closet one day a month, etc.

Do the stories of children being abused or neglected get to you and

you think there must be something you could do? You could work in CPS as a SWA (social worker assistant). We provide training, screening and hours of preparation so you could help supervise visits, make home visits, go to court, write, edit reports and help parents and children with appointments.

Looking for part-time employment? We are also hiring visit supervisors to transport children and then supervise visits between them and parents. If that sounds interesting, call Anne at 327-6779 ext. 12.

Please go to our web site www.avivatucson.org to see more about these opportunities. Pictures from the Sew-a-Thon are posted there as well. Click on special events and see how much fun these volunteers had.

Thank you again so much for all you do for our children.

—The staff of Aviva



Above, Aviva staff members were on hand to help recognize volunteers. From top, holding plaques: Marie Palmietto, Social Worker Assistant; Judy Moll, Life Book Writer; and Jessica Swift, Mentor. Van Brasell, Assistant Director of Arizona DES (on right in each picture), presented the plaques.



Pictured at left is 10-year-old Emily Van Loan, who attends St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School. She sold her handmade rosaries to make duffle bags, which she had decorated and stuffed with clothing and toys for Christmas for CPS children.

Thank you, Emily!

For the sixth year in a row this wonderful group of MISYS Healthcare Systems employees (pictured at right) held a barbeque in the parking lot of MISYS to raise money for Aviva for the holidays.



April Is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Ten Things You Can Do for Child Abuse Prevention Month

by the Child Welfare League of America

Volunteer your time. Get involved with other parents in your community. Help vulnerable children and their families. Start a playgroup. Simple support for children and parents can be the best way to prevent child abuse. After-school activities, parent education classes, mentoring programs, and respite care are some of the many ways to keep children safe from harm. Be a voice in support of these efforts in your community.

Discipline your children thoughtfully. Never discipline your child when you are upset. Give yourself time to calm down. Remember that discipline is a way to teach your child. Use privileges to encourage good behavior and time-outs to help your child regain control. Both words and actions can inflict deep, lasting wounds. Use your actions to show children and other adults that conflicts can be settled without hitting or yelling.

Support prevention programs. Too often, intervention occurs only after abuse is reported. Greater investments are needed in programs that have been proven to stop the abuse before it occurs—such as family counseling and home visits by nurses who provide assistance for newborns and their parents.

Know what child abuse is, and what the signs are. Physical and sexual abuse clearly constitute maltreatment, but so does neglect, or the failure of parents or other caregivers to provide a child with needed food, clothing, and care. Children can also be emotionally abused when they are rejected, berated, or continuously isolated. Unexplained injuries aren't the only signs of abuse—depression, fear of a certain adult, difficulty trusting others or making friends, sudden changes in eating or sleeping patterns, inappropriate sexual behavior, poor hygiene, secrecy, and hostility are often signs of family problems and may indicate a child is being neglected or physically, sexually, or emotionally abused.

Report abuse. If you witness a child being harmed or see evidence of abuse, or if a child tells you about abuse, make a report to your state's child protective services department at **888-SOS-CHILD** or local police. When talking to a child about abuse, listen carefully, assure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling an adult, and affirm that he or she is not responsible for what happened.

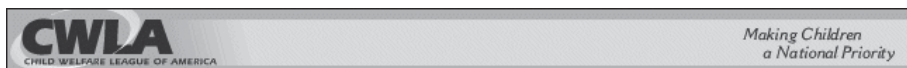
Invest in kids. Encourage leaders in the community to be supportive of children and families. Ask employers to provide family-friendly work environments. Ask your local and national lawmakers to support legislation to better protect our children and to improve their lives.

Write, visit, fax, phone, or e-mail your elected officials. Request that your governor, state legislators, county supervisors, and mayor and city council members proclaim the month of April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Notify your U.S. Representative and Senators about activities to memorialize children lost to violence.

Participate in ceremonies to memorialize children. Read the names of children lost to violence in your state, hold a candlelight vigil, or host an event at your state capital to remember those children who were lost to violence.

Raise public awareness. Distribute information about Child Abuse Prevention Month. Issue news releases, photographs, public service announcements, and compelling stories to the media, advocacy groups, parent-teacher organizations, police stations, hospitals, community centers, websites and special interest groups.

Share this information!



“SEW MUCH FUN”

Saturday, January 21, 2006, marked the 7th Annual Bags For Kids Sew-A-Thon. More than 100 volunteers toting their sewing machines and sergers began filing in early that morning ready to tackle the mountain of fabric that would become 853 bags by 4 p.m. that day. This was the first year that a raffle was held. The prize was a 1913 Singer Red Eye sewing machine. The winner was Pam Kline, who vows to have it up and running so it can be used at next year's Sew-A-Thon. Lots of food, lots of conversation, lots of bags and lots of fun would sum up the day's activities. Many thanks goes out to all of our volunteers for making this a memorable event for everyone.



Giving
time and
Having
Fun at
the 7th
Annual
Bags for
Kids
Sew-a-
Thon!



The Bags for Kids Sew-A-Thon is sponsored jointly by the Community Partnership of Southern Arizona, the DES Division of Developmental Disabilities, Child Protective Services and Aviva Children's Services.

2nd Annual Undies Sundays Drive

Aviva selected this time of year for our undies and sock drive because April is Child Abuse Prevention month and May is National Foster Care Month.

When CPS is called, children are often removed quickly from their homes without time to gather their personal belongings. And when children are moved from foster home to foster home, or to a group home, the child's clothes are frequently left behind. Grandparents or other relatives are often given temporary custody of family member's children and they

don't have the resources to provide new clothes or underwear for them.

This is one of the needs that temporarily falls between the cracks in a large system. But 'temporarily' is long enough to thoroughly humiliate a child. As of March 1, 2006, we have 2,991 children in foster care in Pima County, all of whom who went through disruptive chaos. 958 of them live with relatives. More will come. The least

we can do is give them new, clean underwear.

To help meet some of these temporary needs, CPS caseworkers come to Aviva to obtain resources, like underwear and socks. Aviva needs your help so that as a 'village' we can all help our kids. For more information on this program, please call

Bonnie at 327-6779 ext. 13 or email us at volunteeraviva@hotmail.com.

How does the Undies Sundays drive work? Please see the enclosed flyer for details.

"Philanthropy with Phlavor": Enjoy a Meal, Support Aviva

Our thanks to Pastiche Modern Eatery for their "Philanthropy with Phlavor" program. It is a way that folks who support Aviva and like to eat at Pastiche, (or would like to try it) can make both happen. The program has been going on

for some time. Each month a different non-profit benefits.

In June you can go to Pastiche and tell your server you would like to support Aviva and we will get a percentage of your check as a donation. *Bon Appetit!*

April Is Social Workers Recognition Month

Special Wish List from Aviva's Staff

CLAUDIA:

Several months ago a volunteer called and asked if we had any tickets for upcoming events, or gift certificates to take a child out for a meal, and unfortunately I did not. For those of you who don't have the time to mentor on a weekly basis or do the necessary research for Life Books, but who still want to help out, gift certificates are a wonderful resource.

If you can, donate a gift certificate for two to Olive Garden, Mimi's, or any other restaurant. Other volunteers can then provide a special treat for a child. Such outings are much appreciated and would be put to good use. Other possibilities are tickets for two for events like *The Lion King* or other performances, or museums, skating, bowling, etc.

Our children are often not able to participate in these kinds of events, and if you can assist a mentor with a special gift for a child to go to a nice restaurant or a matinee of a current performance, this is certainly a treat our children will never forget.

Please contact Claudia at 327-6779 ext. 11 or email her at claudialsandoval@yahoo.com.

BONNIE:

There is a great need for beds, cribs, tables and chairs, dressers, sofas and even desks to be donated to CPS clients. Often they are for families who are reuniting with their children and starting over from scratch. There is also a need for these items for young adults setting up their first apartments.

Our request is two-fold: we need these items donated and an even greater need is that we need volunteers with pickup trucks, large SUVs or vans to pick up the donations and deliver them to the clients.

CPS used to be able to request trucks from ADOT and that is no longer the case. So we have to depend on the few workers who have trucks to take time away from their own clients to make these pick-ups and deliveries.

If you or your friends or neighbors have usable good furniture that is no longer needed, or you have a couple of hours a week and a large vehicle, please contact Bonnie at 327-6779 ext. 13 or volunteeraviva@hotmail.com. Thank you.



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Kids at Heart is a publication of Aviva, Inc., a non-profit, non-sectarian organization.

Wish List

Donations may be dropped off at Aviva Children's Services Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Bags for Kids

- Fabric, all kinds for Bags for Kids
- Quilts
- Sewing Machines in good working order
- Yarn, all types
- Gift cards from Target or Wal-Mart
- Twin, toddler or bunk beds and bedding
- Dressers

Life Book Project

- #### Agency Needs
- Clean, nearly new spring/summer infant/children's clothes, sizes 3 months to girls/boys size 12.

- Decorative Paper
- Card Stock

**Thank
you!**

Volunteer Opportunities

Additional information about the volunteer opportunities and an application can be found on the Aviva Web site at www.avivatucson.org or call 327-6779.

- Social Worker Assistant
 - Mentor/Tutor
 - Life Story Writer
 - Child History Writer
- Visitation Supervisor/Assistant
 - *In My Shoes* Mentor
 - Office Assistant
- Donations Closet Organizer
- People to sew duffle bags, blankets, childrens' clothing and Christmas stockings

University credit is available for many volunteer positions. One to two training sessions are required for most positions.