

COMING HOME ON GIVING TUESDAY

CHS Newsletter | May 2020



Every child deserves a home.



A Message from our President

Greetings to all of our wonderful supporters. We are incredibly grateful for you in these very challenging times. As the stress of a pandemic, social distancing and economic chaos fills all of our days, that stress is particularly acute for the children, youth and families we serve with your help. In this Newsletter you will learn a little more about how the COVID-19 crisis has affected our clients and the work that we do. You will also hear how some of our work in the General Assembly this year has yielded significant results, even in this time of fiscal upheaval.

I am so proud of our CHS family at this time of great need. I am proud of our program team who continues to counsel families, match adoptive children, and provide the compassionate comfort and support that our Possibilities Project participants need at this time. I am proud of our adoptive parents who strive to explain a world of uncertainty to children who have faced so much of it in their past. I am also so proud of the children and youth we serve, who are doing their very best to figure out what all of this means for their future. They resiliently move forward, with our help and guidance, to find the future they deserve.

But gratitude is what I feel the most. Gratitude for the families who work hard every day. Gratitude for those on the front lines of both physical and mental health who help to hold our society together. And gratitude for those of you who are able to support us at his critical time. We know that circumstances may make it hard for some folks to continue their support. **But if you can, we ask that you consider a gift to CHS** which will continue to support the impactful programs you will read about below. Our work will go on with your help, and we will continue to change the lives of Virginians, one child, youth and family at a time.

Nadine Marsh-Carter, J.D.

Children's Home Society of Virginia CEO and Adoptive Parent



CHS and #GivingTuesdayNow: Please Contribute!

#GivingTuesdayNow is a new global day of giving and unity that is taking place today on May 5, 2020—as an urgent response to the unprecedented need caused by COVID-19. The work that we do is crucial every day. So is your support. Thank you for all you will do to sustain us today and in the future; because of you, our mission continues. Donate now at www.chsva.org/donate-now-chsva

Adoption Spotlight: Dylan

Meet Dylan! Dylan dreams of having a kind and loving family. He wishes he could be the smartest person in the universe. He will tell you his spirit animal is a tiger because they are brave, fierce, smart and protective. Dylan's favorite subjects in school are math and science, but he says he enjoys them all. Dylan's favorite movie is Detective Pikachu and he loves video



games (especially Minecraft and Roblox). He wants his future family to know that he may become a YouTube celebrity and wants to be a computer specialist or an astronaut when he grows up! Dylan has a beautifully unique personality and enjoys being around people. He is protective over the ones he loves—and now we need to find him a family to be protective over him.

“My ideal home would consist of a loving family where games of all types are played regularly.”

We need your help to find Dylan—and all of our waiting kids—the permanent family every child deserves. Make sure to visit our [Waiting Children](#) page on our website. Or, [CLICK HERE to make an appointment](#) to start the adoption process! Thank you!



Now Could Be a Good Time for New Homes for Older Children and Youth

Of concern among social workers in the child welfare field has been whether we will have enough foster and adoptive homes during the time of COVID-19.

Might some existing homes close? Or will new families still be interested in becoming approved? Will we will have enough new homes for older children and youth waiting for adoption?

CHS is happy to share that we have had just as many (and perhaps more!) families as ever reaching out to obtain information about adoption from foster care. Our dedicated Foster Care Services staff has been quick in responding and getting the process started for willing adopters. We continue to recruit more adoptive parents and answer all of the inquiries that fill our inbox. Although we are now conducting our orientations and training via video rather than in-person, we are still able to keep the process moving forward in hopes of preparing new families for adoption. The approval process may look different than before, but we cannot delay.

Even now, exceptional parents starting the process tell us what we’ve heard before:

“I have thought about this for 5 years.”

“I always wanted to give back.”

“My kids are in a stable place where we can add to the family.”

We are encouraged that some folks may have more time now to make contact with us. [CLICK HERE to "get started."](#) We hope everyone reading this is staying safe and enjoying extra time with family!



How Post Adoption Services Help Adoptive Families Manage the Pandemic

We work with families of adoptive children and teenagers—who often have come from pasts of disruption and trauma—to provide safety, consistency in care, and healthy relationships.

Amid the current COVID-19 pandemic, Post Adoption Services staff are continuing Parent Coaching and supporting relationships using virtual and phone meetings. For adoptive youth we are now providing fun and skill-building activities through twice weekly Facebook Live events. Also via video, we continue our programming for Parental Workshops. In these ways, CHS continues to provide that breadth of support as we have for the past decade.

Our staff encourage self-care for our parents, and time to tend to one’s own needs. The Post Adoption program was designed to help others overcome their own challenges. Our families are used to sudden changes in behavior and emotion—and we have become practiced in coaching them through tough times. The effects of this pandemic are novel and scary, but our Post Adoption team has been helping families manage the novel and scary for nearly 10 years. We feel confident we can continue to be that uniquely adoption-competent and trauma-informed service provider for them now and moving forward.

The Possibilities Project Provides A Beacon of Hope for Lives Disrupted by the Coronavirus

Violet, who entered foster care at age 15, joined The Possibilities Project in the fall of 2019. She was a full-time student working on an associate’s degree in science and worked part-time doing security. Despite having a full plate and struggling with her mental health, Violet’s drive to pursue her education always kept her positive and looking forward toward transferring to VCU to pursue a degree in biology.

Just one month before the coronavirus pandemic, Violet had a panic attack at work and began struggling more and more with her anxiety and past trauma. She decided to resume working as a hair stylist, something about which she was genuinely passionate and finds to be



therapeutic and rewarding. Violet began building clientele again, but like so many young Americans, her opportunity disappeared when salon was closed due to COVID-19.

Luckily, The Possibilities Project has provided a rare safety net so that Violet is able to maintain safe and stable housing, while ensuring that her basic and therapeutic needs are still met during this challenging time. While she is stressed about her employment and financial situation, she is focused on the light at the end of the tunnel: finishing her degree in biology and applying to medical school. The Possibilities Project gives Violet the crucial supports she needs, without which her promising future would be in jeopardy.



Donor Spotlight: Understanding the Great Need of Vulnerable Youth

As Steffani and Will McGurn and their son Jack began to contemplate what social isolation and the economic shutdown would mean for society, their thoughts turned to CHS. As longtime supporters of CHS they know the impact such isolation and economic devastation could have for the children, youth and families served by CHS. They understand

that The Possibilities Project provides the crucial safety net for youth who have no family of their own to rely on for support. They worry about how the vast uncertainty of a pandemic would affect children who had survived a lifetime of trauma and uncertainty. And they wanted to help.

“We want to make a difference, and by supporting CHS, we do.”

The McGurn family decided to make a generous donation to CHS to help support programs that find loving permanent homes for children who need them, that support families who have adopted, and that provide a lifeline to youth who have aged out of the foster care system.



2020 General Assembly Session Successes

We had many successes from the 2020 General Assembly session that will improve the lives of children, youth and families affected by foster care. Two of the highlights include the codifying of Fostering Futures, a program that provides supports to youth who have aged out of foster care until age 21 and the establishment of the Office of the Children’s Ombudsman. This office, independent of the Department of Social Services, will receive and investigate complaints from youth and families. We were also successful in having the General Assembly include many funding priorities in their proposed budget, including funds to help stabilize the workforce through increased salaries and research on case management system improvements.

Because of COVID-19, those budget priorities have been unallotted until the state receives new revenue reports. We expect the General Assembly to reconvene later this year to make decisions on the inclusion of those budget priorities moving forward. As the General Assembly reconvenes, we will keep you updated on advocacy needs to ensure children and youth affected by foster care are kept as a priority with any budgetary changes made by the state.



Every dollar makes a difference in the life of a child

Please [visit our website](#) to learn about supporting CHS. [Click here to learn about YOUR GIFT'S IMPACT](#) to find out the many ways we put your gifts to work to support vulnerable children and youth as we build strong adoptive families in Virginia!

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Children's Home Society of Virginia
[4200 Fitzhugh Avenue, Richmond, VA 23230](#)