

Courier

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CONCERN family honored by SWAN

From July 20-22 at the Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center, SWAN (Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption Permanency Network) hosted its 19th annual conference. The highlight of the conference occurred on Wednesday evening, July 20 with their annual recognition banquet.

It was at this banquet that five families received the “Permanent Family Recognition Award” for providing legalized permanency for a child or children in the child welfare system. One of these families was Jerver and Amanda Fernandez family, a CONCERN resource family from Luzerne County.

Amanda Fernandez says she never planned on having children when she was growing up, but after giving birth to her son, Jesse, she knew she wanted more children. Even though she faced challenges with Jesse’s Down Syndrome, the Fernandez family was far from being complete and soon daughter Gabriella came along.

In 2004, Amanda responded to an ad from CONCERN for a part-time driver to take foster children to appointments and was asked if she and her husband would consider becoming foster parents. Their decision to say yes changed their lives forever.

Over the next five years, six more children entered the Fernandez household. One was another daughter, Vanessa, and the other five (Jack, Rose, Trinity, Dominick, and Paige) were foster children whom they could not imagine ever leaving their family. Adoption proceedings soon began and in 2010 all five adoptions were finalized.

“It was a no-brainer that the Fernandez family should be nominated for the award,” said Stephany Gallagher, a permanency specialist for CONCERN, who assisted the family with the adoptions of the children. “They opened their hearts and entire lives to five other children with special needs,” she said. “All of the kids are very different, which makes the family so unique.”

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Through teamwork, cultural awareness and quality personalized services, CONCERN promotes respect, self-worth and trust in individuals and fosters the growth of healthy, responsible and productive community members.

 **CONCERN**
Hope. Opportunity. Change.

This is the third in a series to feature different positions throughout CONCERN to help all those inside and outside of the organization better understand the scope and depth of our programs and staff activities.

A Day in the Life of a Clinical Coordinator at the Berks County Youth Center

by Marisa Mountz, LSW

The unique position of Clinical Coordinator entails “wearing many hats.” In order to offer a thorough description as to what exactly a Clinical Coordinator does, it is important to have some background information as to how this integral role was developed.

The Berks County Youth Center (BCYC) is a residential facility for adolescents, primarily between the ages of 11 and 19, and is comprised of two programs - Detention and Shelter Care. Children are placed in Detention by the Office of Juvenile Probation because they have committed a criminal offense. Those placed in Shelter Care can either be placed there by the Office of Children and Youth Services (CYS) or Juvenile Probation.

Prior to the inception of the BCYC Project and the creation of the Clinical Coordinator position, adolescents placed at BCYC needed to be transported off-site for psychiatric care and/or counseling, placing heavy demands on the staff at BCYC. This led to uncomfortable, awkward experiences for the adolescents who were led to appointments in shackles. The child-serving agencies in Berks County collaborated and created this position with the intention of offering much needed mental health treatment to the youth placed at BCYC.

My typical day is divided between two main areas of responsibility - direct service with the BCYC youth and coordination. With respect to direct treatment, I am the full-time clinician on-site and maintain a caseload of approximately 15 clients, whom I meet at least weekly for individual therapy.

Following completion of the initial intake interview, clients are generally seen weekly for therapy and each client assists with the development of an individualized treatment plan. Typically, client goals include enhancing communication skills, acquiring anger management techniques, improving

decision making, and recognizing the value of regard for authority.

The coordination aspect of my job is more difficult to define. I maintain the roster for all the youth placed here, assign the intakes to our supplemental clinicians, and keep track of discharges and admittances. Constant communication and collaboration is required between the numerous service providers and public agencies to ensure that the individual treatment needs of each resident are met.

BCYC staff members utilize the Clinical Coordinator for feedback on approaches to utilize when working with certain acute residents. The Clinical Coordinator also manages all psychiatric referrals and ensures that the doctor’s schedule is maintained and that the resident’s referral and evaluation materials are obtained. Clinical Evaluations are referred by Juvenile Probation, and primarily, this involves a CONCERN clinician offering an in-depth evaluation, with the goal of formulating treatment and disposition recommendations, to assist Juvenile Probation with their court and probation plans.

In addition to these responsibilities, the Clinical Coordinator completes paperwork relevant to my client caseload, and attends staff meetings and trainings sponsored by CONCERN and other providers. Other responsibilities include assisting with the rotation in the on-call response system for CONCERN Counseling Services, as well as various other duties as needed in order to continue providing our clients with superior customer service and top-notch therapeutic care.

The role of Clinical Coordinator is challenging, fast paced, and requires the need to work well independently, but more importantly, it is diverse, never dull, and extremely rewarding!



While CONCERN staff and foster parents are proud of all the accomplishments of the children and teens in care, they are especially proud when one of their children successfully completes high school.

This year, we salute the following young men and women who have achieved this significant goal in their lives and who have many plans for the future. Best of luck to all our grads!

Austin T. graduated from high school. He will be attending Penn State - Willkes-Barre in the fall.

Mark B. graduated from Liberty High School and received an award for completing 146 hours of community service. He recently obtained a job and plans to attend Northampton Community College to study computer maintenance.

John M. graduated from Arundel High School. He will be attending Anne Arundel Community College in the fall.

Veola W. graduated from Crossland High School. She plans on attending Prince George's Community College this fall.

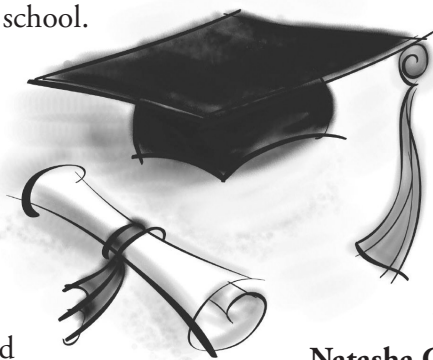
Jeremy P. graduated from Thomas Stone High School. He anticipates enrollment in Southern Maryland College for the fall semester.

Fred P. graduated from Crossland High School. He will be entering the workforce and has accepted a position with Giant Foods.

Matthew H. received his GED. He is working part-time and will be applying to Thaddeus Stevens Technical School.

Brandon M. received his GED. He plans to take courses at Community College.

Congratulations Graduates!



Stephen D. received his Diploma from Harrington High School. He is currently working full time and will be applying to Thaddeus Stevens Technical School to study carpentry.

Lavern "Buddy" M. received his Diploma from McCaskey High School. He is currently working full time and will soon be moving out of state to live with family and work at a Nursing Home.

Thomas "T.J." S. received his GED. He will be applying at Thaddeus Stevens Technical School to study Collision Repair & Design.

Jonathon A. received his GED. He is hoping to attend Thaddeus Stevens Technical School to study Collision Repair or a Culinary School.

Natasha C. graduated from high school.

Matthew M. received his GED. He is currently working with a landscaping company.

Alfonzo D. received his GED. He will be relocating with family and plans to attend college.

Kim C. graduated from Reading High School. She will be attending Reading Area Community College in the fall.

Lemar B. graduated from Conrad Weiser High School. He will be attending Reading Area Community College in the fall.

Complan P. graduated from Suitland High School's Visual and Performing Arts program. Complan plans to attend the University of Baltimore in the fall to study graphic design.

Brenda B. graduated from Crossland High School. Brenda earned honor roll and was recognized in an honors ceremony. She plans to attend Price George's Community College to study Criminal Justice.



Our Commitment Continues

On April 29, 2011, CONCERN admitted its 13,000th child into our foster care and residential programs. This extraordinary number is a tribute to all foster parents and staff at CONCERN. Over the past 33 years, we could not have served one child, let alone 13,000, without the commitment, dedication, and support provided by everyone each and every day. Perhaps the biggest accomplish may not be this number, but having maintained the ability of making sure each child feels special, loved, and having their individual needs met. This truly exemplifies the hope, opportunity, and change we promote.

Go online for CONCERN

Anyone using the Internet can help CONCERN raise funds to benefit children in care, whether searching for a specific web page, shopping at a favorite store, or catching up on Facebook.

Please consider using **GoodSearch.com** as your search engine, shopping on **GoodShop** or **Amazon.com**, and becoming a fan on CONCERN's **Facebook** and **Cause** pages.

Youthful Achievements

CONCERN congratulates the many children in care who are active in their schools and communities and achieve personal and public goals. The following is just a small representation of the achievements of our youth over the past several months:


Austin L., 17, made significant improvement in his new school and is enjoying volunteer work at the community park this summer.

Brenda C., 11, completed a 5K run in a fantastic time of 53 minutes.

Amber L., 17, attended the PA Future Business Leaders of America State Leadership Conference. She qualified to attend by placing third in the regional competition.

Christie B., 15, recently won an award for a poem she wrote. She also continues her weekly volunteer work at a nursing home.

Martha L., 7, had a great year in school and really enjoyed the after school program at the local community center.



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The official registration and financial information of CONCERN - Professional Services for Children, Youth, and Families may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Documents and information filed under Maryland charitable organization laws can be obtained for the cost of copies and postage from the Secretary of State, Charities Division, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401.



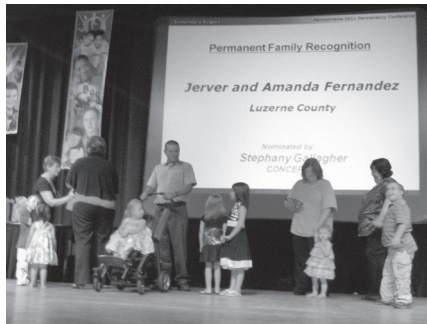
CONCERN Family Honored

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With Amanda working part-time as a phlebotomist and Jerver working an average 60-70 hours a week as a construction worker, they are fortunate to have plenty of family to turn to get both moral support and child care when needed. This support is especially vital with children with special needs such as cerebral palsy, a heart defect, the need for a feeding tube, severe acid reflux, and sleep apnea.

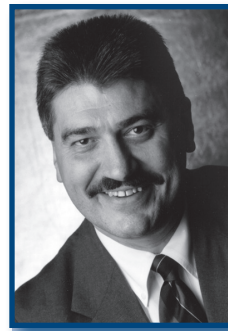
The Fernandez family is like most families, but super-sized. They travel in a 15 passenger van. Their weekly grocery bill averages about \$300. With children ranging in age from 2 to 10½, there is a bit more activity and noise than in most households. At mealtime and bedtime, the pace picks-up even more and the volume level rises a bit higher, but even with this hectic pace, Jerver says coming home around dinnertime is still nice because “I love my kids.”

At the recognition banquet, Amanda said in her acceptance speech “I never imagined seven years ago that I would be a mother of eight beautiful



Amanda Fernandez and her family accepting the SWAN award.

children, nor could I have imagined standing in front of you receiving one of SWAN’s Permanent Family Recognition Awards.” She continued by saying “at the end of each and every day we thank God for choosing this path for our family.”



Glenn Hillegass

Thoughts from the Director

Milestones and Achievements. These two words best summarize the past several months at CONCERN.

During this time, CONCERN admitted its 13,000 client into our foster care and residential programs. While we wish we didn’t need to serve even one child, it is gratifying that we have been there for the past 33 years for those children in need of our services. I would be remiss if I didn’t thank our dedicated foster parents as well as our talented staff for all of the love and support they show each child each day.

In terms of achievements, there are always so many we can celebrate with our clients. In June, 19 clients either graduated from high school or earned their GEDs. Some will be pursuing higher education, while others will be pursuing careers. Regardless of their future plans, all of these young adults are looking to make their mark on the world.

In terms of other client achievements, each edition of the Courier features a sampling of the literally hundreds of “youthful achievements” that occur throughout the year. This edition we have clients who have run 5K races, participated in a Future Business Leaders of America conference, became volunteers, and simply participated in school activities.

Why do we list these achievements? We do so because each achievement is valued and celebrated not only because they are worthy of acknowledgement, but also that they are important to the client. This, above all, makes each achievement meaningful.



Leadership Statement

Leadership ... is a participative process, in which everyone is a stakeholder and has the opportunity, as well as the responsibility, to contribute to the success of the organization.

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Southeast Regional Office
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CONCERN Treatment Unit for Boys -
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The Courier is published by CONCERN Professional Services for Children, Youth, and Families
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Upcoming Events

9/21 - CONCERN Vera Bradley Bingo, Fleetwood Grange, Fleetwood, PA

11/15 - "Building a Strengths- Based Culture" educational conference, Alvernia University, Reading, PA

The Stars Shine Brightly

CONCERN routinely and informally recognizes the achievements of the children and youth in our care, but the Southeast Regional Office once again took this recognition and formalized it into a public event and celebration.

On June 30, the Southeast Regional Office hosted its 2nd Annual "You Are A Star" event to recognize and celebrate the recent years' accomplishments of the children and youth in their care. In a room filled to capacity with approximately 80 guests, there were cheers and even a few tears as the awards were presented.

Regional Director Diane Devlin opened the program by stating "It is great when families come together to celebrate and this is the family of CONCERN."

With an emphasis on recognizing that each child is unique and possesses individual talents, awards were given in the following categories: Super Kid (to one who is simply outstanding in their own special way), Achievement (for reaching a major goal or accomplishment), and Leadership (given to those who demonstrated leadership characteristics). In addition, academic awards were given in two categories – Academic (given for excelling or improving school performance) and Outstanding Academic (given to those who have performed beyond expectations).

The final group of awards went to the recent high school graduates and a CONCERN STAR (Supporting Teens After Release) Fund award was presented as well. In all, 61 awards were presented to 51 well deserving youth.

Ms. Devlin concluded her remarks by stating "I want all of you to continue to reach for the stars because what we envision today is who you will be tomorrow."