

# Courier

Vol 20 No 2 Holiday 2010  
www.concern4kids.org



*This is the first in a series to feature different positions throughout CONCERN to help all staff and foster parents better understand the scope and depth of our programs and staff activities.*

## **A Day in the Life of a Permanency Specialist**

*by Lynn Hammer, Permanency Specialist*

Before I can tell the story of my typical day, I think it is important to define a Permanency Specialist. My position is responsible for completing adoption services for cases referred to CONCERN from the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network. This includes children services such as Child Profiles, Child Preparation and Child Specific Recruitment along with family services such as Adoptive Family Profiles and Adoption Finalization services. The variety of services and activities that I do as a Permanency Specialist is a part of my job that I thoroughly enjoy. The work of a Permanency Specialist is less crisis-driven than that of a Foster Care Caseworker. However, there is more extensive report writing required.

Like many other staff, I usually start my day following up on voice mail and e-mail messages. Several of these phone calls may involve “matching” work. Matching works to identify an appropriate child or children for a waiting adoptive family. I may be talking with a county worker about a child that a family expressed an interest in from the *adoptpakids.org* website. I would then share this information with the family and find out if they are interested in having their Family Profile sent for that child or sibling group.

I then settle into what I hope is a few hours of writing a Child Profile. Depending on the age, history and special needs of the child, these reports can stretch to 25 to 30 pages in length. I pull information from a review of the record at the county office, interviews with the child’s birth parents, foster parents, and the child. The purpose of a Child Profile is to compile a comprehensive history of the child so it can be given

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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.

## Alvarez named director of Susquehanna Valley

CONCERN recently name Rick Alvarez as regional director of its Susquehanna Valley Regional Office. Rick will replace Wayne Miller, who is retiring after holding the position for 22 years.



*Rick Alvarez*

Rick has been with CONCERN since 2001. Originally hired as a caseworker, most recently he has served as the site's assistant administrator.

Rick holds his master's degree in Social Work from Marywood University, Scranton, Pa., along with his bachelor's degree in Human Services from Spring College, Springfield, Mass.

## Holiday's Child

*A new feature to CONCERN's website - [www.concern4kids.org](http://www.concern4kids.org) - this article focuses on a child available for adoption. For information on this child or others available for adoption, please call CONCERN's Adoption Department at (800) 562-1427.*



Christian is a handsome Caucasian male with expressive eyes and a heartwarming smile. He is friendly, enjoys being with people and loves to look at books and have someone read to him. He enjoys pre-school wooden puzzles and children's videos. He is in a Life Skills classroom and was thrilled to participate in his first Special Olympics last year.

Christian has made great gains in his current foster home where his schedule and expectations are clearly defined. He requires very close supervision to ensure his safety. Although he verbalizes very little, he comprehends most of what is said to him and is compliant with requests. He is a good eater and independent in this area. He does not require adaptive devices.

Christian is in need of a family who has the energy to provide him with a closely supervised schedule and the patience to delight in the slow gains he is making. Christian is legally free for adoption.

## Permanency Specialist

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to the child's adoptive family or used in decision making for the child.

In the early afternoon, I may attend an "interview" with an adoptive family. An interview is where potential adoptive parents meet with members of a county children and youth agency who are considering them as the adoptive family for a child. Since adoptive parents tend to be rather nervous at these interviews, my role is to support the family, make note of all the information that is shared by the county and to make sure that all pertinent information is covered.

In the later afternoon, I often meet with children after they return home from school for Child Preparation (Child Prep). Child Prep is to help prepare a child for whatever permanency goal the county is working toward. The main tool used in Child Prep is completion of a Life Book. The Life Book includes historical, medical, and educational information about the child. Once the Life Book is completed, it is given to the child so there is a record of his/her past. Today I am reviewing with the child a timeline that I have created that shows where she lived throughout her life. With each place that she has lived, I ask her what she enjoyed and what she didn't like about living at that place. This helps me gather information as well as gives the child a visual depiction of where she has lived because often she does not remember.

I sometimes have to visit adoptive families in the evening because frequently both parents work. This may be to interview them for an Adoptive Family Profile to approve them for adoption or, if the family has an adoptive placement, to monitor the child or children's and family's adjustment. My role is to support the family and to assist in implementing services that can help in this adjustment process.

As you can see, a Permanency Specialist can provide a wide variety of services. This is what keeps my work interesting and challenging. But the goal of all of the services is to increase stability of children through having them in a permanent setting.



## Conference information helps staff refine curriculum

Thanks to the lessons learned at a recent national conference, Brice Johnston, a caseworker at Southeast Regional Office, has plans to even better prepare teens aging-out of CONCERN's programs.

Mr. Johnston recently attended the Daniel Memorial Institute's 23<sup>rd</sup> annual National Independent Living Conference in National Harbor, Maryland. The conference, attended by national and international service providers, shared innovative techniques to support transition-age youth. According to Mr. Johnston, the best part of the conference was meeting youth that were aging-out and hearing their testimonies of what has been successful for them. The youth indicated that being presented with new approaches helped them be more engaged and focused on setting realistic goals and working to accomplish these goals.

Thanks to these experiences, Mr. Johnston is working with Southeast staff to modify the way they work with older clients. Instead of doing things for the youth such as making doctor appointments or finding the way to an appointment,

staff will encourage youth to make appointments for themselves, plan the route as well as allow them to speak up for themselves when asking directions or arriving at an office.

He also plans to modify the Life Skills program to personalize the classes to meet the individual needs of the participants. An example of this would be coordinating a trip to the bank to support the youth in opening savings accounts. As the youth learn about saving money, they lay the ground work for future endeavors such as higher education or housing.

What Mr. Johnston learned will build on the current Life Skills curriculum at the Southeast office. Currently funded through a grant from the Morgan Stanley Foundation, monthly life skills classes are held to teach youth some of the ways to be successful on their own. Planning, purchasing and preparing nutritious meals; maintaining and caring for your wardrobe; resume building; interview skills; and healthy relationships are just a few of the topics covered through this program.

## State commission selects CTUB programs for award

CONCERN Treatment Units for Boys (CTUB) - Coatesville and Lehighton campuses recently were selected by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and the National Center for Juvenile Justice to receive technical assistance through the Quality Improvement Initiative (Qii) for "Evaluations" for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Qii aims to help Pennsylvania providers assess how well their interventions match up with recognized best practice standards and to identify areas where delivery of service can be improved. Only 40 providers were accepted from across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

As part of the project, both CTUB sites will assemble Qii teams with representation from across

the organization, including administration, managers, line staff and clinical staff. All participants will receive on-site training, and help provide assessments, develop and implement a quality improvement plan, and review progress monthly. In addition, an independent assessment by the National Center for Juvenile Justice will provide objective verification that the intervention aligns with the best practices of an effective delinquency intervention.

Both CTUB sites are working on behaviors and consequences with awards based on the clients behaviors. Each client will have daily areas of review for rewards and each outcome will be measured for effectiveness.



## Your Donations at Work

Imagine being a child and going back to school early in January and having to listen to all your classmates compare gifts they received over the holidays. Then imagine keeping your head down and your mouth shut and not participating in the conversation because you have nothing to add because you did not receive any presents.

This could be the story for many children in out-of-home care. But, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, and our foster parents, it is not a scenario that any of the children in CONCERN's care must face.

Through community groups, individual donations and business support, the children in CONCERN's care celebrate the holidays just like their classmates. They can join in the conversations about their favorite presents, their biggest surprise and how they celebrated the holidays in their home.

Thank you to all of our supporters and donors who contribute gifts, meals, wrapping paper and many other items to ensure that our children have great holiday memories.

## 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.

CONCERN earns a penny each time you search the Internet using **GoodSearch.com**. It's powered by Yahoo! so you get great results. Just enter CONCERN as your charity of choice. You also can shop on **GoodSearch** to earn even more rebates for CONCERN. Click on "Who Do You Shop For?" on the GoodSearch home page to start shopping and earning today!

CONCERN also participates in **Amazon.com**'s rebate program. Simply click on the Amazon logo located on the lower left of most of CONCERN's web pages ([concern4kids.org](http://concern4kids.org)). This "click through" shopping results in a cash rebate to CONCERN.

Finally, CONCERN is now on **Facebook**, so please become our friend and/or a fan of CONCERN and be sure to tell your friends as well.

### Enclosed is my gift to CONCERN

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**Visit [www.concern4kids.org](http://www.concern4kids.org) for secure online donations**

Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Please mail coupon to: CONCERN • Development Department  
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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.



## 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:

**Keila G.**, 14, sang at her local talent contest.

**Joshua P.**, 7, scored in the top three of his first grade class on a math placement exam. Joshua's teachers have said he is doing an excellent job and has transitioned well into his new school. Joshua also was named Student of the Month for October at the school.

**Selina M.**, 11, is playing clarinet at school.

**Jubi G.** turned 18 in September and decided to remain in care so he can pursue his higher education after his senior year at high school.

**Samantha H.**, 13, had the highest grade point average in her class for the second year in a row.

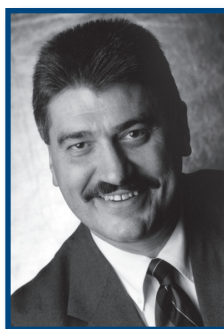
**Cattylee B.**, 18, is working at her school doing painting. She enjoyed youth group and Girl Scout camp. One of the highlights was riding a horse for the first time.

**Brittanie C.**, 11, recently received the Girl Scout Bronze Award, the highest award that a Junior Girl Scout can attain. The award required many hours of community service, hours of work toward different patches that are linked to the service project, obtained her baby-sitting certificate and also tackled the numerous other tasks required to earn the award.

**Aleigha H.**, 7, received a compliment from her cheerleading coach for setting a positive example for the other girls on the squad.

**William W.**, 9, is involved in karate at a local Tae Kwon Do studio.

**Kayla T., Keila G., Aleeshyah S. and Courtney T.** recently did some volunteer work with some fellow CONCERN kids and staff at a local farm.



Glenn Hillegass

## Thoughts from the Director

The conference rooms of CONCERN sites are stuffed with toys, electronic gadgets, wrapping paper, ribbons and more in preparation for the holidays. Yet, as much as the children and teens in care will appreciate these presents, they receive their biggest gift throughout the year when they participate in family life, community activities and life skill sessions that prepare them for a successful adulthood.

CONCERN was founded on the idea we could provide loving homes – instead of institutional care – for abused and neglected children and, keeping our eye on that objective, we have grown in size and scope to ensure our clients receive the best care.

This issue touches on just a few of those services: adoptive services to match children in need of a permanent home with caring families, life skills sessions for teens preparing to age out of the child welfare system and residential units to help young men in need of additional structure to turn their lives around.

And the gifts? A teen asked to present at a state-wide conference. A child receiving an adoptive home. Our CONCERN Treatment Units for Boys being selected for a prestigious state-wide program.

Thank you for helping us give the gift of a future to all those in our care.



## 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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## CONCERN Service Sites:

### Foster Care/Adoption Services

*Greater Berks Regional Office*  
Fleetwood • (610) 944-0445

*Lehigh Valley Regional Office*  
Bethlehem • (610) 691-8401

*Northeast Regional Office*  
Eynon • (570) 876-3800

*Southeast Regional Office*  
Willow Grove • (215) 654-1963

*Susquehanna Valley Regional Office*  
Lewisburg • (570) 523-1297  
Wellsboro • (570) 724-7142

*Maryland Regional Office*  
Lanham • (301) 429-2370

### Counseling Services

*Greater Berks*  
Fleetwood • (610) 944-0445  
Wyomissing • (610) 371-8035

*Lehigh Valley* • (610) 691-8401

*Susquehanna Valley*  
Lewisburg • (570) 522-0990  
Wellsboro • (570) 724-7142  
Towanda • (570) 268-3080

### Residential Services

CONCERN Treatment Unit for Boys -  
Coatesville Campus • (610) 384-8733  
CONCERN Treatment Unit for Boys -  
Lehighon Campus • (570) 386-2990  
Life Skills Institute • (570) 326-6425

[www.concern4kids.org](http://www.concern4kids.org)

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Our children still need you!**  
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To make a donation, please visit  
[www.concern4kids.org](http://www.concern4kids.org)

## Foster Care client speaks at conference

**Complan P.**, 18, a client with the Maryland Regional Office, represented CONCERN youth at the 2010 Maryland System of Care Conference.

The conference addressed topics reflecting the initiatives to improve the system of care for children, youth and families. Workshops for youth included understanding trauma, advocacy, understanding Maryland government and the legislative process as well as starting youth-run support groups.

Complan P., a senior in a Maryland high school's Visual Performing Arts Program, makes beautiful art which has already been displayed in several galleries. She plans to attend college next fall and ultimately hopes to earn a Master's degree. Congratulations on this achievement.



*Complan P., center, a client with Maryland Regional Office, poses with Maryland Regional Director Carrie Knebel, A. Kelly Golden, Caseworker.*