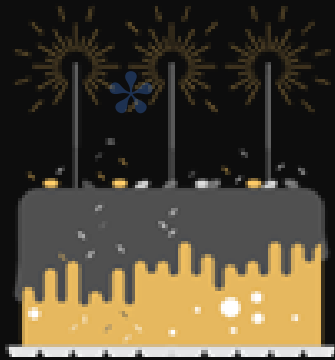


# AFPAG

Adoptive & Foster Parent Association of Georgia



# 50TH 1973-2023 ANNIVERSARY



*Reminiscing  
About the Past*

50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
EDUCATION  
CONFERENCE

February 24-26, 2023



Georgia Department  
of Human Services  
Division of Family & Children Services

JEKYLL ISLAND  
CONVENTION CENTER

75 North Beachview Drive  
Jekyll Island, GA 31527





To those who serve Georgia's children,

We are pleased to welcome you to the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's (AFPAG's) 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference. This year's conference will be hosted at the Jekyll Island Convention Center, located at 75 North Beachview Drive. We will celebrate 50 years of providing services and meeting the needs of our membership, foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship parents, relative parents and the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services staff. Thank you for joining us to help celebrate this outstanding milestone in one of the most beautiful islands in the state of Georgia.

Our theme for this year is "Reminiscing About the Past". During the past 50 years, we have had some successes and made errors alike. However, we have learned from our mistakes, overcome many challenges placed before us and have continued to make improvements. AFPAG and the Division have had a great long-standing partnership, and as president I plan to continue building upon the foundation established by our past presidents.

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for electing me to serve as president of the greatest association in the nation. The Board of Directors for the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia includes 27 volunteers from across the state. It is a pleasure to serve as your president, and on behalf of my fellow board members, let me again say welcome. I am looking forward to seeing all of you! Enjoy our conference!

Sincerely,

*Carsandra Favors*

*Ms. Carsandra Favors*

President, Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia Inc.



Welcome Conference Attendees!

Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! It is my pleasure to serve as the AFPAG Chairperson for the 2023 conference.

We are blessed to see another year. This year we are celebrating the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's (AFPAG's) 50th anniversary. Our conference theme is "Reminiscing About the Past." In 1973, AFPAG began with the mission to empower, support and advocate for foster and adoptive families, who enrich the quality of life for Georgia's children.

AFPAG has selected several qualified presenters who will provide our attendees with captivating information that is especially important to enhancing our ability to take care of Georgia's children. These presenters are coming from all areas of Georgia. Educating our membership is the first step in keeping our homes open, functioning, and taking better care of Georgia's children.

The conference committee has been working very diligently to make this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary a wonderful event for you. Saturday evening, we are planning a 1973 oldies fashion show, door prizes, a DJ, and night of dancing. We would like those who can please come dressed in 1970's attire. There will be other activities that will be announced later. We are planning to have a wonderful time.

Due to the unpredictable nature of Covid, if there is an unexpected rise in cases, we are asking our attendees to please wear masks during the AFPAG Conference.

We are glad to have you back at AFPAG's 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference.

Sincerely,

*Eunice E. Daniels*

*Eunice E. Daniels* Conference Chair

## Hotel Information

To make hotel reservations, please inform the hotel you are with the **Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia (AFPAG) Conference, February 24-26, 2023**. All hotel reservations must be made by the deadline.

<u>Hotels</u>	<u>Room Type</u>	<u>Daily Rate</u>
<b>Villas by the Sea Resort and Conference Center</b> <b>1-800-841-6262</b> <i>Reserve By January 23, 2023</i>	Mini-Villa Studio	\$139.00
	Bedroom Villa Island Side	\$139.00
	Bedroom Villa Ocean Side	\$169.00
	Bedroom Villa Ocean View	\$179.00
	Two Bedroom Villa Island Side	\$179.00
	Two Bedroom Villa Ocean Side	\$199.00
	Two Bedroom Villa Ocean View	\$209.00
	Three Bedroom Villa Island Side	\$219.00
	Three Bedroom Villa Ocean Side	\$239.00
Three Bedroom Villa Ocean View	\$249.00	
<b>Holiday Inn Resort Jekyll Island</b> <b>912-635-2211</b> <i>Reserve By January 26, 2023</i>	Island View	\$135.00
	Ocean View	\$145.00
	Oversized Ocean Front	\$155.00
	Ocean-Front Suite	\$205.00
<b>Beachview Hotel</b> <b>912-635-2256</b> <i>Reserve By January 23, 2023</i>	Standard Two Queen Beds	\$160.00
	Beach View Club Suite	\$220.00
<b>Westin Hotel</b> <b>888-627-8316</b> <i>Reserve By January 30, 2023</i>	Island View	\$169.00
	Partial Ocean View	\$179.00
	Ocean View	\$189.00
	Premium Ocean Front Rooms	\$209.00
<b>Hampton Inn &amp; Suites</b> <b>912-635-3733</b> <i>Reserve By January 24, 2023</i>	Standard Room, Two Queen Beds	\$155.00
	Standard King Room, One King Bed	\$155.00
	Double Queen Suite	\$175.00
	King Suite	\$165.00
<b>Residents Inn Hotel</b> <b>912-635-2764</b> <i>Reserve By January 30, 2023</i>	Island View Studio	\$189.00
	Island View w/Balcony	\$199.00
	Island View One Bedroom w/Balcony	\$239.00
<b>Courtyard</b> <b>912-635-2416</b> <i>Reserve By January 30, 2023</i>	Island View w/no Balcony	\$159.00
	Island View Studio w/Balcony	\$169.00
	Ocean View w/Balcony	\$179.00
<b>Days Inn</b> <b>912-636-9800</b> <i>Reserve By January 23, 2023</i>	Island Side Room	\$155.00
	Ocean Side Guest Room	\$165.00
<b>Jekyll Island Club Resort</b> <b>800-535-9547</b> <i>Reserve By January 21, 2023</i>	Clubhouse Queen	\$149.00
	Traditional King or Double Queen	\$169.00
	Deluxe Traditional Room	\$189.00
	Island Suites	\$289.00
	Ocean Suites	\$359.00
<b>Seafarer Inn &amp; Suites</b> <b>912-635-2202</b> <i>Reserve By January 24, 2023</i>	1 King Bed, non-smoking	\$159.00
	1 King Bed, smoking	\$189.00
	2 Queen Beds, non-smoking	\$159.00
	Double bed suite, smoking	\$189.00

Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia  
50<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference  
February 24-26, 2023  
Jekyll Island, Georgia



AGENDA

Thursday, February 23, 2023

12:00pm – 2:00pm	AFPAG Board of Directors Meeting
2:00pm – 5:00pm	Early Registration
2:00pm – 5:00pm	Exhibit Set-Up

Friday, February 24, 2023

7:00am – 5:00pm	Registration
7:00am – 5:00pm	Exhibits
8:30am – 10:30am	Opening Session
10:30am – 10:45am	BREAK
10:45am – 12:15pm	Breakout Workshop Session A
12:15pm – 1:30pm	LUNCH ON YOUR OWN
1:30pm – 3:00pm	General Session #1
3:00pm – 3:15pm	BREAK
3:15pm – 4:45pm	Breakout Workshop Session B

Saturday, February 25, 2023

7:00am – 12:00pm	Registration
7:00am – 5:00pm	Exhibits
8:00am – 9:30am	General Session #2
9:30am – 9:45am	BREAK
9:45am – 11:15am	Breakout Workshop Session C
11:15am – 1:15pm	AFPAG'S Awards Luncheon
1:15pm – 1:30pm	BREAK
1:30pm – 3:00pm	Breakout Workshop Session D
3:00pm – 3:15pm	BREAK
3:15pm – 4:45pm	General Session #3
6:30pm – 8:30pm	Oldies Dance and Fashion Show

Sunday, February 26, 2023

8:00am – 8:45am	Non-Denominational Worship Service
9:00am – 11:00am	Closing Session: Policy Updates <i>Dajari Patterson, MSW, JD</i> Closing Remarks & Grand Prize Drawing AFPAG President, <i>Carsandra Favor</i>

Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia  
2023 Conference Registration Form



*Please use a separate form for each person registering.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE CHECK ONE**

Adoptive Parent  Foster Parent  Kinship Caregiver  DFCS Staff  Private Agency  Other

*Please choose two selections for each workshop session and record the workshop number in the order you prefer for each workshop selected. Be sure to record your first choice and then your second choice. Remember to register early for the best selections of workshops as class sizes are limited. See the following example.*

**EXAMPLE**

**1<sup>st</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_ **A-1** \_\_\_\_\_ **2<sup>nd</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_ **A-6** \_\_\_\_\_

**Friday Workshop Session (A)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_ **2<sup>nd</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_

**Friday Workshop Session (B)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_ **2<sup>nd</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_

**Saturday Workshop Session (C)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_ **2<sup>nd</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_

**Saturday Workshop Session (D)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_ **2<sup>nd</sup> Choice** \_\_\_\_\_

Is this your first time attending the AFPAG Education Conference? Yes  No

Do you give AFPAG permission to add you to the mailing list? Yes  No

*If you attend the Opening Session, General Session, Awards Luncheon, Closing Session, Business Meeting, and assigned workshops, you will receive a total of 16 credit hours of training.*

**Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia  
2023 Conference Registration Information**



**Registration Fee: \$150.00** per participant  
*(Only checks and money orders will be accepted.)*

**Registration Deadline:** February 1, 2023

**On-site Registration Fee: \$200.00** per participant  
*(No personal checks will be accepted for day-of registration.)*

**Extra Awards Luncheon ticket: \$40.00** per participant

*Registration fee includes conference registration, workshop materials, conference bag, awards luncheon ticket, and a one-year membership to AFPAG.*

**All returned checks will be charged a \$45.00 fee. No refunds will be granted after February 1, 2023.**

Please make checks payable to:

**AFPAG Conference  
101 Windsor Road, Savannah, GA 31419  
Attn: Verdell Daniels**

***A note about childcare:*** *This conference provides a terrific opportunity to gain experience and address issues such as childcare, new policy changes and working in true partnership with those agencies that support us as we care for the needs of children in DFCS custody. The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia will not supply childcare for any children accompanying you to this conference. Please contact your local DFCS case manager for help arranging suitable respite care for your children.*

**OTHER HELPFUL TIPS**

- ✓ Arrive at your workshop early.
- ✓ Make sure you sign in to get credit for the workshop.
- ✓ Please attend only the workshops that you registered for.
- ✓ Complete the workshop evaluation sheet and give it to the class monitor.
- ✓ Make sure you receive your workshop stamp at the end of the workshop.

***For questions about registration, please contact Verdell Daniels at 912-308-3802,  
or via email at [verdell.daniels@yahoo.com](mailto:verdell.daniels@yahoo.com).***

***Due to Covid-19, face coverings may be required.***

Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia  
2023 Adoptive Parent of the Year Application



Name of Nominee (First and Last Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated By (First and Last Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

References for Verification

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

What makes this caregiver the *best foster parent* in the state of Georgia?  
(Use a separate sheet of paper if needed.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the nominee a member of any organizations or civic clubs?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The nominee must be a member in good standing with AFPAG and their local DFCS. All applications must be received by February 1, 2023. The winner must attend the awards luncheon.

Please mail your application to: AFPAG CONFERENCE

101 Windsor Road  
Savannah, GA 31419

For questions, please contact Verdell Daniels at 912-308-3802, or via e-mail at [verdell.daniels@yahoo.com](mailto:verdell.daniels@yahoo.com).



2023 Foster Parent of the Year Application



Name of Nominee (First and Last Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated By (First and Last Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

References for Verification

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

What makes this caregiver the *best foster parent* in the state of Georgia?

*(Use a separate sheet of paper if needed.)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the nominee a member of any organizations or civic clubs?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The nominee must be in good standing with AFPAG and their local agency. All applications must be received by February 1, 2023. The winner will be selected by AFPAG Conference Committee. The winner must be present at the awards luncheon.

Please mail your application to: AFPAG CONFERENCE  
101 Windsor Road  
Savannah, GA 31419

For questions, please contact Verdell Daniels at 912-308-3802, or via e-mail at verdell.daniels@yahoo.com.

2023 Caseworker of the Year Application



Name of Nominee (First and Last Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated By (First and Last Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

References for Verification

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What makes this nominee the *best caseworker* in the state of Georgia?  
(Use a separate sheet of paper if needed.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the nominee a member of any organizations or civic clubs?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**All applications must be received by February 1, 2023. The winner will be selected by AFPAG Conference Committee. The winner must be present at the awards luncheon.  
Please mail your application to: AFPAG CONFERENCE  
101 Windsor Road  
Savannah, GA 31419  
For questions, please contact Verdell Daniels at 912-308-3802, or via e-mail at [verdell.daniels@yahoo.com](mailto:verdell.daniels@yahoo.com).**

2023 Association of Excellence Award Application



Name of Association \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated By (First and Last Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

References for Verification

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What makes this nominee the *best association* in the state of Georgia?

*(Use a separate sheet of paper if needed.)*

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**All applications must be received by February 1, 2023. The winner will be selected by AFPAG Conference Committee. The winner must have a representative present at the awards luncheon.**

**Please mail your application to: AFPAG CONFERENCE**

**101 Windsor Road**

**Savannah, GA 31419**

***For questions, please contact Verdell Daniels at 912-308-3802, or via e-mail at verdell.daniels@yahoo.com.***

## Winne Levison Scholarship Opportunity



The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia will **award two (2) \$1,000 scholarships** through the Winne Levison Scholarship fund. The Winnie Levinson Scholarship is awarded to deserving foster care students who are Georgia residents. Caregivers must be a member of the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia (AFPAG). The Winnie Levinson Scholarship is sent directly to the student to use for any educational-related expense the student may need. The scholarship is payable in two payments, one at the start of the Fall semester and one at the start of the Spring semester. Proof of enrollment is required before payment can be issued.

The applicant does not need to attend a traditional school, and must be enrolled at a technical school, business school or post-secondary school to qualify for the scholarship. We encourage all qualified students to apply. The following is a list of information required to process the application:

- ✓ Personal Data: Name, address, contact information including e-mail address and phone number.
- ✓ Letter of recommendations from three people who do not live with the applicant and have known the applicant for a minimum of one year.
- ✓ Letter of recommendation from the applicant's local DFCS on their letterhead.
- ✓ A short, five-hundred-word essay explaining why the applicant should receive this scholarship.
- ✓ A copy of the applicant's high school transcript.
- ✓ A letter from one of the applicant's caregivers explaining why the applicant should receive this scholarship.

**All required documents must be received by February 1, 2023. Please mail supporting documents to:**

**AFPAG CONFERENCE  
101 Windsor Road  
Savannah, GA 31419**

***For questions, please contact Verdell Daniels at 912-308-3802, or via e-mail at [verdell.daniels@yahoo.com](mailto:verdell.daniels@yahoo.com).***

**Workshop Descriptions | Session A**  
**Friday, February 24, 2023**  
**10:45am – 12:15pm**

A-1. Beyond The IEP. So, your child has been placed in Special Education and they have an IEP, what's next? Participants will learn how to use the superpowers that an IEP provides. It can change you and your child's life. This workshop is a must-attend workshop if you have a child in Special Education.

**Presenter: Dr. Sherry Sutton**

***Workshop Track: Education***

A-2. Post Adoption Services Through Adoption Assistance. The Georgia Department of Family and Children Services looks to provide quality supportive services to adoptive families from the time a child is first placed in the home until the child becomes an adult. These services range from referrals for preventive therapeutic resources to crisis intervention services. This workshop will provide an overview of adoption assistance benefits and describe efforts to improve awareness and access to post-adoption services.

**Presenters: Lani Burden, Leah Jamison, Evangel D. Wicks and Angel Wittmann**

***Workshop Track: Adoption***

A-3. Fear Factor and Its Impact on Behavior {Empowering Principle}. Felt safety is that visceral sense of feeling safe that doesn't necessarily reflect actual safety. For many children and youth in care, even though they may be safe for the first time in their lives, they may not feel safe. As a caregiver or in your profession, you may not always feel safe either. Felt safety is crucial to our ability to connect and learn and grow, so join us to identify fear-based behaviors and ways we can promote felt safety for ourselves and those in our care.

**Presenters: Mary Margaret Mauer and Melissa Trussell**

***Workshop Track: Safety***

A-4. Georgia's Foster Parent Bill of Rights: The presenters will go over 23 items in the Georgia Bill of Rights, when you may need to contact an AFPAG Advocate, and reasons Georgia has a bill of rights for foster parents. The presenters will go over the three levels of grievances and the time limit for filing and getting a response.

**Presenter: Dr. Bettie Stafford, Kemberly Watkins, and Mrs. Angela Whidby**

***Workshop Track: Foster Care***

A-5. Stronger Together/Parents and Teens: This workshop focuses on helping parents become the kind of parents with-long-standing influence. The discussion will focus on the power of loving relationships, how to tip the scale toward a positive future, strengthening family ties and how to respond to extreme circumstances will be the focus.

**Presenter: Brenda Gillespie**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***

A-6. Becoming a More Resilient Caregiver: Helping Families Thrive: Resilience is often thought of as an ability to bounce back from a tough time. In this training, we're going to look at resilience as bouncing forward. Parents and caregivers frequently model resilience for children. Our actions no matter how small can have a significant impact on our children and on our communities. This training will discuss our responses to stress, the impact stress can have, ways we can promote positive childhood experiences and create resilience through connection.

**Presenters: Deborah Chosewood and Tiffany Sawyer**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***

A-7. Navigating Confidentiality and Access to Information: Foster parents and others participating in the juvenile court and foster care system often struggle with gaining access to information. Despite statutory provisions designed to ensure that foster parents and other caregivers have information to help them understand the "big picture" of the case as well as what to expect day-to-day, this information is not always provided. This situation leaves foster parents and other caregivers struggling to provide care and assurance to the children in their care.

**Presenters: Jerry Bruce and Angela Tyner**

***Workshop Track: Legal***

A-8. Brown's Trip During Covid-19 Trip to Holland by Emily Pearl Kingsley: Emily Pearl Kingsley's analogy of "Welcome to Holland" will show how a perfect plan to parent can end up taking a detour and become an incredibly challenging trip. But is it the end or is there a different trip you can take? So, let's buckle up and be resilient so we can parent with love.

**Presenter: Suzette Brown**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***

**Workshop Descriptions | Session B**  
**Friday, February 24, 2023**  
**3:15pm – 4:45pm**

B-1. Bikers Against Child Abuse: B.A.C.A. Bikers Against Child Abuse exist with the intent to create a safer environment for children. B.A.C.A is an organization of bikers who help empower children to not feel afraid of the world in which they live in. Two B.A.C.A. members are assigned as the child's primary contact. They will remain in close contact with the child. They support each child based on their individual needs. B.A.C.A. is available to accompany your child to court and parole hearings. In addition, they work in conjunction with local and state officials who are already in place to protect children.

**Presenter: Brad Hayes, Betty Herring, and Stephen Tiller**

***Workshop Track: Safety***

B-2. Giving Voice Through Choice: For children and youth who come from places of relational trauma, many typically feel they have no voice and are much more likely to use maladaptive strategies such as aggression or manipulation to get their needs met. This workshop will explain how children lose their voice and how caregivers can offer one of the most powerful connecting gifts by restoring a child's voice through attentiveness and shared power.

**Presenters: Allyson Christianson and Elijah Miranda**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***

B-3. Let's Talk Adoption: Whether you are a prospective adoptive parent, a resource parent, or a partnership parent, you want to attend this workshop if you have children placed in your home whom you desire to adopt. Participants attending this workshop will gain knowledge regarding the requirements and the process to adopt children from Georgia's child welfare system. The primary focus will be on laws governing adoption policy in Georgia and Georgia's best practices supported by adoption policy.

**Presenters: Deborah Burrus Germany and Karla Wells**

***Workshop Track: Adoption***

B-4. F.R.E.E (Fostering Relationships, Elevating Experience): "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you." A parent who has been through the process of self-discovery, the pain of losing their children to the child welfare system is often left feeling voiceless and alone. After losing my children after years of incarceration, the termination of my parental rights, and the reunification of my family, my greatest desire was to share my untold story. Through the process of self-discovery, education, and therapy, I discovered my voice and learned to articulate my own experience.

**Presenter: Erin Patrice Thomas**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***

B-5. It Takes Two to Make a Thing Go Right/ Collaboration with Your Child's School: Are you eager to go beyond participating in your child's education? Then this is the workshop for you! Learning strategies to engage positively with your special education teacher is exciting and proven to increase the success of the child specifically and a child with disabilities. Come and join me in learning best practices behavior and academic strategies to help your child achieve success in school and at home.

**Presenter: Dr. Kimberly Gore-Mobley**

***Workshop Track: Education***

B-6. Caring for Foster Youth in Real Life: Efficacy v/s Effectiveness: Foster parents face many challenges on a day-to-day basis. Despite all the training provided, when foster parents are in the middle of a situation and there is no one around to ask, "What do I do?", foster parents must somehow figure it out. Sometimes these decisions are later questioned, leaving the foster parents with the anxiety of wondering, "Am I doing it right?" The purpose of this workshop is to give foster parents tips on fostering in a safe and effective manner. Key topics of discussion will include how to keep the home safe while living in it at the same time, and what to do when training is not enough to prepare the foster parent for the behaviors experienced.

**Presenters: Tiffany Cutliff and Samuel Pittman**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***

B-7. Language as a Missing Link and Missed Opportunity: This presentation explains why language development is well-being, an indicator, and a prerequisite for learning and self-regulation. Education staff and others that work with children can apply the elements of this presentation. Participants will learn how language development is a well-being indicator and ways to eliminate the gap between our knowledge of the impact of language and our practice and policies. Participants will learn how language skills protect an individual from mental health issues, as the ability to share and cope with emotions relies on an "inner language". Participants will learn why the failure to develop skills jeopardizes mental health and educational attainment. Participants will learn opportunities to institute new, proactive approaches to employ language as a beacon of guiding light, in their own work with children, from infancy through adolescence.

**Presenters: Dr. Garry McGiboney and Arianne Weldon**

***Workshop Track: Mental Health***

B-8. Black Boys Matters: Positioning Promise: The positioning of African American boys and young men in the child welfare system for a positive outcome has often been framed as a challenge and a daunting one. This view has had a limiting effect on the perspective regarding these young men within the foster home and school system they live in and attend, and the child welfare system charged with their wellbeing. Too often the net effect is where potential goes unrealized. These realities have far reached implications beyond the young men themselves and include how they show up as fathers, partners, and members/leaders of their communities.

**Presenter: LeRoy E. Reese, Ph.D.**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***



**Workshop Descriptions | Session C**  
**Saturday, February 25, 2023**  
**9:45am – 11:15am**

C-1. Attachment: Our Framework for Relationships (Connecting Principle) Mindfulness Strategy: Our attachment style plays a crucial role in how we see the world and how we do relationships through life. In this workshop, participants will learn about four different attachment styles, how those are developed in childhood, how to assess their own style, and how to promote healthy attachment for children or youth they serve through the TBRI Connecting Principle.

**Presenters: Allyson Christianson and Mark Andrews**

***Workshop Track: Mental Health***

C-2 Vision of Family and Child Wellbeing: Georgia's plan for increasing family prevention and community support is the section within Georgia Division of Family and Children Services tasked with managing Federal and State funding streams supporting programs and initiatives to prevent child maltreatment.

**Presenters: Deborah Chosewood and Jennifer Stein**

***Workshop Track: Well-being***

C-3. Post Adoption Services Through Adoption Assistance. The Georgia Department of Family and Children Services looks to provide quality supportive services to adoptive families from the time a child is first placed in the home until the child becomes an adult. These services range from referrals for preventive therapeutic resources to crisis intervention services. This workshop will provide an overview of adoption assistance benefits and describe efforts to improve awareness and access to post-adoption services.

**Presenters: Lani Burden, Leah Jamison, Evangel D. Wicks and Angel Wittmann**

***Workshop Track: Adoption***

C-4. Understanding Amerigroup 360: This workshop will provide participants with information and tools needed to secure health care services for children placed in their care. The Department of Community Health (DCH) showed a need for enhanced care coordination and service integration for children in foster care and receiving adoption assistance, and youth in DJJ custody who live in community residential facilities. This interactive workshop will discuss and provide information on the recent changes to healthcare services as well as information on improving the health and well-being of children/youth.

**Presenter: Ronald Dunham**

***Workshop Track: Healthcare***

C-5. Navigating Confidentiality and Access Information: Foster parents and others participating in the juvenile court and the foster care system often struggle with gaining access to information. This is despite statutory provisions designed to ensure that foster parents and other caregivers have information to help them understand the "big picture" of the case. This workshop will provide information on confidentiality and access to information. What part does the foster parent's bill of rights play? What are my rights to attend court hearings? What role does my AFPAG representative play, and what about the office of the child advocate?

**Presenters: Jerry Bruce and Angela Tyner**

***Workshop Track: Legal***

C-6. What to Expect When, NOT IF, you are Reported for Abuse or Neglect: In this workshop, CPS Intake Communication Center (CICC) leadership team members will share with caregiver's child abuse data as it relates to foster and adoptive parents. We will discuss the role of caregivers as mandated reporters along with tips for completing the report on the mandated reporter website. The presenter will also share what caregivers should expect when they are reported for child abuse or neglect from standard operating procedures, the investigative process, and appropriate options available to resolve concerns.

**Presenter: Marva Reese and Nicole McDougald**

***Workshop Track: Safety***

C-7. Navigating Early Childhood Services: Ensuring the Well-Being Needs of Young Children in Foster Care: Serving young children in foster care is no small task. Research in the neurosciences has established that approximately 80 percent of brain development occurs by the time a child is five years old, with the first three years seeing the maximum growth. Children in this age group are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of foster care placement. In these early years, quality care, education, and early intervention give children a head start on skill development, school readiness, and future success. This workshop will provide an overview of the services, support, and resources designed to meet the needs of children in foster care under the age of five. The DFCS Early Childhood Collaboration Unit will focus on critical areas such as early childhood education options, early intervention services, and childcare (CAPS) benefits.

**Presenter: Victrecia Hines**

***Workshop Track: Education***

C-8. The Impact of Prenatal Substance Exposure and Plan of Safe Care: This workshop will provide an overview of the short-term and long-term effects of prenatal substance exposure and available services within Georgia to serve these children. In addition, this workshop will provide an overview of the Plan of Safe Care which is federally required by law for infants who have been prenatally exposed to substance abuse and their families.

**Presenters: Dr. Claire Coles and Kelly Thornton**

***Workshop Track: Safety***

**Workshop Descriptions | Session D**  
**Saturday, February 25, 2023**  
**1:45pm – 3:15pm**

D-1. What to Expect When, IF NOT! You are Reported for Abuse or Neglect: In this workshop the Child Protective Services Intake Communications Center (CICC) leadership team members will share child abuse data with caregivers as it relates to foster and adoptive parents. We will discuss the role of caregivers as mandated reporters along with tips for completing reports on the Mandated Reporter website. Presenters will also share what caregivers should expect when they are reported for child abuse or neglect from standard operating procedures, the investigative process, and appropriate options available to resolve concerns.

**Presenters: Marv Reese and Nicole McDougald**

***Workshop Track: Safety***

D-2. Take Care of Yourself! - Self-Care Strategies for Busy Foster and Adoptive Parents: Parents, do you sometimes find yourself “running on empty”? We all know that foster and adoptive parenting demands a unique level of energy! This workshop will provide you with some practical “tools for your parenting toolbox” to help you take better care of yourself so that you can be better focused on day-to-day parenting demands.

**Presenter: Dr. Mark Andrews**

***Workshop Track: Parenting (Self Care)***

D-3. High-Risk Population for Human Trafficking: This presentation defines what human trafficking is and discusses trafficking statistics in the United States and Georgia. Participants will learn why foster children are often at considerable risk for trafficking and the safety measures that children need to help keep them safe.

**Presenters: Dr. Karen and Tom Lambie**

***Workshop Track: Safety***

D-4. HELP! My Child Keeps Getting in Trouble at School, and I Don't Know What to Do Next! Discuss how to quality for G-NET School. The presenter for this workshop is an educator and current foster parent who has a child with severe emotional behavioral challenges. Dr. Sutton's workshop will provide participants tips on how to get their children with severe behavioral challenges accepted into a Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) school. These schools have services available within the continuum of support for LEAs to consider when determining the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities, ages 5-21.

**Presenter: Dr. Sherry Sutton**

***Workshop Track: Education***

D-5. Co-Parenting – Is It Just a Catch Phrase: This workshop will discuss the challenges and successes we've experienced as foster parents, co-parenting with the biological families of the children placed in their care. Sharing suggestions for a positive result, and warning of the pitfalls that lead to negative ones. This workshop is a must-attend workshop if you are partnering with the biological family.

**Presenters: Iris and Jim Gandy**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***

D-6. Building Trust Through Connecting Time: As caregivers, we are often instructed to connect with our children more, but how do we do that? This presentation will explore the benefits of deliberate “connecting time” and provide tips and strategies that will help us make the most of the sometimes-limited time we have with our children or teens.

**Presenters: Mary Margaret Mauer, and Adrienne Reeves**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***

D-7. Recognizing Secondary Traumatic Stress: This workshop will provide participants with the foundational knowledge needed to recognize signs and systems of traumatic stress in foster/adoptive and kinship parents. During this workshop, you will learn relaxation techniques and identify your level of stress.

**Presenter: Liz Gallaspy**

***Workshop Track: Mental Health***

D-8. Foster: 3-11 An Experience Guide to The Fostering Life: This topic covers the recommended things/actions for foster parents to put into place to help avoid some of the pitfalls, mistakes, and headaches while caring for foster children. The presenter will share recommended documents, as well as topics such as getting prior permission before deciding regarding the children in your home, advocating for your children, keeping an open line of communication, and always asking a question.

**Presenter: Rose Diggs**

***Workshop Track: Parenting***

## Speaker's Biographies

**Andrews, Dr. Mark:** Dr. Mark Andrews is the founder/director of Adoptive Family Resources (AFR) in Newnan, Georgia. He and his wife Lisa have two children (now adults) whom they adopted from India. Before starting AFR in 2018, Dr. Andrews worked as a therapist for 30 years in the mental health field in a variety of settings. He has worked with many foster and adoptive families. A trained TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention) practitioner, Dr. Andrews provides staff and parent training, support groups, and parent-to-parent coaching for foster and adoption agencies, as well as on an independent referral basis.

**Barnes, Mary:** Mary Barnes is a licensed professional counselor, registered play therapist, and trust-based relational intervention practitioner. She currently serves as a child and adolescent counselor and co-owner at Rewritten Counseling. She received her Master's in Clinical/Counseling Psychology from Valdosta University. Her experience includes working in private, residential, and hospital settings. Mary has an extensive background and knowledge in effective approaches for the treatment of neurodevelopmental disorders, including ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and developmental delays. She also specializes in the recognition and intervention of early childhood traumas, adoption, family separation, and attachment disorders.

**Bates, Carol Shilloy:** Ms. Bates has over 16 years of experience in behavioral health services and social work. From 2001 to 2009, she worked with the TREK program serving as case manager and placement coordinator for youth in therapeutic foster care. Shilloy served as the director of outreach and trainer for Lookout Mountain Care Management Entity from 2009 to 2021 and was also regional supervisor for Certified Peer Support staff. Other experience includes oversight of case managers and other staff in Child Placement Agencies as well as supervision of System of Care coordinators. She is an independent consultant and certified wraparound trainer as well as a consultant providing coaching and technical assistance for various evidence-based practice models. She was originally certified in Mental Health First Aid in 2010 and has supported and coordinated various efforts to train individuals in Mental Health First Aid.

**Brown, Debra Suzette:** Mrs. Brown has an Associate Degree in Business Management and B.A. in Psychology. She has been employed with Families First Georgia Center for Resources and Support for over five years. Mrs. Brown is happily married. She along with her husband, Charles, are raising their granddaughter.

**Bruce, Jerry:** Mr. Bruce has been a parent attorney, Guardian ad Litem, prosecuting attorney, delinquency and adult defender, Special Assistant Attorney General representing Georgia's child welfare agency, and juvenile court judge. He is an adjunct professor at Emory Law School, a regular guest lecturer for the Barton Child Law and Policy Center, and regularly speaks, writes, and teaches on child welfare issues. Most recently, he served as the director of the Georgia Supreme Court Committee on Justice for Children, before continuing his child welfare practice, law, and policy work as the director of the Office of the Child Advocate.

**Burden, Lani:** Lani Burden has been with the Department of Family and Children Services for 13 years. Lani started with the agency in CPS working on investigations and Family Preservations cases, then later became a placement supervisor for Whitfield County and Cherokee County. Currently, she is one of the post adoption and guardianship services coordinators for the state. Lani's passion is around helping

families stay intact and access all the needed services for their children. She also became an adoptive parent in 2016 to sisters that were in foster care (1 teenager and 1 toddler). Later in 2018, she welcomed their brother (15 at the time) into the family through guardianship.

**Burrus-Germany, Deborah:** Mrs. Burrus-Germany is the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services state adoption director. Mrs. Germany has worked passionately in this field of child welfare since 1992. Most of her tenure has been spent working with adoptions. Currently as the state adoption director, she is responsible for leading her team's effort to achieve timely and safe permanency outcomes for children in foster care in addition to ensuring quality and effective post-adoption and guardianship service. Mrs. Germany serves on the Executive Board of the National Adoption Association and the National Association of State Adoption Managers. She is a proud graduate of Auburn University.

**Chosewood, Deborah:** Deborah is the deputy director of Prevention and Community Support (PCS) in the state of Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services, the state's child welfare agency. PCS is the state entity charged with administering federal and state funding streams geared toward child abuse and neglect prevention, including the community-based Child Abuse Prevention federal grant and the state's Children Trust Fund appropriation.

Deborah has worked in the early childhood and prevention field for 20 years. She is a member of numerous statewide task forces and committees aimed at the prevention of child abuse, neglect, human trafficking, youth, and adolescent pregnancy. She also serves on the National Children's Trust Fund Alliance Board of Directors.

**Christian, Allyson:** Allyson Christianson is the founder of Hope 1312 Collective and a licensed clinical social worker. Ally is enthusiastic about offering hope in hopeless situations and giving voice to the voiceless. Much of her current work surrounds advocating for vulnerable families and children. As a clinician, she specializes in providing therapy for children with trauma histories and enjoys providing trauma-informed approaches to caregivers.

**Coles, Dr. Claire:** Dr. Coles researches the effects of teratogens on behavior and development from infancy through young adulthood. The Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development (MSACD) program includes a program of research focusing on the developmental effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol, cocaine, tobacco, and examining biological, social, and neural development. In addition, the MSACD program hosts prevention services, supported by the State of Georgia. Current activities include the GoFAR Project, a clinical trial evaluating interventions for school-aged children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Dr. Coles' clinical work is carried out in the Division of Child Adolescent and Young Adult Services, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Emory University Neurodevelopment and Exposure Clinic (ENEC). This clinic is the only multidisciplinary clinic in the Southeastern United States providing specialized services to individuals prenatally exposed to drugs and alcohol.

**Cutliff, Tiffany:** Tiffany Cutliff is the Director of the Office of Provider Management with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). The Office of Provider Management has the responsibility of providing monitoring and oversight of private providers that are contracted to provide placement for Georgia's foster youth. Tiffany has been in child welfare for the past 22 years; all her years of service have been with DFCS in various roles within child welfare.

**Diggs, Rose:** Mrs. Diggs is originally from Monrovia, Liberia. She is the mother of two biological children, serves as a foster parent, and is an entrepreneur/visionary. Rose has been a foster parent for ten years and has fostered over 225 children. Mrs. Diggs is currently a foster mother of two children. Rose is a graduate of the University of Minnesota. She was honored as Georgia's Region 13 and Cobb County Caregiver of the Year, Member of North Cobb Civilian Club, Author- I am Happy, who are You, and member of the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce. Mrs. Diggs is a member of the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia, where she serves as the regional vice-president for region 13.

**Dunham, Ronald:** Ron is a community relations representative with Amerigroup. He started January 6, 2014, after working for 10 years with the Chatham County Division of Family and Children Services. Mr. Dunham is originally from Hardeeville, South Carolina. He is a 1995 graduate of Jasper County High School and graduated from University of South Carolina in 1999. He is married and the father of four children. Ron serves as deacon at the Christ Memorial Baptist Church in Savannah. Ron enjoys reading, investing, and sports, but spending time with his family is what he enjoys the most. Mr. Dunham and his wife appeared on Wheel of Fortune in 2010.

**Fowler, Kimberly:** Kimberly works for the law firm of Epps, Holloway, Deloach, and Hoipkemier, in Watkinsville, Georgia. She also serves Region 5 as a co-director for a mentor program, The Five Hive. This mentor program helps foster parents navigate through partnership parenting as well as helps foster parents to be open-minded when caring for teens. Mrs. Fowler and her husband have two biological sons, and six adopted children including a set of twin girls. Kimberly enjoys spending time with her family, helping others, and serving on the Georgia Parent Advisory Council.

**Gallaspy, Liz:** Liz Gallaspy is a social worker with over 30 years of experience in child welfare and inpatient psychiatric treatment. She has been with the Georgia State University School of Social Work Professional Excellence Program for over 11 years. Liz received her master's degree in Social Work from the University of Michigan. She received her bachelor's degree in Social Work from Mississippi Valley State University. She has worked in various program areas in child welfare, therapeutic foster care, foster care, kinship care, and adoptions. For several years, she had her own Adoption and Foster Care Agency geared towards special need adoptions.

**Gandy, Jim and Iris:** The Gandy's are foster parents to five foster children. They also have four biological children, one adopted child, and nine grandchildren. Jim is a minister and Iris is a nurse. Mr. and Mrs. Gandy have been married for 21 years.

**Gillespie, Brenda:** Brenda Gillespie, serves as the Program Manager for the Georgia Center for Resource and Support (GACRS). She is a licensed social worker with 40 plus years of experience in public and private child welfare services. She retired from the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services in 2004, continuing as an independent contractor until 2009. Since then, she has been employed with Families First, Inc., and is enormously proud of the GACRS team who provide support, training, and resources for all caregiver families. She has four grandchildren who are quickly growing into young adults; she feels blessed to be a part of their lives.

**Hayes, Brad:** Mr. Brad Hayes (DAWG) serves as the Georgia State President, and Little River Chapter Vice President of B.A.C.A in Valdosta Georgia.

**Herring, Betty:** Betty Herring serves as the Georgia State Treasurer, and Hooch Chapter Treasurer of B.A.C.A in Braselton Georgia.

**Hines, Victrecia:** Victrecia Hines currently serves as the state child well-being early childhood services manager. She works in the Early Childhood Collaboration Unit (ECCU) within Well-Being Services, a section of the state of Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), the state's child welfare agency. The (ECCU) ensures that the early care, early education, early health and wellness, and childcare needs of young children, youth, and young adults with DFCS involvement are met. Victrecia worked in the early childhood care and education field for 20 years. She is a member of numerous statewide workgroups and committees that work to ensure early care and education services for children ages birth to five, prevent youth and adolescent pregnancy, and reduce the cycle of multi-generational involvement in foster care.

**Jamison, Leah:** Mrs. Jamison has been in DFCS for over 20 years, currently serving as adoption assistance consultant in the Social Services Administration Unit (SSAU) where she is responsible for processing IV-E adoption assistance applications. In her role, Mrs. Jamison also assists with policy consultation, special need determinations, and approvals of special services adoption assistance requests. Mrs. Jamison has a Bachelor of Social Work degree from Georgia State University. She earned her Master of Social Work degree in May 2022, from the University of Georgia.

**Lambie, Karen:** Dr. Karen Lambie taught for 32 years and is now retired. She has spoken on the issue of human trafficking of children for 10 years, in Florida, South Carolina, Ohio and throughout the state of Georgia to a variety of audiences. She is also a trained volunteer for Shared Hope International. Karen is also a member of the Savannah Working Against Human Trafficking task force.

**Mauer, Dr. Mary Margaret:** Mary Margaret Mauer, PhD, is an enthusiastic advocate and community organizer on behalf of foster children and their birth, foster, and adoptive families. She currently serves as senior vice-president of foster care services for Global Impact International, and co-founder of the Restoration Come Center for Foster, Adoption, and Family Services. She has served as an officer and board member for multiple local child service organizations, and she is the co-founder of the Floyd Faith Coalition for Families. Having studied neurobiology at Emory and Georgia State University and trained as a TBRI practitioner, Mary Margaret has focused her efforts on supplying services for children and caregivers who have experienced trauma and leading the TBRI Georgia Collaborative initiative to provide community-wide resources to caregivers and child welfare professionals in trauma-informed care.

**McDougald, Nicole:** Mrs. McDougald is a program director with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services' CPS Intake Communication Center (CICC). She manages information and technology at CICC, the Bibb Call Center and provides oversight and staffing for intakes involving serious injuries, near fatalities, and child deaths. In addition to her CICC duties, Mrs. McDougald also provides consultation on child abuse and neglect assessments as requested. Nicole is a graduate of the University of Georgia where she received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, and a Master of Social Work. Nicole's 21 years of professional experience in social services also includes work in a hospital emergency department. Her career at DFCS has spanned 20 years and includes frontline case management and supervision in all child welfare program areas. Mrs. McDougald's passion is advocating for those who are unable to advocate for themselves.

**McGiboney, Dr. Garry:** Dr. McGiboney has over 30 years of experience as a school psychologist and administrator in public education and has served on several committees as an appointee of the Governor's Office on topics related to the physical and mental health of children and adolescents. He also serves by appointment on Georgia's Supreme Court Justice for Children Health Planning Committee, Board of Directors of the Georgia Council on Justice for Children Committee, Behavioral Health Reform



Commission; Children in Need of Services (CHINS) Advisory Committee, Carter Center School-Based Behavioral Health Planning Committee, and Board of Directors of the Council on Alcohol and Drugs. Dr. McGiboney has been interviewed by CNN, CBS, NBC, and ABC. Recently, he received the outstanding leadership award from the Georgia Association of Positive Behavior Supports (GAPBS) and the award will henceforth be named in his honor as the GAPBS Dr. Garry McGiboney Outstanding Leadership Award.

**Miranda, Elijah:** Since 2017, Elijah Miranda has served as the executive director of the Vashi Center, a non-profit in Thomasville, Georgia, that has been serving children and families since 1903. She received his master's degree in public health from Hunter College. He also holds a bachelor's degree in public promotion and behavior from the University of Georgia, Elijah has overseen the growth of Vashi's school-based community mental health program as well as the development of professional learning programs bringing much-needed resources and training to rural southwest Georgia. He is a trained facilitator for Connecting Matter and is currently a trust-based relation intervention (TBRI) practitioner.

**Mobley-Gore, Dr. Kimberly:** Dr. Kimberly Mobley is currently employed with Brighter Day Education Consulting, which supports local school districts with providing general supervision for special education services to students with disabilities. Dr. Mobley was formerly director of special education and special education program specialist for the Georgia Department of Education Compliance Unit.

**Patterson, Dalari:** Ms. Patterson has over 20 years of child welfare experience in both the public and private sectors. Ms. Patterson received her bachelor's and master's degree in social work from Clark Atlanta University and has a Juris Doctorate from Atlanta's John Marshall Law School. She started her career at a private adoption agency in Atlanta. Ms. Patterson has been with the Division for over ten years, having held positions in region fourteen as well as the State Office. Her areas of expertise include adoption, foster care, kinship care, and resource development.

**Pittman, Samuel:** Mr. Pittman is a monitoring manager within the Office of Provider Management (OPM) at the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). He is a graduate of Georgia Southern University where he received his Bachelor of Therapeutic Recreation degree. He is also a graduate of Argosy University where he received his Master of Clinical Mental Health Counseling degree. Mr. Pittman has worked in Child Welfare for the past 24 years. He began his career working as an activity therapist in a psychiatric residential treatment facility where he held several positions in various leadership roles. He began his career with OPM in 2015 as a monitoring specialist and has also held the position of training and curriculum specialist.

**Puckett, Collen S.:** Mrs. Puckett is the Owner of Families Anchor, and Podcast host for the "F" Word Foster Care. She is a member of the Georgia Parent Advisory Council, and manager of client care at Good Legal Firm. Through her experience in the child welfare system with her family. Colleen became one of the first parent navigators in Georgia mentoring and supporting parents currently working through the system. She also facilitates a biweekly parent support group. Colleen has served as a parent fellow with Children's Trust Alliance and Casey Family Programs. She also participates in the Birth Parent National Network, and Birth and Foster Parent Partnership. Mrs. Puckett was awarded as a Birth Parent Reunification Hero in 2021.

**Reed, Marva McIver:** Marva Reed is the director of the CPS Intake Communication Center (CICC) with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. Mrs. Reed is a graduate of the University of West Georgia, where she received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology, as well as a graduate of Troy University where she received her Master of Science in Counseling and Human Development. Mrs. Reed

has over 28 years of professional experience in social services, child welfare, and human services delivery program. She has been a part of the agency's front-line staff and its executive leadership staff. She began her career as a case manager in her local county, and has held several positions within the agency, including but not limited to being regional director, a Class 5 county director, state program administrator, and state director of Family and Child Well Being. In her role within the agency, Mrs. Reed has constantly proven her ability to lead change within the agency.

**Reese, Dr. Leroy E.:** Dr. Reese is an adjunct associate professor at Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science and Pediatrics. He is the director of the Smart and Secure Children Parent Leadership program at MSM. He is also the director of Behavioral Health at Akoma Counseling and Consulting, Inc., an outpatient behavioral health clinic in Atlanta. A widely published author, he was a member of the American Psychological Association Task Force that published the report *Resilience and Strength in African American Children and Adolescents*. Previously, Dr. Reese was a senior scientist section chief at the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Reese received his doctorate from Ohio State University. He did his internship and fellowship at the University of Illinois Medical School's Institute for Juvenile Research in the Department of Psychiatry.

**Reeves, Adrienne:** Adrienne Reeves is the Region 1 C3 coordinator for the Division of Family and Children Services. She received her Master's in Social Work (MSW) from Kennesaw State University and is a Trust-Based Relation Intervention (TBRI) Practitioner. Adrienne has a passion for supporting professionals and caregivers in understanding the impact of early childhood trauma and can do so by providing TBRI training and supportive conversations throughout Northwest Georgia in partnership with other practitioners and organizations.

**Sawyer, Tiffany:** Tiffany Sawyer joined the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy as the director of prevention in 2006. In her capacity at the Georgia Center, Tiffany oversees the center's statewide abuse and exploitation prevention initiative, which has trained and educated over 170,000 adults. Before her work in Georgia, Tiffany worked at Darkness to Light where she assisted in the creation of the Stewards of Children training curriculum and helped to launch the program on national and international levels. She continues to serve as an instructor and featured program expert for Darkness to Light through their Stewards of Children training video and other training modules.

**Solanki, Bhavini:** Bhavini Solanki is the director of Georgia Families 360. Currently, she is responsible for the fiscal and operational management/implementation and oversight of foster care, adoption assistance, and DJJ, developing and implementing the strategic vision, goals, objectives, policies, and decision-making for foster care, adoption assistance, and DJJ population for Georgia's Medicaid. She oversees all health plan medical management programs for special populations and facilitates and collaborates with medical management staff to identify gaps and improve processes. She oversees the design and development of provider contracts and partnerships to achieve quality, cost management, and strategic business development objectives. Bhavini also develops and negotiates strategic provider contracts on behalf of the plan.

**Spooner, Tacia:** Tacia Spooner is the kinship director for Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services. During her tenure with DFCS, she has served as a CPS case manager in Fulton County and Cobb County before leading statewide initiatives aimed at improving child safety and family support. Mrs. Spooner spearheaded the development of Georgia's Child Abuse Registry, Kinship Navigator Program, and the implementation of the state's Kinship Care Continuum. Tacia embeds partnership development

and community engagement in every aspect of her career, and her local community.

**Stafford, Dr. Bettie:** Dr. Stafford received a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science from Savannah State University, a Master of Education from Valdosta State University, and a doctorate from NOVA Southeastern University in Early and Middle Childhood Education. Currently, she works with Albany State University as an assistant professor in the Education Department. She is the graduate advisor and elementary education coordinator. She is the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's regional advocate for region 10. She is also an education specialist with EPAC and certified Impact class trainer. Bettie is also a foster parent.

**Stein, Jennifer:** Jennifer Stein is the Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse Georgia in the Mark Chaffin Center for Healthy Development, a Georgia State University Research Center located in the School of Public Health. Jennifer joined Prevent Child Abuse Georgia after seven years of leading Prevent Child Abuse in Habersham. She identified the need for and launched the Family Resource Center of Northeast Georgia. She has more than two decades of management experience collectively in banking compliance operations, sales, and nonprofit management.

Ms. Stein has been involved in Georgia's Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act panel (CPSAC), Georgia's Family Support Network, Prevent Child Abuse, Georgia's Advisory Board, Georgia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Strategic Planning Committee, and globally the Supervised Visitation Network as a board member and officer.

**Sutton, Dr. Sherry:** Dr. Sutton is an educator, and a current foster and adoptive Parent. She cares for an adopted child with severe emotional behavioral challenges. Dr. Sutton teaches from experience as a special education teacher.

**Thomas, Erin Patrice:** Ms. Thomas has experienced child welfare involvement as a parent. Her parental rights were ended and then reinstated after a period of incarceration and rehabilitation. She successfully reunified with her son in 2020. She is currently employed by the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network where she serves as the training coordinator for RESPECT Institute of Georgia. Her role is to help peers in developing their own stories of recovery through a five-day training process. She is a certified peer specialist in Mental Health as well as a certified peer specialist for Addictive Diseases. Ms. Thomas is formally trained in both Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid and has completed Trauma-Informed Care and Cultural Competency training. She is a Whole Health Wellness coach and mentor/advocate for her peers who are experiencing challenges related to mental health and substance use disorder.

**Thornton, Kelly:** Ms. Thornton works as the substance abuse specialist for the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). As substance abuse specialist, she provides training and support to DFCS staff surrounding substance use disorders, plans of safe care, and the impact of substance use on the safety and well-being of children. Kelly has worked with DFCS for seventeen years in many roles throughout Child Welfare.

**Tiller, Stephen:** Mr. Tiller is the Georgia State Secretary, and the TWO River Chapter President of B.A.C.A. in Savannah, Georgia.

**Trussell, Melissa:** Melissa Trussell, PhD, is an associate professor of Economics at the College of Coastal Georgia. She started her career studying the economic impact of trauma on former child soldiers in

Liberia, West Africa. More recently, she has continued to apply her expertise as an economist to study the child welfare system and educate others on the effects of childhood trauma in her home region of Coastal Georgia and the state more broadly. Melissa was a former foster parent for three years and adopted her son from foster care in 2020. She is a TBRI Practitioner and is enthusiastic about sharing her story and her training to bring hope to children from hard places and their caregivers.

**Tyner, Angela:** Ms. Tyner has served as the advocacy director for CASA since 2004, where she supplies legal guidance and technical help to the CASA network and participants in policy and legislative reform efforts. Ms. Tyner also serves on several task forces and committees seeking systemic child welfare improvement. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia and her Juris Doctorate from Mercer University School of Law School. She is a certified Child Welfare Law Specialist.

**Walker, Samantha:** Samantha Walker received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of New Orleans and a Master of Social Work degree from Southern University in New Orleans. After college, she began her career as a CPS investigator. In 2008, Samantha moved to Georgia and began working for the Division of Family and Children Services as a foster care case manager. During her thirteen-year tenure with the Division, she has served in many capacities including foster care case manager, kinship assessor, permanency supervisor, permanency administrator, and permanency program director. She is currently serving as the Division's Reunification Director and interim Safety Director.

**Watkins, Kemberly:** Ms. Watkins has been with the Department of Family and Children Services for 21 years. She holds a Master's in Public Administration. She began her career in foster care, adoption, and resource development. She served as an inter-state compact placement administrator before joining the Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Unit (CRRU) in 2016. Currently, she serves as the caregiver ombudsman. This role is dedicated to advocating for all caregivers and working to resolve all level two grievances. She also manages the statewide waiver box and supervises a team of caregiver navigators.

**Weldon, Arianne:** Arianne Weldon is the strategic innovation manager and Get Georgia Reading campaign director for Georgia Family Connections Partnership, as well as an epidemiologist. Her work includes connecting decision-makers across Georgia to create the conditions essential for children to succeed. Arianne holds a master's degree in Public Health from Emory University and a bachelor's degree in Sociology from Georgia State University.

**Wells, Karla:** Karla Wells is the program manager with the State Adoption Unit. She has been with DFCS since 1998. During her career with DFCS, Karla has specialized in foster care, adoptions, and resource development. She also worked as a state trainer with Education and Training covering all social services program training classes. Karla began serving as regional adoption coordinator in 2008. Karla has served as one of the program managers for the regional adoption coordinators since 2013.

**Whidby, Angela:** Angela Whidby has been a foster parent for over ten years. She and her husband, Steve, have sixteen children, eleven grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. Angela graduated from West Gwinnett High School. Angela is currently the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's regional advocate for region 2, committee member of Hart/Franklin Counties Foster Adoptive Association, chair of the Hart County Cupboard, a member of the Board of Elections, Governor appointee for Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, and former officer for the Franklin County Georgia Board of Commissioners.

**Wicks, Evangel:** Evangel Wicks has more than 28 years of child welfare experience with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. She previously served as a Case Manager, Foster and Adoptive Parents' Trainer, Assessor, Supervisor, and Administrator. Mrs. Wicks currently serves as the Adoption Program Manager. She oversees the state's contracts for private adoption agencies. She also manages a team of three dedicated staff who supervise Post Adoption Services.

**Williams, Lakeisha:** Ms. Williams has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology, Master of Arts in Community Counseling and is the director of Behavioral Health Services at Amerigroup Georgia. In this role, she is responsible for managing the various levels of care in Behavioral Health, collaborating with behavioral health providers, advocates, and state partners to maintain quality outcomes and coordination of care. Ms. Williams is a Georgia licensed professional counselor and has an extensive history of providing supervision and treatment in both inpatient and outpatient levels of care.

**Wittman, Angel:** Ms. Wittman has more than 30 years of experience in foster care, adoption, resource development, investigations, and special investigations in Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Ms. Wittman began her position with the Social Services Administration Unit as a post-adoption program manager in July 2014. She currently supervises post-adoption managers for regions 1, 2, 3, 13 and 14. Ms. Wittman is the adoptive parent of two adult daughters.

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**50<sup>th</sup>**  
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

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FEBRUARY

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**25**

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6:30pm-  
9:30pm

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*Events to include  
old school music with a live DJ  
and 1970's Attire Fashion Show.*

Jekyll Island Convention Center