

VILLAGES

Highlights

A PUBLICATION OF THE VILLAGES

Special Outcomes Edition 2004



Celebrating Heroes

Resolved to make a difference

Dear Friends,

Today's family is dramatically different from decades past. But the needs of children have not changed. Young people need stability and gain strength from those around them. Youth need a strong education and the support of family and friends to succeed.

At The Villages, we strive for proactive protection for children. Our Healthy Families program provides prenatal advice and support for first-time parents. Our quality child-care centers help families at the earliest possible time. Our core mission is ensuring that every child can grow up in a nurturing family, whether it is their own family or a foster or adoptive family.

Our theme this year is "resolved to make a difference," which means we are focused on the results we're able to achieve for each child and family. That's why we're so committed to checking program outcomes.

I often say that our social workers and case managers are the firefighters of the child welfare industry. These heroes are saving children from abuse, neglect and abandonment. But the children and families we serve are among the greatest heroes ... because of their strength, perseverance and resiliency!

Here's to our heroes ... and their inspiring results!

Sincerely,

Sharon Pierce,
President & CEO, The Villages

Therapeutic Foster Care

One Step Closer to a Brighter Future

Foster parenting offers one of the most intimate, lasting opportunities to change the world, by changing the life of a single child. A foster home provides a caring, family environment during a child's transition to reunification with his or her own family, adoption or independent living.

In 2003, The Villages admitted 363 children in foster care. We served a total of 692 children—a record number for our organization.

Characteristics of the children we served:

- The average age at admission was 9.88 years, with children ranging from newborns to age 19.
- 50.1 percent were boys and 49.9 percent were girls.
- They were Caucasian (60 percent), African American (29 percent), Bi-racial (6 percent) and Latino (4 percent).
- 74.5 percent of them moved to a less restrictive placement following discharge, including returning to biological parent(s), a relative's home, or an adoptive home.

The Villages licensed 108 new resource families in 2003, giving us a total of 326 licensed families. Each family completed a licensing process that included 30 hours of training, home study and rigorous licensing procedures.

The Villages has 66 social workers who tirelessly support our families. These social workers received support from their regional directly, clinical director, an on-staff educational psychologist and administrative staff. We believe that it truly takes a village to raise a child.

The Villages discharged 362 children from foster care in 2003. **Key outcomes for those children were:**

- Nearly 93 percent were either in one (75.7 percent) or two (16.9 percent) homes while in care at The Villages.
- They spent a median of 297 days in care.
- The majority (74.5 percent) went to a less restrictive environment at discharge, while 21.6 percent went somewhere more restrictive. There were no statistically significant differences in ethnicity or gender on discharge outcomes.

Many children found **permanency** at The Villages. Thirty-three percent returned to their biological home and 25 percent were adopted.

Nurture a Child and You Save the World

Ali and Harold Hartman, of Elkhart, Ind., have been foster parents through The Villages for nearly seven years. They have fostered more than 120 children during the years, some short-term and some long-term.

"We enjoy seeing the changes that they make and knowing that someone really cares about them," said Ali Hartman. "I want them to know that they are loved. That, to me, is satisfying—just knowing that they belong."

Children's Village

Play, Discover, Grow

In Indiana, approximately 85 percent of fathers and more than 50 percent of mothers with preschool age children are in the labor force. This is a much different picture than decades past.

Because of the number of working parents, child-care facilities have become an integral part of a young child's life.

According to a study cited by the National Child Care Association, a strong early childhood program saved \$7 for each \$1 invested in a young person because the individual had a better chance to read, write, be employed, or enrolled in post-secondary education.

The Villages provides quality child-care and early childhood development services through our Children's Village facilities in Indianapolis and Bloomington. These state-of-the-art centers provide care to children six weeks old to kindergarten age.

We currently serve 130 children in Indianapolis and 77 in Bloomington.

Learning the Language: Our Spanish-speaking Room

Leah Thornberry, a teacher at Children's Village in Indianapolis, began teaching Spanish in the multi-age room in 2003. Children ages 3, 4 and 5 showed interest in the language, and now it is a regular part of the curriculum.

"Children catch on a lot easier to new languages than adults," said Denise Ferrell, director of Children's Village—Indianapolis. "They haven't preprogrammed their minds into English yet."

Thornberry started with numbers, days of the week, and months with the children before moving on to relationships and colors.

"We sing songs and play games," said Thornberry. "Or we'll say 'find something rojo' and they will pick out something in the room that is red."

Thornberry says a new class has arrived, so they are starting again from square one.

"So much of our culture is changing," said Thornberry. "Many elementary schools require the students to take Spanish classes now, so it's good to start early."

Transitional Living

Providing Tools to Help Youth Succeed

There are not very many 18-year-olds who are financially independent. Most young people have a financial safety net as they transition from teenagers to independent adults. But children leaving the child welfare system aren't as fortunate.

The **transitional living program** at The Villages targets youth age 17 and older who are in out-of-home placement and approaching independence. The program focuses on preparing them for life on their own.

Our program strives to help youth make this important transition by providing assistance to help them complete a high school diploma or GED, enroll in post-secondary education programs, obtain employment opportunities, and increase their social skills and support network through transitional living group activities.

In 2003, The Villages transitional living program served 24 youth. Characteristics of these teens include:

- Their average age at admission was 18.48 years.
- 50 percent were males and 50 percent were females.
- 64 percent were Caucasian and 36 percent were African-American.
- 69 percent had a positive educational outcome (i.e., good attendance, achievement and behavior).
- 61 percent were employed upon discharge.
- The average program length was 261 days.
- All youth came from a more restrictive placement and were discharged to independent living.

Given their age and previous placement histories, the transitional living program is the last chance for these youth to hone their life, employment and education skills before they are no longer supported by the child welfare system.

By supporting young adults who are leaving the child welfare system with life skills training in a community-based living environment, we give them the opportunities they need to become independent, productive members of society.



Healthy Families

Helping Families Help Children

Healthy Families Indiana has again received national credentialing to offer services across the state and was named one of only two regional training centers in the nation by Healthy Families America. Indiana, first accredited in 2001 for two years, is one of only two states with a statewide, multi-site credentialed Healthy Families program. Arizona has the other.

Sites credentialed by Healthy Families America have completed intensive internal and external reviews and were found to meet national research-based standards, ensuring high-quality service.

"At The Villages, we believe in every child's right to a safe and nurturing

Fast Fact:

On average, the Healthy Families team visits 645 homes each month.

home," said Deb Brewer, early childhood program director for The Villages. "And we want to provide a healthy start for all babies and their families."

The state's goal is to reach 90 percent of all newborns in Indiana, offering parenting information, services and support as needed. In 2002, Healthy Families Indiana met with families of more than 40,000 newborns. Currently, 56 Healthy Families sites throughout Indiana serve every county in the state—all with the goal of helping families thrive.

The Villages, which serves seven Indiana counties, is the state's largest Healthy Families provider.

Adoption

Finding Families for Children

The Villages strives to provide nurturing homes to every child that enters our door. We offer special needs, private and international **adoption services** that provide preparation, education and support throughout the adoption journey.

Helping children find permanency gives them the tools to grow into healthy, independent adults. The road to permanency for many children begins in foster care.

In addition to adoptions from foster care, The Villages also places children through our special needs adoption program (SNAP). Many of the special needs children are older, have siblings, or physical, mental or emotional challenges. As one of several licensed private agencies selected to participate in Indiana and Kentucky's adoption initiatives, The Villages helps to secure permanent homes for special needs children. In 2003, The Villages facilitated 90 adoptions—forever families for some very special children.

Thank You

Gifts to The Villages Foundation provide scholarships, emergency assistance and recreational activities that enhance the lives of vulnerable children and families. In-kind gifts directly benefit individuals in need. Contributions also support essential programs that are not self-supporting. On behalf of all we serve, we extend our gratitude to these individuals, organizations, corporate partners and foundations for their generous support.

Gifts received from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2003

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Giving Back, Making a Difference

Karl R. Zimmer, III, learned about The Villages at an auction benefiting the organization in Indianapolis in 1998. He began giving to The Villages at that time and is now involved as a volunteer board member.

"My parents always talked about giving back to the greater whole," he explained. "When I retired, I thought it was a good opportunity to give back."

A former CEO of a leading packaging company, Karl now serves as a spiritual and business consultant. His passion is helping people get

a broader perspective on the lives they live. His core philosophy is **RULE®**—Respect, Understand, Love and Enjoy.

"Everyone at The Villages is passionate about the work they do. Their hearts are in their work, and that inspires me," he said.

The Zimmer Family Fund supports ongoing training initiatives for resource parents and staff. "We want to start people off with a better foundation, one which will give them a better chance at living prosperous and fulfilling lives."

Making the Connection

A Conference for Caregivers

The Villages launched the first "Making the Connection" mini-conference in March 2004. More than 60 people attended, including kinship caregivers, foster parents, and staff from The Villages and The Office of Family and Children.

Workshop topics included Relatives Raising Children, Creative Discipline, Determining Your Legal Health, and Making the Community Connection. The keynote speaker was Delores Kennedy Williams, director of adoption and recruitment at White's Family Institute. Williams provided inspiration to many families to remain focused on the goal of providing the best care for the children, while taking care of themselves. A panel discussion rounded out the day, where participants discussed "What do grandparents need?"

Foster parents received in-service training hours to meet Indiana foster care licensing requirements and kinship caregivers received training certificates.

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The Villages is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting Indiana and Kentucky youth and their families. For more information about The Villages, please visit www.villageskids.org or call 800-874-6880.

VILLAGES Highlights

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Family Connection Network

Helping Families Help Children

The Family Connection Network tries to build and sustain a collaborative network of providers that offers an array of services to support families with relatives raising children.

The Villages has partnered with the Martin Luther King Multi-Service Center and Christamore House to provide support services for these kinship families.

One of the highlights of the partnership is to address the issues and needs of children involved in kinship-care relationships. Currently, the partnership provides services and support to approximately 40 grandparents and 20 grandchildren at any given time, including age-

appropriate support groups, summer camp, annual activities, and back-to-school support.

Services include:

- Support groups
- Community resource information and referral
- State, local and national educational opportunities
- "Making the Connection" – Kinship Care Mini-Conference
- Planned respite activities

This critical partnership is made possible through generous funding by the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, CICOA – The Access Network, and Trinity Episcopal Church.

"The Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust is pleased to support the great work The Villages does to keep families strong in our community. Supporting kinship care families is one fine example of how we can all work together to help develop healthy families. We applaud Villages' efforts to provide leadership in this very important area."

—Michael Twyman, Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust

Visit our enhanced Web site, www.villageskids.org

Special Edition: Our 2003 Outcomes

