

What's Happening In My Region?

1 Aging Out Seminars are scheduled for September. Invitations will go out soon so be sure to mark it on your calendar. These are mandatory meetings. We're having Youth Leadership Committee meetings once a month in Amarillo and Lubbock. We need you to be a part of these! So please call me if you're interested. Hope to hear from you soon!

Jade Arias * (806) 677-1361 * Youth Specialist

2 Region 2 is currently working on establishing a Youth Leadership Council. Our first YLC meeting will be held September 8th where Region 9 will be joining us. We had a Regional conference August 9th and information was given on your Benefits, ETV and the STAR Program. Most of the youth that went to the conference received a door prize

Heather Woodcock * (325) 641-7143 * Youth Specialist

3 PAL staff and the Youth Specialist are busy preparing for the Aging-Out Seminars, where youth will come together for tons of fun and information about life after foster care. Region 3's foster youth/alumni group, Change for Today and Tomorrow (C4t2), had a successful meeting that included planning fun activities, finding ways to serve our community, and we had attorneys speak to the youth/alumni about their rights. Don't hesitate to contact the Youth Specialist so you can help be part of all the action in Region 3!!!

Zophelia Conley * (214) 331-7898 * Youth Specialist

4 Region 4's YLC structure and organization is emerging and we now have our YLC Board. In our last meeting board members (leaders from the group) were chosen to represent the youth as a whole when making decisions and the board will be holding meetings every first Thursday of each month. Our YLC events are being scheduled for the last week of each month and our next events will be "Skating through September" at a skating rink, followed by either laser tag or paintball in October. Our goal for the next quarter is to reach out to the youth in more rural areas of our region and encourage them to participate in the YLC.

Jennifer Mace * (903) 533-4110 * Youth Specialist

5 What a great summer! The past few months have been jam-packed with exciting and fun-filled activities within our region. We had our Regional Teen Conference on July 14th and the youth had an amazing time. They learned how to get their "SWAG" on (Striving with a Goal) with M. Haynes and lots of other valuable information dealing with making good choices and knowing your benefits. We also went on our first campus tour of the year to Lee College in Baytown and celebrating with the graduating seniors of 2012 at Dave-n-Busters! Next YLC is set for September 15, 2012, 285 Liberty, 20th floor, Beaumont, 10am to 2:00pm. Contact me for more information...

Shaneka Guidry * (409) 951-3368 * Youth Specialist

6 Hello world! This year on August 10th, in region 06 we had our Independent City conference where 36 youth got the opportunity to part-take in various sessions that represented life after care. Youth enjoyed experiencing what it's like to be independent hands on once aged out of care. There were various goodies for all to take home after the event in addition to the knowledge gained. A big thank you goes to the NCJW (National Council of Jewish Women), our region's caseworkers along with PAL staff who put together such a great event. Most of all, we appreciate PAL Specialist Lindsey Moss for taking the lead this year and putting in such hard work! Also, region 06 is looking to gain young leaders in our regional council so if you are interested in becoming a part of something greater than you, please give me a call!

Gaby Valladares * (713) 884-3300 Ext:124 * Youth Specialist

7 In July, PAL hosted a 2 day, overnight, event at Texas State University at San Marcos. 32 youth attended various workshops, learned about F.A.C.E.S (a foster care alumni support group located at Texas State, and participated in a University-wide scavenger hunt! Each youth was given a bunch of Texas State colligate gear, such as: shirts, backpacks, water bottles, and notepads. There was also a special guest speaker—San Marcos Mayor Daniel Guerrero. The conference ended with a glass bottom boat tour of the San Marcos River.

Tymothy Belseth * (512) 834-3382 * Youth Specialist

8 Updates from Region 08, our Regional Teen Conference was held on June 29, 2012 at UTSA Downtown campus. Many thanks to UTSA and BCFS for making this conference special. The youth participated in on-hands workshop throughout the day. The Texas Workforce provided information to youth regarding career planning. The transition Center is busy planning to take youth to a Job Fair on August 21, 2012. Project Thru is having another Mentor Mixer/ Ice Cream Social on August 23, 2012.

Nadine Terry * (210) 431-5640 * PAL Supervisor

9 School is just around the corner and Region 9 is ready!! We had a regional conference with Region 2 on August 9th and we had a great turn out! Lots of great, important information was given out and really good speakers! Region 2 and 9 will get together for a YLC meeting on September 8th in Brownwood. If you would like to join please give me, your Regional Youth Specialist a call.

Daniela Ontiveroz * (432) 686-2297 * Youth Specialist

10 Region 10's teen conference was a success! Our theme was health and focused on overall well-being and healthy living. Be on the lookout for Aging Out Seminars! Youth Advisory Board (YAB) meetings will be every 3rd Saturday of the month unless otherwise noted. Speak Up and Speak Out! Your voice is valuable!

April McWilliams * (915) 521- 3871 * Youth Specialist

11 The Region 11 Youth Leadership Council has been busy advocating for all Foster Youth by participating in Youth Panels in Harlingen, McAllen, and Corpus Christi. Several Teens Advocating for Change Organization Members have been doing just that by talking candidly with Case Workers about their experiences in care and how the Case Workers can better serve the children and youth in care. We have also been fundraising in different areas of the Region and plan to utilize the monies to host recruitment events for the Teens Advocating for Change Organization. There are 5 meetings held monthly throughout the Region, so please feel free to contact me for further information!

Kassandra Villarreal * (361) 878-7571 * Youth Specialist

FRESH CHEFS SOCIETY & Foster Care (continued)

Not only were the youth pretty good in the kitchen, it provided an opportunity for them to be creative and share stories from their childhood. These experiences paved the way for the Fresh Chefs Society.

In Austin, Shaleiah was fortunate enough to befriend someone who had a desire to get young people more involved with giving back to the community, so together they started Fresh Chefs Society. Fresh Chefs Society aims to create a medium for foster care youth to learn the art of cooking from community chefs and culinary experts. One of Fresh Chefs main goals is to engage the community - all of us have a role in ensuring youth who are aging out of the foster care system are given the best possible opportunity to succeed. Cooking and eating right is an important aspect of independent living, Fresh Chefs Society believes that this is often overlooked.

Why do you give back to the community?

"I was appointed a Guardian Ad Litem named Barbara when I was in foster care. For so long, she was the only constant in my life – showed up when she said she would, always remained positive and offered me another take on life – one that was stable and relatively turmoil free. It was through the time spent with her and her family that I saw I could have another life no matter what I was going through at that time. This taught me two very important things: 1. You never know the impact you are making on someone when you take the time to give back or help, and 2. It takes only one stable individual in a young person's life to make all the difference.

As soon as I was old enough and had a vehicle, I trained to become a Guardian Ad Litem and have been one ever since. "I give back because there is beauty and opportunity through struggle. I now see that all the pain and hardship I went through in foster care can be used in a powerful way to inform my life's work and other youth that the life they are born into, doesn't have to be theirs, if they don't want it to be. " Shaleiah Fox enjoys being an advocate for all people, but finds herself most effective when working with women and youth in foster care. "I love working with youth transitioning out of care. In my experience, I learn far more from them than they do from me." For more information visit Freshcheffssociety.org



The Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) hosted an amazing State-wide Youth Leadership Council (YLC) meeting on August 1, 2012 at LIFEWORK's new youth Transition Center in Austin. The meeting theme was Team Work: Together Everyone Achieves More! YLC members came up with great goals and objectives to work with on with their regional YLC's for the next year.

Youth Specialists (pictured) brought two Regional YLC members to represent their region at the Statewide YLC meeting.

My PAL'S

My name is DeeDee and I was born in North Carolina, raised in Fort Worth, Texas. But currently living in Quinlan, Texas. My favorite singers are MC Magic, Ms. Krazie and S.P.M. I like to draw, shop, cook, swim, learn, meet new people, and read. My favorite colors are blue, green, and black.

-DeDe

My name is Kevin and I'm 17 years old. I was raised in San Antonio and reside in San Antonio, Texas. But I was born in Lubbock, Texas. I'm 5'8", weigh about 170lbs, I'm athletic and I play basketball and soccer. I'm half Mexican and half Italian. I got a few tattoos. I've made mistakes in the past but I want to change and now make a difference. Currently I'm in IYC but soon to be out within 3-4 months. My favorite sport is basketball. My favorite team is the San Antonio Spurs! My favorite color is green and blue. My favorite music is R&B, Rap, Reggaeton, and slow jams. Favorite artists are Boosie, Webby, Drake, Wayne, Romeo Santos, Don Omar, Brown Boy, SPM. Aint gonna lie I like a lil old school like Keith Sweat, Boys II Men. I'm a Cadillac person. I like to party and have fun! I'm very social. Want to make things better for myself. My dream is to become a faithful responsible man. I am going to major in music business in college to be a producer for some of my homeboys and cousins. Be straight with me and its all gravy. Well till pen meets paper. Later.

-Kevin

I want you reader as my pen pal. Hi, my name is Jason. Everyone calls me Jason even though I would like to be called Myles. That is a long story though. Um I'm 17 and I was born in Washington (not D.C). I've been all over, Paris, London, Fiji and Switzerland, but now I'm in CPS. My favorite colors are turquoise and purple. I write songs and like poetry that rhymes about my life. I love reggae, classical blues, country, death metal, rock, foreign, techno, R&B, rap and every other type of music. I love all people I meet! Okay time to stop writting, bye.

Yours truly Myles.


Do You Want a Pen Pal?

Send your responses or new letters to:

News for Us! Editor
2525 Wallingwood Dr., Suite 1503
Austin, TX 78746

Don't forget to write your name and address on all materials you send.





Votexas.org
Knowledge is power!
Make your vote count by
learning about the voting
process in Texas, including
voter registration and key
voting days.

TEMPORARY HOUSING ASSISTANCE BETWEEN ACADEMIC TERMS

(EFFECTIVE 9/1/2011) - Texas’ institutes of higher education are required to assist full-time students formerly in DFPS conservatorship or who have been legally emancipated in locating temporary housing between academic terms (Christmas and summer holiday breaks). Students must be a full-time student in the semester preceding the housing need; be registered or started the enrollment actions as a full-time student for the next semester period following the housing accommodation; and lack other reasonable temporary housing alternatives. Students must request the housing assistance and are encouraged to inquire at financial aid offices, student affairs offices, admissions offices, or housing/residence life/residential living offices or ask a Student Ombudsperson.

BACTERIAL MENINGITIS VACCINE FOR STUDENTS ENTERING POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

(EFFECTIVE 1/2/2012) - Students under age 30 entering a Texas institution of higher education must be vaccinated for bacterial meningitis. For DFPS foster youth, payments for doctor’s visits and vaccination costs are covered by Texas Medicaid (STAR Health or Traditional); Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Care Youth (MTFCY); or the Former Foster Care Youth in Higher Education (FFCHE) program. Young adults are encouraged to check college admissions policies for more information about the vaccination requirement.

Trial Independence Period (TI): (Effective 9/19/11) A young adult in DFPS conservatorship who turns 18 as well as a young adult enrolled in the Extended Foster Care Program may leave foster care for a “trial independence” period of 6 months (or up to 12 months with a court order). During the TI period, the young adult may be living independently and receiving other transitional living benefits such as PAL, ETV, and Transitional Medicaid. A young adult that elects to return to Extended Foster Care during the TI period may do so without losing Title IV-E eligibility.

Extended Court Jurisdiction: Young adults that leave foster care at age 18 for a TI period will have court jurisdiction extended for 6 months. Additionally court jurisdiction may be extended for a 12 month TI period if ordered by the court. If a young adult is in Extended Foster Care, court jurisdiction will continue during this period but will not exceed the month of their 21st birthday.

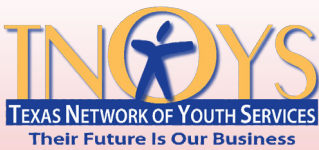
Returning to Extended Foster Care: Young adults who aged out of DFPS foster care may return to participate in the Extended Foster Care Program until the age of 21 if the required stipulations are met:

- Understand that court jurisdiction will be extended, if the court permits
- Sign or re-sign a Voluntary Extended Foster Care agreement;
- Agree to one of the extended foster care activities with in 30 days of being placed in extended foster care
- Is offered an available placement. PAL staff pre-screen these young adults who want to return to Extended Foster Care.

Return to Extended Care Staff Contact list:
<http://intranet/CPS/Regional/re-entry.asp>

Extended Forster Care Program: With the implementation of the federal **Fostering Connections Act** (Title IV-E of the Social Security Act) on **10-1-2010**, a young adul who ages out of foster care at age 18 will continue to be eligible for Extended Foster Care provided the young adult signs a voluntary extended foster care agreement prior to or within 30 days of the young adult’s 18th birthday. The young adult must be:

- 18 or up to 22 year olds, and;
- regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or school equivalence certificate (GED); or is 18 to 21 years old and;
- regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post secondary vocational or technical program (minimum six hours per semester);or
- actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to, employment;
- employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition.



2525 Wallingwood Dr.
Suite 1503
Austin, TX 78746
(512) 328-6860

Editors:

Kim Schenck Carina Moreno
kschenck@tnoys.org cmoreno@tnoys.org

Read *News for Us!* Online at:
www.TNOYS.org



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Austin, TX
Permit No. 1587

Return Service Requested

News for Us! Newsletter - Helps you stay informed about current events in your region that affect you! Stay updated with stories about **youth in care**, information about **youth rights and policies**, stories about youth who left care, **budgeting tips**, **health care information**, **college** and **vocational schools!**

Remember to “Like” us on Facebook!!

Check out the **NEW Texas Youth Connection Facebook page.**
It is located at the web address: www.facebook.com/TexasYouthConnection

This Facebook page provides current resources, benefits and other information such as National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) updates that are important to transitioning youth. The page will allow the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to connect with YOU!!



Volume 16
Issue 4
August 2012

News for Us!



FRESH CHEFS SOCIETY & Foster Care



Shaleiah Fox spent her early childhood in and out of foster care in South Florida. Growing up, Shaleiah spent many years being ashamed of being in foster care because she thought her family was not a “normal” family. “As a young person, the last thing I wanted others to know is that I wasn’t normal. I know this feeling hits home for a lot of youth in care,” said Shaleiah. Her last foster care placement was at 11 years old then her mother made significant changes to her life so Shaleiah could return home.

From that day on, Shaleiah continued to pursue higher education by attending Florida State University in Tallahassee and received three degrees: Bachelor of Arts and Sciences (Psychology), Masters of Social Work, and Masters of Public Administration and Policy. After graduating and getting married to her best friend she moved to Austin in 2011.

Throughout graduate school Shaleiah worked with youth transitioning out of care – both directly and indirectly on policy and legislation. In Florida she worked with a great group of youth and adult supporters to help found a local chapter of a statewide, youth-driven advocacy organization. She worked with youth who had aged out or were preparing to age out of the system, offering basic support as they transitioned into adulthood. Alumni also mentored younger foster youth and advocated on behalf of youth rights while in foster care. When parties were planned for the younger youth, the older youth always wanted to cook as opposed to soliciting donations from restaurants. (contine story inside)