

# Foot Prints

June 2008  
Issue 1

## Footsteps to the Future

Self-Reliance

Accountability

Love

Integrity

Responsibility

**Welcome...** it is our intention to let you know who we are, what we do and why we do it. Remember, it's all about the "Girls".

There are presently over 650,000 children in foster care across our Nation...many will never be returned to their birth parents and even more will not be adopted. Herein lies the dilemma, how do we keep these young people from becoming invisible, forgotten and from falling through the cracks? **Footsteps to the Future** believes all children are precious and deserve the chance to be the best they can be, regardless of their past. We believe in the resiliency of abused, abandoned and neglected children. We know that **mentoring** is one of the most positive actions we can take to help shape the future of this struggling population. We provide one-on-one and group mentoring to young women between the ages of 13 and 26 who are currently in or who have "Aged Out" of foster care.

In the state of Florida foster youth are emancipated - sent out on their own - at age 18, often with limited life skills and carrying their belongings in a garbage bag. What 18-year-old doesn't want to leave home, get a car, apartment, a job, go to college or travel? What 18-year-old doesn't want to be independent and show the world they're grown up? And how many routinely return to the same home they couldn't wait to break away from for the comfort of a home-cooked meal, parental advice, money or just a place "to crash for a while"? Parents know that at 18, even though a child has grown up, the job isn't over. But for the young people who age out of foster care in our communities, the job *is* over! At 18, there is no place to go...no place to call home. We will not abandon these young women. **Footsteps to the Future** is a stakeholder for positive, safe and affordable transitional living programs in Lee and Collier Counties.

We value the need for an education, knowing it is vitally important. Education not only provides a young woman with a roadmap for future success, it also serves as a positive counterweight to abuse, neglect, separation and instability. Stable school experiences enhance youths' well-being, helps them make a more successful transition to adulthood and increases their chances for personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency, as well as their ability to contribute to society.

Nearly seven years ago I became aware of the crisis in foster care, found out too much and couldn't walk away. Over the past seven years a group of wonderful and compassionate women have created one of the most positive and life changing projects for young foster women in the Nation...read on and see why **Footsteps to the Future** invites you to join the journey to Independence...

Love,  
Judi Woods  
President and Executive Director  
Footsteps to the Future, Inc.

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

For more information:

Judi Woods  
239.275.5834

Beverly Spana  
239.945.4527



## Update from Melvia McCann, Mentor Coordinator

Since taking this position in January I've been busy with my various duties. I've been working on updating our mentors' files, interviewing new prospective mentors, making phone calls and delivering our flyers to help recruit mentors. We are averaging about one new mentor a month. If anyone needs flyers to hand out, please let me know. I have enjoyed meeting these new women who have so much to share with us. Welcome:

Angela Malena Rebecca Karen

I can't help but to remind all of our mentors that I will send you an evaluation form to be filled out monthly. It is really important for our agency to show measurable results. So please take a few minutes and fill these out and send them back to me by e-mail, fax or mail. If you have any questions that I can help you with please don't hesitate to contact me.

Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Melvia  
239.489.0379  
mcaimee4@comcast.net

### How do I become a Mentor?

1. Fill out mentor, volunteer form (go to [www.footstepstothefuture.org](http://www.footstepstothefuture.org) for a form or call Melvia MaCann.)
2. Complete necessary forms and interview.
3. Make a commitment of 2 years, 16 hours a month with your mentee, attend monthly meetings and Footsteps functions.
4. Attend "Mindful Mentor" Training.
5. Together we find the right match for you and do a Match Ceremony.
6. Know you are doing one of the most important things in your life.



"I am who I am today because of my mentor. Not only did she help me grow, she listened to me. Because she believed in me...I believe in me. Thank you."

Discover the difference in the life of a child.  
Become a mentor

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**June 9th** - Footsteps Ft Myers Monthly gathering with the "Girls" - Resume writing and job interview.

**June 12** - Footsteps booth at Bonita Chamber Expo, Three Oaks Facility off Corkscrew Rd.

**June 13** - Footsteps "Old Gold" Fun-d-raider at Noble Jewelers Cleveland Ave, Ft. Myers.

**June 16** - Footsteps Naples Monthly gathering with the "Girls" Putting together our recipe book...Footsteps Cooks!

**July 1** - Transitional Living Project begins.

**July 26** - Footsteps dinner to honor Mentors, Volunteers and Board Members

**Aug 2** - Living Now Expo Fundraiser for Footsteps Crowns Plaza at Bell Tower Ft Myers.

**Aug 21** - Footsteps "Community Resiliency" Workshop...Stress Relief presented by Teresa Decsillo.

**Aug 21-24** - Footsteps Family Vacation Tween Waters Inn Captiva, FL.

See our website for more details...  
[www.footstepstothefuture.org](http://www.footstepstothefuture.org)



## ***Footsteps to the Future Mission Statement***

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Our purpose is to provide tools of empowerment to guide, encourage and mentor young women in and “aging out” of foster care, helping them make positive choices to reach their highest human potential on the paths they choose.

It is our intention to work towards providing them with safe, affordable housing, a place where they are able to transition into living independently and to become self-sufficient, productive members of the community.

### ***Our Vision***

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Footsteps to the Future is committed to providing former foster youth with the opportunities essential for self-sufficiency and a healthy, productive lifestyle. We will achieve this by providing them with a safe place to live, access to education, employment readiness and opportunity, life skills training and mentoring.

Failing to support this group of at-risk youth through the difficult transition from foster care to independence can and often results in enormous cost in terms of wasted lives, disrupted communities and the taxpayer burden of delinquency, dependence, homelessness and incarceration. Clearly, preventative services are the most cost effective way to meet the needs of this population and change its plight.

By giving former foster youth access to the resources they need, we heal the symptoms of a broken system. Through our advocacy on a local, state and national level, we work to repair the system.

### ***Our Values***

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**Self-Reliance** - We value and encourage self-reliance...having the ability to create and maintain your own resources while taking good care of yourself.

**Accountability** - We value and encourage taking responsibility for the choices you make, keeping your word and being prepared to accept the consequences of your behavior.

**Love** - We believe in the transformative power of the heart and that love can heal all wounds.

**Integrity** - We value and encourage doing your best to make sure that what you say and do are consistent with what you believe.

**Responsibility** - We value and encourage making decisions that reflect compassion and responsibility for the people and the earth around us.

## **Our Footsteps to the Future...**

- April 2001 began 1<sup>st</sup> mentoring project Making It On Purpose
- April 2007 Organizational meeting /reorganized as Footsteps to the Future
- April 2007 First official Footsteps Gathering at Rene's Restaurant
- May 2007 Incorporated as Footsteps to the Future, Inc.
- May 2007 First Fundraiser House Concert Susie Jennings and Mindy
- April 25, 2007 Awarded Official 501c3
- November 2007 Joined Foster Care Alumni of America
- August 2007 Footsteps Family Vacation Tween Waters
- August 2007 Trauma Resolution workshop/fundraiser
- November 2007 First Footsteps Mindful Mentoring training
- December 2007 Donated Beanie Babies to soldiers in Iraq
- December 2007 First Footsteps Christmas Party
- January 2008 Awarded grant for mentor recruiting and training SW Fl Community Foundation
- February 2008 Contracted with mentor recruiter
- March 2008 Footsteps asked to submit first 3 applicants in Lee and Collier counties for State of Fl employment as part of Butterworth's promise to hire 100 former foster children in State jobs.
- March 2008 Collaborative efforts Florida Youth Shine and Florida Children's First
- March 2008 2nd Footsteps Mindful Mentoring training
- April 2008 Art in the Woods fundraiser
- April 2008 Received donation to pursue case manager
- April 2008 Group community service Sanibel Sea School
- April 25, 2008 Awarded American Association of University Women National Grant for video production, "Aging Out" and the need for Transitional Housing for emancipated youth
- April 2008 Join Bonita Chamber of Commerce
- May 2008 PSA produced and distributed for Footsteps via Dreamtime Entertainment
- May 2008 Contracted Case Management Associate
- June 2008 first edition of FootPrints Newsletter

We are proud to see the swift and powerful activity of  
**Footsteps to the Future**

**Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. - Margaret Mead**

# From the Desk of Treasurer of Footsteps to the Future, Inc.

By Beverly Spana

I was introduced to "aging out" of foster care about 7 years ago, when I was asked to participate in an art fundrasier for "girls aging out" of foster care. At that point, it had not occurred to me, "what happens to children when they reach the age of 18 in foster care?" Now I know. Now I know and have to believe that it is a terribly traumatic experience being taken away from your family at any age. And for a foster child turning 18, does not have the same connotation as a non-foster child! I now know about the obstacle these children must overcome. Education, employment, housing, food and clothing, all of the things that we do not go without. This is because we have had the privilege of a "Happy Home."

Footsteps to the Future, Inc. is a non-profit organization that would like to give "our girl" these same privileges and we are committed to this endeavor.

First, as the treasurer, I would like to state that the members of our board, all our mentor and volunteers get no compensation for time spent in creating and carrying out the vision we have for the girls. With that being said, the funds we raise go towards the future of these girls. Although, the task at hand is large, I believe, that as a committed organization, we can grow the funds that will be needed to provide safe, affordable housing for the girls while they are in transition. We will do it one girl at a time or one "Happy Home" at a time.

Now, as the treasurer, I will ask you to support us with a donation, so that we can make this program thrive for these girls. For your donation, you will not have to do anything, unless you want to volunteer in the fundraising. We will do everything. You can tell your friends about our program and they can tell their friends and so on. This is how we will make this program grow!

We thank you, so very graciously, for any support you can give.

Sincerely,  
Beverly Spana/Treasurer

## Volunteer Opportunities:

We are looking for someone to work with the girls on a regular basis to teach them about budgeting and bank accounts. Ideally visit with them in person (maybe a telephone appt. sometimes) every 2 weeks to review their progress and continued education.

## Footsteps Wish List:

We are in need of your time, your talent and your treasure. Your tax deductible dontations are needed and appreciated:

### Professional Services:

CPA Services  
Printing Services  
Auto Mechanic Services  
Fundraisers  
Grant Writers  
Storage Unit  
Volunteers  
Volunteers to help move furniture  
Handy Man Services  
Personal Life Coaching  
Tutors  
Babysitters trained in First Aid and CPR

### Items needed:

Used cars  
Tires for a Ford Escort  
Furniture  
Baby Furniture  
Bedding  
Computers  
Printers  
Professional clothing  
Kitchen items



We also graciously accept all cash donations...you can sponsor a young woman, ask us about this.

# *In Honor of Women* By Joanna Ukail

*The Women Who Walk Miles to Feed Their Families  
Thank You*

*Women Who Love When No Love Is Returned  
Thank You*

*Women Who Dance the Stories Of The Ancients  
Thank You*

*Women Who Loose Their Children And Keep On Going  
Thank You*

*Women Who Speak Their Truth To Educate Others  
Thank you*

*Women Of Beauty Who Know Their Power Is To Share  
Thank You*

*Women Who Mother When Mothering Is Called Upon For Healing  
Thank You*

*Women Who Love Men Enough To Respect Their Difference  
Thank You*

*Women Who Love Themselves Enough To Come Forward  
Thank You*

*Women Who Know The Truth Of Their Soul  
Thank You*

*In Home Of You*

*We Honor Women*

*And Say*

*Thank You*

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*Visualize  
fantasize  
the glory  
inside let it  
out and don't  
underestimate  
the power of a dream*

*I'm gonna be the example and make  
all of you doubters realize that this isn't  
just a fight it's a war and to those who looked  
down at me, criticized me, and said I wouldn't make it.  
Ha-look at me now I started with just a dream and now  
I'm here on my own two feet clean and sober.*

*Fighting this war not just of survival but for my own right to be heard  
...to try or change the broken piece in the system  
to change the doubters into believers so maybe the next girl who ages out has a  
chance to make it and doesn't just become a statistic of these broken systems  
By Nancy G. age 19 "Footsteps Darling."*