



PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
Monday, June 20, 2011**

**Contact: Sasheika Eugent
Community & Public Relations Specialist
(954) 288-5161**

SPECIAL CEREMONY CELEBRATES SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT OF BROWARD COUNTY'S FOSTER YOUTH

7TH Annual Independent Living Graduation Ceremony- Thursday June 23rd

PLANTATION – Tassels, caps and gowns and doting friends and family is what graduations are all about. However, for youth in foster care, there are not many family and friends in the audience celebrating this great accomplishment. ChildNet, the FLITE Center and other social service agencies that work with local youth transitioning out of foster care will host a special commencement ceremony to celebrate the scholastic achievements of Broward County's foster care youth. The 7th Annual Independent Living Graduation Ceremony will be held on Thursday June 23rd at Broward College South Campus at 6:00pm. Foster care youth and former foster youth who have graduated from middle school, high school, GED Program, technical school or college will be cheered on by their case workers, counselors, mentors and friends.

This year's keynote speaker is Mackenzie Ramsay, a former foster youth who recently completed his Master's degree in Social Work and who will also participate in the ceremony. Mackenzie says that his decision to pursue an advanced degree in Social Work stems from his passion to help other vulnerable groups. "I have received support and encouragement along my journey and I want to be that support for someone else." Today, Mackenzie's pursuit to help others is being realized in his role as Social Worker for the medically vulnerable at Lee Medical Center. Kristen Guerrise, Executive Director at the FLITE Center and event coordinator, said that Mackenzie Ramsey is the ideal speaker because youth can relate to him. "Mackenzie is an example that with dedication, hard work and adequate support, you can achieve your goals," added Kristen.

The 7th Annual Independent Living Graduation is coordinated by the following agencies.

- ChildNet
- FLITE Center
- HANDY
- Broward Legislative Delegation
- SOS Children's Village
- Dan Marino Foundation
- Children's Services Council
- Camelot Community Care
- Keiser University
- Jim Moran Foundation
- Broward College

###

ChildNet is the private, not for profit organization that administers the child welfare system in Broward County. Its mission is to protect Broward's abused, abandoned and neglected children. ChildNet manages the cases of approximately 2,000 children and their caregivers and delivers a comprehensive local system of care through subcontracts with more than 30 social service agencies. Since its founding in 2003, Broward County's abused children are safer, their placements are more stable and they move to permanent, loving homes more quickly. ChildNet is accredited by the Council on Accreditation. For more information about ChildNet and its services, visit www.ChildNet.us or call (954) 414-6000.