



PRESS RELEASE

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CHILDNET BOARD MEMBER IS RECOGNIZED FOR DEDICATION AND SERVICE TO INDEPENDENT LIVING YOUTH

PLANTATION, FL – When Silvia Smith-Torres, Vice President of Client Services first met Sandy Harris, she remembers being impressed with the ChildNet board member's sincere interest in understanding the intake and placement process. "Even at the time of our initial meeting it was evident that she would be hands-on member of ChildNet's board," Silvia recalls. Silvia's first impression of Sandy would prove to be an accurate one. Throughout her four years as a board member, Sandy has spearheaded the planning of several significant annual events for Broward's foster care teenagers. On January 25th ChildNet recognized Ms. Harris at the organization's first Board of Directors meeting for the year. Sandy was presented a plaque honoring her service and dedication to the Independent Living Program.

Sandy Harris, a 20 years resident of Fort Lauderdale and Executive Director of the Broward Legislative Delegation has been an active ChildNet board member since 2004. Encouraged by Virginia Miller, ChildNet's former Board Chair and members of the Broward Legislative Delegation, Sandy signed on to be a part of the diverse group of citizens that offer general oversight to Broward's Community Based Care lead agency. Sandy now plays an integral role in organizing several annual Independent Living events. Independent Living is a highly specialized program designed for foster youths ages 13-23 that provides services that promote their smooth transition to adulthood.

In 2005, Sandy launched the Independent Living Graduation ceremony. Every year in June, Sandy and the Independent Living team stage a momentous event that recognizes the academic achievement of foster care youth graduating from middle school, high school and other academic or vocational programs. "At the graduation the kids walk in feeling self conscious but by the time the ceremony is over they have a sense of pride and accomplishment," said Sandy Harris. In December Sandy and the Independent Living team shift their focus to organizing a festive and fun Holiday Party for the Independent Living youth. "She not only organizes and handles the fundraising for the Graduation and Holiday Party but she also shadows the IL staff to get first hand knowledge of the children she represents as a board member," said Kristen Guerrise, Independent Living Supervisor. Sandy admits that her heart lies with working with teenagers in the dependency system. "Foster care teenagers face many adult challenges and I want to be able to help them become self-sufficient young people."

As our foster care teenagers grow into adulthood, ChildNet works to provide them with the skills and resources they need to excel. ChildNet's unique program provides former foster care youths with a broad array of short term services including but not limited to financial assistance to participate in educational and vocational training, employment services and financial assistance to secure housing. To help our Independent Living youths with a successful transition from foster care to adulthood, we are always accepting donations for new household items, gift certificates for grocery stores or Wal-Mart, financial assistance for extracurricular activities such as college tours and graduation expenses and donations for annual IL events. If you would like more information about donating to the Independent Living Program, please contact Kristen Guerrise at (954) 414-6000

ChildNet is the private, not for profit organization selected by the state through a competitive process to serve as the local Community Based Care lead agency. As the lead agency, ChildNet manages the local system of services and supports for Broward's abused, abandoned and neglected children and their caregivers. This system of care was developed with extensive input from local stakeholders and its effective implementation depends upon their continued support. For more information on ChildNet visit the Web site at www.ChildNet.us or call (954) 414-6000.

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