



PRESS RELEASE

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BRIDGES BACK HOME: CHILDNET CELEBRATES FAMILY REUNIFICATION WEEK BY HONORING BROWARD COUNTY'S REUNIFIED FAMILIES

Plantation, FL – The first weekend in May was a special one for Florida parents who have overcome great hardship and difficulties to regain custody of their children. To honor parents who successfully completed tasks necessary to be reunited with their children, Governor Charlie Crist declared May 2-8, 2010 Family Reunification Week. On May 8th, ChildNet, Broward County's Community Based Care lead agency, hosted a luncheon for five reunified families along with the community agencies that work to preserve families and promote safe and stable reunifications.

Family Reunification and Strengthening service providers, Children's Home Society, Minority Development and Empowerment, Inc., Kids In Distress and Henderson Mental Health Center each selected a family to honor as "Reunification Family of the Year". During the *Bridges Back Home* luncheon held at Dave & Buster's in Hollywood, families were honored with a special plaque and gift basket. Attendees include parenting instructors, counselors, case workers and others who worked directly with each parent to help them resolve the situations that caused the removal of their children. The first of its kind event for Broward County was a huge hit with parents, children and staff of the local social service agencies that work closely with these families. Antoinette Roberts, a parent that was honored at the luncheon, was moved by the recognition and motivated to help other parents. "The children and I had a wonderful time and I would love to share my story to bring hope and encourage other parents who are working to get their children back," said Antoinette.

During the event, local family reunification service providers and those ChildNet Child Advocates who have reunited the most families received special acknowledgment for their efforts and commitment to preserving families. Since ChildNet's 2008 launch of the Family Reunification and Strengthening system, 241 Broward children have been reunited with their parents. Larry Rein, ChildNet's Vice President of Network Development, credits this recent success to the great work that both the parents and the service providers that support them do to ensure that families become and remain safe and stable.

See photos on page 2.



Larry Rein presents award to ChildNet Child Advocate, Shameeza Alli for having the most family reunifications since 2008-2009. (L to R) Larry Rein, ChildNet's VP of Network Development, LaCheryl Alvardo, ChildNet Child Advocate Supervisor and Shameeza Alli, ChildNet Child Advocate



Adrienne Gardner and family.



Judge Carlos Rebollo addresses the families.



Larry Rein presents Family of the Year award to the Philogene family. (From L to R) Simone Miles, Children's Home Society, Larry Rein, ChildNet, Kassandra Philogene and Jacquada Lee, Children's Home Society.

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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