PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Tuesday, March 18, 2008

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CHILDNET TEAMS UP WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS ON STATEWIDE INITIATIVE TO RECRUIT FOSTER PARENTS

PLANTATION, FL **–** Community Based Care lead agencies, Department of Children and Families and local social service organizations have joined forces to launch a statewide initiative to improve the recruitment, retention and support of foster families. On Monday, March 17th in Weston, ChildNet and its local network providers attended the Foster Parent Recruitment and Support Training that kicked off an ongoing collaboration with several important partners: Broward's lead agency, Department of Children and Families, local foster care management agencies, foster parents, and youth formerly in foster care. The DCF-sponsored regional training covered marketing basics, recruitment strategies, strategy development, and using data analysis to determine recruitment needs.

Larry Rein, ChildNet's Vice President of Network Development, believes that the training is instrumental in organizing an effective county-wide strategy. "This statewide initiative is monumental in bringing together key players in Broward's dependency system to initiate a countywide strategy to recruit additional foster parents and support existing foster families," said Rein. The team will focus on reducing the timeframe required for licensure, increasing the pool of foster parents, minimizing moves of children in care and implementing additional support services for foster parents.

In Broward County, there is a continuous need for foster homes as more and more foster parents adopt. There is an especially urgent need for foster homes for teenagers, sibling groups, children with relatively minor medical conditions, infants under six weeks old, and children with relatively minor mental health or behavioral problems. The ongoing partnership will be essential to developing an effective plan to recruit foster families for this population. Jennifer Smith, Foster Home Recruitment Coordinator, is equally optimistic about the new initiative. "Recruiting loving foster homes is a priority for ChildNet and our network providers," said Smith. "This is an ideal opportunity to incorporate input from all involved parties on how best to recruit and support foster families in Broward County."

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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