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# BOARD RETREAT MINUTES

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**May 16, 2025**

**Board of Directors:**

Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair; Rebecca Brock, Vice Chair; Michael Lepera, Treasurer; Lois Marino, Secretary; Bill Reicherter, Carolina Raineau, Chelsea Bellew, Donna Korn, Dr. Heidi Schaeffer, Maria Mezerhane, Nancy W. Stamper, Paul Adams, Dr. Ronald Ford, Sabria McElroy, Stefanie Title, Dr. Victoria Thurston

**Unable to Attend:**

Bill Reicherter, Michael Lepera, Nancy W. Stamper, Paul Adams, Rebecca Brock, Ronald Ford

**Other Attendees:**

*ChildNet Staff:* Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Donna Eprifania, Julie DeMar, Alcolya St. Juste, Rebecca Lindstadt, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Traci Schweitzer, Isis Williams, Adrienne Reid, Christy Gillis, *Facilitator:* Matt Savarick, *Public:* Karen Cabrera

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## CALL TO ORDER – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair

- Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair, called the Board Retreat to order at 10:15 a.m. The in-person Board Retreat was held at Born on Purpose Project, 4850 N. State Road 7, Lauderdale Lakes, FL 33309.

## ANNUAL BOARD SURVEY – Alcolya St. Juste, CLO

- Alcolya St. Juste reported that it is time for the annual Board Survey, which will be sent out soon via Survey Monkey. She asked that board members complete and submit it by early June. The survey includes questions about their service and experience as board members. The results will be presented at the annual Board Meeting.

## WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & ICEBREAKER

- Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair conveyed that this Board Retreat is a transformative day of strategic alignment and vision setting for ChildNet's future. The objective is to align ChildNet's updated strategy, mission, vision, and direction. Ms. Benjamin hopes that we walk away, not with "hard" work, but with "heart" work.

Ms. Benjamin introduced facilitator, Matt Savarick, expressing gratitude for his support throughout the planning process and praised his dedication and commitment. Ms. Benjamin also noted that Mr. Savarick is doing all this pro bono. Mr. Savarick is an advisor who helps mission-driven organizations grow with clarity and purpose, with expertise in leadership and revenue generation. Mr. Savarick then asked all attendees to introduce themselves, to state their role at ChildNet and asked 'why' they joined ChildNet.

## CURRENT MISSION AND VISION

- ChildNet's Current Mission: "To protect abused, abandoned and neglected children in the communities we serve," and the Current Vision: "ChildNet will lead every child in our care to safety, permanence, and stability."



Discussion was held on how ChildNet's focus has evolved over 23 years from primarily ensuring child safety to emphasizing family support and reunification. They agreed to revise the mission statement to reflect keeping children safe with their families. The goal is to shift public perception from ChildNet as a family-separating agency to one that restores and reunites families through supportive services. Foster care should be viewed as part of a broader, family-centered continuum of care.

## NEWLY CREATED MISSION STATEMENT

- After in-depth discussion, a **New Mission Statement** was created: "Lead the community to serve and protect abused and neglected children by supporting and strengthening their families."

*Please Note: At the 06-17-25 Governance/Executive Committee meeting, the **following updated New Mission Statement** was submitted for the Governance/Executive Committee to present to the full Board Meeting on 06-27-25 for review and approval:*

***"Leading communities in protecting and serving abused and neglected children by supporting and strengthening their families."***

## BRANDING DEVELOPMENT

- Discussion held on continuing to refine ChildNet's overall branding, including the vision statement and tagline. Both Carolina Raineau, Board Director and Matt Savarick, Facilitator, will work together on this endeavor. There was consensus that the vision statement should be revised to align with the newly agreed-upon mission statement. They will present their recommendations to the Governance/Executive Committee and then to the full Board for review and approval.

## BOARD ENGAGEMENT AND CONTRIBUTION FRAMEWORK

- Discussion was held that framework for building engagement pipelines should include conversations (direct outreach), content (social media storytelling), capital (financial support and events), and collaboration (partnerships). Discussion was held about board member responsibility, engagement, and the nuances of fundraising at ChildNet. It was encouraged to develop a clear, simple "elevator pitch" grounded in three key pillars of the organization's mission to help educate others and build awareness.

Discussion was held on the importance of individual board accountability, e.g., conversations, showing up, using personal skills, and having each board member reflect on what they bring to the table. Suggestion was made to have a basic set of expectations for all board members (e.g., attending meetings/events, contributing financially or in-kind), paired with tools like a self-assessment survey to support transparency and engagement. Donna Korn, Board Director, mentioned how Junior Achievement tracks board member engagement to increase accountability. ChildNet should consider adopting a modified version of Junior Achievement's board engagement model to set expectations (not necessarily with strict consequences).

The Board agreed that while every board member contributes in different ways, more structured accountability, clearer expectations, and purposeful messaging will help unify and elevate their collective impact moving forward.

## BOARD MEMBER GIVING COMMITMENT

- Introduced a "Give or Get" fundraising model, where contributions could take many forms: direct donations, sponsorships, securing venues, or connecting with potential donors. The goal is for everyone to contribute meaningfully in ways aligned with their strengths and includes a contribution expectation of a minimum of \$1,500 - \$2,000 per Board member annually.



## **DONOR IMPACT COMMUNICATION**

- Discussion was held to create compelling messaging that clearly communicates how donations are used (e.g., housing deposits, kinship care needs). Both Neiko Shea, COS and Donna Eprifania, CFO will work on this endeavor.

## **PROVIDER ENGAGEMENT**

- Discussion noted provider concerns that ChildNet's fundraising competes with theirs. In response, it was clarified that ChildNet's efforts aim to supplement, not duplicate, services by addressing unmet needs like tutoring and housing. A revitalized Broward Cares for Kids Foundation would function as a community funder, distributing resources based on need while maintaining transparency. While past joint fundraising efforts faced challenges, now may be a suitable time to revisit collaboration and improve communication. Suggestion provided to equip providers with information about services not covered by DCF to promote awareness and strengthen their advocacy and resource efforts. A dedicated provider meeting was suggested to gather feedback and clarify ChildNet's supportive role.

## **"I PLEDGE" CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW**

- Karen Cabrera, from FPL, shared that their company runs an "I Pledge" campaign, which gives nonprofits the opportunity to set up a table and promote their organization to employees in hopes of being chosen as a recipient of employee pledges.

## **STORYTELLING THROUGH PODCAST INTERVIEWS**

- Discussion was held to launch podcast interviews at BOPP Podcast Studio featuring success stories from families served, team members who are products of ChildNet's services and a special focus on kinship care as the upcoming campaign theme. Larry Rein, CEO, the Governance/Executive Committee and Community Engagement Committee will work on this endeavor.

## **CLOSING COMMENTS**

- Board Chair Josefa Benjamin closed the meeting emphasizing that, despite the informal tone, the meeting was highly important and productive. Ms. Benjamin thanked everyone for their thoughtful input and their time, and thanked Matt Savarick for his support and provided him with an appreciation award.

## **NEXT MEETING DATE**

- Annual Board Meeting - Friday, June 27, 2025.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

- Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:04 p.m.

*Lois Marino*

Lois Marino  
Board Secretary

7/25/25

Date

(Corporate Seal)