Families Helping Families

Connecting caregivers, strengthening families, changing lives.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE RESOURCE FAMILY ASSOCIATION Winter 2026 Edition

NEWSLETTER

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PO Box 60216
Harrisburg, PA

PENNSYLVANIA STATE
RESOURCE FAMILY ASSOCIATION
Hearts & Homes

1-800-951-5151
www.psrfa.org

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Mission Statement

The Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA) advocates for all who care about children and their families. We work in partnership with foster, adoptive, and kinship families, local foster parent associations, and child-serving agencies to provide support, resources, and a strong voice for the children and families we serve.

Vision Statement

To engage every part of the community in strengthening family life across Pennsylvania, while shaping child welfare policy and practice at the state, national, and international levels.

A Message from the Executive Director

Dear PSRFA Members, Families, and Friends,

As we continue into the new year, I want you to know how grateful PSRFA is for each of you and the role you play in supporting children and families across Pennsylvania.

This newsletter reflects just a small part of the work happening statewide. Training opportunities, resources, events, and shared experiences are meant to remind you that you are not alone. PSRFA is here to support you, advocate alongside you, and help strengthen the community that supports our families.

Thank you for trusting us, for staying connected, and for all that you do every day.

With appreciation,

Melissa Geesaman
Executive Director
Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA)

SUPPORT SERVICES SPOTLIGHT

LSI Warmline: Legal Information & Guidance

1-888-793-2512

Lsiwarmline@diakon-swan.org

Provides families with guidance by connecting them to reliable legal information and support.

SWAN Helpline

1-800-585-SWAN (7926)

SWANHelpline@diakon-swan.org

Information, guidance, and ongoing support for foster and adoptive families—from first call through permanency.

Pennsylvania 2-1-1

www.pa211.org

Connects families with statewide resources and local community programs.

Getting to Know *Dream*

An independent and creative young lady seeking a permanent family and a future that keeps her connected to the people and places she loves.

Dream is a resilient young lady who prides herself on being independent, creative, and reliable. Dream loves to dance, listen to music through her pink headphones, create art on her tablet, and try new foods. Dream may be quiet at first, but once she feels comfortable with someone, her charisma, wit, and humor shine. To stay active, Dream likes to take walks, skateboard, go swimming at the beach, and dance. If she feels like having a cozy day, she enjoys taking cat naps, and watching TV or movies. Her favorite season is summer, she likes hip-hop and R&B music, and playing games or puzzles on her tablet. Dream is in the 7th grade and does well in school.

Dream remains connected to several family members and wishes to remain in contact with her family. She speaks to her family members regularly through phone calls and texts. In thinking about her permanency options, Dream would be open to exploring any family type, including a two-parent household (male/female; female/female; male/male couples), single female, and single male. She would prefer being an only child, however she would be comfortable in a home with younger children. Dream would love to have her own room.

Dream feels a deep connection to New York City and hopes to return to New York City soon. A family located in/near New York City or willing to visit New York City would be preferred.

Parental rights have been terminated for Dream.

For more information, a family can call the **SWAN Helpline at 1-800-585-SWAN** or have the family worker contact the recruiter, **Alison Levy**, via telephone or email **Alison.levy@plcntu.org**. *Please note: Dream's PAE ID number (C51ED22) should be referenced when calling the Helpline.*

Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN)

The SWAN Helpline assists families interested in adoption.
800-585-SWAN

Voices of Resource Families

Warm Hearts, Strong Families

Article written by: Shari McConnell, SWAN Southwest Regional Technical Assistant

Jennifer and Bob never imagined that more than 20 years after adopting their two sons, they would once again be full-time caregivers to a young child. Yet when their grandson needed a safe and loving home after his mother passed away and his father became incarcerated, they did not hesitate.

Their grandson was at home when his mother passed away, an experience that was deeply traumatic for him. Wanting to be a constant source of love and stability, Jennifer and Bob welcomed him into their home in September 2024. On March 25, 2025, they officially adopted him, becoming his forever family.

As they help their grandson heal, Jennifer and Bob have experienced a wide range of emotions. From the beginning, however, they knew he needed normalcy, consistency, and a family he could count on. They have devoted themselves to learning how to best support him with routine playing a central role. Jennifer shared that because of his past experiences, he often worries about whether people will truly be there for him. Jennifer and Bob work intentionally to show up for him, celebrate small joys, and create meaningful family time together, including sharing meals.

Jennifer reflected, "Love means everything, but it can't fix everything." She emphasized the importance of being honest with yourself and understanding your own limitations. While their grandson continues to work through many challenges, Jennifer and Bob remain focused on meeting his needs and reassuring him that they will always be there. She shared that providing this level of care takes strength and a strong support system.

Jennifer's advice to other resource families is to truly understand what you can give and to recognize that the journey will be hard but also incredibly rewarding. In the end, she noted, the benefits outweigh the difficult moments.

Today, Jennifer and Bob's grandson is beginning to experience the sense of safety and belonging they have worked so hard to create. Making new memories together, the family spent this past Christmas at the beach, where their grandson excitedly imagined Santa's reindeer landing in the sand to deliver presents. Moments like these reflect the hope, joy, and security that now surround him and serve as reminders of the loving, dependable family he can finally call his own.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

The SWAN Helpline

1-800-585-7926 **SWANHelpline@diakon-swan.org**

The SWAN Helpline is a warm, welcoming place for foster, adoptive, and kinship families across Pennsylvania. Staffed by knowledgeable and caring Helpline Technical Specialists, it's often the first place families call when they're curious about fostering or adoption and a trusted source of support throughout their permanency journey.

Whether a family is just beginning to explore becoming a resource home, needs help navigating the permanency process, or is caring for a child through adoption and permanency, the Helpline is there to guide, encourage, and connect them to the right resources.

Most first-time callers are families seeking to learn more about becoming a permanency resource for children in the child welfare system. The Helpline remains available throughout the entire journey, including after adoption or permanency, to ensure families never feel alone.

Making a Difference Where It Matters Most

As we continue uplifting organizations making a difference, we are honored to spotlight **Fostering Positive Change for Kids, Inc.** Their mission is simple yet powerful: ***to make a meaningful difference in the lives of underprivileged children in foster care and the foster parents who open their homes to them.***

Fostering Positive Chance for Kids, Inc. works to fill the gaps that government systems (because of red tape, limitations, and delays) cannot. Their focus is on meeting the immediate, real-life needs of children entering foster care, especially during those first hours and days when everything feels uncertain and overwhelming.

Imagine being in your home one moment, and an hour later stepping into a stranger's house with only the clothes on your back. For too many children, this is their reality. Fostering Positive Change for Kids, Inc. steps in to ease that transition by providing essential items that bring comfort, dignity, and stability, from hygiene products and clothing to cozy blankets, teddy bears, toys, and even bikes.

Their support doesn't end with childhood. As youth age out of the foster care system, the organization helps them step into adulthood with confidence, whether that means securing housing, furnishing an apartment, preparing for job interviews, visiting colleges, or covering expenses not supported by FAFSA or other grants.

Their vision is to ensure no child ever feels forgotten. By building a bridge between children, foster parents, and the community, they hope to create a future where these young people can grow, prosper, and one day give back by continuing a cycle of support and positive change.

Most recently, the organization hosted a joyful Christmas party for foster children, bringing warmth, celebration, and a sense of belonging during a season that can be especially difficult.

PSRFA proudly celebrates Fostering Positive Change for Kids, Inc. for their heart, dedication, and unwavering belief that when a child succeeds, the entire community thrives.

FOSTERING POSITIVE CHANGE FOR KIDS INC.

Leadership Team:
William Sutton: President
Anne Kelly: Vice President
Amanda Wetzel: Secretary
Nathan Koscuk: Treasurer
Jessica Peters: Foster Parent Representative

Address: Schuylkill County
586 Spring Mountain Drive
Zion Grove, PA 17985
C/O: William Sutton
Phone (570) 594-1081

PSRFA Grants at Work

Since 1999, the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA) has supported and strengthened local foster parent associations across the Commonwealth. PSRFA supports local foster parent associations by providing advocacy, training opportunities, networking, and statewide representation, as well as awarding grant funds to help support youth in foster care.

Grant funds may be used to support youth through initiatives such as, but not limited to:

- Family events or special outings
- Holiday celebrations, graduation parties, and milestone moments
- Back-to-school drives, senior photos, or care items
- Any activity or resource that directly supports and benefits youth in foster care

These funds are designed to be flexible, allowing local associations to meet the unique needs of the youth and families they serve.

**Funding availability is based on available resources and the number of participating FPAs.*

A simple phone call can open the door to information, reassurance, and hope!

What the SWAN Helpline Offers:

- Answers questions from families interested in foster care or adoption
- Sends helpful information packets
- Assists approved families during their matching process by providing additional information about waiting children, and help to initiate initial communication between family and child workers
- Initiates referrals for Post-Permanency services for families
- Follows up with families throughout the process
- Provides families additional resources for a variety of topics and issues

It's Not About You

Training Families to Stay Child-Focused in Foster Care

By Kate Kirkpatrick, Training and Recruitment Specialist

Across Pennsylvania, foster and adoptive families are asked to step into some of the most complex and emotionally demanding roles imaginable. While state licensing requirements establish a baseline for training, many agencies recognize that truly preparing families requires deeper reflection, practice, and ongoing support. At Bethany Christian Services of Central Pennsylvania, one guiding principle emphasized throughout preservice training is simple, but powerful: **IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU.**

This phrase serves as an important reminder that while foster care deeply impacts caregivers, the child's needs must always remain at the center. Bethany's training philosophy reinforces that foster care is a journey of sacrifice, choosing a child's well-being over personal comfort during sleepless nights, social isolation, or the emotional weight of a child's grief and trauma. As one foster family shared, ***"We learned a lot from the training, and when I have moments where something feels hard, I often think about that statement. It's not about me."***

Being child-focused also means embracing the heartbreak that can come with success, particularly reunification. Bethany prepares families to understand that while the challenges are real and the personal cost can be significant, providing a safe, healing home, even temporarily, can change a child's life forever.

Bethany Christian Services of Central Pennsylvania emphasizes consistency and shared language across its foster care and adoption program. Trainers, licensing workers, parent coaches, and therapists are grounded in the same trauma-informed principles so that families receive cohesive, relational support throughout their journey.

An adoptive family who welcomed three siblings through foster care reflected on this experience:

"In foster care, there are too many unknowns to make assumptions about success. The only reliable strategy is an unwavering focus on the child. Regardless of the circumstances, we are called to meet their needs as if they were our own. If you're an experienced parent, the only safe assumption is that every new child will likely demand more of you than any child who came before."

Bethany's preservice training program includes more than 25 hours of instruction and self-reflection and typically covers topics such as attachment and trauma, developmental versus chronological age, separation, grief and loss, discipline and the meaning behind behavior, cultural humility, identity, and a sense of belonging. The program draws from evidence-based curricula and relational approaches, equipping families to meet children where they are and respond with empathy and understanding.

By centering training around the needs of children, Bethany Christian Services of Central Pennsylvania strives to ensure foster and adoptive families are well prepared for both the challenges and the profound impact of care, reinforcing the belief that when families remain child-focused, healing and connection are possible.

Bethany Christian Services is a family-centered nonprofit serving vulnerable children and families in 28 states. In Pennsylvania, Bethany provides foster care, adoption, and family support services focused on safety, stability, and well-being.

For more information on the licensing process, you can explore our website at:
www.Bethany.org/Pennsylvania

National Days

A fun, family-friendly way to celebrate the season with children, families, and communities.

Winter Resource Corner

Celebrating February

Month-Long Observances

Black History Month
Celebrating Black history, culture, leadership, and contributions.

American Heart Month
Promoting heart health and healthy habits for the whole family.

Children's Dental Health Month
Encouraging healthy smiles and good dental care.

National Random Acts of Kindness Month
Focusing on kindness, compassion, and small acts that matter.

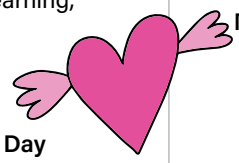
Family-Friendly National Days

Feb 2 – World Read Aloud Day
Reading together builds connection, comfort, and routine.

Feb 2 – Groundhog Day
A fun way to talk about seasons, weather, and change.

Feb 3 – National Wear Red Day
A chance to talk about heart health and self-care.

Feb 11 – International Day of Women & Girls in Science
Celebrating curiosity, learning, and exploration.



Feb 14 – Valentine's Day
Love in all its forms—family, friendship, and support.

Feb 17 – Random Acts of Kindness Day
Small acts can make a big difference.

Feb 20 – World Day of Social Justice
Reflecting on fairness, inclusion, and advocacy.

Celebrating March

Month-Long Observances

National Social Work Month
Recognizing social workers and the vital role they play in supporting children and families.

National Women's History Month
Honoring the achievements and impact of women past and present.

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
Promoting inclusion, understanding, and support for all abilities.

Family-Friendly National Days

March 2 – National Read Across America Day
Perfect for reading together and celebrating literacy.

March 12 – National Plant a Flower Day
Hands-on fun and a reminder that growth takes time.

March 13 – National Good Samaritan Day
Modeling kindness and helping others.

March 14 – Pi Day
Math + pie = learning made fun.

March 19 – National Let's Laugh Day
Joy, connection, and stress relief.

March 20 – First Day of Spring
Fresh starts and outdoor play.

March 21 – World Down Syndrome Day
Inclusion, acceptance, and awareness.

March 23 – National Puppy Day
A favorite for kids and families alike.

March 31 – National Crayon Day
Creativity, expression, and imagination.

Winter Safety Reminders

- Practice safe sleep habits
- Use space heaters safely
- Dress children in warm layers
- Prepare your vehicle for winter weather (blankets, snacks, and a small emergency kit)

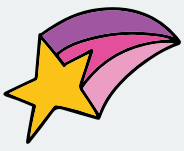
Winter Wellness & Calm

Simple Calming Activities for Children

- Hot cocoa & read-aloud time
- Sensory bins (rice, beads, or even clean snow!)
- Family movie nights
- Gentle stretching or yoga
- Creativity breaks: crafts, drawing, or cookie decorating

Fun & Uplifting Family Activities

- Start a Winter Gratitude Jar
- Build a Kindness Snowflake Chain (add a strip for each act of kindness)
- Create a Winter Memory Scrapbook
- Make homemade cards for teachers, social workers, or neighbors
- Host a family game night or puzzle night
- Try a new winter recipe or warm dessert together



Celebrating Our 49th Annual PSRFA Conference

This fall, PSRFA was proud to host our **49th Annual Conference** in Harrisburg, bringing together resource families, professionals, and partners from across Pennsylvania for two days of learning, connection, and encouragement.

Attendees participated in a variety of engaging workshops focused on supporting foster, adoptive, and kinship families, navigating challenges, and strengthening family well-being. The sessions offered practical tools, shared experiences, and space for meaningful conversation among those who truly understand the journey of caring for children.

Our keynote speaker, **Dominic Carter**, brought energy, inspiration, and humor, reminding us of the importance of resilience, compassion, and community in the work we do every day. Throughout the conference, the sense of connection and shared purpose was unmistakable.

We also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our presenters, sponsors, donors, volunteers, and attendees who made this conference possible. Thanks to the generosity of our community, the silent auction raised **$2,236** for the **PSRFA Scholarship Fund**, directly supporting educational opportunities for youth connected to our member families.

Events like this reinforce what PSRFA is all about: families helping families. We are grateful to everyone who joined us and helped make this year's conference a success.

Save the Date!

PSRFA's 50th Annual Conference will be held **Thursday and Friday, October 22–23, 2026,** at the Penn Harris Hotel & Conference Center in Camp Hill, PA. Join us as we celebrate 53 years of serving families across Pennsylvania and 50 years of providing meaningful, statewide conferences in support of foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

Membership renewal invoices have been mailed!

PENNSYLVANIA STATE
RESOURCE FAMILY ASSOCIATION
Hearts & Homes

Membership has it's Benefits!

What are the benefits of becoming a member of PSRFA?

- The knowledge you've helped a child
- Copy of the quarterly newsletter
- Advanced notification, and a reduced rate for trainings, conferences and meetings
- Academic scholarships for foster children and adopted / biological children of PSRFA Members
- A voice in Pennsylvania
- Supply of special brochures and appreciation items
- Support for local foster parent associations
- Become a new member or renew your membership today!

Use the Application or online at www.psrfa.org.

For more information, contact:
PSRFA: **1-800-951-5151** or
visit our website: **www.psrfa.org**

PENNSYLVANIA STATE RESOURCE FAMILY ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
Membership period is from January 1 – December 31
Membership Year_____
Please type or print all information.

If ***Agency*** Membership:

Agency Name_____

Contact _____Position/Title_____

If ***Family*** or ***Individual*** Membership:

Name _____

Spouse _____

Address _____

City _____State _____ Zip _____ County _____

Telephone: Home_____Cell_____Work_____

Email Address_____

Type of Membership: **New** □ **Renewal** □

□ **Family ($25.00)**

□ **Local FPA ($25.00)**

□ **Private Foster Care Agency ($60.00)**

□ **Public Foster Care Agency ($60.00)**

□ **Supporting ($30.00)**

Please mail completed form with dues to:

PSRFA
P.O. Box 60216
Harrisburg, PA 17106-0216

Thank You to Our Outgoing Board Members

As we close out the year and look ahead to a fresh chapter for PSRFA, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to several board members whose terms have come to an end. Their time, leadership, and dedication have helped shape the work we do for resource, kinship, and adoptive families across Pennsylvania.

Teresa Alden
Kathy Thomas-Jones
Jan Scherer
Kim Range
Elaine Gwinn

Each of these individuals brought passion and commitment to the board. Their contributions helped strengthen PSRFA during a time of rebuilding and growth, and we are deeply grateful for the many hours they dedicated to supporting our mission. We wish them well in their next chapters and hope they remain part of our PSRFA family.

We Need You!

With recent transitions, the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA) has several open seats on our Board of Directors. We are actively seeking caring, motivated individuals who want to help support resource families statewide and help strengthen PSRFA's impact across the Commonwealth. **Important note: Two-thirds of the PSRFA Board must be resource parents.** If you or someone you know has a heart for advocacy, collaboration, and supporting other foster, kinship, and adoptive families, we would love to hear from you.

Regions in Need of Representation

We are especially seeking board members from the following regions:

Region 4
Lycoming, Union, Montour, Columbia, Northumberland, Snyder, Schuylkill, Berks, Lehigh

Region 6
Indiana, Clearfield, Clinton, Centre, Cambria, Blair, Mifflin, Juniata, Huntingdon, Fulton, Bedford, Somerset, Fayette

Region 7
Erie, Crawford, Mercer, Venango, Clarion, Jefferson, Warren, McKean, Potter, Cameron, Elk, Forest

Interested in Serving?

Email Melissa at **mgeesaman@psrfa.org** for more information or visit the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA) website at **www.psrfa.org**.

- Click on the "About PSRFA" tab
- Select "Board and Staff"
- Download the Board Application located at the bottom of the page

We welcome your interest and encourage you to take the next step in supporting foster, kinship, and adoptive families across Pennsylvania.

APPRECIATION EVENTS

National Foster Care Month is in May and as a **THANK YOU** for your incredible work we invite all our **MEMBERS** to two **FREE BASEBALL APPRECIATION EVENTS**!

May 16 @ PNC Park in Pittsburgh, PA
May 28 @ First Energy Stadium in Reading, PA

More info and registration information coming soon!

Go ››› Member News

PSRFA 2026 Scholarship Opportunity

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS!

The Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA) is proud to continue its long-standing commitment to supporting the educational goals of youth connected to our resource families.

Active PSRFA members are encouraged to apply if they have children currently in their care who are high school seniors during the 2025–2026 school year and plan to further their education through college, university, or trade/technical school.

PSRFA scholarships are designed to help ease the financial burden of post-secondary education and to celebrate the resilience, determination, and achievements of our youth.

Application Deadline: April 21, 2026

How to Apply:

- Visit the PSRFA website at **www.psrfa.org**
- Navigate to the Education tab → **PSRFA Scholarships**
- Download and complete the 2026 Scholarship Application

If you have an eligible student in your family, we strongly encourage you to apply. These scholarships reflect PSRFA's mission of Families Helping Families and investing in the future of the youth we serve.

For questions or additional information, please visit our website or contact PSRFA directly.

The Village Voices gives families across Pennsylvania the chance to connect, no matter where you live, hosted on the Zoom platform. In this group, families can:

- Connect with others who truly understand the ups and downs of caregiving
- Share stories, tips, and encouragement
- Learn about helpful resources and receive special training opportunities
- Build friendships and lasting support

Join us, register at 1village1voice@gmail.com and join us for our next meeting.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE
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Hearts & Homes

200 Corporate Center Drive
Suite 100B
Camp Hill, PA 17011

P.O. Box 60216
Harrisburg, PA 17106-0216

1-800-951-5151 www.psrfa.org

Beat the Winter Blues

Simple Ways to Lift Your Mood This Season.

Winter may bring shorter days and colder nights, but it doesn't have to bring your spirits down with it. A few small shifts in your routine can make the season feel brighter, cozier, and even energizing.

SOAK IN THE DAYLIGHT

Natural light is one of the most powerful mood boosters. Try to step outside for a quick walk during the brightest part of the day; even 10 minutes can make a difference.

MOVE YOUR BODY

You don't need a full workout to feel better. Gentle stretching in the morning or a short dance break in the afternoon can release endorphins and shake off sluggishness.

CREATE POCKETS OF COZINESS

Think warm drinks, soft blankets, your favorite music, or lighting a candle in the evening. Building little rituals you look forward to helps winter feel more comforting.

STAY CONNECTED

Reach out to friends or family, schedule a game night, or join a virtual group. Social connection is one of the strongest defenses against seasonal lows.

TRY SOMETHING NEW

A new hobby, recipe, or creative project can spark excitement and keep your mind engaged even when it's chilly outside.

Winter won't last forever, but with a few intentional habits, you can make the season happier, healthier, and a lot brighter.

Article submitted by Rose McMillan