2015 Annual Report

25th Anniversary Edition

bloom
Changing the Face of Foster Children.
A Letter from the Executive Director

It has been 25 years since our founders realized their dream of providing a safe refuge for abused children by opening the doors of the Jim Friday Home in northern Fayette County. I recently ran across a newspaper clipping circa 1989, which featured an article that described the ups and downs of Bloom’s initial grass roots efforts and our ultimate success of building the home and taking in those first few children. What stands out the most in the article was a somewhat remarkable quote from our original founder, Jim Friday (who sadly passed away three years ago). Here is what he said regarding the process of starting up our organization:

“It seemed like when we needed something, people we had never heard of would come in at the right time—it’s been really strange. At the right time, the people were there.”

Until a few days ago, I had never read that article, nor had I ever heard Jim Friday utter those words. What I find so remarkable about his quote is that over the course of my ten years at Bloom, I must have said that exact same phrase at least a thousand times! Apparently, this is not a recent thing. Over the years, a mysterious and grand orchestration of volunteers, staff, and supporters has collided together to create the organization that we are today. The enormity of this realization has finally hit me; we have been incredibly blessed over the last 25 years!

If you are one of those people who has shown up “at the right time,” we thank you from the bottom of our hearts! You are the thread that has knitted our organization together, and has allowed us to reach more children than we ever dreamed possible when we opened our doors 25 years ago. We look to you, our friends and supporters, as we continue our mission to offer a better future for children who have been traumatized by abuse and neglect. I am excited to announce that on February 24, 2015, Bloom received a child placement licensure which will allow us to extend our services to medically fragile foster children as well as pregnant or parenting foster teen girls. So stay tuned…..

We wish there wasn’t a need for our services, but as long as there is, we will be here for the children. And we hope you will be here with us!

Becky Davenport, Executive Director

Over the past year, The Bloom Closet has provided free clothing and supplies for 1,000 foster children.

In 2014, Bloom gave away $150,000 worth of clothing and supplies to foster children from 60 Georgia counties.

Bloom Staff List

Executive Director          Foster Care Social Worker
Becky Davenport             Ashlie Hale

Program Coordinator        Friday-Johnson Children’s Home
Judy Matthews               Allison Holmes    Simone Foster-Payne

Office Manager              Tiffany Johnson   Brenda Wilder
June Parker                 Charlsetta Bailey

Marketing & Development    The Bloom Closet
Kristin Hauch Melton        Lauren Powers, Store Manager
                            Jennifer Lucero, Assistant Manager

2014-2015 Board of Directors

President                  Foster Care Social Worker
Jack Middleton             Ashlie Hale

Vice-President             Program Coordinator
Normer Adams               Judy Matthews

Secretary                 Office Manager
Michael Boylan             June Parker

Treasurer                  Marketing & Development
Mike Teal                 Kristin Hauch Melton

Dr. Terry Banks
Lauren Davis
Dr. Joseph DeVeau
Terry Ernst
Maggie Laton
Angela McNulty
Angie Wright-Rheaves
Chad Smith
Margaret Suggs
Tim Symonds
Larry Underwood
Congressman Lynn Westmoreland

Top Row (L-R): Ribbon cutting ceremony at Bloom’s new building; NCR volunteers at Bloom; sisters Abigail and Isabel give their savings to Bloom. Bottom Row (L-R): Eagle Scout Andrew Aycock donates collected shoes; young volunteers make Valentine’s Day cards for foster children; Girl Scouts volunteer at the Bloom Closet; Child’s Bloom Closet wish list; artwork created by foster child at Friday-Johnson Home. Right Column: Board members, staff, and foster families visit with Santa at Bloom’s holiday party; Southside Church group volunteers at Bloom; Krista Burris, Carly Isaacson, and Amanda Zupkoff support Bloom at the Frocks & Rocks fashion show.

Since 1989, the community has come together to provide for kids in need.
The Face of Foster Care

Over the past year, Bloom has celebrated many successes with our foster children. However, we have also been touched and saddened by the circumstances that have brought them to foster care in the first place. Bloom receives about 30-55 calls per month from the Department of Family and Child Services (DFCS) seeking placement for foster children and sibling groups. The reasons for placement vary. For example, the parents might be incarcerated, deceased, or struggling with substance abuse. Sometimes the child has been abused, neglected, or the child is homeless or living in extreme poverty. Those are just a few heart-breaking situations that we encounter time and time again. The following stories are just a glimpse into the true lives of the foster children we serve at the Friday-Johnson Home.

For confidentiality reasons, names and personal details have been changed.

Meet Joseph:

Ten-year-old Joseph is one of five siblings. Three of his siblings are being adopted, leaving him and his sister in need of an adoptive home. So far in his young life, he had fallen victim to parental substance abuse and violence which resulted in his coming to foster care. Shortly after moving into the Friday-Johnson Home, he found companionship with another boy his age, a new best friend with whom he plays ball, rides bikes, and shoots hoops. Although he hopes to be adopted one day like his siblings, Joseph finds daily comfort and joy in his new friendships and in the stable environment of the group home.

Meet Joseph:

By age 13, Adrianna had accepted the reality that most of her life including a 2-year placement in another state. Before coming to the Friday-Johnson Home, they had been split up in several foster homes. They cried constantly for one another. When they were accepted to the Friday-Johnson home, the girls were truly appreciative of being back together. At the group home, they began to enjoy life again. They formed friendships and bonded with the other children during field trips to the skating rink, the movies, and to the Atlanta Ferris wheel. They reminded the group home staff daily how lucky they feel to be together again, surrounded by friends and caring adults. Now they look at everyday as an adventure!

Meet Brianna:

Brianna came to the Friday-Johnson Home almost 17 months ago. As a high school student, she had lofty goals — to become the Valedictorian and someday become a doctor. With the help of the group home staff and her therapist, she processed through painful scars left from her previous family life. Once her emotional turmoil stabilized, she was able to pull up her grades with the help of a tutor and regular study sessions. For the first time in her life, she had a team of people who believed in her and supported her aspirations. Despite her circumstances, she is more determined than ever to succeed.

Meet Brianna:

I'm just a girl.
I work hard at things, but don't get what I deserve.
I can be read like an open book, but I hide so much.
I'm not always right, but I hate admitting I'm wrong.
I'm just a girl.

Meet Adrianna:

With the help of a local voice coach, Adrianna's talent grew and grew. She sang for the children at the Friday-Johnson Home, she sang at her school, and she even sang at the community holiday concert. Through the gift of singing, her heart is slowly healing.

Meet Adrianna:

I'm just a girl.

Just a Girl
(poem written by a Bloom foster child)

I'm just a girl.
I love being called pretty, but I'll never believe it.
I'm not always right, but I hate admitting I'm wrong.
I'm always smiling but it's not always real.
I can be read like an open book, but I hide so much.
I work hard at things, but don't get what I deserve.
I'm just a girl.
Thank You Donors!

$199-499 (continued)
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Mr. & Mrs. Owen Morgan
Mr. Ricky Morris
Mr. & Mrs. William W. Morris
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Ms. Karen Neuner
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Mrs. Helen Norton
Oak Grove Elementary
Mr. & Mrs. James Papac
Peachtree Industrial Electric, Inc.
Peachtree Pediatric Dentistry
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Dr. & Mrs. Ralph Zimmerman
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Mr. & Mrs. Dave Ziobro

Monthly Giving

Will you be a sustaining supporter for our programs? We invite you to join our Bloom Our Youth Monthly Giving Program. Your monthly gift will provide the constant support our children need.

- Simply choose an amount to give per month, and your gift will be automatically deducted from your credit or debit card.

- Your monthly gift will go directly towards supporting the children who utilize our services through the Friday-Johnson children’s home and our Bloom foster parenting program.

- Sign up online today at www.bloomouryouth.org/donate

Please Note:
Donor list is ONLY reflective of cash donations made between January 1, 2014 and February 1, 2015, and is NOT representative of in-kind donations.

THE BLOOM CLOSET IS A PLACE WHERE FOSTER CHILDREN CAN JUST BE KIDS AGAIN.

The Bloom Closet

When children are placed into foster care, they usually arrive with nothing but the clothing on their backs. The Bloom Closet relies on the donations of individuals and groups to help meet the needs of displaced children and youth.

Interested in donating? We are always in need of the following:

- New or gently used shoes and clothing (size infant through teen)
- Pajamas, socks and underwear (new)
- Diaper wipes and diapers
- Baby gear (diaper bags, infant carriers, baby swings, cribs, etc)
- Baby blankets, baby liners
- Baby bottles, sippy cups, bibs, pacifiers (new)
- Toiletries such as toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, soap
- Books for babies, children and teens
- School supplies
- Canned goods, food items
- Gift cards to movies, restaurants, and clothing stores

Items can be dropped off at Bloom:
Monday-Friday 9am-5pm
Saturday 9am-2pm

Back to the Basics

Each year, more than 7,000 Georgia children live in foster care. Although foster parents are given a small stipend for clothing, it typically doesn’t even begin to cover the actual costs incurred. The Bloom Closet addresses this need by distributing donated clothing, baby gear, shoes, toiletries, school supplies, and toys to foster families at no cost.

In 2014, The Bloom Closet experienced a 33% increase in the number of children served, which coincides with a 22% increase in the number of children removed from their homes statewide. Over the past year, The Bloom Closet has provided free clothing, books, toys, school supplies, and baby gear to more than 1,000 foster children from 60 Georgia counties.

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Team Bloom is a community group of athletes that want to make a difference. Originally founded by Lacey Hegwood as the “Tri-for-Bloom: Change to Make a Change” challenge, the concept has grown from a single competitor to include a team of 7 triathlon athletes who are competing around the state of Georgia in order to raise money for Bloom. Last year, Lacey Hegwood raised more than $1,300 in pledge monies. In 2015, Team Bloom athletes will be soliciting mileage pledges and sponsorships to support their mission and combined mileage goal of 13,060 miles.

“Because of Team Bloom, our training efforts include more than just winning medals,” Lacey says. “It is about something bigger. It’s about the children who have been lost and forgotten in this world, and about the kindness and generosity of the people who love and care for them.”

To follow and support Team Bloom, go online:
facebook.com/teambloom2015
twitter.com/teambloom2015

Panera Bread

Throughout 2014, Panera Bread gave their customers the opportunity to donate money at the register to assist Bloom’s mission of providing shelter and support for foster children in Georgia. As part of the Panera Bread’s Community Bread Box program, collection boxes were placed at 20 Panera Bread bakery-cafes around metro Atlanta, which raised $5,000 in donations. In addition, Panera Bread in Fayetteville committed to donating 24 meals per year to the foster children and staff living at the Friday-Johnson children’s home.

Giving Back to Bloom

Jeff and Bonnie Giglio were guests at Bloom’s table at Chick-fil-A Foundation’s Pinewood-Atlanta gala for Fayette County non-profits.

Fayette County Bar Association members Brandon Taylor, Sam Beck, Angela Landgaard, and Jordan Jewkes donate toys collected for foster children.

Foster Parent Recruitment

Bloom recruits foster parents during Spring and Summer tent events in the community.

Bloom Annual Events & Fundraising Initiatives

**Spring/Summer**

**Bloom Ball**
Premier fundraising gala held during the first week of spring. This spring-themed evening event includes dinner, dancing, auctions and live entertainment.

**Frocks & Rocks**
A ladies-only fashion show featuring a 30+ outfit runway show, appetizers, a silent auction, jewelry bar, and an off-runway live accessory auction. Proceeds benefit The Bloom Closet.

**Power Parade**
Annual walk-a-thon held in all 14 Fayette County Elementary Schools. Students solicit pledges to raise money to support the children at the Friday-Johnson Home.

**Fall/Winter**

**Noel November**
Hosted by the Fayette County Board of Realtors

**Christmas at The Bloom Closet**
Foster children are invited to visit with Santa Claus and enjoy holiday crafts and cookies.

FUNDRAISING FOR A CAUSE:
EVENTS FOR FOSTER CHILDREN IN NEED.
BLOOM PROVIDES A REFUGE FOR ABANDONED CHILDREN WHO NEED HELP. RIGHT NOW.

Our Mission:

Bloom is a non-profit organization which provides physical, educational and emotional support to children who have been the victims of abuse or neglect in order to strengthen them for the next phase of life.

How You Can Help:

- DONATE
- ADVOCATE
- VOLUNTEER
- BECOME A FOSTER FAMILY

Learn more at www.bloomouryouth.org