



## Christmas is Just around the Corner!



After the heat of this past summer, the crisp, cool days of fall with its vibrant colors of red, orange and yellow are a welcome change for all. Even as we relish these fall days, the minds of FSN staff are speeding ahead to Christmas lists and families. Bringing Christmas cheer to over 200 families is a big job and requires lots of work and preparation during the time of falling leaves. We begin the holiday course in October asking parents for a family Christmas wish list. The wish lists are then compiled into our Christmas data base ready to deliver to the generous community members, organizations and businesses that come to the aid of Family Support Network families. These generous people and organizations help ensure that our families experience the hope and joy of Christmas and find a measure of peace during this season knowing that people genuinely care for their well-being.

The most important part of Family Support Network's Christmas program is the adoption of families. This program is essential for FSN workers because it helps strengthen the bonds between

the worker and their families. It is not just the gifts they receive but the opportunity these gifts allow for parents to create and plan traditions for their children. Instead of an atmosphere of guilt, remorse and depression, our families experience some of the wonder, laughter and enthusiasm that most of us take for granted during this holiday



season. This enriching experience often opens the door for our workers to help their families learn how to manage through some very rough times by helping them make positive decisions and assist their children in appropriate behaviors. When parents feel they have helped their children experience a more nurturing home environment in spite of their poverty or know they have resisted taking a path that will only provide more heartache, it empowers them to keep

working to become better parents and better members of their community.

From high school classes to businesses, Girl and Boy Scout Troops to book club members, grandparents to bachelors, and even former families, those who have adopted families or given donations in the past are as diverse and unique as the families for whom they have shopped. If a busy schedule does not allow you the opportunity to shop, a donation of money or individual gifts are much appreciated alternatives in supporting FSN as it strives to help area families.

Our workers are lucky enough to lead the parade for making the Christmas season magical for our families. We invite you to join with us for this season and hope it will become part of a holiday tradition for your family, organization or business and that you too will become a beneficiary of the Christmas spirit that makes the holidays such a rewarding time. If you, your office or your organization would like to participate, call Family Support Network at 256-7783 or watch for our letter in the mail.

# A Home of Our Own:

## FSN Hopes to Expand into a New Building and Provide More Services

FSN is looking to find a home of our own. During the course of working with families, Barbara Sample, Executive Director is always on the lookout for ways to improve our program. The vision for our new home involves creating a family center that will house all of our services together. The housing center will include an area for our offices, a licensed daycare, transitional housing units, and provide home settings for supervised visitation.

Three issues started the vision to expand into a home setting. First, our families have limited choices in daycare when they need to apply for TANF, make doctor's appointments or apply for jobs. State daycare does not pay for drop in care so parents are often forced to leave their children with inappropriate individuals. By providing a daycare on site, we can model appropriate parenting (discipline, nutrition, play) with our parents who will serve as aides to earn daycare credits. Second, doing supervised visitation in one small room doesn't create an environment to observe and teach parents skills they need like preparing nutritious meals, napping, time out and a score of other basic parenting issues often needing to be done all at the same time. Third, many of our parents are ready to have their children returned but lack appropriate housing. This often leads to significant delays that are harmful to the children. During the critical transition time when the children are first returned, parents will literally have support right next door.

We believe parents will learn skills needed more quickly, children will spend less time in foster care and our recidivism rate will decrease further. (After a federal case audit, with a five year look back, FSN showed 83% of our closed families had



not reentered the Child Protective Services database vs. 40% of those families who did not receive our services).

Join with us to make this vision a reality. Cash contributions to the capital project can be mailed to Family Support Network, P. O. Box 21366, Billings, MT., 59104. We also need help from contractors to take the building and remodel it into the various working segments, local businesses for building materials and household items, and teams to put it all together. The staff of Family Support Network will continue to pursue grants that will help defray the costs to help the family center become a valued addition to our community. Pass our newsletter along to people who might be interested in becoming a part of this community project.

### ***Special Thanks:***

**Joanne Miller  
Underriner Motors  
Costco Employees  
Alpha Delta Kappa  
Pam Lowe Enterprises  
Costco Employees**

### ***Did You Know?***

**Barbara Sample, Executive Director, was privileged to be invited by Rosalind Carter to participate in a panel on stigma and mental illness at the Carter Center in Atlanta Georgia.**



# Former Jesuit, Erin Royston and Husband Donate Wedding Gifts to FSN



This spring FSN received a call from Erin Royston, a former Jesuit volunteer, with a tremendous proposal. She and her fiancé James Battat wanted to use their wedding registry to provide necessities to the families of FSN. Erin and James created a Target wedding registry and told their guests that gifts purchased from this registry should be sent to Family Support Network for our families. This marvelous act of generosity supplied the families of FSN with many needed items such as bedding, a vacuum, kitchen place settings, toasters, a microwave, blenders, utensil sets, pots and pans and many others.



Erin grew up in Old Saybrook, Connecticut surrounded by a close knit family. After attending Georgetown University in Washington, DC, Erin joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corps who stationed her in Billings. Erin's time with Family Support Network left an indelible mark on her life. She recalls the strong relationships she built with moms and dads while working as a home visitor. Erin remarks of the families she worked with, "I remember feeling grateful for the trust they

placed in me, and awed by the strengths they demonstrated in the face of great adversity." In addition to her experiences with families, Erin found working with Barbara Sample, FSN's Executive Director, a "truly formative experience" from which she learned a great deal.

After her year at FSN, Erin worked in Missoula before returning to the East Coast. She is currently working on her PH.D. in American Studies at Harvard University.

While undergoing the wedding registry process, Erin was struck with the idea of sharing her guests' generosity with FSN's families. She and James knew that the giving spirit of their friends and

family would yield more gifts than they could ever use, and Erin's positive experience made FSN their natural choice. All through the summer, the generosity of Erin, James and their family and friends arrived at Family Support Network providing items so needed for our families. Thank you to all who celebrated Erin and James' wedding with a generous gift to Family Support Network; you really made a difference.

## Special Thanks to...

Russell & Karen  
Barmmer  
Old Saybrook, CT

Joe & Brenda Battat  
Old Saybrook, CT

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Gail Moorhouse  
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Bill & Sally Murray  
Lilburn, GA

Catherine O'Connor  
Boston, MA

Amanda O'Donnell  
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Michael Royston &  
Amy Tria  
Windsor Locks, CT

Sara Schwebel  
Mystic, CT

Michael Siciliano  
Arlington, MA

Ellen O'Shaughnessy  
Cambridge, MA



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*WITH JUST A LITTLE SUPPORT EACH OF US CAN DISCOVER THE SOURCES OF STRENGTH IN OUR LIVES*

**YES!** I WANT TO JOIN WITH FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK IN THEIR EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN AND PRESERVE THE FAMILY THROUGH SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES. I UNDERSTAND MY DONATION WILL SUPPORT LOCAL EFFORTS.

**MEMBERSHIP FORM:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Donations are tax deductible and can be sent directly to our office

**P.O Box 21366  
Billings, MT 59104**

I want to do more. Contact me to be a volunteer

I cannot join now but my contribution is enclosed for