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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES CELEBRATES NATIONAL KINSHIP CARE MONTH BY RECOGNIZING NYC GRANDPARENTS, AUNTS, UNCLES & FAMILY FRIENDS WHO HAVE STEPPED FORWARD TO BECOME KIN CAREGIVERS

More Than 40% of NYC Children in Foster Care Are Placed with Kin; Research Shows That Children Placed with Kin Experience Less Trauma, Have Greater Overall Well-Being, and Experience Greater Placement Stability

NEW YORK, NY – In honor of September's "National Kinship Care Month," the NYC Administration for Children's Services honors New York City grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends and more, who have stepped forward to become kinship caregivers to children in need. Research has shown that children in foster care who are placed with family members or friends experience less trauma, have greater overall well-being, and are more likely to be reunified with their parents, become adopted, or achieve guardianship. In New York City, approximately 41% of all children in foster care are placed with kinship caregivers. Now more than ever, as children in foster care cope with the added uncertainty caused by COVID-19, ACS recognizes the critical role kin care givers play by providing safety, stability, and a sense of normalcy.

"In recognition of 'National Kinship Month,' ACS recognizes New York City grandparents, aunts, uncles, and close friends who are providing safe, loving homes for children in need," **said ACS Commissioner, David A. Hansell**. "We know that children fare best when they maintain strong ties to their families, and increased efforts to place kids with kin reinforce our commitment to improve outcomes for all children and families who come in contact with ACS."

"This 'National Kinship Month,' The New York Foundling honors and celebrates the countless extended family members who, every day, share and join our mission of providing children with familiar, stable, and caring homes," **said Bill Baccaglioni, President and CEO of The New York Foundling**. "While all of us strive to keep families together, when temporary removal of a child is required, The Foundling believes that the long-term outcome for a family is much more positive if the care is provided by kin. This work wouldn't be possible without the tremendous commitment of kin caregivers across New York City, who support their family members and provide children with a safe and nurturing family setting as parents address the stressors that led to separation and disruption of the family unit."

"Since 1997, I've worked alongside many kinship care services providers and gotten to know thousands of kinship caregivers. Everyone who meets them and hears their stories become their admirers and advocates. They are our nation's original child welfare system, still the best system, and always our greatest natural resource for vulnerable children," **said Retiring Kinship Navigator Director, Gerard Wallace, Esq.**

"The NYS Kinship Navigator has provided assistance to over 20,000 families since its inception in 2006 - we have spoken with kinship caregivers all across New York State that have selflessly stepped in to care for children when the parents cannot parent. Children find safety, permanency and overall better outcomes in the care of relatives and family friends, and this "natural resource" is pivotal to the well-being of our youth," **said Rae Glaser, Co-Director, NYS Kinship Navigator.**

"I am grateful to be able to give two wonderful children a loving home and the structure they deserve. There certainly are challenges, but ultimately kinship care is the best option for the child. To all the other kinship foster parents out there who have stepped up, I applaud you," **said Theresa Branch-el, Kinship Foster Parent.**

Whenever possible, ACS looks to place children entering foster care with relatives or family friends, people who are known to the children. This work begins by exploring kinship options with the parents and the children, and when a kinship resource is identified, the foster care case planner works with the resource to certify their home as a foster home. Kin are held to the same safety standards as non-kin foster parents and must meet all foster home requirements. ACS and its community partners strive to support kin so that children can stay closely connected to their natural support networks.

Increasing kinship care is a top priority in the ACS Foster Care Strategic Blueprint and a recommendation of the Interagency Foster Care Task Force. ACS has successfully implemented multiple strategies to achieve this goal, including establishing new Kinship Specialist positions within the ACS Division of Child Protection (DCP) who focus full-time on finding and engaging kin caregivers for children entering foster care. Through these and other efforts by ACS' contracted foster care agencies, ACS increased the proportion of children placed with kin from 31% in 2018 to 41% in 2020.



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