

NEWS NEWS



Department of Human Services

June 30, 2010

DHS' Achieving Reunification Center Hosts Event to Celebrate Reunited Families

Philadelphia—In recognition of the first annual National Family Reunification Day, the Philadelphia Department of Human Services' (DHS) Achieving Reunification Center (ARC) will host a Reunification Celebration to acknowledge the achievements of parents with children in placement who have successfully reunified their families. The event, which also marks the center's five-year anniversary, will take place on Wednesday, June 30th at ARC, 714 Market Street in Philadelphia. ARC will present a special award to the Hon. Kevin M. Dougherty, Administrative Judge of Philadelphia Family Court for his dedication and commitment to helping families reunify.

According to DHS Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose, "the reunification process can pose a host of challenges for parents struggling to meet court mandates, which may include obtaining safe housing and employment, completing parenting classes, and substance abuse treatment. The ARC was established to help parents overcome those challenges and successfully reunify their families."

At the ARC, parents receive a host of services--such as parenting classes, financial and housing classes, counseling, anger management, employment training, life skills and more--under a single roof. By bringing systems together, ARC helps parents achieve economic self sufficiency and positive outcomes for their families. The facility even has a beautiful play space, which offers childcare when parents are receiving services and provides a safe environment for parent and sibling visitation.

"Many of the parents involved in the child welfare system are frustrated in their efforts to comply with what are often extensive and conflicting mandates," says ARC Director Martin Harris. "The center helps parents address the issues that led to the separation and meet

mandates guided by child welfare, public benefits and workforce policies so they can not only get their children back but provide a more stable and nurturing home for them.”

Harris notes that since opening its doors in 2005, ARC has helped reunify 336 children with their families and has helped more than 3000 parents improve their lives.

Among those who have successfully completed services at ARC and who will be recognized at the Reunification Celebration are Shaleeda Busbee and her husband Ervin, whose 10 year-old son was placed in foster care in March of 2009. At ARC, both parents were active participants in parenting skills classes. In addition, Shaleeda attended a Women's Empowerment Group as well as a GED/Move Up course and Ervin participated in a fathers program and was the first father to receive his GED at the center.

The Busbee family was successfully reunited in January of this year and today Shaleeda has a business catering baked goods and her son is one of the top three students at his class in school.

“Shaleeda is an inspiration to all parents going through the reunification process,” says Harris. “She was a dynamic ARC parent who participated in a range of services and was an integral member of the Women’s Empowerment group. She continues to keep in contact with her peers and makes herself available to them for support.”

Kelly Roye is another success story. Roye was referred to ARC after her two sons, ages 11 and 13, were placed in Treatment Foster Care in July 2008. Determined to reunite her family, she participated in Culinary Employment Training, anger management workshops and a parenting group for parents with children in placement. After successfully completing the requisite training, she was reunited with her sons in December 2009.

On Wednesday, June 30th, the Busbees and Roye along with several other reunified families will share their stories at ARC’s Reunification Celebration. The event will feature remarks by DHS Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose, as well as music, games, raffles, giveaways, and an opportunity to tour ARC and learn more about the services provided.

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The Philadelphia Department of Human Services is the City agency charged with protecting children from abuse, neglect, and delinquency; ensuring their safety and permanency in nurturing home environments; and strengthening and preserving families by enhancing community-based prevention services. In partnership with community organizations, DHS provides services to strengthen the overall well being of Philadelphia children, youth, and families using a customer focused approach that is responsive to evolving community needs.

