



CHILD FOCUS: ENRICHING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN LIVING IN FOSTER CARE

LAS VEGAS – Child Focus, founded in 1999 by Dr. Stephanie Holland and Gloria Bernal, is proof of what two people can do. Confronted with the problems they saw every day within their work in the foster care system, Holland and Bernal decided to act for change. As a non-profit organization, Child Focus is dedicated to helping foster children live happier, more fulfilling lives all across Clark County.

In her role as a child psychologist, Holland had first-hand experience with the issues that have plagued the foster care system. She and Bernal, a licensed social worker, decided to take on the challenge of enriching the lives of children living in the foster care system. “The idea of approaching such a large problem ourselves was daunting – we really weren't sure how to approach this at first,” admits Holland. “But now, Child Focus is such a part of our lives and I think we're making a tremendous difference for many children out there.”

Today, Holland heads the organization as its founder and board director, putting countless hours of her free time and passion into this worthwhile cause. With the help of the Child Focus board and staff, Holland has built up an organization of over 250 volunteers strong, with a number of ongoing projects serving the 4,000-plus foster children in Clark County. Each program aims to address a particular problem Holland has experienced in the field. Current projects include:

- **Academic Success** – With overwhelming numbers of foster children at risk academically, Child Focus offers both mentoring and tutoring services to help promote educational success.
- **Sibling Preservation** – While foster children frequently get separated from their siblings, Child Focus works to preserve that sibling bond through quarterly “get together” events, creating shared memories for siblings living in separate homes. In addition, Child Focus supports “Camp to Belong,” a national summer camp program that reunites foster siblings separated by the system.
- **Birthday Wishes** – Because too many foster children's birthdays go by unnoticed, Child Focus provides children with a gift and a card to make sure their special day is a memorable one.
- **Step-Up** – Child Focus administers the Nevada state initiative FAFY which offers

public funding to support youths in transition from foster care to adulthood, teaching them to be self-sufficient members of society through mentoring, education and financial aid.

Funding for Child Focus comes completely from donations and charity events. The annual Hats Off To Child Focus Mother's Day Tea is an afternoon affair celebrating the special bond of mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and dear friends and helps raise funds for a variety of Child Focus projects. And thanks to major corporate donors such as M.J. Christensen, Nevada Power and Target, Child Focus is able to provide valuable services to the foster child community in Southern Nevada.

“We have a strong volunteer base already, but we're always adding new people to our team. And we need them, because there are still problems endemic to the foster care system” says Holland. “But with enough community involvement and volunteers, we can make a difference.”

Child Focus is a non-profit agency providing many vital supportive services and resources which enrich the lives of children living in foster care in Southern Nevada. The goal of the organization is to work within the system to become a powerful voice for change. Child Focus partners with many national and local child welfare organizations to create a strong network of support and caring within our community.

Current programs and services include: **Academic Success** offers both mentoring and tutoring services to help promote educational success. **Sibling Preservation** coordinates quarterly “get together” events, creating shared memories for siblings living in separate homes. In addition, Child Focus supports Camp to Belong Nevada, a national summer camp program that reunites foster siblings who are separated by the system. **Birthday Wishes** ensures no child is forgotten on their birthday providing presents to children living in care so their special day is a memorable one. **Step Up** is a state of Nevada funded initiative supporting youths in transition from foster care, teaching them to become self sufficient members of society. The **Step Up** program has been administered by Child Focus since 2004. Child Focus: 4310 S. Cameron, Suite 13, Las Vegas, NV 89103. 702.436.1624, www.childfocusnv.org.

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