

For Immediate Release:

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Jacksonville first in the Nation to declare “Foster Child Day”

On October 28th, 2008, inside Jacksonville City Council Chambers, a few minutes after 5pm, two-dozen foster children captivated the attention of city officials and those in public attendance as they accepted Resolution 2008-836-A, declaring “Foster Youth Day”. This is the first Resolution adopted by any level of government in the Nation recognizing the hardships faced by foster children and their success thereafter. Even more noteworthy, and another first, NE FL foster children stood before government, as an organized force finding hope and an over whelming sense of empowerment.

Florida Youth SHINE is an advocacy group whose members have either “graduated” from the foster care system by turning 18 or are currently in foster care. These young adults meet once a month to work on issues they think can be improved within Florida’s foster care system. During their August meeting, FYS members decided that proposing “Foster Child Day” to City Council would put a good foot forward in changing the unpleasant perception experienced by many foster youth around the state. With a strong network of child welfare professionals behind them, FYS members are learning how to identify problems and seek solutions by networking with decision makers.

Several of the decision makers stood behind Florida Youth SHINE members during their presentation before City Council. FYS worked with City Council Woman Glorious Johnson who helped by introducing the Resolution to City Council. She opened the presentation speaking of the strengths of foster children and especially Florida Youth SHINE members. Mike Dunlavy, NE FL Youth SHINE Organizer, accepted the Resolution on behalf of the group and then spoke on how and why the FYS members found value in recognizing foster youth in the Jacksonville community, “foster children are making progress in our community through self advocacy and we can all be proud to live in a city that is setting the standard on this issue”, Dunlavy said. FYS members presented Council Woman Johnson with a bouquet of flowers, and then remarks were shared from several child welfare professionals who are strong supporters of FYS. Judge David Gooding, Nancy Driecer, NE FL DCF Director, Jim Adams, Family Support Services Director, and Andrea Moore, Florida’s Children First Director shared words of support and the progress of NE FL Foster youth.



Members of Florida Youth SHINE along with local Child Welfare supporters

The Members of Youth SHINE are dedicated to changing the culture of foster care. Florida's Children First and its programs, including Florida Youth Shine, are funded in part by the Florida Bar Foundation, The Eckerd Family Foundation, and the United Way of North East Florida. For more information, please email fcf@floridaschildrenfirst.org or call 954-796-0860.