CYS Campout

Marisha McDowell, Recruitment and Retention Specialist

This June we invited all of our foster families and staff for the first ever CYS Campout!

We were located up on the beautiful Olympic Peninsula, just outside of Sequim, WA. We stayed at Camp Ramblewood Retreat Center, just four miles east of Sequim and a quarter mile from Sequim Bay State Park. Ramblewood sits under a canopy of cedar, fir, hemlock and maple trees. It is a popular destination for those seeking a mixture of camping with the comforts of a fully equipped lodge and showers. Ramblewood offers a cozy lodge with fireplace, three heated sleeping cabins and four Adirondack (three-sided) sleeping shelters.

The first night was just CYS staff which provided a great opportunity for some team bonding. Lots of games were had, as well as happily watching all of our fur babies play and scurry around the woods!

The second night of camping, our foster families were invited! We had over 20 people there, with lots of food and fun! Families had the chance to connect with other families and staff in a neutral and non work environment. This provided the opportunity to create new memories. Thanks to our great chefs, Nathan, Liana and Liz! Those that weren’t available to be there missed out! We hope to see you next year!

Camp Ramblewood
As most of you know I have been a Foster Parent for over 15 years and work primarily with older youth. I had a young man (15 year old) join my family several months ago. He has been through many placements, and has seen some of the worst that we humans can do to one another. Through it all, he is still the most kind and caring youth I have had. Several weekends ago my husband and I decided to take him to the Tacoma Pride. It was a huge deal for him since he was never allowed to express/explore his true sexual identity in ANY other home.

We spent several hours walking around, talking with vendors, and most importantly, getting pictures with all the Drag Queens. He was so nervous that he could not ask the Drag Queens for a picture. He would whisper to me or my husband’s ear to ask for him. By the end of the event he had over a dozen pictures. On the way home we talked about PRIDE and how amazing the people were. The amazing dresses, the booths, the food, the music, we talked about them all.

At this point my kiddo said, “Am so happy, I never had a dad before and now I have two dads!” This totally melted our hearts and reaffirms why we are Foster Parents.

Later that afternoon when we got home, he immediately went straight to his room and shut the door. After being in them for 20 minutes he came out and wanted to show us something, so we followed him into the deep and dark depths of a teenager’s room. Hanging up was his T-Shirt from PRIDE! He happily exclaimed to us “I am keeping this forever!”

Words cannot express the joy, happiness, and love that we all felt in that moment..... since words cannot describe, I want to share with you all the prized PRIDE T-Shirt that will forever be hanging up in my son’s room.

Being a foster parent has been one of the most rewarding and challenging things I have ever done with my life. The community that has sprung up around me has not only supported and encouraged me, but also inspired me to do more. I hope this story inspires you to do more as well. At CYS, we are actively looking for Foster Parents to join us.

Remember: There are multiple ways to provide care and support to foster youth. At the end of the day, foster parents are the best recruiters! Reminder to all CYS foster parents—if you refer a family to CYS and they complete the licensing process YOU will receive $500! Upon the family receiving their first placement, you will receive an additional $500.
Families should plan on spending several hours as the event is usually crowded.

Clothing items will be available 8:00am - 6:00 pm Thursday, August 16th at Komachin Middle School. Any items not distributed on Distribution Day may be provided to Thurston County Students through similar community agencies in Thurston County.

The supplies and available clothing is spread throughout the day. It's impossible to predict how many people will show up but based on last year’s turnout there should be supplies all day. No proof of financial need is required. We all trust if your family is coming to ask for help that you need it.

Each student will receive the appropriate school supplies, a new or used backpack, and we hope, a new or gently used coat, and new socks and underwear.

Various local agencies that help families will have booths outside the commons with information on their programs. For more information, contact: Thurston-Mason Counties Crisis Clinic at 360-586-2800 for assistance.

DID YOU KNOW? All CYS Foster Parents are pet owners!

August is National Pet Awareness month and to celebrate we are holding our first ever PET FOOD DRIVE! So swing on by Community Youth Services between 8am - 5pm and head up to the third floor lobby to drop off your donation. All donations will go to shelter animals in need.
Community Youth Services supports youth and families in achieving their needs for health, safety, security, and community.

**Upcoming Alliance Trainings**

**AUGUST**

- **August 7, Vancouver**
  *Emotion Coaching*

- **August 12, Tacoma**
  *Introduction to Positive Discipline*

- **August 16, Tacoma**
  *Infant Safety and Care*

- **August 20, Webinar**
  *So you have a new placement, now what?*

**SEPTEMBER**

- **Sept. 7, Tacoma**
  *Behavior Management Tools for Caregivers*

- **Sept. 8, Tacoma**
  *Caring for Children with Physically Behavior Concerns*

- **Sept. 8, Tacoma**
  *Caring for Children with Sexual Behavior Concerns*

- **Sept. 11, Webinar**
  *So you have a new placement, now what?*


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**CYS Foster Families...**

Open the door to their homes, providing a safe, stable, nurturing home for growth.

**CYS Foster Youth...**

Walk through the door, into the home; vulnerable and have suffered multiple traumas. Most times not trusting, but looking for change.

**CYS Case Managers...**

Hold the door; to facilitate safety and growth, and to improve children’s lives leading to successful adulthood.

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**IMPORTANT NUMBERS:**

- **Police Dispatch:** 911; Get Intake Number for CYS Case Manager
- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:** 800.843.5678
- **After Hour CYS On-Call Case Manager:** 360.280.9516

*Remember to always reference your youth’s safety plan!*

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