

A STEP AHEAD IN PIERCE COUNTY

May 2011

Dear Supporter,

Statistics show that each month Pierce County places an average of 55 children under the age of five into the foster system. Research indicates that 50% of those children will have mental health problems. These children are less likely to be placed into permanent homes and are more likely to experience multiple placement changes than those children without mental health concerns. **They are also at a higher risk of poor school performance, higher drop-out rates and more likely to engage in substance abuse in later years.**

Did you also know that **A Step Ahead is working to improve the outcomes of infants and toddlers in foster care** by providing the emotional and developmental support they need in order to be a success later in life? With community grants and donations, our home visiting program helps children cope with the trauma he or she has experienced and provide enriching activities to ensure that they are ready for school by age five.

You too can help by donating to A Step Ahead's Fostering Care Program. And by donating now, your donation will be matched by the Lucky Seven Foundation!

Meet Duane and Victoria. Victoria was 15 months old when she was removed from her mother's care and placed into a foster home. Although Duane knew he was the father, he had been unable to see his daughter up until that time. Children's Protective Services helped him determine paternity and gain his parental rights. However the courts mandated that he complete a number of requirements before his daughter was able to live with him full time. He needed to continue his outpatient treatment and enroll in parenting classes. During that time, Victoria was moved from foster care and placed with her maternal grandmother. Both the social worker and the grandmother stated concerns regarding Victoria's aggressive behavior and tantrums. Connie Lucas, A Step Ahead's Infant Mental Health Specialist, met with Victoria and her grandmother and completed a developmental and behavioral assessment. She discovered that Victoria had significant behavioral issues and mildly delayed communication skills. She agreed to provide weekly home visits to help give the grandmother strategies for stabilizing Victoria's emotional response to two changes of caregivers.



continued on back

As Duane began making progress in his program, Connie was able to attend his visitations with his daughter and support their relationship and his parenting. In a recent conversation with Duane said, “Connie helps me learn how to structure play times and learning for Victoria. Things are always better when Connie is around.”



Victoria was able to move in with her dad last November. Her tantrums have subsided and are now indicative of a typical two year old rather than those of a distressed toddler. Her language skills are up where they should be, indicating that she will be on par with her peers at age five. In addition to home visits, Duane attends our early childhood classes once a week and is able to take Victoria on our field trips, thanks to donations made to A Step Ahead. When I asked Duane if he would have been able to pay for these activities on his own, he replied, “Probably not. It’s all I can do to afford the gas to take Victoria back and forth from her grandmother’s.”

You can help us help children like Victoria. By making a donation today, you will be investing in the future of young children who have had an unfair start in life. And right now, *your donation will be doubled by the Lucky Seven Foundation.* Just think, **your donation will have double the impact!** The enclosed pledge form gives more details about this opportunity. Please complete it and mail it in today.

From all of us at A Step Ahead, thank you for your generous support.

Sincerely,

Candy Watkins

Candy Watkins,
Executive Director