

## Spotlight on Youth

Spotlight on Youth is in its ninth year of being the primary fundraiser for CDS programs. It is a unique program that features talented youth throughout Gainesville/Alachua County and exhibits their artistic talents, including performing arts (music, dance and orchestra productions), visual arts (oil paintings, sketches, sculptures, and abstract) and literary works (poems, prose and artistic descriptions) in one gala event held annually at the Curtis M. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Notable sponsors that have been involved each year include the Gainesville Sun, CBS 4, The Gainesville Health & Fitness Centers, Kiwanis Club of Gainesville and Shands Healthcare.

### Programs: *(Description and Example)*

*CDS, Interface Youth Program Central:* This program is a twenty-bed facility that provides short-term residential care to truants, runaways, ungovernable youth, as well as, youth involved in domestic violence. The goal of the program is to prevent children from entering the juvenile justice system by offering a safe, structured environment away from home where they may begin working on family issues with the aim of reuniting them with their families. Interface provides shelter, 24-hour supervision, food, clothing (if necessary) and counseling to each child. Last year over 1200 youth were served, mostly between the ages of 12 and 17. The majority of youth served is from high crime zip code areas and are experiencing problems in school, home and the community with respect to high-risk behavior. Interface also acts as the Alachua County Truancy Center, which is the location where local law enforcement drops off truants. These youth who are often at-risk of committing delinquent acts are assessed and offered services by CDS. Many of these youth and families receive services from Interface as well as a wide range of CDS community programs. CDS has a long history of success in providing services to these youth and families. Consistently 80-85% are reunited with their families and do not commit new law violations resulting in their adjudication.

*Family Action:* The Family Action Program provides counseling and case management to children and families in need of services who are at risk due to runaway behavior, ungovernable behavior, truancy, and/or substance abuse issues. Twelve weeks of intervention are provided at no cost to the family. The program provides screening, assessment, counseling, service planning, and case management in a variety of settings including the school, home and office. Overall, the program strives to prevent the escalation of problematic behaviors and crises so that adolescents do not formally enter the delinquency or dependency systems.

*Drug Free Communities Support Program:* The Drug-Free Communities Support Program provides substance abuse education, intervention, drug testing and counseling to adolescents referred by the Alachua County Sheriff's Office, State Attorney's Office, the Alachua County School System, the Department of Children and Families, the Partnership for Strong Families and other sources. Program services are often provided in lieu of prosecution or as a suspension-reducing alternative for youth in school. Youth are eligible for services until the age of 18 – or past the age of 18 if services have been initiated prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

*Prevention Services:* The Prevention Program provides substance abuse and violence prevention education and resources for youth and adults in Alachua County. The services provided include in-school programs, training workshops and educational seminars, peer mediation and chemical free events. The program serves people of all ages but places special emphasis on youth 8 to 18 years old. Last year, CDS prevention staff in conjunction with the Alachua County Sheriff's Office, Gainesville Police Department, Department of Juvenile Justice, State Attorney's Office and local school personnel organized a very successful "Teen Summit." Youth identified to be involved in gang related activities were specifically targeted for involvement in the very successful two-day summit.

*Independent Living:* Independent living is a program of counseling/case management/ education for youth and young adults aged 13-23 who are, or have been, in the custody of the partnership For Strong Families (formally DCF). Services provided to youth and young adults range from assessment of needs and formation of service plans, to individual instruction on necessary life skills, to locating student housing and negotiating financial assistance forms, to finding overlay services to ensure success such as tutoring. Independent living offers a wide range of services that help to build successful lives.

*Youth Talk:* Youth Talk is a phone number where youth can listen to pre-recorded information on a wide variety of topics such as drugs, peer relationships, health and parents. Counselors are also available to speak with the youth 24/7.

*Outpatient Services:* Outpatient Services provides adult substance abuse services to the clients of three criminal justice agencies; Alachua County's Drug Court and Day Reporting Programs and US Federal Probation criminal justice clients. Services include, but are not limited to screening individuals for alcohol and drug abuse problems, and education and counseling activities to improve the functioning or to prevent further deterioration or persons with substance use disorders.