As we enter the summer months, we want to take the time to reflect on our spring and the amazing milestones our kids and families have met so far this year. Big and small, For Children's Sake's children and families have been working hard this spring and have so much to celebrate!

💐 Foster Care Awareness Month in May 💐

Throughout the month of May, we took the time to express our appreciation to our foster parents and staff for their dedication to the fostering community. During this season, we encourage you all to take the time to recognize the experiences of children and teens in foster care, as well as the dedication of foster parents, social workers, and advocates who support them. Foster Care Awareness Month helps raise awareness about the need for safe, stable, and loving homes for youth facing difficult circumstances. We are working hard to educate communities to learn how they can help through fostering, mentoring, volunteering, or supporting local child welfare organizations, like For Children's Sake! We encourage you to do the same.

🌼 What Have We Been Up To? 🌼

🌷 New Beginnings for All

It's bittersweet to see one of our case managers, Ashley Waters, move along to her next adventure. Ashley has departed from For Children's Sake after 2 years of hard work and dedication to the children and families she served. We wish her the best of luck with her move and know she will continue to do great things for her community!

With Ashley's departure, we have the wonderful addition of Diana Miranda, our newest case manager. Diana has experience working with a variety of children, previously in the

service realm of ABA therapy. We're looking forward to Diana being a part of our team and giving her a warm welcome!

Additionally, we welcome the birth of Rayden, one of our case managers, Kinsey's, first baby! We are so excited to have Kinsey back in the swing of case management following her maternity leave, and for Rayden to be part of the FCSVA family! 👶🍼

🧠 Trainings

This year, we've dedicated more time and energy to providing training tailored to our foster families' needs and wants, as well as our staff! We've had a major focus on self-care, and how we collectively can address burnout among the fostering community. Here are the training courses we've provided throughout the spring:

📝 Training on Burnout and Self-Care

- Provided by Eboni Gullatt, our foster parents and staff were able to get training tailored to their needs as foster parents, with specific strategies as to how they may incorporate more self-care into their daily lives, to avoid burnout and fatigue. As foster parents, taking the time to incorporate appropriate self-care into daily lives is essential, as caring for children who have experienced trauma, loss, or instability can be emotionally and physically demanding.

🤝🏽 Creating Safety: Parenting Children Who Have Experienced Trauma

- Provided by Kelly Facciola, our foster parents engaged in learning about what strategies and responses can promote an increased sense of safety and support for the children that enter their homes. By providing a stable, predictable, and nurturing environment, foster parents help children feel protected, valued, and supported. When children feel safe, both physically and emotionally, they are more easily able to build healthy relationships, regulate their emotions, heal from past experiences, and develop the confidence needed to grow and thrive.

👯 Parenting Difficult Children

- Provided by Ryan and Kayla North, co-founders of One Big Happy Home, For Children's Sake partnered with the City of Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services to provide this training for our families. This training provided our foster parents with the tools necessary to create a home where children feel safe, welcome, and loved. With the North family having personal experiences as foster parents themselves, having a first-hand perspective within the training was greatly appreciated by our parents!

💭 Foster Parent Support Groups

- We continue to provide support groups to our foster parents, both virtually and in-person, on a near monthly basis. Foster parent support groups provide a valuable space for caregivers to connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. These groups have offered space for our parents to receive encouragement, practical resources, and a sense of community while navigating the unique challenges and rewards of foster care. By building relationships with others who understand their journey, foster parents can reduce feelings of isolation, strengthen their caregiving skills, and gain the support needed to continue providing stable, nurturing homes for children. We look forward to this month's virtual support group on June 24th!

⁉️ Big Baffling Behaviors

- Provided by Formed Families Forward, two of our foster families were sponsored by FCS to attend this 8-week training designed to support caregivers in understanding and responding to challenging behaviors with confidence and compassion. These foster families now have increased skills in understanding the behavior of their children, even in times that it may not make sense at first glance.

🎪 Community Engagement

This year, we have worked to engage the community in learning more about foster care, foster parenting, and our agency. We've loved attending these events so far!

- **Springfield Blossom Festival**
  - Saturday, April 11th, at Springfield Town Center
- **Fairfax Earth Day Celebration**
  - Saturday, April 25th, at Lake Fairfax Park
- **Fredericksburg Summer Vendor Festival**
  - Saturday, May 30th, at Old Mill Park
- **Taste of Woodbridge Festival**
  - Saturday, June 6th, at Potomac Mills Mall

We also celebrated our annual picnic this spring! On **Saturday, May 16th,** we celebrated another year with our families! Thank you to everyone for coming out to spend the day with us.

Keep an eye out for us at future events! We are always adding new events to attend, and do pop-ups at our local farmers markets. If you have any local events in need of vendors, let us

know! We'd love the opportunity to further educate our community about foster care and the need for support. This fall, we are excited to attend:

- **Stonebridge Fall Fest Chili Cook Off**
  - Saturday, September 12th from 11am-6pm at Stonebridge Town Center

🎉 What We're Celebrating

We are incredibly proud of the progress we see from all children and families with For Children's Sake this spring. We would like to take the time to recognize their hard work and achievements.

🍇 Successful Reunifications

Though we will miss them dearly, we're happy to see some of our children successfully return to their biological family. Reunification is a meaningful and hopeful outcome in foster care, reflecting the hard work, growth, and commitment of children, biological families, foster families, and support professionals. These children have shown so much strength, courage, and resilience along the journey. We wish them happiness, love, and many wonderful memories as they reunite with their family.

🎓 Graduations

From preschool to high school, we have multiple children who are opening a new chapter of their lives this spring!

- We have 4 high school graduates to celebrate this year! We are supporting their journey to adulthood. These 4 will be moving on from their foster homes to enter Independent Living, start college, and one will be moving out of state. We can't wait to see the amazing things they do.
- We have 3 preschool graduates as well! Entering Kindergarten is an exciting time of growth, friendship, and new adventures. We can't wait to see their journey through Elementary School and support these children in this next chapter.

🌱 Meeting Milestones

From infants to teens, we are happy to see our children thrive. This spring, we have seen our children earn their learner's permit, license, say their first words, use sign language to communicate, join sports teams, make honor roll, and so much more. For children in foster care, milestones can also include meaningful achievements, including building trusting relationships, successfully transitioning to a new school, participating in therapy goals, maintaining family connections, or reaching permanency goals, all of which we have had

the privilege to see many of our children meet this spring. These accomplishments reflect tremendous strength and resilience and deserve recognition and celebration.

🫶🏻 Appreciating our Volunteers!

Our volunteers have been a massive support to our agency this spring. They have taken the time to support with childcare and engagement during foster parent trainings, coordinate for activities for events, and make magic happen for our families. Participating families were able to wake up to a visit from the Easter Bunny on Easter Sunday, with a yard full of eggs to find! At this year's annual picnic, our volunteers were integral to the magic our children experienced! With face paint, games, and activities to keep the kids engaged, we couldn't have done it without them. We appreciate all of their hard work and dedication to For Children's Sake's families!

👨🏽‍👧🏽‍👦🏽 Join the For Children's Sake Family! 🤱🏽

We're Hiring Therapeutic Mentors!

We are in need of more therapeutic mentors. Therapeutic mentoring services provide children and youth with guidance, encouragement, and skill-building support through positive relationships with their identified mentor. These services help young people develop social, emotional, and behavioral skills while building confidence and resilience. Through structured activities and consistent support, therapeutic mentors help children navigate challenges, strengthen coping strategies, improve relationships, and work toward personal goals in their home, school, and community environments. Visit our website for more information and to apply!

Become a Foster Parent!

Do you know someone who would make an amazing foster parent? Tell them about For Children's Sake (FCS)! We are always looking for compassionate and dedicated families like YOU to make a difference in a child's life.

At FCS, we offer a no-strings-attached information session where potential foster parents can learn about the fostering process and see if it's the right fit for them. If they decide to move forward, we'll guide them through the application process and provide continuous training and support every step of the way.

Our foster parents are our most valuable resource, and we're committed to ensuring they feel empowered and supported throughout their journey.

Get Started Today!
Reach out to our Foster Home Development Coordinator, **Stephanie Edwards**, at **sedwards@fcsva.org** for more information or to sign up for an information session.

Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families in our community!

Volunteer Opportunities with FCS!

We're always looking for amazing volunteers to join our mission! Here are some of the ways you can get involved:

Fundraising:

- Host a school supply drive in your local community.
- Assemble birthday bags for foster youth.
- Organize a dine-out event or other fundraising event to support our cause.

Community Outreach:

- Help us recruit foster parents by passing out flyers, partnering with local businesses, or sharing contacts at churches and PTAs.
- Place our flyers at your workplace, gym, or neighborhood bulletin boards.

Recruiting Foster Parents:

- Spread the word about fostering with FCS.
- Share creative marketing ideas to help us reach more families.

Interested?
Contact us at **fcsvanow@gmail.com** to learn more!