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Subject: Press Conference: DSS Champions for Children Press Conference
Location: 1st Floor Lobby, Statehouse
When: 3/16/2016 2:00:00 PM - 2:30:00 PM

EVENT: DSS Champions for Children Announcement

DATE: Wednesday, March 16, 2016

TIME: 2:00 PM

LOCATION: Statehouse, first floor lobby, Columbia, S.C.

PURPOSE: To announce DSS' new foster care recruitment campaign, "Champions for Children" and to encourage parents around the state to consider fostering.

PRESS: Yes.

PUBLIC: Yes.

SPEAKING ORDER/LINE-BY-LINE:

- Governor Nikki Haley
- Director Susan Alford
- Carl and Mary Brown - President, SC Foster Parent Association (have been licensed to foster for 40 years)
- Governor Haley will close the event with a Call to Action: Becoming a Champion for Children

ATTENDEES:

DSS Staff

Susan Alford, DSS State Director
Joan Meacham, DSS Chief of Staff
Taron Davis, DSS Deputy Director, Child Welfare

Labor, Licensing, and Regulation

Richele Taylor,
Robert "Bert" Polk, State Fire Marshall

Foster Parents

Carl & Mary Brown, President, SC Foster Parent Association (40 years)
Darryl & Deborah Middleton, Richland County, one year in June
Mary L. Wright, Richland Co. Foster Parent, 4 years

Walter & Betty Sugick (*pro. Suhh gik*), Lexington County, 4 years
Alan & Amy Pope, Oconee County, 5 years
Mark & Cathy Lewis, York County, 8 years
Peggy & Greg Nibert, Laurens County, 9 years
Nicole & Bryan Johnson, Charleston County, 3 months
Pastor Patrick Connelly, Seacoast Church, recently licensed
Pastor James C. Woodley, Gill Creek Baptist Church, \$2000 Donation to
RCDSS and formerly in foster care

Other invited guests (In the crowd):

Members of the DSS Advisory Board
Children's Trust
Guardian ad Litem
Foster Care Review Board
Children's Law Center
Citizen's Review Panel
USC Center for Child and Family Studies
Connie Maxwell Children's Home –Randy Harling
Miracle Hill Ministries – Brenda Parks
DSS Recruitment/Family Support Unit Staff

TALKING POINTS:

Opening Remarks:

- Today really is another great day in South Carolina, as we are here today to announce DSS' new foster care recruitment campaign, "Champions for Children."
- If you look behind me today, we have members of the General Assembly, foster parents from across the state, DSS staff, and children services advocates.
- This really is Team South Carolina coming together to make a difference.
- The Department of Social Services' mission is to strength families in South Carolina, and one of the most important roles DSS has is to provide a safe and nurturing home to children in their care.
- The children that DSS is charged with taking care of are usually coming from extremely unstable environments, and that's where foster parents come in.
- Unfortunately, 54% of the children placed in foster homes are placed outside of their home counties because we don't have enough licensed families in many of our counties to take care of them without making that move.
- That move can cause an added level of stress to an already traumatic situation for these kids, and it's something that we must work together to keep from happening.
- Over the past year, South Carolina has dealt with a number of challenging situations that tested each and every one of us.
- We saw South Carolinians come together in a way that we had never seen before.
- South Carolina embodied grace, courage, and strength in those difficult times, and we showed the world what "neighbors helping neighbors" is all about.
- We're here today to talk about a different kind of crisis – it's what we are calling a "quite crisis," and it affects children across our state, but it's one that can fixed by the same grace and compassion that we saw from South Carolinians in 2015. **[DSS suggested calling this a "quiet crisis"]**

- A lack of licensed foster parents is an issue that you don't normally hear about, but we're here today to change that and to bring awareness to this very real problem.
- The "Champions for Children campaign" that DSS is launching today is aiming to recruit at least 1500 new foster parents.
- To talk about the specifics of the campaign, I would like to turn it over to one of my partners, Director Susan Alford.

Closing Remarks (Call to Action):

- So now you've heard the charge. You've heard from Director Alford and you've heard from foster parents who have dedicated their lives to fostering.
- Now, we're asking for your help.
- We understand that fostering is a huge undertaking. We understand that it isn't feasible for every family to sign up today, but what we are asking is for you to consider it.
- And if you consider it and decide that it isn't possible for you, there are other ways to help:
 - Be an advocate for foster parents and foster parenting in your community groups, your schools and your recreational organizations.
 - Recognize foster parents in your place of worship and community organizations
 - Ask your church to host DSS recruiters and place announcements in bulletins
 - Rev. James Woodley is the pastor at Gill Creek Baptist Church in Columbia. As a former youth in care in the state of New Jersey, Pastor Woodley raised awareness about the needs foster children in his congregation and they raised \$2000 dollars which they donated to Richland County DSS on behalf of the children in care.
 - Pastor Patrick Connelly stepped up too, and was recently licensed as a foster parent and has been licensed since November 2015. He has already cared for 5 children.
 - Contact your local DSS for ways you can help your local Foster Parent Association
 - Donate a dependable vehicle to the Foster Parent Association for our independent youth
 - Consider an independent youth for employment opportunities.
- To learn more about DSS and the Champions For Children campaign, go to www.scfamilies.org