



*Serving at-risk youth and their families, strengthening family cohesion, and reducing juvenile recidivism rates through family group intervention.*

## **Families4Change Welcomes New Group Leaders to the FSP Family!**

### *Thomson, GA & Sumter, SC*

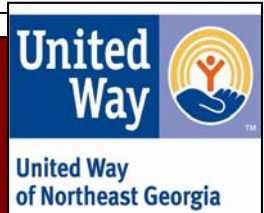
FSP trainers traveled to sights in Georgia and South Carolina during the month of March to provide training to youth-serving professionals to become leaders of new FSP cycles. 38 professionals from the fields of social work, education, psychology, counseling, juvenile justice, and other social service organizations at these two sites participated in a two day training experience to qualify as leaders of FSP.

We are excited to have these new leaders implement the FSP in their neighborhoods and continue to positively impact youth and families!

## **Family Solutions Impacts Youth Re-Offense Rates in Georgia and South Carolina**

Recent studies have documented the effectiveness of the Family Solutions Program as compared to other services related to reduced juvenile offenses, decreased parental stress, improved family communication, and high rates of program completion (82%). In a randomized study of 144 juvenile first offenders comparing the Family Solutions Program graduates with youth receiving services-as-usual in Departments of Juvenile Justice across the State of South Carolina, FSP graduates had a significantly lower re-offense rate. In Newton County, Georgia, among 87 juvenile first offenders referred to the FSP, 72 graduated (83%). The graduates and their parents both reported significantly improved family functioning by graduation. Also, children reported significantly higher scores on open communication with their parents at graduation. In addition, parents reported significantly higher scores on positive parenting skills.

**FSP Awarded the Distinction of "Promising" Program and is Designated as a United Way Member Agency!**



### *A Warm-Up Exercise to Kick off Day Two of Training in Sumter, S.C.*



From Left: Alice Huff (LCSW and Program Supervisor), Theresa Jurgensen (MSW Intern), Katie Morrison (BSFCS Intern), & Dr. William Quinn (Executive Director)

In 2008, the Family Solutions Program was recognized by the US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The FSP was awarded with the distinction of "promising" program as a result of an evaluation by an objective national team of researchers who serve on a panel to evaluate youth programs. A current randomized student in the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice will generate results that will provide the opportunity to be reviewed for "exemplary" status, a designation that would indicate that FSP is more effective than services-as-usual for juvenile first offenders. We are also proud to announce that effective 2010 Families4Change, Inc. will become a United Way Member Agency! Thank you United Way of Northeast Georgia for your continued support of our agency.

# Families4Change, Inc.

*Family is belonging to and believing in each other.*



## FSP School-Based Program Shines in Richland 2 School District

Between August of 2006 and April of 2009, the Richland County 2 School District in Columbia, SC successfully completed 52 Family Solutions Program cycles and served over 350 families. Reports from staff coordinators Dr. Karen Cooper-Haber and Danielle McCormack indicate that following FSP completion the students had missed fewer days, had fewer disciplinary referrals, and improved their academic performance.

The FSP continues to expand its area of impact! The Department of Juvenile

*Morgan County DJJ Adopts the Family Solutions Program!*

Justice in Morgan County, Georgia has adopted the FSP and began its first FSP cycle on April 6, 2009 with a group of 7 families. The group is led by MSW Theresa Jurgensen from The University of Georgia who has multiple experiences leading groups. The group is

co-facilitated by BSW Jessica Rosenkoetter who interned with Morgan County DJJ. We wish them much success!!

## A New Look

On top of a new layout and new colors, Families4Change has a new website. One of the most exciting additions to the site is a

**Leader Log-In**

This portion of the website allows FSP leaders to log on with a special username and password and have access to the newest and most up-to-date training and session materials and group processes.

Check it all out at:  
[www.families4change.org](http://www.families4change.org)

## FSP Celebrates Success in Two Georgia Counties!

### *Family Solutions Kicks off 2009 with the Graduation of Three Groups*

The FSP hit the ground running in the new year with the start of three cycles which began in January in Clarke and Newton counties. With the help of group leaders Alice Huff and Dawna Titus and co-leaders Theresa Jurgensen and Katie Morrison, FSP was able to serve 19 youth and their families. Each FSP 10 session cycle was completed with overwhelming success. Below are a few quotes from youth graduation papers which highlight the effectiveness of The Family Solutions Program and the ability of FSP to not only reach youth and their families during group sessions but also its ability to evoke lasting impact well after completing ten week program.

"This program can and has kept me out of trouble and tells me that I can use what I've learned from these sessions in my future." -FSP Graduate

"Family Solutions has helped me to not give up. I thought I couldn't be changed but 'look' if I can do it anybody can." -FSP Graduate

"It was an emotional experience for me. Most of all, I like the way we didn't have to speak of our past in order to move forward." -FSP Graduate

## FSP Adds New Gang Awareness Material to Program Curriculum!

With gang activity

evolving into a growing concern in many communities, new program content has been developed by intern Katie Morrison to prepare youth and families for meeting the challenge of coping successfully with gang influences in their schools and neighborhoods.

The session content empowers youth with the skills they need to abstain from gang involvement and provides them with tips for helping a friend that may be involved. For parents, this new optional topic raises awareness of the warning signs of youth gang activity and educates them on what to do if they suspect their child is involved in a gang.

The material includes a discussion of risk factors for gang involvement, explains why gang life is sometimes appealing to youth, and debunks common gang myths through an upbeat Q & A activity. The session wraps up with an art activity which challenges families to work together to create a pretend "wall" of family graffiti for their home which represents their values and their family as a whole. This activity is done to encourage families to provide for one another the essential family ingredients that may be lacking in the home (support, love, sense of belonging, etc.) which would then make a youth significantly less vulnerable to gang involvement.

Finally, the session homework reminds youth that the key to avoiding trouble and being successful is to surround themselves with caring people in healthy environments. It challenges youth to do a community search pinpointing reputable, constructive community organizations with which they could get involved.

Piloting this new content in current FSP cycles indicates that the content is relevant to the demographic of families being served and validates the need for educating families on this topic. This new content will be available on the website for all trained FSP leaders to access.