“Making a Difference for Youth, A Community Forum”

Virginia Organizations Join to Raise Community Support for Foster Children as They Navigate and Age Out of the Foster Care System

Several Virginia organizations are working together to host a two-day community forum focused on one of America’s hidden tragedies: The challenges facing America’s foster care youth. Former first lady Anne Holton is the Honorary Chair of the event. With her help, the organizations will work with other partners to encourage and empower foster youth and involve our community in making a difference for our the area’s at-risk youth.

“Foster care should be temporary and no adolescent should live their whole life in foster care,” Holton said. “As you’ll see in this film, this is often the case. Virginia has made great strides in reforming foster care, but there is more we can and must do to get these children to some sort of permanent family and support them in as many ways as we can. We hope this forum will encourage the entire community to get involved.”

- According to the Fostering Connections Resource Center, nearly 463,000 children were living in the nation’s foster care system in September 2008.
- 29,000 of those youth were emancipated from foster care, which is also called “aging out,” at the age of 18 or older without a safe, permanent family. The number of children who age out of the system continues to increase steadily.
- Virginia has one of the highest rates of youth who age out of the foster care system with little resources, limited support systems and emotional and physical challenges.
- According to the Virginia Department of Social Services, there are 265 children in foster care in the City of Richmond.

On Saturday, October 8 at 2 p.m., the group will premiere From Place to Place, a documentary that tells the story of Raif, Mandy and Micah, who grew up in foster care in Montana, as they face life aging out of the system with little support. With the help of producer Matt Anderson, the film will be followed by a forum led by local youth who will talk about their own experiences. Local government and non-profit professionals will also join the youth to talk about how they think the community can make a difference. Both the film and the forum will be held at The Byrd Theatre at 2908 West Cary Street, Richmond, VA, 23221. This event is free of charge and open to the public. This event is sponsored by the Freddie Mac Foundation.

Learn more about From Place to Place by visiting http://fromplacetoplacemovie.com/.

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The partnering organizations include area CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) programs, Faces of Virginia’s Families, Foster Care Alumni of America, Project LIFE (a partnership between United Methodist Family Services and Virginia Department of Social Services), Greater Richmond SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now) and Voices for Virginia’s Children. These organizations help place children in safe permanent homes, empower youth by giving them a voice, work to advocate for foster care policy improvements, and provide direct services to abused and neglected children.

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To kick off the event on Friday, October 7, a concert featuring Jimmy Wayne will be held at Camp Concert Hall at the University of Richmond at 7:30 p.m. Jimmy, a former homeless teen and foster youth, is a national spokesperson for youth in the foster care system. While performing his country hits to local
fans, Jimmy will also share stories of his life and his experiences in the foster care system. Donations to attend the concert are welcome. Donations are encouraged to attend this concert.

To learn more about Jimmy visit http://meetmehalfway.jimmywayne.com/index.cfm.

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Please contact Jana Blue at jana.blue@Richmondgov.com or 804-646-0519 if you are interested in learning more about the two-day forum or to set up an interview with local foster youth or alumni, Anne Holton, Jimmy Wayne or Matt Anderson.