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Fostering Hope

Groovy Girls and Dream Chasers programs inspire confidence in foster children awaiting adoption. **By Ken Shane**

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There are 270 children in the Rhode Island foster care system awaiting adoption, according to the most recent Kids Count report. Of that number, 48 percent are ages ten and up. The older they get, the less likely they are to find permanent homes. What foster children often lack is the sense of community that children with families enjoy.

This was the issue that Child and Family and Adoption Rhode Island sought to address when they initiated the Groovy Girls program in April 2012. Funded through donations and grants, it empowers adolescents in foster care by providing them with opportunities to engage in the surrounding community.

“We noticed that the girls who were waiting for adoption were sad,” says Maureen Philbin, senior vice president of Child and Family in Newport. “They felt let down, and they didn’t have any hope.”

Opportunities include yoga classes, visits to an animal shelter and pampering in a Jamestown beauty salon followed by lunch at a local restaurant.

“When the girls went to meet potential pre-adoptive families, they were able to feel good about themselves,” Philbin says.

Initially, there were seven Groovy Girls, but that number has expanded to twenty-five. Another sign of success is the recent addition of a boys’ program called Dream Chasers. Two events are scheduled for eight boys ages eight to thirteen, including a visit to a restaurant where they will learn cooking techniques.

“We believe that children deserve families,” says Darlene Allen, executive director of Adoption Rhode Island. “A program like this gives them positive childhood memories and lets them know that people in the community care about them.” childandfamilyri.com