

Partners in Service (PINS)

PINS brings together faith communities with human service agencies. We promote the resiliency and success of children and youth who have been the victims of abuse and neglect, ranging in age from infant to adult.

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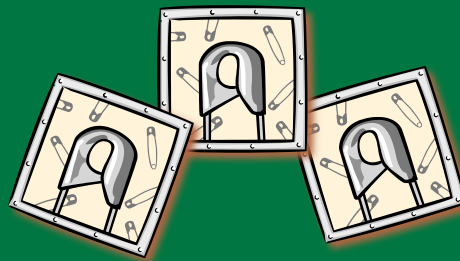
May ... is
national
foster care month!



Check out Project Family at

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MUD SEASON 2009

Dear PINS partners:

What a joy to read your responses to my question about how you have been helping and planning to assist children, youth and their families!

Now that the driving conditions are improving (except for the mud), I hope to find cost-effective opportunities to meet with many of you. It's time to re-energize and renew our partnerships.

With new laws coming into effect about the best ways to serve children and youth, we will see more emphasis on working with biological families and seeking placements for children with non-custodial parents or with extended family or others who serve in family-live roles (fictive kin). For PINS partners, this may mean requests for very basic needs – gasoline to get to appointments for therapy and parenting classes, grocery store gift cards for better nutrition, gift cards for clothing or items such as baby gates, playpens, and car seats.

The Vermont Foster and Adoptive Family Association is taking registrations for its annual institute and conference. For more information about either event, see www.robie.info/Events.html

As always, if you have concerns, questions, or suggestions, be in touch with your partner, and please keep me in the loop!

Happy Spring!

Becky Strader

State PINS Coordinator



st albans district

St Albans looks forward to reaching out to our PINS this spring as the community at large was so generous our needs were met without having to reach out to our partners.

hartford district

St. Anthony's Church in White River Junction provided gifts for all of the children we work with through investigations and open cases. It was wonderful to see how much these families seemed to appreciate the gifts and the help during holiday season. It was also great for our investigators to have the chance connect with families around such a positive subject!

St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Fairlee, **Norwich Congregational Church** and **East Corinth Congregational Church** all donated gift cards for stockings for our teens and older children to have at our annual Foster Family Christmas Party. The teens and older children were excited about being included and having their own stockings to open up.

burlington district

Over the holidays the **Essex United Methodist Church** bought gifts for 6 or 7 PINS children. Each child received at least 3 gifts. In addition, we put together 3 food baskets for PINS families that included a frozen turkey and lots of food supplies such as potatoes, onions, stuffing, etc., and including a special bag of fruit, cookies, jams, teas, etc.
-- Eleanor Uckele

Anthe Athas of the **Dormition Greek Orthodox Church** reports that their congregation budgets funds for help with PINS, and was glad to join other Burlington PINS congregations in responding to the BDO staff member whose house burned this winter.

We at **Richmond Congregational Church** gave our kids each a Gift Certificate from WalMart for Christmas. We held our Annual Fund Raising Appeal to Richmond Congregational Church on a Sunday in January and raised almost \$300. Leslie Johnson, Lisa Johnson, and I all spoke about PINS. We have already made plans to gift each child with another WalMart Gift Certificate at end of summer for purchasing back to school supplies. We have another Fund Raising Appeal this summer.

-- Leta Watkins

Our congregation had a wonderful response to the list of holiday wishes that Amy sent us. We were able to provide gifts for 17 of the children on her list. In addition, we have had a good response to the request for the family of the program services clerk who lost their home to fire. Items for that request are still coming in. --Mary Jane Whalen,
Grace United Methodist Church, Essex Junction

In November, one of the members of the Lund Family Center Teen Pregnancy Outreach Panel, and Cristie Manchester, Outreach Specialist, spoke at the **Charlotte Congregational Church**. They were there to help celebrate the connection between Lund and the congregation as partners through PINS. Our PINS partners help with mailings, fundraising, phonathons, gathering backpacks and school supplies and so much more throughout the year. Thank you, Charlotte Congregational Church members, we could not do this work without your support! 18 volunteers logged in 68 hours processing over 5,000 letters for the holiday mailing. Four volunteers spent about 10 hours wrapping gifts at the Christmas Wrapping Bee. The Church filled 60 LFC wishes from our Christmas Giving Tree.

St. Johnsbury District

Our holiday celebration was hosted again this year by our partners at **Northern Vermont Regional Hospital**. Together, we ask foster parents, co-workers and friends to pass on gently-used, re-giftable items that can be used to stock our "general store". We ask children to bring a non-perishable food item to give to Santa who passes it on to people who don't have enough food...and a list of people they would like to find gifts for when they shop at our store. We were very well stocked this year, more than enough for everyone to get all their gifts. There was a group of teens who helped wrap and label the gifts and a volunteer from the hospital who helped make decorations. A group of people from the hospital made Christmas cookies. Santa came to visit and pick up the food that had been donated.

Our special thanks go to Lynn Burgess, Donna Racine and her daughters, Cynthia Waldner and her daughter, and Angel LeTourneau, hospital folks who worked hard to make this a wonderful time for everyone.

Close to seventy children and their families shared a lovely afternoon. The children were excited about picking out gifts to give to their families, friends and teachers. Parents had time to relax and share holiday stories with each other. This event has become our traditional start of the holiday season.



—Bob Ranahan
Resource Coordinator



We did the Foster Family Holiday Party with AHS folks again, and it was great! Bob Ranahan and the other staff were quite happy, as were the families. A refresher on what we did... People donated re-gifting items (things they had received and didn't want/need) and items squirreled away in their closets. Other folks bought and donated items, e.g., it's really hard to find things for men, so folks bought lots of gloves, flashlights, etc. The people of NVRH really get into this. My office starts to fill up in November. We do this on the principle of "it's better to give than to receive." so that the children can pick out items for their loved ones, get help with wrapping (sort of a Secret Santa), and also do crafts and have some light refreshments. The children brought nonperishable food for the local food pantry. The hospital also took part in the CVPS Paul Sweeney Memorial Coat Drive. Lots and lots of coats and other warm items were donated for folks to receive early in December.

Lynn Burgess, Chaplain
Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital

middlebury district

The **Weybridge Congregational Church** participated in the Christmas Shoppe with contributions, wrapping supplies and volunteer wrappers. We also provided about 15 or so individual gifts for children, geared to their interests or requests. —Gale Hurd

Cornwall Congregational Church participated during the holidays by purchasing and wrapping gifts for individual children. We also received a request from a mother who hoped for something special for her disabled adult son. One family at church responded by getting gifts for the son and something special for the mom. Ingrid Pixley is our liaison and she will be speaking at a church spaghetti supper next week. She will be sharing information about her job, what is going on and how we can make a difference. — Pat Mattison

The members and friends of the **New Haven Congregational Church** donated a complete thanksgiving dinner to a family. We also provided Christmas gifts for this same family. We participated in the Christmas Shoppe. — Beth Bemis

Bridport Congregational Church and the grange hosted the annual foster family party.

The **Congregational Church at Middlebury** is planning their annual PINS auction for April 26, May 3. —Jean Fifield

The First Congregational Church in West Brattleboro

PINS program asked staff to find families who needed Thanksgiving Day turkeys. About 10 turkeys made their way to the primary home of children who enjoyed the holiday with their own families. The church also gave gifts to the children on their office partner's caseload. Case-worker, Tim Fleming, said they were generous and thoughtful gifts.

The Brattleboro Holiday Party was a true FAMILY success!

About 140 people shared in our holiday party on December 10th, which included foster parents and their families, foster children, respite care families, and DCF/Family Services staff and their families.

The **Brattleboro Centre Congregational Church** PINS program helped buy some of the food, decorations and essentials for the party.

The turkey dinners with 'fixins' and desserts were cooked by foster parents. Family Services staff helped cook and serve.

With the generous help of the church we were able to give small gifts to ALL the children who attended.

The Centre Congregational Church wanted to help on a more personal level this year and so they provided Christmas for two teens who were members of their Confirmation class.

Centre Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
193 Main Street
Brattleboro, VT 05301

Dear Members:

We are very pleased to accept the donation of \$400.00 on behalf of the members of your congregation. This money is so very welcome, especially in these times of budget cuts and decreasing resources. As you know, this fund is used to support our children in custody when the state's system is not able to cover the cost.

Recently, we were able to cover the costs of sports equipment for a teen girl who had given up playing hockey because of the costs – we purchased the skates, helmet and stick. She is thrilled to be able to go back to a sport she loves. Most children had scholarships to camps this summer, but we helped when there was a need for additional funds. Several children needed help with summer pool passes at area recreation departments. One young teen girl got her very first 'real haircut' at a salon for a school function. Two young teens were able to take their driver's permits. Three child safety seats were purchased for infants and children.

Also, because we have this checking account, we are able to provide foster parents with a check to buy clothing for children in need during their first few days in custody. State vouchers are accepted at only a few stores, not including Walmart, which is very limiting. Now we can write the check for any store, including second hand stores, and then reimburse this account with the state check. This helps foster families cover those immediate costs.

On behalf of the staff of the Brattleboro Family Services, I would like to thank you for caring for the neediest of Vermont's children.

Sincerely,
Karen LaMorder
Resource Coordinator



The **Williamstown Federated Church** put together 27 gift bags for Christmas which is the most we have ever done and in the failing economy we were very pleased with the outpouring of gifts. The youth group always fills them for us at one of their Sunday evening meetings.

In Feb., we filled 15 gift bags for Valentine's day and are looking forward to preparing Easter gift bags. We will rest until August when we fill backpacks for school children.

— Norma Atherton

The **Warren Congregational Church** had a great holiday 2008 PINS Program. We received gifts for PINS clients through local clubs and businesses besides our own congregation. Even with an ailing economy, people went above and beyond with their giving this year. So far we have our Mother's Day PINS Baby Shower planned with our annual Mother's Day Brunch on May 10th.

— Gail Heitzker

Christ Church Episcopal in Montpelier did a marvelous job of responding to Christmas Wish Lists from a young family and three additional children in foster care over the holidays that Joan Rock provided to us. Rilla Murray, PINS Coordinator for Christ Church, created gift tags and shopping cards from the wish lists and church members chose a person/ item to shop for. Some church members who could not shop

personally made donations and gifts were purchased on their behalf. We delivered a pile of brightly wrapped gifts in time for holiday delivery. More recently our acclaimed knitters and crocheters have been making baby blankets and using yarn leftovers to make mittens and hats which get passed along to Joan as they are ready.

Last year at Mother's and Father's Day we collected small gifts for parents to be used at foster parent meetings as door prizes and simple thank you recognitions.

— Rilla Murray

I met with Joan Rock, Resource Coordinator at DCF, to get a list of children's ages, gender and wish lists. I then made a sign-up poster and announced it during Sunday announcements at church. Many holiday wishes came true due to the generosity of the Congregation. Children and families received toys, clothing, guitar strings, gift cards, food gift cards, bath and body products, books, board games and more. Because of monetary donations from church members, I have also been able to purchase gas cards which I pass on to our PINS partner, Hillary Denton, for distribution.

For the Spring, I am working on organizing an "April Shower" event which will be symbolic of a baby shower. I received a list of needed baby items from Joan Rock which I will distribute to my Congregation. I also plan on organizing an Easter basket drive similar to the Holiday gift giving drive.

--Jeanette Hurdle

Faith in Action Trustee,
The First Church in Barre,

Universalist

David Strong and I were in contact over the holidays and in December and February, the BEFC Compassion Team delivered five (10 ride) bus passes and many boxes of Pop Tarts and Valentine cookies to the students going through the DOC juvenile offender education program. David mentioned that he may have one or two graduates this Spring and our team is planning to work with him to provide graduation gifts to the students. We are enjoying our PINS partner relationship.

--Barb Mc Mahon

Barre Evangelical Free Church

First Presbyterian Church, Barre, prepared 24 Christmas stockings for preschool children in the Barre District.

First Presbyterian Church, Graniteville, donated grocery store gift cards to the New Leaf Child Care Center.

Waterbury Center Community Church / O.U.R. House - The "goodie box" was delivered approximately six times during 2008. This box includes juice boxes. It was our 175 anniversary and a wall hanging was created by the ladies of the church. This included a square with the O.U.R. House

barre district, continued

logo. A photo of the wall hanging was sent to O.U.R. House. As a church we are very proud of this mission. At Christmas the Ladies Aid furnished age and gender appropriate stockings filled with candy along with a stuffed toy and hand decorated Christmas cookies. This spring we will furnish flowers for their garden.

--Virginia Martin

During the fall, Catholic Daughters of the America (CDA) of **St. Augustine's Church, Montpelier**, donated \$100.00 for miscellaneous needs for foster children and families (for example, money to purchase movie tickets, transportation cost for visits, gifts for children's birthdays....whatever needs are not covered by Family Service funds). CDA and church members gave money and gift certificates for Christmas amounting to over \$100.00.

One religious class of 6th graders (8 girls and 1 boy) did a special project for the third year in a row. They requested to shop for one small foster girl and each student brought in twenty-five cents a week. Teacher, Debbie McCormick, suggested they bring change they found around the house. The boy cleaned out his closet and found \$4.00. They were very sensitive and considerate in discussing what a young girl might like that would be comforting, things she could enjoy alone or with a friend. The class sang through the town as they went shopping and brought smiles to passers by. Gifts included a doll and teddy bear (and clothes

for these), an activity book, markers and a case, and a snowman in a bag, among other gifts. The boy reminded his classmates to focus while they wrapped gifts and took the lead in wrapping the bigger gifts. The class decided to label them "To You from Santa". Much sharing went on during this project and Mrs. McCormick says the boy is ahead of the game after listening to what girls think and like during this whole process! The Christmas spirit and community sense of involvement and caring are truly outstanding with this special class and enthusiastic teacher.

--Kathy O'Brien



The PINS partners and community partners in central Vermont overwhelm us again this year with their faithful generosity. The children fill out their wish lists long before snow flies. These lists include what they really want and then what do they need. The members of 16 congregations and 4 community partners are busy organizing these lists in early November and distributing them to individuals who look forward to shopping for the children and families who really need a boost. Some folks are very eager to shop on Black Friday! This year got off to a slow start and we wondered how the state of the economy would affect our efforts to help each of the families that we encounter. I can safely say that each child who submitted a request was given a gift this year, many focusing on the "needs" area of the list.

I have received several thank you notes from the children and their parents to pass along to the congrega-

tions and community partners. The spirit of giving to those less fortunate certainly lives on in the Barre Community.

--Joan Rock
Resource Coordinator

newport district

The PINS partners for the Newport District office supplied our kids with gift cards from local stores and the local pizza restaurant. In addition we received home made mittens, hats and scarves which the kids love!! Some of the partners "adopted" one of the kids in our custody and provided a number of gifts for that child.

Deb Richards
Resource Coordinator

Westmore Community Church gave gift cards for several different places at Christmas.

--Nan French

rutland district

The **Benson Congregational Church** had one group from **Camp E-Wan-Akee** come see our Christmas play and stay for our pot luck. The caroling (scheduled with another group from the camp) couldn't come because we had to cancel due to the weather. . We are inviting a group to come for Easter sunrise service and pot luck breakfast.

-- Holly Ross Noble

Pittsford Congregational Church adopted a family for the holiday.

springfield district

St Luke's Episcopal Church in Chester is putting on a fund raiser on Saturday, March 28th for 3 foster girls [1 is adopted] graduating high school in June and in need of financial assistance. It will be a Maple Fest dinner [in conjunction with the open house maple sugaring] with a raffle of donated items. This will be open to the community and the menu will highlight the use of maple syrup and recipes from the new church cookbook.

--Marcia Clinton

Again this year, **The United Church of Bellows Falls** made Christmas stockings for the students at Mountainside Teen Shelter in Ludlow. We collected "stocking stuffers" from the congregation and delivered them just before Christmas. We also included donated sheets and blankets.

On March 7, the students helped wait tables at our annual "Sugar On Snow" supper. Their help was greatly appreciated and they learned a little about an old Vermont tradition. This spring, we will again donate a giant Easter Basket to them along with gardening supplies for their spring planting.

--Tim Johnson

morrisville district

Stowe Community Church came through strongly for Christmas by providing some 40 children with Christmas gifts and three families with Christmas food baskets. The baskets were beautifully prepared by one of our church members who bought all the nonperishable foods and filled the baskets which were quite large and attractively decorated. We were all very happy to help out.

--Diane Lee

We have a wonderful group of PINS Partners that have participated to make the 2008 Christmas Season and Party by far the BEST!

St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Chester collected under the guidance of Dee Robinson enough money from the congregation to fill two huge food baskets to go to two very need families. Thank you, Dee and Don.

Christ Church in Saxtons River under the leadership of Jane Cook collected from the congregation thirty large filled Christmas bags for the SDO children in out-of-district and residential treatment placements. Bags were full of toiletries, hoodies, games, gloves, flannel pajama bottoms, socks, sweaters, and edible goodies. Outstanding job, as always, and a huge thank you!

Our **Ascutney Union Church** always comes through with beautiful Christmas wrapping paper, tape, and bows for wrapping gifts at our Christmas Store at the party and all the other Christmas gifts for the children. Pat Dana dropped them off – thank you, Pat.

The **Perkinsville Community Church** made a wonderful donation which bought all hats and gloves for the children. Thank you to Fran Wright for coordinating this gift from the church.

North Springfield Baptist Church allowed me to come and speak of our needs at Christmas time. A wonderful couple's donation filled the wish list of one of our teen girls. Judy Stearn, our church PINS partner, came through a second year with a very large and generous donation which bought coats, ski pants, and sweatshirts for the children. Judy, because of you, the kids will stay warm; thank you so very much.

The **Andover Community Church** donated a huge amount of items for our Free Christmas Store at our Children's Christmas Party. All the children shop for free, then go to the wrapping table and leave with bags full of presents for their foster families, siblings, and friends. The church also gave \$500 that sponsored four families for Christmas and \$100 to a senior teen girl's computer fund for college. Savannah Gordon from our office was the point person spearheading all the wonderful donations from her church. Thank you, Savannah.

The benefits of being a PINS partner are endless. To all our PINS partners – many big hugs and thank-yous for your continuing support and generosity. You all truly make a difference our children and families.



Sincerely,
Jane Siddall
Resource Family Support Worker for the Springfield District Office

bennington district

Federated Church of East Arlington

donated tons of Christmas items for our Christmas shop in Bennington. We helped and the kids were great..it was a huge success. Our next project for PINS is our annual concession stand in conjunction with our Church's auction. It takes place the first sat. in August, proceeds going to CFS, Bennington.

– Darlyne Barber and Leslie McCooey

I collected a lot of items for the Dept. of Children and Families for their Christmas shop for the foster children. In fact my car and trunk were filled. I couldn't go for the actual sale but I saw many nice things for all ages when I brought mine in and I heard later that it was a great success.

– Pat Dupree

– **First Congregational Church,
Manchester**

Christmas Eve 2008

Greetings~

During this Holiday Season, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for all the wonderful *acts of kindness* our PINS partners have done for our kids and families...now and through out this past year. In the near future, I will be sending a more detailed note regarding all the great work folks have done and contributed to.

But for now, thank you again – you have warmed my heart and all who have been so fortunate to benefit from your generosity!

As you celebrate this holiday season with your family, please take a moment to acknowledge how much you have helped kids and families - right in your own community.

Wishing you Peace and Happiness!

With warmest regards,

Valérie Miner, Resource Coordinator



PINS (Partners in Service)

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