



Dear Neighbor,

Merry Christmas! I hope you are enjoying the Holiday Season.

My staff and I are gearing up for the 2010 Legislative Session. In January and February we will be spending much of our time in committee meetings going over legislation. Session begins in March. I am looking forward to representing you in my 8th Session with the Florida House of Representatives.

Many of us are blessed with a wonderful family surrounding us during Christmas. I am thankful to have my son with me. Please take the time to read below about my friend's experience adopting children. Family First Network is the leading organization in the Northwest Florida area if you are interested in adopting.

Here is the Family First Network web address if you would like more information:

<http://www.elakeviewcenter.org/FamiliesFirstNetwork/>

There are many children out there in need of a loving family. If you are in a position or if you have the desire to adopt, I encourage you to look over this information.

As a Christian, I am thankful for this time to celebrate the birth of Jesus. His birth was the greatest gift of all. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas celebrating with friends and family!

God bless,

Representative Dave Murzin

Representative Dave Murzin Donates Computers

Representative Dave Murzin appreciates the hard work that Pensacola community organizations put forth. He likes to help them by donating computers. Representative Murzin has made donating computers a regular practice. In past years, recipients have been organizations, such as, *B.R.A.C.E., Health and Hope Clinic, Grace Lutheran School, and United Way*. This year he donated computers and equipment to *Alzheimer's Family Services* (Pictured are Representative Murzin and AFS Executive Director, Kristina Robison).

Job Creation Summit

Representative Dean Cannon (R-Winter Park) and Senator Mike Haridopolos (R-Merritt Island) are hosting a job creation summit. It is called the Florida Jobs Summit and it will be held on January 14, 15, 2010, in Orlando at the Rosen Shingle Creek Hotel. Senator Haridopolos was quoted in an article from the *News Service of Florida* saying, "It's not the government that creates jobs, it's the private sector that creates jobs." Representative Murzin agrees with this statement and hopes that helpful solutions for our economy will be brought to the table. Participants for the event will include government officials, various businesses, and leaders in the fields of education and labor. This event will aid in the preparation of legislators facing the economic issues that must be dealt with in the 2010 Legislative Session.

Our Journey to Adoption

Walking into our first foster training class, commonly called MAPP, we weren't positive about which direction we were heading. Did we want to foster only? Did we want to adopt? And if yes to either of these questions, then what age and sex of child were we hoping to parent? And would we be willing also to bring home a sibling group?

Part of our indecisiveness rested on our lack of knowledge about the children in foster care and about how we as a married couple would respond to parenting a child that was not

biologically our own. What we did know was: we wanted to parent, we wanted children to help care for, and we were willing to help a child needing a little extra attention.

Before long we had finished MAPP, we had completed our home study, and we were beginning to understand the needs associated with not only the children in the system but also with their families.

A common myth associated with foster care is that there is something "wrong" with the children in foster care, that they are irrevocably damaged and beyond hope. The truth is that children are in foster care at no fault of their own. It is not because of something they did or did not do, but because their parents or guardians were unable to care for them.

This realization hit home the night a case manager brought us our first child- a small 13 month old boy, so small he was wearing a 3 month old outfit. He came to us with a fever, head cold, and one diaper.

We knew right away that not only could we foster him, but we would be willing to adopt any child that walked through our doors.

Florida's advancement of adoption of children from foster care is the best in the nation. Our state leaders have committed to not only ensuring safe foster care homes, but to providing much needed permanency to children in foster care. These children want and need a forever family. Hoping to make adoption from foster care an option for more families the Florida Legislature has established special benefits to families adopting children from foster care that reduce most, and many times, all of the costs associated with adoption. If you are interested in adopting, you most likely can afford it and don't even realize it.

Some benefits to consider:

- While private adoptions can exceed \$30,000, adoption from foster care can cost nothing - with fees associated with training, the home study, and court costs all paid by the state.
- Florida's foster care children are not made available for adoption until the parental rights have been terminated, which means parents can rest assured the birth parents will not be changing their minds.
- Families that adopt from foster care may be eligible for monthly financial support to help offset ongoing costs.
- All children who receive a monthly subsidy may also be eligible to receive health care through Medicaid until they are 18 years old.
- Florida's children adopted through foster care are eligible for free tuition at any

state university, college, or vocational school.

The benefits of adopting through foster care are numerous. For more information on the benefits and the adoption process, please visit www.adoptflorida.org.

Today, my husband and I are blessed beyond measure because we were able to adopt two of the three children we have fostered. Our son and daughter are the heart of our home and we could not imagine it without them.

If you are interested in adopting, check out one of the 15 Heart Galleries in Florida. Heart Galleries help recruit potential adoptive families and create community awareness by capturing the individual spirit of a child through photography. Go to www.heartgalleryflorida.org for more information.

By Sherri Croom

November 2009 Point of Light Recipient