

## *Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents*

### **TIES THAT BIND: CONNECTING COMMUNITY AND KIN**

Now 62, the woman who friends and neighbors call Miss June pauses to count and recall the 70 or so children, many of whom are relatives, she has cared for, raised, mothered, and adopted over three decades, even despite a cancer diagnosis. “I was determined to not let any of these children, including my nieces and nephews, end up with strangers or in a group home. It was hard some days, but I couldn’t have done it without help from A Second Chance. The saying goes, ‘it takes a village to raise a child.’ I know that it is true in kinship care,” says Miss June, who has been both a client and on the staff of the agency that supported her and her children over the years.



For over 25 years, the partnership between A Second Chance, Inc. (ASCI) and the Allegheny County Department of Human Services' Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF) has excelled at keeping kinship care in the community. Miss June is one of the over 10,000 kinship caregivers ASCI and CYF have proudly served. Community-based kinship care providers, together with their public agency partners, respond to the strengths of the families and serve as a bridge to needed resources and to the people who can expand their village of care and support.

The agency was there when Miss June first stepped forward to be a caregiver for three of her sister’s five young children. She tapped into the kinship village support. Miss June was about 30 years old with children of her own then, but she quickly learned to coddle and walk the floor both day and night with the youngest—a baby born addicted to drugs and reeling from withdrawal.

Now retired, Miss June remains connected to ASCI, serving as an active volunteer on the agency’s Community Advisory Board (CAB), work that she’s done for nearly 3 years. CAB, made up mostly of former caregivers and those who live and work in the historic Black community that surrounds the agency, is a vital link to the agency’s neighbors—providing information about what they are doing and what they need. The community members also provide a trusted voice that informs how ASCI delivers its kinship care model and serves the kinship triad (birth parents, children, and caregivers).

Even now, while raising children ages 6, 10, and 16 for the past few months, Miss June participates in community events. To Miss June, the agency is a good neighbor that’s very visible

and vocal and also listens. "It's important for those in the community to know that A Second Chance doesn't just place kids. With its programs and services and annual events, like the Red Hat Healthy Heart Luncheon and the Community Day Celebration, they are helping to strengthen the community," Miss June explained. "Those at A Second Chance, show up at meetings and demonstrate that they care about what's happening to the people in their backyard!"

To learn more about A Second Chance Inc. visit <http://www.asecondchance-kinship.com/>.



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