



NATIONAL CHILDREN’S CHARITY OPENS DOORS IN DUNKIRK TO HELP PROVIDE FOSTER CARE FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

*New Foster Care and Family Services Center Calls on Local Families
to Help Local Kids Waiting for a Place to Call Home*

Chautauqua County Executive Greg Edwards Attends Grand Opening Event to Show Support

DUNKIRK, NEW YORK, February 15, 2007 – Help arrived for many needy local children today when the 125-year old national children’s charity KidsPeace opened a Foster Care and Family Services center in Dunkirk, New York.

At a special event and open house today, the charity appealed to families in Chautauqua County, Buffalo and Southern Erie County, and Cattaraugus County to help give homes and emotional healing to more of the nearly 30,000+ children currently in the state foster care system. Dozens of VIPs and special guests, including Chautauqua County Executive Greg Edwards, Chautauqua DSS officials, KidsPeace specialists from around the country, and local community supporters and foster parents attended the event for a unique opportunity to learn more about the new program. County Executive Greg Edwards and KidsPeace officials kicked off the event with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, inaugurating the new effort by KidsPeace and local children’s champions to help more of New York State’s kids in need.

Across the nation, the need for foster homes is rapidly increasing as more and more children are removed from their homes and need temporary or permanent alternatives because of abuse, neglect, or other family crises. More than 600,000 children nationwide currently need foster homes, but the number of foster homes falls short of meeting the need. A supportive, caring foster family can give them a sanctuary and can prevent the cycles of their past from determining the course of their future.

“KidsPeace is mission-driven, so we find out where the need is and we go there,” said Rolland LeFevre, new program manager for the Dunkirk center. “Children are supposed to be blessed with happy, carefree lives, and many are. But some are not – hundreds of kids right here in our own community are victims of abuse, neglect, poverty, and other terrible things no child should ever have to suffer. We cannot look the other way and that’s why we are here. KidsPeace has opened this center in Dunkirk to do our part in keeping children safe from harm and giving them the opportunity for a brighter future.

Carolann Woodard, KidsPeace Dunkirk’s Family Resource Specialist, says, “I am excited by the response of the community to the new program, and hopeful that in partnership with local foster parents and other community organizations, KidsPeace can make a real difference in the lives of kids in foster care.”

The new KidsPeace center in Dunkirk will help place children who have been removed from their homes into caring, supportive foster or adoptive arrangements where they can be safe, can heal from their emotional scars, and can experience a sense of home and family they may never have had before. The center will benefit from the resources and expertise of KidsPeace's 125-year history, including the knowledge and contributions of some of America's finest minds in child development, unique online resources, and public education outreach on a wide range of child-related issues.

The KidsPeace foster care programs differ from traditional programs in that they are specialized therapeutic programs, providing more than just a loving home – they also provide intensive counseling to help kids heal emotionally while in foster homes. In addition, thorough training and 24-7 support enable foster parents to better relate to emotionally scarred children and give them the compassion and encouragement they need to overcome severe emotional crises.

“The shortage of foster homes across the nation leaves more and more children deprived of the tender loving care that every child needs and deserves,” said C.T. O'Donnell II, KidsPeace President and CEO. “In an attempt to give a helping hand in New York State, KidsPeace's new center in Dunkirk will work with kids and families in the region to help give kids who've been through the worst peace of mind and hope for the future. Giving hope, help, and healing to children facing crisis is the mission of KidsPeace, and with the help of local children's protectors, we can make sure that every child who needs a second chance at happiness can get one.”

KidsPeace is no stranger to New York State. With six other locations, including Albany, Amsterdam, Elmsford, Kingston, Lockport, and West Seneca, the organization has been serving foster children in the state for over a decade. The center is one of more than 40 KidsPeace foster care centers nationwide that help place thousands of kids in foster/adoptive homes annually, giving them a chance for a fresh start.

To learn more about being a foster parent, go to www.fostercare.com or go to:

KidsPeace Dunkirk Foster Care and Family Services Office

324 Central Ave
Dunkirk, NY 14048
877-696-9071

KidsPeace helps thousands of children daily at 66 centers across the nation to overcome the kinds of crises that can strike any child – traumas from abuse, neglect, and family problems to depression, eating disorders, and the challenges of growing up today. KidsPeace was called “the outstanding organization” of its kind by the American Association of Psychiatric Services for Children and “a prototype of what we need for all children everywhere” by renowned family expert Dr. Lee Salk. For more information, go to www.kidspeace.org.

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