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Margaret Holland McDuff
Chief Executive Officer

November 30, 2006

Dear Friends,

We don't know who called 9-1-1. When the police and EMTs arrived, the terrified three year old was screaming. She was filthy, hungry – clearly, nobody had been taking care of her. Probably, they thought, she had been abused. But they didn't have time to pay much attention to little Maya* – it was her mother they'd rushed to save. Exhausted and desperate from years of struggling against drugs and depression, Maya's mom had tried to kill herself again.

At the emergency room, while one team worked to save Maya's mom, another team of kindly nurses examined Maya for injuries. They gave her a bath. Her pajamas were stained with her mother's blood so they bundled her in a hospital gown. The nurses found no physical injuries, but you could tell without even speaking to her how badly hurt the little girl was. She was all alone without even a favorite doll or her familiar dirty pajamas for comfort – without her mother.

In her short life, Maya had too often been without a mother, and she had never known a father. In earlier crises, relatives had taken Maya until her mother was ready to take her home. But this time, the state could find no one willing to open their home to Maya.

We were called to find a home for Maya. In turn, we called our most experienced foster parents, those we had trained to work with the most severely traumatized children.

Immediately, one said, "Yes!"

Now Maya has a big "sister" to read her stories and teach her silly games and a "mom" who makes her dinner and tucks her safely into bed at night. Her "queen's bed," as Maya calls it, has soft flannel sheets, two big, fluffy pillows, and a brand new, cuddly bear. Maya has clean clothes to wear instead of filthy pajamas.

(over, please)

More importantly, she is learning how it feels to be safe and cared for. Her nightmares are already starting to lessen, but she will need a lot of help to recover from her ordeal that day and the ordeal that has been her young life.

We recruit and train foster families and provide them with 24/7/365 support so that these precious children have a dependable home, even if nightmares keep them awake night after night or they get sick or make big teenager-type mistakes. We are teaching families how to love and value these children even if they can't ever be perfect. Only Maya's pajamas were disposable, not Maya -- not any of these children!

Maya is safe, but many other severely abused and neglected children still need our help. Foster care is just one of many programs we provide to help keep children safe from abuse, neglect, and violence.

You can help these children through a generous tax deductible contribution of \$50, \$100, \$500, or whatever you can spare. Your gift combined with that of other caring community leaders will be helping support essential programs for children and families throughout our agency and throughout our state.

Family Service of Rhode Island has been helping children and families in need since 1892. Last year, we provided mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, care coordination, education, and wrap-around support to more than 3,500 families from every community in our state. Three out of every four of the people we help are children. Half are minorities.

Please join us in giving Maya and children like her a chance in life. Thank you for your consideration. Whatever you are able to give would be deeply appreciated. Happy holidays to you and yours.

Sincerely,



Margaret Holland McDuff
CEO

P.S. For more information about foster care or to arrange an informational interview, please call 401-331-1350 and ask for Christina. You can also help these children by spreading the word to single adults and families who might be interested in taking a child like Maya into their hearts. Families are needed for both short term and longer term care. For some, foster care can begin a process leading to adoption.

*Based on a real case. Photo and details changed.