



Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition

NEW YORK

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Kinship Status Community Discussion Panel | 11-2-21



James Czarniak

James Czarniak is the founder and principal consultant of JCZ Consults. Before his work as a consultant, James spent twenty years working in the non-profit and government sectors, most recently as the Deputy Commissioner for the Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services. During his tenure, as Deputy Commissioner, the County led the county initiative to reduce the use of congregate and group care for children in foster care and increase kinship care in the county. James has also worked for the Boys & Girls Clubs in both Syracuse, NY and in Washington DC and worked for the Ways and Means Committee in the United States House of Representatives where he was a program staffer. James

graduated from Washington College and is a member of the Annie E. Casey Applied Leadership Network. James also is involved in many local committees and sits on several boards that focus on supporting children and families in the community. You can often see Jim with his family, Heather, Morgan and Williek and their three dogs and are proud fostering parents and supports for teens in the community.



Jeanette Keane

Jeanette Keane is the proud mom of five children between the ages of 9 and 14. Her oldest child recently entered High School. Jeanette is a certified EMT and is in the process of finishing a nursing program. She entered foster care as a teenager and after about a year of moving from foster home to foster home, Ms. Keane found a permanent home with her mom, Mary Keane, who was a foster parent at the time she accepted Jeanette into her home to be with her other siblings. Jeanette nonetheless had to stay in the care of the foster care system until she was 21 years old because her parent's rights were not terminated. Jeanette was legally adopted by Mary Keane at age 22 after she aged out of the foster care

system.



Mary Keane

Mary Keane became a foster parent over 21 years ago, not really having any idea what she was getting into at the time. She was only interested in working with teen girls and so her agency found it pretty easy to fill her home up with a wide variety of girls for whom they could not find other homes. Not having learned much from any of her training to become a foster parent, Mary took the time to learn from the girls about their lives and what they needed. As it turned out, they needed someone to be there for them – really just a fundamental need that was not being met by others. In a relatively short time, Mary realized she had to show

the girls that she was committed to them no matter what and that is the only thing that made a difference. Not being satisfied with having her own kids, Mary joined You Gotta Believe to help many more kids and has been working with parents for 17 years helping to train them in the ways she missed and helping them to keep a permanent commitment to their kids.



Stacey Mason

Stacey Mason is originally from the Caribbean Island Nation of Jamaica. Her family came to the U.S. when she was 5 years old and live in Miami where Stacey spent the majority of her childhood. She has wanted to be a lawyer since childhood. Stacey and her husband Michael became foster parents in 2017. Today they have two foster children, their oldest is 4 and the youngest is 2. The oldest has been with them since he was 10 months old and the youngest since he was 2 weeks old meaning both of her children have resided with her for more than 24 months each. Stacey and Michael have had a total of 3 foster children since we started, the first child was returned to his father after a short placement.



Mike Plumb

Mike Plumb has worked for the Oregon Department of Human Services for over 18 years, and is currently a coordinator for the Adoption and Guardianship Assistance program serving families with last names starting with D – I. He has worked closely with the Oregon Guardianship Assistance program since it was one of the first IV-E waiver programs around 2004, at that time as a caseworker. His favorite parts of his current role are empowering adoptive and guardian families pre- and post-adoption/guardianship, and supporting them through difficult times post-finalization.



Jeanette Vega

Jeanette Vega is a proud mother of 4 awesome boys. She has been advocating for the past 17 years for family rights in NYC. Jeanette is a graduate of Child Welfare Organizing Project, the first Parent Advocate to sit in a child safety conferences. She has worked as a Parent Advocate at a foster care agency for 5 years. Currently Jeanette is the new Co-Executive Director for Leadership and Policy at RISE. Her commitment is to continue uplifting parents' voices and power to make systematic changes that support families wellbeing.