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Foster Care Youth Serve Their Legislators and Bring Awareness

<City>, <State>, <Date> - Foster care youth from the regions around Kansas served as Legislative Pages for a Day on March 11, 2008, while also helping to bring attention to the National Child Abuse and Prevention Month in April.

In a joint effort with other child welfare service providers, four youth from TFI Family Services served as Pages alongside 16 other foster care youth. Tanya Keys, Director of Children and Family Services, Kansas Department of Social Rehabilitation Services, coordinated the Page for a Day program after hearing about one similar for Kentucky's foster care youth. Youth chosen to be a Page for a Day during this event had to be currently in foster care and between the ages of 12 – 18 years old. Senator Dwayne Umbarger along with Representative Jerry Williams and Representative Julie Menghini sponsored TFI Family Services' youth from their legislative districts.

The Pages began their day with orientation and then met with Governor Sebelius in the Governor's Office where they were formally introduced to their legislators and had their pictures taken. They also received a tour of the Capitol before assuming their duties. The youth were impressed with the beauty of the Dome, and one youth observed that, "the building *must be* at least 1000 years old" – a truly historic building!

The Pages served during the House and Senate sessions where they observed firsthand the processes involved in the enactment of laws and contributed by helping the legislators with routine duties. Between 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM, the youth also took part in the CAPitol Kick Off Event for National Child Abuse and Prevention Month, largely organized by Kansas Children's Service League. Although the official National Child Abuse and Prevention month is April, the kick off was held during March while the House and

Senate were still in full sessions. The event focused on showing support for Kansas kids and promoted child abuse prevention efforts in Kansas Communities.

Spencer who had been at the CAP event last year, said that it was much larger turn out this year and was pleased to see so much support for those children who are in need of care. Spencer also said that, "It was really neat for the foster care youth to be recognized both at the kick off event, but also during the legislative sessions. It was an experience that they won't forget."

This event also gave TFI Family Services an opportunity to share about our services for families and children by having a booth available with brochures. Nadine Terry Washington, TFI's Ombudsman, shared that it was another way to connect with the Kansas legislators about the needs of our children and to see that their concern was very real.

For additional information on Page for a Day or CAPitol Kick Off Event, contact LisaB@the-farm.org.

ABOUT TFI Family Services – TFI Family Services is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for youth and families through Behavioral Health and Child Welfare Services. Visit www.the-farm.org for more information.

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