

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FOUNDATION



CHANGING THE WORLD ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- THERE ARE MORE THAN 500,000 CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE IN THE U.S.
- EVERY 2.2 SECONDS, ANOTHER ORPHAN CHILD AGES OUT WITH NO FAMILY TO BELONG TO AND NO PLACE TO CALL HOME.
- APPROXIMATELY 20,000 YOUTH "AGE OUT" OR EMANCI-PATE FROM FOSTER CARE EACH YEAR.
- UP TO 50% OF FORMER FOSTER YOUTH BECOME HOME-LESS WITHIN THE FIRST 18 MONTHS OF EMANCIPATION.

**SAVE the DATE**

Join us on **Thursday, September 29, 2011**, from 5:30pm-11:00pm,

in the **Oil Baron's Ballroom at Southfork Ranch.**

**Emcees for the evening:**

**Jody Dean**, KLUV morning show radio personality

**Todd Whitthorne**, former co-host of "Good Morning Texas" on WFAA-TV

Participate in our Live and Silent Auctions.

Be inspired by the powerful stories of **ISF Students.**

Dance the night away to the tunes of Dallas favorite, **Emerald City Band!**

For more information on how to purchase tickets or donate an auction item

visit [www.isfsite.org](http://www.isfsite.org) and visit the homepage.

Dust off your cowboy boots and rhinestones for a Cowboy Chic evening

of giving, friends, and fun. You don't want to miss this!



## DID YOU KNOW?

- 58% OF ALL YOUNG ADULTS ACCESSING FEDERALLY FUNDED YOUTH SHELTERS IN 1997 HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN IN FOSTER CARE.
- LESS THAN HALF OF FORMER FOSTER YOUTH ARE EMPLOYED 2.5-4 YEARS AFTER LEAVING FOSTER CARE, AND ONLY 38% HAVE MAINTAINED EMPLOYMENT FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR.
- YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE ARE 44% LESS LIKELY TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL AND AFTER EMANCIPATION, 40 - 50 PERCENT NEVER COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL.



## HELPING A FOSTER STUDENT

All of us depend on the support of family and friends regardless of our age and situation. Most of us have been raised to depend on our families during good times and hard times. They celebrate with us when we graduate, when we get married, or when we land our first job. They hold our hand when we are ill, when we make a mistake, or when we have a tough decision to make. Most of us have a place we can call home.

Approximately 30,000 foster youth are removed from the system (age-out) each year. The state is no longer responsible for their care and so they find themselves on their own and alone. Of the young men and women who are able to avoid or overcome such problems, many dream of pursuing a higher level of education. They understand that educational opportunities mean better jobs that will support their basic living expenses and will give them hope for a better life than the one they came from.

The challenge is paying for such an education. Imagine the courage and fortitude it takes to be entirely on your own without the resources to live from day to day yet dare to dream of attending a college or university. At ISF, we know the struggles these young people will face. Together, we can give them that helping hand they so desperately need.

**Become a mentor:** These youth need the kind of mentoring and connections that most of us receive from our families. By giving of your personal time, resources, and compassion and by sharing the lessons you have learned through experience, you will be guiding these young adults toward leading productive and happier lives.

**Become an advocate:** Before learning about ISF were you aware of what happens with these children? Now that you do, please share what you've learned with those people close to you who may also want to become involved.

**Become a donor:** Become a surrogate parent and take a student under your wing. Be A Star and donate \$30 a month to help a young student. Your funds help purchase books, pay for college housing, keep the electricity on, or help pay for additional classes. You can make a profound difference in the life of a student; a student pursuing the dream of a better life who will in turn strengthen the community.

Remember the excitement and anticipation you experienced as you walked onto your college campus that first day? Wouldn't it be great to help someone else experience that same joy? For more information on how to become involved with ISF, contact Renee LeClair at [renee@isfsite.org](mailto:renee@isfsite.org).



## ISF ALUMNI CHANGING THE WORLD SPOTLIGHT: PARIS MELTZER

“Try everything at least once and take the risk – what can you lose?”

Paris joined ISF in January of 2010 with strong motivation and direction. At the age of 23 her resume already included impressive accomplishments for one so young. She was founder of the “Students Going Places” organization, committee member of the Harris County Protective Services board, and mentor for the Hay Center supporting foster care alumni. As well, she has been invited as a guest speaker for the Black voice, Fox 26, and the Debra Duncan shows to discuss issues concerning the foster care system. In 2009 she was named one of America’s Outstanding Young Leaders by the Foster Care Club. It was at the Foster Care Club where she was introduced to ISF. “I elected to be a part of ISF because of the personal aspects of the relationship. I was able to speak directly with someone and learn more about the program. I am very involved in helping youth who age out of care and when I found out that this was ISF’s mission, I was very excited”.

The personal attention that Paris receives with ISF is very important to her. “One of the greatest gifts that I have received through ISF are two wonderful mentors who actually care for my well-being and my advancement in life. They are genuine and never seek anything for themselves”. When asked which lesson has been the most valuable, Paris shares “I have learned that it takes persistence in order to be successful. Changes happen in life and you have to be able to roll with the changes whether you like it or not. If a situation does not get better, don’t quit but make it better”.

Paris completed her Bachelors in Consumer Science and Merchandising as a Cum Laude grad at the University of Houston. Next year she will graduate with her Masters in Social Work. Throughout her college years Paris has continued her passion for giving back by volunteering as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for abused youth in foster care. In addition to her full school load Paris works as a leasing professional in a community that is geared toward low income families. “This job allows me to work in an area that is closely related to my life’s passion which is to be a Social Worker”.

To learn more about becoming an ISF student, visit <http://www.isfsite.org/students.html>



PARIS WAS BORN IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA. SHE WAS PLACED IN THE FOSTER SYSTEM AT THE AGE OF 7 AND REMAINED THERE FOR 11 YEARS UNTIL SHE AGED-OUT OF THE SYSTEM. SHE HAS ONE OLDER SISTER AND MAINTAINS A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH HER FATHER.

PARIS LIKES TO WRITE POETRY AND KEEPS A DAILY JOURNAL. SHE ALSO LIKES SPORTS, INCLUDING SWIMMING, VOLLEY BALL, BADMINTON, BOWLING AND SKATING. SHE ALSO LOVES TO DANCE, LISTEN TO MUSIC AND READ.



DR. GWEN CARTER IS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE AND SERVES AS THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES OF THE CAMBRIDGE LEGACY GROUP AND IS A LEADERSHIP AND LEGACY COACH. AFTER EARNING A DOUBLE MAJOR IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND PSYCHOLOGY AT SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY, SHE EARNED HER PH.D. IN PSYCHOLOGY FROM TEXAS WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY.

GWEN HAS LIVED IN TEXAS FOR 18 YEARS. SHE HAS BEEN MARRIED FOR 25 YEARS TO BILLY CARTER AND IS A MOTHER OF 2 CHILDREN AND 3 GRANDCHILDREN.

## MENTOR SPOTLIGHT: GWEN CARTER

“Think you can, think you can't....either way you are right”

As a foster child you are moved from family to family and school to school. You have inconsistent guidance and have to deal with an ever-changing curriculum. Each time you re-enter a new school you have to become familiar with a new system, new teachers, and new guidelines. With so much instability it becomes a challenge to be successful. For those who are already pursuing a higher level of education or wish to, finding the resources to support this dream may provide to be difficult. Gwen Carter understands this very, very well. As a school psychologist she experienced this first-hand and it is these very issues that motivated Gwen to become involved with ISF.

Gwen has been a mentor for ISF for two years and observes the positive impact it has on a young adult. “Mentoring gives these students a higher probability of success by being exposed to a caring professional in their chosen area early on in their career. This support can often help them over critical times during their college education”. The ISF Mentor program is delivered using a specific curriculum that fits with the needs of the student. Depending on their career choices and personal goals, the curriculum will be adjusted to help guide the student. Throughout the program, focus is maintained on developing values, character, and spiritual development. “With my student, we read each chapter and then make notes about what they meant to her. We have discussed attitude and the difference that makes in your everyday interactions. In other words, “Think you can, think you can't....either way you are right”.

The faith element of the program is very important to Gwen. “My faith defines who I am and how I respond to all of my life experiences. After all, the only thing we have control of is our own attitudes and reactions to our life situations. My faith helps me stay in control of my reactions and pray for help when I don't react as well as I should. As a mentor, I am always trying to help my student keep a positive attitude and stay in control of her own reactions”. When asked why someone should consider becoming a mentor, Gwen feels that it is clearly worth the time and effort when you see the personal growth and development of the student. “Any caring professional who enjoys sharing the ups and downs of their chosen profession and how to best prepare for the roles and responsibilities of that profession is a great prospect for this role”.

If you would like more information on how to become a mentor, please contact Renee LeClair at [renee@isfsite.org](mailto:renee@isfsite.org).