

family matters

children's home society OF FLORIDA

summer 2007

central florida edition

Turning Lives Around Luncheon

THE TURNING LIVES AROUND 2007 LUNCHEON on April 17 at the Church Street Ballroom offered an incredible opportunity to increase awareness in the community and engage individuals in helping abused, abandoned and neglected children. With more than 180 guests, including our society members, this year's event



was a great success as we raised \$139,000 for our mission! Children's Home Society of

◀ *On behalf of Christian and the 10,000+ children we serve, thank you.*

Florida (CHS) extends a very special thank you to our Table Captains for their efforts on behalf of the precious children we serve. The inspirational program included presentations by Bruce Holmes, adoptive and foster parent, Dan Wachs, foster parent, and a compelling video presentation featuring our clients. A special thank you to our signature sponsor, Roy's Club.com, and our Gold Sponsors, Regions Bank and Greenberg Traurig, P.A., for underwriting this event! We also express sincere thanks to our 41 Turning Lives Around Society members, featured in this issue's donor appreciation page. Each member has made a \$1,000+ five-year commitment to support our most vulnerable children today and in the future!

Through a child's eyes: An interview with Dave Lilley

THE HEARTWARMING, TEAR-JERKING STORIES seemed to be endless. Yet I looked forward to each one, wishing we had time for one more... just one more. As I learned more about the amazing woman Sue Lilley had been, I wondered just how many lives she had changed... and how many lives will continue changing because of the impact she's had on so many others. While her son, Dave, shared his fondest memories about his mother, I had to brush the tears from my eyes more than once.

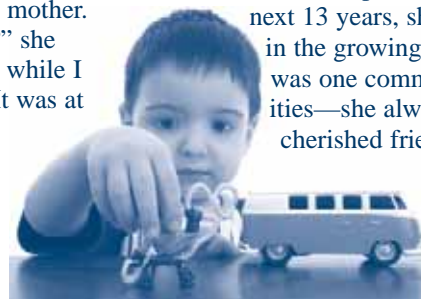
He recalled taking his mother to the hospital a year ago. As they approached the check-in window, the registration nurse stopped what she was doing and reacted to his mother. "Sue, do you remember me?" she asked. "You took care of me while I was at the Crisis Nursery!" It was at that moment, Dave remembers, that he realized how much his mother had affected lives.

He recounted this story with immense pride as we

sat around the dining room table at The Lilley House, CHS' emergency shelter named for Sue when it opened May 3, 2001. Her continuous devotion to the Crisis Nursery, our other emergency shelter, had impressed and inspired so many community members that they chose to recognize her commitment when they named The Lilley House in her honor.

As a dedicated volunteer, Sue helped shape the first vision of the Crisis Nursery. She spent so many hours there that the staff convinced her to transform her passion into a career. Her love and commitment to children in need grew, as did her responsibilities at the Nursery. Over the next 13 years, she held many different positions in the growing and changing facility, but there was one common thread in all her responsibilities—she always loved her work. She formed cherished friendships and learned a degree's

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◀ *Sue Lilley's devotion to children continues to change countless lives.*

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Embracing Children.
Inspiring Lives.

www.chsfl.org

Important Dates

Volunteer Orientation

June 7—5:30–6:30 p.m.

June 16—10–11 a.m.

July 12—5:30–6:30 p.m.

July 21—10–11 a.m.

August 9—5:30–6:30 p.m.

August 18—10–11 a.m.

Call (407) 895-5811 to RSVP

July-August

Back-to-School Drive

October

Smart City Annual Golf Tournament

Monthly:

Tours of CHS Emergency Shelters

Call (407) 895-5814 for dates

family matters

central florida edition

Family Matters is a regular publication of Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS). CHS is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to *Embracing Children. Inspiring Lives.*

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Central Florida Division

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Family Matters—Summer 2007

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Lilley House toddler takeover

THE LILLEY HOUSE has been experiencing exciting changes throughout the past year! As we've recently adjusted our focus at The Lilley House to care for children ages birth through 5, the shelter needs some transformations so we can better meet the specific needs of this age group. With the overwhelming generosity of Gene and Lisa Goodmaster, The Lilley House will undergo a reconstruction this summer! Thanks to Disney's Central Shops painters, The Lilley House already received a fresh coat of paint in April. Soon, we'll recarpet the entire house, add a surveillance system for the safety of our children, purchase toddler beds with child-friendly bedding, install two closets to provide much-needed storage space and add new dressers in the bedrooms. To fulfill other

needs of our young ones, we would love your participation with the following items:

Toddler Takeover Wish List

- New playhouses for toddlers
- Mobiles for our cribs
- Child-sized hangers
- Developmental toys
- Wall-mounted, non-glass mirrors
- Sippy cups
- Desk for our Resident Shift Supervisor

If you have any questions or would like to learn about other ways to participate in this meaningful project, please contact Sarah Johnston at 407-895-5814.



▲ *The Lilley House*



Back-to-School Drive

LAST YEAR, a young girl's life was changed through the generosity of our community's participation in our School Supply Drive. Dianna, 11 years old, had lived at the Crisis Nursery for 182 days. Thanks to the help of our supporters, Dianna started her first day of fifth grade with a brand new backpack, a pink pair of shoes and a cute new pink shirt to match. She could hardly contain her excitement as she went to her first day of school with pride and confidence.

The first day of school is always a big moment for children and teens. But imagine starting

school without the supplies you need to be successful. Imagine not having new school clothes to begin your year with confidence. Imagine being removed from your home and missing the only parents you know. This is the harsh reality many children and teens at CHS face every year. Please help us prepare for their first day! We're gearing up for our 2007 School Supply Drive. Our goal is to fill 1,100 backpacks and provide new school clothing for children who desperately need our help.

Please call Sarah Johnston at 407-895-5814 or e-mail sarah.johnston@chsfl.org with the number of children you would like to sponsor. With your help, we can have all school supplies and other items to our children by the end of August!

Convergys raises \$60,761 for playground at The Lilley House

WE'RE SO THANKFUL for the generous support we've received from Convergys Corporation to help make days brighter for the youngsters we serve at The Lilley House. With the funds raised at the company's successful annual charity golf tournament, the Convergys team will create a new backyard dreamland for our little ones at The Lilley House! The age-appropriate playground will include a new play structure, a porch for our children, rubber flooring, a picnic area and much more. Additionally, Convergys made dreams come true for six of our sheltered children who attended the golf tournament and received private golf lessons from the club instructor. After their lessons, they enjoyed a delicious dinner and explained that they "wanted to become golf professionals." A special thanks to the Convergys team for making a difference for our children!



▲ *Thank you from our children*

We also extend a thank you to Jeff and Regine Gordon, Jim Hair with Little Architects and Jeff Caldwell with Rep Services for their commitment and dedication to make our playground the best and safest place for our children to play.

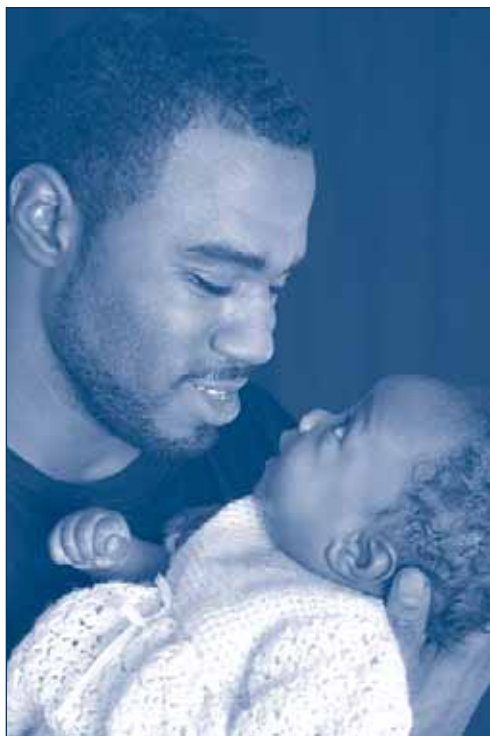
You really can change the world if you care enough.

—Marian Wright Edelman

Women of Alaqua raise \$14,031 for shelters!

RUNWAY MODELS, a fabulous catered lunch, unique silent auction items and Neiman Marcus' newest fashions were the backdrop for this year's Women of Alaqua Fashion Show. Generously sponsored by Insurance Office of America, Seminole Harley Davidson, Wescar Management and Neiman Marcus, the luncheon raised \$14,031 to support the precious children CHS serves and protects. Many thanks to Lee Floyd and Nancy Fichthorn for spearheading this great event.

A portion of the funds raised at the luncheon will provide assistance to one of CHS' prevention programs, the Perinatal Program. Through peer group meetings, parenting classes, social events, and one-on-one professional or volunteer support, the Perinatal Program provides critical support and parenting education to first-time parents in Seminole County. Its primary purpose is to prevent the occurrence or reoccurrence of abuse or neglect by increasing parents' knowledge of child development and the demands of parenting so they may better cope with the stresses of raising a child.



▲ *One of our very special Perinatal clients!*

Essian Construction Bowling Tournament raises \$20,000

We're excited to announce that, for the fourth year, CHS has benefited from the generosity of Richard Shassian and Essian Construction, LLC. The company held its Annual Charity Bowling Tournament on April 28 at Boardwalk Bowl, raising \$20,000 for the little ones we serve! Richard has demonstrated his commitment to Central Florida's children through various event sponsorships, his annual bowling tournament and participation in many CHS in-kind drives. The funds raised at this tournament will support the daily care of children at our emergency shelters, Crisis Nursery and The Lilley House.



▲ *A fun day of bowling to provide safe days and nights for our children*

Sue Lilley... (cont)

worth of knowledge about the world of child welfare. Most of all, she loved and made a difference in the lives of hundreds of children.

"Miss Sue" has been a surrogate grandma to many, and a wise and helpful co-worker and friend. Clearly evidenced by the nurse who remembered her decades later, Sue left lasting impressions on the children she served, changing hundreds of lives and offering hope to countless youngsters. Her commitment to improve the lives of children was revealed every day of her working life. And even after Sue's passing in March 2007, her legacy continues to touch lives, to change hearts, to brighten futures.

Sue Lilley was more than a mother, more than a friend, more than a mentor—she was a lifeline, an embodiment of hope and a provider of peace, nurturing and comfort to countless children. For years to come, the children who find safety and love at The Lilley House and Crisis Nursery will have hope because of Sue.

**story shared by Sarah Johnston*

From the CEO

Few voices resonate as powerfully as passionate child and family advocates determined to brighten futures for hundreds of thousands of teens, children and families that have struggled to find hope. And when our voices unite at the Florida State Capitol during our annual Legislative Day, they form a powerful choir on behalf of children, sharing their dreams and securing their futures. To all of you who played a role in this year's Legislative Day, I sincerely thank you. Our many volunteers and advocates devoted their time and energy to help inform elected officials of the needs of Florida's children and families, encouraging our delegates to take a stand for these young ones and their parents.

The most substantial development that resulted from the recent legislative session is the creation of a Children and Youth Cabinet. Though this success is non-monetary, it holds incredible potential for strategic long-term implications. Complementing directions for several child-serving organizations, this Cabinet is designed to ensure better coordination and improved communication between state agencies, with a direct link to the governor's office.

Additionally, integral modifications made to the Office of Adoption and Child Protection illustrate the Executive Branch's desire to take a more active role in child protection, especially adoption. With the Office's close ties to the aforementioned Children and Youth Cabinet, we should expect to see resources unite in a more coordinated manner at state and local levels, allowing us all to better serve children and families.

And, in a legislative session primarily dominated by property tax and insurance debates, we did see a modest increase in financial support for our crucial services, but it's vital that we continue advocating for increased funding so we may reach more children, teens and adults who need us. I encourage you to begin looking ahead to the next session, where we'll once again push for more resources to better serve teens through our independent and transitional living programs, as well as advocate for the opportunity for CHS and other child-serving organizations to assist employees in paying for mandated auto insurance coverage if they transport children.

Thank you so much for your continued support as we work together to make a difference in the lives of those who need us. I'm honored to be part of such a dedicated team.



Dave Bundy

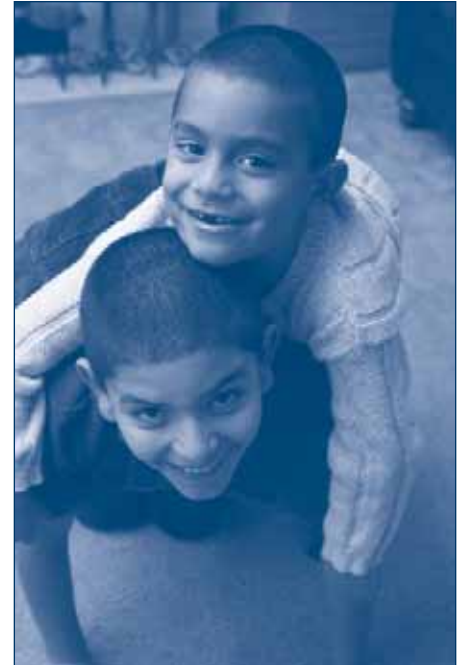
\$400,000 Kellogg grant will help promote school readiness for abused children

CHS RECENTLY RECEIVED a two-year \$400,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation—the sixth-largest grant-making foundation in the country—to help fund an innovative project designed to promote school readiness and facilitate early returns to safe, permanent placements for abused and neglected children. The project, Ready by 5, uses community-based, collaborative approaches to provide young children with the developmental and emotional skills and competencies they need to succeed in school.

We're excited to partner with several funders and organizations as we pursue effective, evidence-based programs to help children succeed. Ready by 5 focuses on reaching youngsters who lack critical skills necessary to perform well in school and in other family and community settings. Through our partnership with Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy, we're fortunate to receive additional expertise and valuable funding, contingent on matching dollars. Recognizing the critical importance of this project, the Sovereign Order of St. John recently donated \$10,000 to CHS, which will be matched dollar for dollar by Florida State University. This is an exciting start as we continue to seek vital financial resources for this project—through this matching opportunity, donors can actually double the impact of their support, ensuring these children receive the crucial services they need.

Early childhood abuse or neglect can have a permanent, negative impact on healthy brain development and school readiness—and research indicates that children who don't succeed in the first three years of school are often headed toward long-term, costly difficulties, great personal tragedies that also burden their communities. Fortunately, effective interventions such as Ready by 5 help these children and their families by preventing and treating early childhood problems so they won't interfere with learning and the everyday coping children confront as they grow up.

Ready by 5 uses trained early childhood specialists to provide comprehensive developmental screenings of vulnerable young children, while infant mental health experts offer valuable parent education, working hand-in-hand with parents and children.



▲ Ready by 5 will help promote school readiness and facilitate early returns to safe, permanent placements for abused and neglected children.

These family interventions promote strong bonding and attachment, positive interactions, and safe, secure relationships between children and their caregivers.

“By infusing these additional resources and enhancing expertise, we believe the results will show fewer children being abused, more children performing better in school, and quicker family reunifications for children who have been separated from their families,” says Dave Bundy, CHS President.

We're grateful for the support of the Sovereign Order of St. John to help us reach the full potential of our partnership with Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy. We invite you to join us in this initiative, or in another project you're passionate about, by participating in matching grant opportunities. Through matching grants, you can double the impact of your dollars—allowing us to continue providing valuable services for children and families. If you're interested in matching opportunities, contact the Development Department in your local division at the phone number listed on the back page of this newsletter.

A legacy of love

HER EYES REVEALED HER HEART. Her warmth conveyed her devotion. And her dedication illustrated her passion. Sue Lilley was more than a mother, more than a friend, more than a mentor—she was a lifeline, an embodiment of hope and a provider of peace, nurturing and comfort to countless children. Children who had never known stability, never known love. Children who found security and opportunity because of her desire to change their lives, to offer them a chance for happiness.

We lost Sue in March, after a long, brave battle with cancer, but her legacy continues to touch lives, to change hearts, to brighten futures.

Sue's devotion to CHS began decades ago, as she volunteered her time and resources to serve children in need at our Central Florida Division's Crisis Nursery. She transformed her passion into a career—indeed life's call-



▲ *Sue's devotion changed the lives of countless children.*

►
Children will continue to find hope and love at the Crisis Nursery and The Lilley House.

ing. She truly enjoyed every day, as she knew each moment with CHS had a purpose—to help a child who desperately needed her nurturing. Sue clearly conveyed her commitment to our mission and children—even during her battle with cancer, she continued her steadfast service with CHS. She simply couldn't pass up the opportunity to help another child.

Yet Sue's impact extended beyond the children and families she faithfully served. She so inspired fellow donors, volunteers and community members that they chose to recognize her in 2001, when they named the Central Florida Division's new children's emergency shelter in her honor.

"Sue portrayed her desire to make a difference in these children's lives every single day. It was truly our pleasure to name the shelter in her honor, as she provided so much hope and encouragement to each child she helped," says State and Central Florida Division Board Member Deborah Theroux, who was one of several volunteers and companies helping initiate The Lilley House. "Thanks to her welcoming spirit to all guests, the residents of Casselberry recognized what a great contribution The Lilley House would be to their community, which resulted in the shelter's success. Sue truly took CHS' mission of *Embracing Children. Inspiring Lives.* to heart, and she inspired countless others to follow her example."

Now, as Sue's legacy thrives in The Lilley House, her memory lives in the children who have turned into productive adults, in the youth



▲ *CHS Vice President of Operations Kim Brien, Sue Lilley and Susan Lilley (Sue's daughter) at Sue's CHS retirement luncheon*

who have transformed into caring citizens, in the mothers who understand the importance of nurturing their children. Her influence passes through generations—each child she helped, each family she consoled, each teen she taught to trust has the power to continue the path toward success and happiness.

And for years to come, children who find safety and love at The Lilley House and Crisis Nursery will have hope because of Sue.

After Sue's passing, many members of our community wanted to honor her legacy by supporting the cause she believed in, helping the children she loved. If you'd like to honor Sue, we invite you to indicate your wishes by marking the correct box on the enclosed envelope.

Or perhaps you have a loved one who had such passion and desire, like Sue, to make a difference, to bring happiness to children who have known hurt for too long. Perhaps you'd like to keep that dream alive, to continue the legacy your loved one began.

When you make a gift to CHS in honor or memory of your loved one, you continue a legacy that can change children's lives. Your

loved one's legacy will shine in the smile of a child, in the love of a mother, in the success of a teen. We encourage you to share in the dream of your loved one, to help make dreams come true for the children and families in our care.



Heartfelt thanks to our donors

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to all our generous supporters who embrace children and inspire lives!

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*These individuals and organizations are members of the CHS Turning Lives Around Society who have made a five-year commitment of \$1,000 or more to support our most vulnerable children today and in the future!



A childhood given back

FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD JENNA* was forced to grow up much too fast—she quickly learned survival at a young age, as she was required to uphold adult responsibilities just to avoid being hurt. Only a child, Jenna was forced to sell candy or ask strangers for money to support her family. Even worse, her father abused her when she didn't sell enough to earn money to pay the family's rent. So, last September, Jenna ran away from home because she hadn't sold enough candy, and she was terrified of her punishment. In addition to the beatings, this sweet, innocent young girl regularly witnessed her father abuse cocaine and her mother abuse alcohol. But Jenna recently had something very special to look forward to—her 8th Grade Sadie Hawkins Dance. She was extremely excited and told her CHS caseworker that she would love a new dress with a pretty purse. This was her opportunity to experience the care-free part of childhood she'd been missing, to forget her adult problems for one evening.

Jenna's wish came true—with the help of some very special friends, Jenna experienced

Cinderella's dream that evening. The beautiful dress she chose fit as though it was designed just for her, and the glittering jewelry she wore shimmered like she was a princess. And, for that moment in time, she was. She even had her hair styled for the dance—the night she had waited too long for, the night she would finally be able to experience the joy of being a young, teenage girl.

Most children we serve at CHS lose the chance to be just a child. During this time of year, many children come to their case managers requesting a dress for prom, a suit for a dance or maybe a matching pair of shoes. We extend a special thank you to Insurance Office of America and Debbie Gross, Dan Derango, and Chip Webb for their contributions to make dreams come true for young individuals like Jenna. Thank you for bringing a smile to a child who had forgotten how to laugh. Giving these children a happy memory to hold onto has a bigger impact than you can imagine.

**Name has been changed for her protection*

Recognizing our everyday heroes

LASHON, a CHS Dependency Case Manager, is an everyday hero.

Day in and day out, Lashon puts herself at risk to make sure Central Florida's most vulnerable children are safe. This is a story about her dedication to one of the very special families she cares for.

This young family is comprised of a 20-year-old mother raising her 2-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son. Even though they live in a rough neighborhood, the mother left her innocent children home alone while she went out to party. Fortunately, a brave neighbor suspected the children were alone and called police to investigate. Soon after, CHS became a regular part of these children's lives, with Lashon at the forefront.

During one of Lashon's visits, Jane* and David* were at the home of a family friend, Ms. E. Ms. E was known for the excellent care she provided for children in the neighborhood; Lashon had already helped her get beds and food stamps for the young ones. As Lashon drove up to the residence, she passed a group of eight men playing basketball with a makeshift hoop—and it was the middle of a workday.

Throughout the visit, the children sat on the couch, their backs straight, arms folded,

completely silent. Lashon recognized their reactions as "emotional numbness," a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder. While some might view their behavior as reserved shyness, the children were actually displaying a paralyzed fear around strangers, a protective mechanism used to detach themselves from others to avoid being hurt. Ms. E explained that the children were very well behaved, but their mother had not come to see them in almost six weeks. Their mother lives only two blocks away.

As Lashon left the residence, she was inappropriately approached by the men playing basketball, as they made some lewd gestures and comments to her. She politely waved them off as she got in her car, disregarding the offensive encounter.

Most people don't realize the personal risk our caseworkers take each day walking into these neighborhoods. Though Lashon could arrange to visit the children at day care or another safe distance, she goes bravely and willingly into neighborhoods these youngsters call home—neighborhoods the police sometimes know all too well. She goes every day, for every child.

Thank you, Lashon, for being an everyday hero.

**Names have been changed for their protection.*

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Executive Director's Message

I'D LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT to share some interesting history about how the world of child welfare has evolved. In the late 1800s, children were viewed—and often treated—as property. Behind the closed doors of the family home, many youngsters suffered from horrific abuse and neglect. It wasn't until someone brave enough to fight for the life of a young girl eventually changed children's rights forever.

Mary Ellen's story isn't new, yet it is one worth remembering and retelling. Little Mary Ellen endured nightmares at the hands of her parents for many years, until a landlady noticed that she was malnourished, covered in bruises and other marks, and was forced to perform manual labor. In desperation, this caring landlady turned to a caseworker, Etta Wheeler, to help to save Mary Ellen. But at the time, there were no laws protecting children from abuse inside the family home. Etta refused to give up, determined to fight for Mary Ellen. In frustration, she turned to the ASPCA. She successfully argued in court that children were members of the animal kingdom and were therefore protected under the laws protecting animals. It worked. Etta Wheeler was a truly brave woman who, by saving one child, changed the law to rescue so many children in years since.

Similar to Etta's brave fight, Reverend D.W. Comstock of Jacksonville, along with a group of dedicated volunteers, rescued children from 'orphan trains' that had left so many young children on the streets in Jacksonville at the turn of the century. It was then, back

in 1902, that CHS was founded. These leaders knew that bravery meant committing their own homes as shelters for children, opening their hearts to care for young ones who needed their nurturing.

After years of being run by the government, Florida's child welfare was placed back in the hands of the community in 2002, with the help of Governor Bush—the "privatization of child welfare." This endeavor allowed communities to once again assume care for vulnerable children, rather than relying solely on the government to fix unresolved issues. CHS took a lead role, financially and philosophically, as Florida underwent this dramatic shift, and we currently deliver child welfare services for nearly one-third of the state's foster care population. Locally, we serve more than 10,000 children each year. Although we have much farther to go, it is amazing to me how far we have come.

Warmest Regards,



Andry Sweet



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