

## Summer Freedom Celebrations

By Radha Selvester CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services

Most Americans consider the Fourth of July as a day of freedom and independence. 239 years ago, the United States of America and England concluded the Revolutionary War, separating what were the British colonies in North America from the country of England. All students in the USA spend considerable time learning about this piece of history.

From a kid's point of view, June is seen as the beginning of 10 weeks of freedom each school year. Growing up we had a chant that started with, "No more pencils, no more books ..." Of course this was youthful ignorance as education is what will really set people free. But at 10 or 12 years old all we could think about was sleeping in, swimming, sports, camps, and socializing during the summer.

There is a summer celebration that many don't know about. It is a holiday called **JUNETEENTH**. 150 years ago, on June 19, 1865, in Galveston, Texas, African Americans who had been enslaved found out that they were now free. The really strange part of this story is that the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed more than two years earlier by President Lincoln on January 1, 1863. News did NOT travel fast in those days! Or perhaps the news was withheld so the plantation owners could squeeze out some more free labor from their slaves. But eventually the truth was announced and the newly liberated African Americans were jubilant!

In the beginning, former slaves and their descendants began observing Juneteenth in Texas with recreation, music, dance, and food. Now the holiday receives full community support regardless of race or ancestry. As of 2014, 43 states, including Florida, recognize Juneteenth as a state or ceremonial holiday.

Gainesville began holding community Juneteenth celebrations 8 years ago. Originally organized by the first Resource Center\* (Library Partnership in NE Gainesville), it is now being held at the Cone Park Library and Resource Center. The event will be held this year on Saturday, June 20, 11 am – 3 pm. This spirited community event is open to everyone and will include music, exhibits, refreshments, and door prizes. It will be a wonderful day to celebrate freedom. Mark your calendar and plan to attend!

For families with children whose behaviors and attitudes don't inspire parents to award "freedom" or age-appropriate privileges, please contact CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services for information about Family Action Counseling (age 6-17) and/or the CDS Interface Youth Shelters for adolescents in need of a residential program. [www.cdsfl.org](http://www.cdsfl.org) (352) 244-0628 x3822.

\*The three Gainesville Family Resource Centers include Library Partnership (1130 NE 16th Avenue), SWAG Center (807 SW 64th Terrace), and Cone Park Library and Resource Center (2841 E. University Ave). Resource Centers are open to all and provide a means of connecting families to community resources. Juneteenth will be celebrated at Cone Park this year (next to the Eastside Recreation Center).



Africa 2000 will be performing a dance again at this year's Juneteenth Celebration on Saturday, June 20, 2015 at Cone Park Library and Resource Center.