



Mary Perdue

First Lady of Georgia

Mary Perdue has centered her life around matters involving family and children in her roles as mother, grandmother, foster parent, speech pathologist, and children's ministry volunteer in her church. As Georgia's First Lady, she continues to make family and children's issues her primary focus. The first lady is committed to working in support of the welfare of our children, particularly children in foster care and the juvenile justice system. She believes it is critical to reach children in their early years to avoid potential social problems as teenagers or adults.

In August 2003, Mrs. Perdue launched her "Our Children" campaign, to raise awareness about the need for foster care programs in Georgia and to encourage individuals, corporations and faith-based organizations to take an active role in addressing the needs of their community. Her objective is to increase the number of available foster homes and volunteer hours, and financial and in-kind contributions to our youth-serving organizations. In 1998, the first lady and her husband, Governor Sonny Perdue, served as foster parents for eight newborns awaiting adoption through Covenant Care in Macon, Georgia. Their personal experience served as the inspiration for this initiative. Additionally, Mrs. Perdue has created the First Lady's Children's Cabinet, whose mission is to stem child abuse and neglect and to promote foster care and adoption. Cabinet members include heads of state agencies that address children's issues.

Mrs. Perdue was born in New Orleans, the third of five children of Ed and Lorraine Ruff. She also lived in Nashville, Tennessee, before settling in Atlanta. As a student at the University of Georgia, she met future Governor Sonny Perdue on a blind date, and they married in September 1972. After being a stay-at-home mom for 19 years, Mrs. Perdue served as a speech therapist to public school children from pre-kindergarten to high school. The Perdues have four children and ten grandchildren. When in Atlanta, the Perdues attend the First Baptist Church of Woodstock, where they have taught a Sunday school class that focuses on strengthening marriages.