



Foster Care & Adoption News

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The Goodwin Family

Vicki Goodwin just loves being around kids and caring for them. She and her husband, David, have three grown children but there were always little ones in their home as Vicki provided babysitting for her friends who worked. One day, she saw a Children's Bureau billboard promoting foster care and adoption and was interested in learning more. David was familiar with having foster children in his home as his mom was a foster parent during his middle school years. In 2005, the couple became certified foster parents and since then have cared for 30 infants.

"The best part about being a foster parent is the smile you can bring out of a scared, unsure child. We've mostly cared for babies but we've also had a few very scared toddlers. I also enjoy working with the birth families — parents and relatives. It can be challenging trying to schedule visits with everyone but I think it's important that they know who has their kids and that they are safe," said Vicki.

Vicki and David had no intention of ever adopting even though Children's Bureau had asked them on several occasions. However, that all changed in March 2006 when they picked up a five-month-old boy named Joseph. Joseph had been abused and neglected by his birth parents. The situation didn't improve and Joseph needed a permanent home. Children's Bureau asked the Goodwins if they would consider adopting him. Initially they declined, however, after talking with their older kids and building an addition to their home (the extra space was needed if they were to adopt), Vicki and David officially became Joseph's parents on May 8, 2009.

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Annual Appreciation Luncheon is a Big Success!

On May 21st, more than 100 of our foster and adoptive parents attended Children's Bureau's Annual Luncheon and Training. The day included a breakfast and luncheon buffet along with inspirational and educational speakers. All parents received six hours of training while relaxing in the luxurious ambiance of Children's Bureau Magnolia Place Family Center and Conference Facility. Raffle prizes were awarded along with handy first aid kits with the Children's Bureau logo. Thanks everyone for your dedication and support of this annual event! We look forward to seeing you, along with others attending for the first time, in May 2012!



Arlene and Jake

Arlene's adoption journey was sparked after watching the heartwarming television special, "A Home for the Holidays" which focuses on adoption and the various kinds of families created through adoption. She had always wanted to be a mother and decided to explore her options. She found Children's Bureau via an advertisement in "The Hollywood Reporter" and was delighted to discover that the agency had an office conveniently located across the street from her home!

Initially Arlene focused on adopting a sibling set of older girls. As a single, working parent, she thought this was the best family make up for her situation and began to set up her household with that intent.

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In October 2009, Vicki and David received a call at midnight from Children's Bureau asking if they would take two girls who had been removed from their home. They agreed and thought the placement was short term. The girls had family in another state, however, no one tried to get custody of them. Vicki and David adopted Amanda, age three, and Gabriella, age two, on October 25, 2011.

"I believe Joseph, Amanda and Gabriella were sent to us for a reason. They keep us young and definitely moving with all of the chasing around we do. Our older children raised a few questions, especially with the recent adoption of the girls, but they love these kids so much and now appreciate how much work goes into parenting," said Vicki.

Vicki was a mentor parent for a year through Children's Bureau's APSS program and continues to speak at parent support groups and foster parent trainings. She appreciates the support and encouragement she receives from the staff and knows that they are always available to her when needed. Vicki and David plan to continue being foster parents for years to come.

"There are many kids out there who just need arms to hold them, even if it's just for a short time," Vicki said with a smile.



Children's Bureau Finds Success with Matching Team Approach For Children in Adoption Program

Matching an adoptive child with a potential family isn't easy. There are several factors to consider including the child's age, gender, health, history and special needs as well as how the child might fit in with a family's interests, activities and beliefs. Children's Bureau developed a "matching team" approach for placing adoptive children with families and has noticed a higher success rate of children staying with families.

"Each child or group of siblings (brothers and sisters) is assigned a team of our Children's Bureau professional staff to review their case and match that child's temperament with a family's temperament. For example, a child who has special needs (such as infant born with drugs in their body) might be placed with a family that can handle the range of emotional and physical demands of that child," said Cynthia Elliott, Children's Bureau's matching team coordinator.

A child and their prospective adoptive parents get to know each other over a gradual period of time meeting two to four times before a decision is made to pursue adoption. Children's Bureau has been using the matching approach for several years now and has placed many children in loving, adoptive homes.

"This process is working well for the children and families that we work with. It allows everyone involved time to get to know each other to ensure that this is the best match for them," said Elliot. "At the present time, we are also searching for adoptive homes for African American children who are part of sibling sets of two or three children and also, for children who are older."



Children need help using the present to deal with the past in order to move into the future.

DR. EILEEN PASZTOR

Support Groups Offered

Children's Bureau provides support groups each month for families throughout the Southland! These groups provide a great opportunity for you to meet, learn and share your experiences with other foster care and adoption families. Oftentimes families in our support groups build lasting friendships outside of the group. Certified parents receive two training hours for attending a meeting. We are currently offering support groups (Spanish & English depending on site) in Palmdale, North Hollywood and Los Angeles. Ask your social worker for information on exact locations, dates and times.

Join our Adoption Promotion and Support Services Program!

Our Adoption Promotion and Support Services program gives more than 250 foster care and adoption families each year additional help through therapy, mentoring and support groups. We also invite you to become mentors as part of the program. Mentors help new adoptive families with vital support, information and shared experiences as they go through the adoption process and afterwards. For more information, please call (800) 730-3933 or (661) 272-9996. We would love to hear from you!

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"Finding the right match was a roller coaster ride. In some cases, I was one of the families considered but wasn't chosen. In other cases, my intuition told me the match wasn't right. I also learned that many of these older children had mental health issues and I wasn't feeling comfortable or prepared to handle those issues as a first-time parent," said Arlene.

Arlene's search for a child continued but the focus shifted to a low-risk adoption. Children's Bureau also asked her to consider a younger child. At this time, Arlene's job situation had changed and she realized that maybe this was a better option for her. Shortly afterwards, Arlene was matched with a happy and healthy seven-month-old boy she named Jake.

Adopting Jake was not simple due to various issues with the birth mom, however, it all worked out and the adoption was finalized a week before Jake's 2nd birthday. Jake also faced developmental challenges. He was failing to thrive and required physical, occupational and speech therapies. He did not walk until he was 15 months old, only became verbal at 18 months and displayed odd behavior. Eventually, Jake was diagnosed with highly functioning autism spectrum disorder. Despite these obstacles, Jake began to progress with early intervention and intensive behavioral services.

"Jake is now a beautiful four year old with boundless energy. He studies karate and takes acting classes. He is very perceptive and remembers everything. He enjoys frequent trips to New York to visit our family and friends and loves spending time at the beach," Arlene said.



Arlene says that the best thing about being a mother is that now her best friend is her son. She continues to learn from him and feels that she has grown immeasurably as a person. Balancing work and life issues as a single mother have also challenged Arlene.

"Since I'm from the East Coast, one of the major challenges is that our family is more than two thousand miles away. This makes it difficult to find time for myself as well as when I need someone to help when I am sick or have to work overtime or weekends. Having a strong support network to rely on, in the absence of a partner/spouse, is one of the biggest challenges faced by the single adoptive parent," Arlene noted.

She also mentioned that the Children's Bureau staff and the support groups the agency offer have been invaluable, both pre and post adoption. They encouraged Arlene to fight for services and have helped with connecting her to various resources.

Arlene's adoption journey with Children's Bureau has inspired her to recommend the agency to others, especially single women and same sex couples. She's also renewed her foster parent license but plans to take her time in finding a sibling for Jake.

"I've talked with Jake about how I chose him," Arlene said, "and, when we're ready, we will choose his little brother together."

Welcome to Our New Child Share Families!

Child Share is a non-profit organization that recruits foster and adoptive parents specifically through church congregations. Through the years, many of our families have been recruited by Child Share thanks to their hard working staff, especially Bob Levy. Last fiscal year, we welcomed the following to our Children's Bureau /Child Share Family: Valerie & Matthew Berezuk, Marilyn Holley, Keri Ann Luevano & Victor Hugo Velasquez, Theresa & Richard Rivera, Aileen Fooks, Jacqueline Page, Lynn Furnare-Rea & James Rea, Tracie & David Tewksbury, Carissa & Jason Byers, Elizabeth & Jonathan Raju and Yolanda & Jose Garcia. Back for 2nd adoptions are Marissa & Samuel Reynolds and Debbie Ernster!

Tax Credit for Adoption Expenses – You may be eligible for a \$12,150 tax credit!

If your state has determined that the child you are adopting is a child with special needs, keep evidence of that fact for your records as you might be eligible for a \$12,150 tax credit. Please consult with your tax preparer to see if you qualify. For more information, go to www.NFPAonline.org.



A WORD FROM LOU GRAHAM:

Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress. Resilience helps children and adults overcome adversity with courage, skills and faith.

Resilience comes from families and communities that provide caring and support, hold high expectations, and encourage children's participation. When adults provide responsive care to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, children learn to trust others. When children are held to high expectations by their parents or other caregivers, children begin to believe in themselves and realize that they are capable. When adults encourage children to participate in the family or classroom by giving them responsibilities and offering them choices about their environment, young children feel a sense of belonging and competence.

Supporting infants' and toddlers' resilience development includes adults expressing their love for a child both verbally and physically, acknowledging the child's feelings, keeping the child safe while allowing her to explore the environment, modeling confidence and optimism and encouraging the child to do things on her own. To support a pre-school aged child, adults can tell a child he is loved, acknowledge what he can do, encourage his independence, explain the rationale for rules he is told to follow and show the child what empathy and caring look and sound like.

Children need high-quality care, opportunities for developing and maintaining relationships, adequate nutrition and support from families, educators and communities. When these and other protective factors are in place, children experience positive development in all areas and have the resources to cope with the trauma and stress they encounter in life.

(Excerpt from the March, 2011 issue of "Young Children" Magazine titled "I am Safe and Secure – Promoting Resilience in Young Children" by P. Pizzolongo and A. Hunter.)



Update on Child Safety Seats

Vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for children 4 and older! To address this issue, pediatricians have determined that children riding in cars should remain in rear-facing child safety seats at least until their second birthday – and preferably even longer. Children under 2 are 75% less likely to die or be severely injured in a crash if they are in rear-facing child restraints. They also recommend that a child stay in five-point harnesses until they exceed the height and weight limits. Five-point harnesses distribute the crash forces evenly over crucial parts of the child's body. Rear-facing seats act like cocoons, cradling children's heads, torsos, arms and legs, and spread crash forces over a larger area. Booster seats are recommended until a child is 4'9" – which most children don't reach until they are between 8 and 12 years of age. About 1,500 children under age 16 die in vehicle crashes each year in the U.S. So, Buckle Up! (Excerpt from "Doctors Make a U-Turn on the use of child safety seats" by P. Callahan)

Referral Fee \$500 per Family

To further encourage you, our excellent foster and adoptive families, to refer quality families to become foster and adoptive parents, we have raised the referral fee to \$500! When a family attends an Information Meeting or turns in their application, ask them to write your name as the Referral Source --- it's that easy! When the family becomes certified, you will receive \$250 and when a child is placed in their home, you will receive an additional \$250! Referrals are our best resource for finding quality families, so please share our program with your family and friends. For more information, please contact your social worker.

Interested in learning more about Children's Bureau's foster care, adoptions or mentoring programs?

Please give us a call at (800) 730-3933 or (661) 272-9996 or visit us at www.all4kids.org.

We would love to hear from you!

No TV for Baby - Face Time Is Needed!

In a 2010 study, it was found that TV watching in babies stunted talking, learning and problem solving and by 14 months of age caused lower scores on developmental tests. 14 month-old babies who watched an hour of TV every day scored one-third lower on developmental tests compared to babies of the same age who did not watch TV.

An earlier study, in 2009, found that watching TV decreased the likelihood of babies learning new words, playing, talking and interacting with others around them. For every hour that a baby watched TV they heard 770 fewer words from their parent. Conversations between the baby and parent decreased and babbling and talking decreased. The researchers found that regardless of whether it was baby-friendly shows or adult TV shows, watching television hampered social interaction between parent and child.

A 2007 study showed that even with educational videos, for each hour of viewing, infants learned six to eight fewer vocabulary words compared to infants who never watched videos. The educational products had the strongest negative effect on babies between 8 and 16 months old – which is when language skills are beginning to form. The researchers found that the more videos the infants watched, the less words they knew.

Interaction between the parent and child is the most important aspect of early learning for an infant. Babies require face-to-face interaction to learn. They don't get that interaction from watching TV or videos. (Shortened from Hip Chick's Guide to PMS, Pregnancy and Babies)

Independent Domestic Adoption Studies Now Available

Children's Bureau now offers the service of completing independent domestic adoption studies for families adopting outside of Children's Bureau. For more information or to refer a family, please contact Cindy Stogel at (213) 342-0117.

