



# Foster Care & Adoption News

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## Meet the Bulus Family

Patty and Raid Bulus wanted to start a family but were unable to have kids biologically, even after several fertility treatment attempts. They started looking at different adoption options, including international adoption and the foster/adopt process. The couple thought the foster/adopt route made sense and began the journey to become Resource Parents with Children's Bureau. We asked Patty and Raid to share their story of hope and unconditional love for children in need.

**CB: How did you find Children's Bureau and why did you choose to foster/adopt through this agency?**

*We found Children's Bureau while investigating foster/adopt agencies through online searches. Children's Bureau was the one agency that seemed to have the most information, and the foster/adopt process was well explained on their website. We decided to attend the information meeting that same month, then started our pre-certification process with Children's Bureau soon after.*

**CB: Tell me about your experience with Children's Bureau. How has the organization helped you on this journey??**

*The pre-certification process really helped us to understand the foster/adopt process. We learned about the Model of Practice Children's Bureau has implemented called P.R.I.D.E. (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education), which emphasizes assessing for the resource parent's willingness, ability and resources to 1) protect and nurture children, 2) meet development needs and address delays, 3) support children's relationships with their birth families, 4) to connect the child to safe and nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime, and*



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## Ana Munoz's Story

Ana Munoz's journey in foster care began when she was four years old. Her family came to the attention of social services after a neighbor reported that Ana and her three siblings were being mistreated. Both parents abused drugs and did not know how to care for the children. Ana and her siblings were placed in eight foster homes before they met Aracely and Raul Munoz.

Ana, now a teenager, held an internship position in the summer of 2015 at Children's Bureau with our Foster Care and Adoption Assistants. She helped to create files for new prospective families, prepared binders for pre-service training and spoke to a group of adopted persons in our APSS program where she shared her story and how she overcame negative feelings about being adopted.

**CB: Tell us about your foster care experience.**

*My siblings and I were afraid when we moved to different families and I was very protective of them. Sometimes the foster parents were not understanding of my behavior and I would be punished. It would have been better if they would have talked with me about my feelings and concerns. I was then labeled with emotional and behavioral challenges and we were at risk of being separated. I was afraid that I would never find a permanent place where we could all live together.*

*When I first met my now adoptive parents, they gave me a Princess Belle doll with a brush. I still have it today as it means a lot to me. These amazing people saw beyond my challenges and adopted me and my siblings, all of us were under the age of five. They have also advocated on my behalf to resolve my U.S. citizenship which has been a long process. They have given me and my siblings everything we need to grow, be happy and feel secure. I know that we all have a bright future because of them.*



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# An Adoption Story continued from page 1

5) work as a member of a professional team. This prepared us to understand the needs of children who are in foster care. Before starting, our thinking was "we want to adopt a child," however during the training, we learned that "a child needs a family". That theme was stressed throughout the entire process, and we realized that this is all "for the kids". Our first child joined the family, 5 week-old Lisa, less than a week after we became certified. We thought we were ready, but as soon as baby Lisa got to our home, we felt completely overwhelmed and unprepared, as I am sure any new parent would feel. Our Children's Bureau social worker, Patty, was with us every step of the way, encouraging us and assuring us that we would get the hang of parenthood in no time. And of course she was right, but even after we knew we could handle things, she assured us that we are never alone in this, and we have Children's Bureau supporting us if we needed anything.

## **CB: Tell me about the children you have adopted.**

Elizabeth (2.5 years), Anthony (18 months), and Jocelyn (6 months) were siblings who joined our family in April of 2014. They were our 6th, 7th and 8th children to join the family. They were all together in a foster family, but that foster family was unable to provide legal permanency through adoption. We bonded almost instantly. We participated in the transition plan that included several visits, each visit lasting longer than the previous one. The attachment was so strong between the kids and us that whenever we would drop them back off at the prior foster home, they would cry because they wanted to stay with us. In June of 2015, we finalized the adoptions for all three kids, and the joy was obvious among all 5 of us. Elizabeth even made up a song "Today is Adoption Day!", and was singing it the entire



day. All three kids are wonderful children, each with their own distinct personalities. We have adapted very easily to each other, including our extended families.

## **CB: How has becoming an adoptive parent changed your life?**

For starters, our dream of becoming parents has been achieved. While we helped other foster children and loved them all as if they were our own, there was still something missing because we knew that they might depart from our family at any time. As soon as we learned that we had received an adoption finalization date for these three children, we felt that everything was finally as it should be. We were finally a complete family. We find that our life is filled with more joy and purpose, even though we are now much busier. Waking up in the mornings to, "Good morning, Mommy! Good morning, Daddy! We Love you!", is much more fulfilling than waking up to a noisy alarm clock, as is coming home to hear all their laughter and cute chit chaty.

## **CB: What advice would you give other parents who are considering to foster/adopt?**

Be prepared to feel emotions you never knew you had. You



will feel ecstatic when a child joins your family. You will feel confused as you learn about their biological families and their continued ties to "your" children. You will feel disappointed as you learn

about the foster system and its unexpected challenges. You will feel extreme sadness when a child separates from your family. However, keep in mind that you are doing this for the children. Even if a child stays only one day in your family, give them all the love every kid deserves, because it will make a difference in their life. And most of all, don't give up, your child is out there, and you will one day be united.

## **CB: Anything else you'd like to say?**

Our first foster child, Lisa, was returned to her biological family after more than a year of being in our care. As you can imagine, it was very difficult for us to deal with her separation from our family. However, we have no regrets whatsoever and feel blessed that we had the chance to take care of Lisa, and indirectly help her mother get her life back on track. We still see Lisa quite often and have become very close with her mother. In fact, we are Lisa's God parents. Our children think of Lisa as their sister, and spend a lot of time together.

## **CELEBRATE NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH!**

**Children's Bureau celebrates 1579 Adoptions since 2002!**

The nation will celebrate National Adoption Month in November! In Los Angeles, on Friday, November 20th, Children's Court will host a special day that includes the adoption of many children in a festive courtroom filled with balloons, teddy bears, crafts and other activities for families. This is not only a happy time for the families but also for the social workers, attorneys and judges who work hard year-round to find safe, permanent homes for children in need. Congratulations to all of the families who will finalize their adoptions on this wonderful and inspirational day!

**CB: What do you want potential foster parents to know about foster kids.**

*I want them to know that everyone deserves a chance to live with a wonderful family and have opportunities to accomplish their goals. Taking care of kids, whether it is your birth child or one you foster or adopt, is filled with joyful moments and some challenging ones. The only difference is that foster kids know that you picked them to love and support. They appreciate that you have opened your heart to them.*

**CB: What do you want other children who have been adopted and struggling to know?**

*I want these kids to know that everything will be alright. I know it's hard thinking about when you will be adopted but God has a path for you. Don't think you are alone and keep things inside. Talk to a friend, family member, teacher, coach or anyone close to you.*

*Also, if you are adopted, you should not feel ashamed at all. You should feel special because you got to pick your parents and they chose you because they love you. Also, being a foster and/or adopted child is a special moment in your life that creates and shapes you as a person. You have a story to tell that others may not have.*

**CB: What is important for adoptive parents to know about how kids feel about being adopted?**

*Parents should know that even though kids have been adopted, they may still have feelings for their birth parents. I know I did and was curious to know more about them. Adoptive parents need to realize that their kids can love more than one set of parents. Also, as I got older, I had so many questions about what adoption meant. Parents need to be open to answering these questions as we are trying to understand what all of this change in our lives really means.*

**CB: Tell us about your adoption.**

*My life has been amazing since I was adopted. I had been chosen to be adopted and live in a family household where my parents would love and care for me and my siblings. In the beginning, it was a hard transition because I was so young and didn't fully understand that my adoptive parents were not going anywhere; they were going to be my parents forever.*

*I always think about what my life would be like if I wasn't adopted. I know that I would have never had any of the opportunities that I have now. I go to school every day, take honors classes and maintain a 3.5 or higher GPA. I have made so many new friends such as Amanda, Marcela, Samantha, Olivia and Kyle. In addition, I am involved in extracurricular activities including concert choir, ASB and I founded a high school club called Sponsor A Child that raises money for kids who are in need. I also play field hockey on the Varsity Team and have been contacted by colleges regarding scholarships. I have so many opportunities that might not have been with my birth parents. I have a future where I can accomplish anything and not by myself but with my family and friends.*

**CB: How important is it that you're being raised with her siblings?**

*As we lost our birth parents, I feel that it is very important to be raised with my siblings. You need someone by your side who you feel comfortable with, especially during the hard times. If my siblings were not by my side, I would have been constantly wondering about their safety and if I was ever going to see them again. It would have been devastating to lose them and my birth parents as these are the people who were closest to me.*



**CB: What prompted you to become an intern at Children's Bureau?**

*I would like to follow in my parents' footsteps as they have played a large role in my life by bringing me and my siblings into their lives. I would like to someday foster and/or adopt a child of my own. I have a desire to help children and become a social worker like Amy Heilman at Children's Bureau. I want to help families like she did for mine. The internship has shown me what social workers do from a different perspective. It's about helping the kids and there is also a lot of paperwork involved.*

## Find More Families Like Your Family for \$500 Per Referral!

Children's Bureau is proud of the hundreds of excellent foster and foster-adopt families who are certified with us. And we want more families like you, who are caring, compassionate, committed, child-focused, concerned, and comforting. Join us in developing and supporting more resource families to help children of all ages and their families in our communities by referring them to foster or foster-adopt with Children's Bureau. When your friends, neighbors, and families apply, tell them to write **Your Name** for the **Referral Source**. When the family becomes certified you will receive \$250.00. And when the first child joins their family, you will receive an additional \$250.00! Referrals are our best resource for finding quality families, so please tell all about the value of fostering and foster-adopting with Children's Bureau. For more information, please contact your Children's Bureau worker.

## 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 resource families. The ultimate goal is for families to build lasting friendships that flourish outside of the group. Certified parents receive two training hours for attending a meeting. We are currently offering support groups in Palmdale, North Hollywood and Los Angeles. Ask your social worker for information on exact locations, dates and times.

## Attachment Activities *by Dr. Tere McNichol*

Bonding or “attachment” happens during ordinary, every-day activities through the emotional messages that are embedded in routine care and daily interactions with children. These messages of love, empathy, caring, protection, and support are expressed through emotions that are sent and received through the “senses.” Think of the **smell** of cookies baking or a favorite fragrance of lotion; the **sound** of a loving voice calling for you, the family laughing; the **sight** of a face smiling and looking lovingly at you; the **taste** of that cookie just baked, spaghetti or pizza for dinner; the soft **touch** of a warm, secure hand that helps you out of the car or the gentle pat on the back. Children have their “antennas” out all the time for these messages that need to be from the heart and sensitive to the person receiving them. During every-day activities, a smile conveys pleasure at having the child as part of the family. Words are important for bonding when the other senses send the same message of love and acceptance. Happy, shared, positive experiences promote bonding.

One way to send strong messages is to do what children most want, which is to “play” and “have fun.” Engaging with children in the play of their choice is powerful in showing acceptance and interest while giving your time to them and having fun “together”; a benefit for the parent is “seeing” the world from the child’s eyes. Other ways to engage with your child may include a game of “peek a boo” with an infant, singing the “Itsy Bitsy Spider” with a toddler, sharing a snack with a pre-school child while “feeding” a doll and then feeding each other, giving a manicure to a young girl or throwing a baseball with

your child. Enjoy relaxed and emotionally nourishing meal times, gently brush each other’s hair or massage each other’s hands with lotion. Think of giving “piggy back rides” and gently taking the hand of an older child as you cross the street. Put an arm around the shoulder of your child as the two of you talk to his/her teacher to show that he/she “belongs” to you and is protected and cared for by you. Play “copy cat” imitation games having the child clap in a pattern, move in slow-motion or make a silly face in the mirror; copy him/her and then do the reverse. Give the child a special “role” or “job” at home based on something he/she does well and have the child share in meal preparation with you or make cupcakes to decorate. Hold the child and “dance” with him/her, sing infant-toddler-kid-songs in the car or teach the child a craft or sport you can do together. Give a “side hug” to the sensitive child and a “high 5” for a success during the day. Laugh a lot (which reduces tension and anxiety), share jokes and have fun with the child.



## Wendy’s Wonderful Kids Presents at Children’s Bureau

To celebrate National Adoption Month in November, Wendy’s Wonderful Kids will be presenting to our families at Children’s Bureau’s Magnolia Family Place, 1910 Magnolia Avenue, Los Angeles, 90007, on November 21 from Noon to 1:00 pm.

Wendy’s Wonderful Kids is making a difference for thousands of children for adoption—one child at a time. The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption awards grants to public and private adoption agencies to hire adoption professionals who implement proactive, child-focused recruitment programs targeted exclusively on moving America’s longest-waiting children from foster care into adoptive families.

Recently released research from a five-year evaluation of Wendy’s Wonderful Kids shows that children referred to the program are up to three times more likely to get adopted.

Professionals, known as Wendy’s Wonderful Kids recruiters, work on caseloads of children the system has forgotten, ensuring they have the time and resources to give each child as much attention as he or she deserves. These recruiters employ aggressive practices and proven tactics focused on finding the best home for a child through the starting points of familiar circles of family, friends and neighbors, and then reaching out to the communities in which they live.

All families interested in learning about the hundreds of children waiting for a family to adopt them are encouraged to attend! Lunch will be provided and currently certified families will receive one hour of training credit for the WWK presentation. Please R.S.V.P. to Maria Otero at (213) 342-0168.

## Providing Support to Families Adopting

Adoption Promotion and Support Services (APSS) is a program that provides services to families and youth in Los Angeles County with the goal of moving children into adoption, supporting adoptive placement or preventing adoption disruptions. The county has contracted with 8 providers located in each of the SPA’s for easier access to families. Services include case management, therapy (paid through Medi-Cal) with therapists trained in adoption issues, support groups for youth and adults, and mentoring for youth and adults. Children’s Bureau is proud to continue its’ service to the community in metro Los Angeles/Hollywood area (SPA 4). If you are interested in services, please contact CB APSS Department by calling 323-953-7350 x466 or speak with your CB worker. We continue to recruit adult adoptees, bilingual Spanish adoptive parents, and kinship adoptive parents to become mentors offering support to others in the process.

**Interested in learning more about Children’s Bureau’s foster care and foster-adoption programs?  
Please give us a call at (800) 730-3933 or (661) 272-9996 or visit us at [www.all4kids.org](http://www.all4kids.org).**