

## Ronald & Fatima's Story

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

*Children's Bureau has an office in Palmdale and we saw the name on the outside of the building. We researched the name to find out what it meant. Then, we read reports on Children's Bureau and other agencies. Children's Bureau was the only choice for us based on the information we had found.*

### **CB: How has Children's Bureau helped you on this journey?**

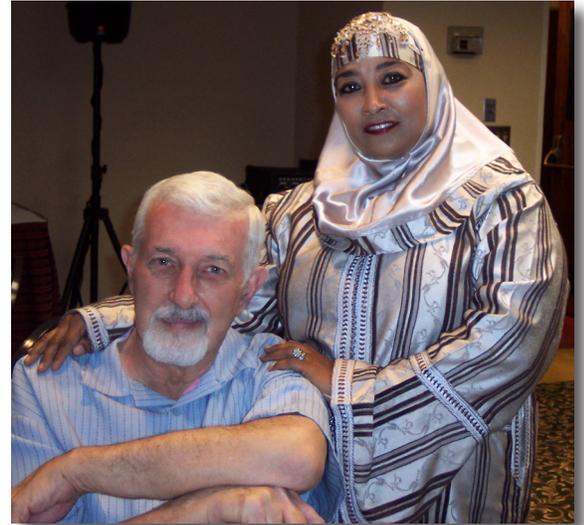
*Our experience with Children's Bureau and their social workers has been a pleasurable experience. The social workers are very helpful and easy to work with. The organization is supportive, provides training and is there daily for our needs. The people of Children's Bureau are always ready to answer any question we have and back us up when we need it.*

### **CB: What inspired you to become foster parents and how has it changed your life?**

*A one-time encounter with a foster mom inspired us to do something to "pay back" for the goodness and kindness shown to us during a previous family situation. We were two people with grown children and a big house with three empty bedrooms. I was retired. I asked my wife if we were going to just sit around watching TV and waiting to die. We had this thought that we could provide a child something he or she didn't have. I guess we unconsciously thought that we could help save the world with some love and material things. How naïve.*

*We went to CB and began our training to be resource(foster) parents. After graduation, we anxiously awaited our first appreciative child. For approximately the next year we did our duty. However, our attitude and outlook really changed when we received a*

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## Meet the Christensen Family

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

*After months of consideration we decided to adopt a foster child, but we didn't know where to start or even who to ask. The bureaucracy at DCFS was daunting, and we needed someone with the time and the knowledge to guide us through this life-changing journey. Where could we turn? One afternoon, I was driving down a street in the South Bay and happened to notice a billboard showing a child's bright shiny face. It was as if she was saying "I'm here and am ready for you." The words said something about adopting a foster child. It gave a phone number and the name of an agency, "Children's Bureau." I didn't catch the phone number, but I couldn't forget the name of the organization. Nor could I forget that face. When I got home, I mentioned this to my wife and got on the internet to learn more about Children's Bureau. A phone conversation with a responsive, caring, informed adoption professional followed, and the rest is history.*



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*Christmas Eve emergency placement call for a brother and sister who had been abandoned. It was very soon after that that we realized we needed more specialized training. We immediately enrolled in classes at the local Community College - and also took online classes.*

*In addition to the training, we changed our approach to fostering. All children in the foster system have experienced abuse or neglect that impacts them. Along with the love and material things we were providing, we had to address the issues each child has whether it is physical, psychological, or social.*

*We are still amazed at the number of children in the foster care system. We have learned how to interact with the legal system, the medical system, private therapy agencies and most of all, BIRTH PARENTS.*

### **CB: How have you helped the children transition back to their families?**

*Helping children with their transition has not been a very big problem for us since most of the children we care for are younger than school age. We talk to them about their birth parents and support family time (visitations) with them. The school age children are always told the truth in such a way that their current situation is a healing-learning-growing process. Reunification is the reward the child and parents enjoy for achieving their goals.*

### **CB: What do you do to prepare yourselves for the child leaving?**

*Preparing oneself for a child leaving is impossible. We know the child will leave but he or she will always be with us in our heart and mind. They will always be our lost children. Why lost? Once a child leaves, we never hear about them again. We have not been fortunate to have continued a relationship with the birth family as other resource families have. Sometimes you never get over a child leaving. My wife still cries with the thought of a little boy that came to us two days old. She was called to the hospital and was wheeled out in a wheelchair with him in her arms. A child like that becomes your baby and no amount of preparation can make separation easy or the hurt go away.*

*A copy of the child's life book allows us to remember our experience with each child.*

### **CB: What advice would you give others who are considering being resource parents?**

*Fostering is a pleasure but it is also work. I would suggest that training is the most important thing one can do. All children will be impacted by their experience prior to joining your family. Depending on their age, you have to know what to do on a daily basis. I recommend that prospective resource parents not wear rose-colored glasses but be realistic about what they want to do. Fostering is not about saving the world but providing one unique child the necessities of life to grow into a happy, healthy, productive adult.*

*We have had 20+ children join our family through Children's Bureau and currently we have three little girls, ages 1, 2 and 3. We have had to go to the hospital and have my wife wheeled out with a baby in her arms, 2 or 3 days old.*



*People ask us about the bond that develops with the children. Yes, you do develop a bond, but with reunification the goal, you know they will leave someday and you prepare for it.*

*However, there happens to be a child or two that will melt your heart like no other and you know that that one child is for you, to be your family. That happened to us with our son.*

*The problem with my wife and I is we are too old to consider adopting other children. However, we still enjoy each child and love them like they are ours to keep. I am 77 years old and fostering is one of the greatest joys I have ever had. Instead of sitting around watching TV and talking about yester years, we are living in the now and the future. We have added a room to the house that is a playroom and classroom just for the children. We have also added raised gardens so the little ones can plant and raise vegetables. My wife and I like the life and joy of the young ones even as they make us tired and happy.*

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

Children's Bureau is proud of our excellent resource (foster and foster-adopt) families. 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 approved 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.

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

*It's been an exciting challenging wonderful terrifying life-changing heart-wrenching joyful journey. Children's Bureau has been there every step of the way. There has always been someone there who has the specific experience and the compassion to engage with us and our children and help us find the answers and the resources to meet our needs. We have established relationships with Children's Bureau's amazing staff that feel more like family than adoption professionals. They not only helped us get through the adoption, but they have stuck with us (for 12+ years now) and to help deal with some of the post-adoption challenges that sometimes arise with kids coming out of the foster care system.*

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

*We adopted a sibling set of three, two girls and a boy. The girls were 4 and 2 years old when they came to live with us permanently, and the boy was 1. They are now 16, 14, and 13 respectively. Keeping them together was never a question for us, and we have experienced many times the transcendent bond these children have with each other. Had they been separated, they would have had a hole in their hearts without knowing what it was from. They are smart, challenging, engaging, loving kids who have blessed many lives, including ours, and have much to give the world in the years ahead.*

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

*With older children either already out of the home or*

*several years ahead of our "little ones", we were able to re-experience child-rearing. We had a chance to enjoy all the precious moments of the kids growing through their toddler, elementary, and now teen-age years. The vacation adventures, the school plays, the Halloween costumes, the Christmas mornings, the family reunions, the bumps & bruises, the tears & laughter, and the hugs & kisses, we've experienced all of these and much more. It has been a high-energy, challenging, rewarding experience that has required us to grow and become better parents...and better people. The memories and relationship building has been tremendous. Our lives are forever changed, for the better.*

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

*If adoption is in your future, there is no need to look any further than our surrounding county. So many local children need a family. If you're wanting to "make a difference" with your life, consider doing something that will make a tremendous difference in the life of a youngster, adopt from foster care. You could be saving generations. It's a high-energy life-changing eternally-rewarding experience. Be sure you get the help of an organization that can guide you through this process. Children's Bureau did it for us. Then roll up your sleeves, buckle up, and get ready for the best ride of your life.*

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

*If you have questions don't be afraid to reach out and talk to a professional. Children's Bureau is a great place to start. The greatest fear is always the fear of the unknown. Let them guide you to the answers so you can make an informed decision on what could be one of the biggest and best choices of your life. You will not regret it.*

## Children's Skills Improve While in Your Care

While in the care of our Children's Bureau Resource Parents, children experience significant cognitive, academic and developmental growth. During the 2015-16 period, for the older children (ages 5-18) in Wide Range Achievement Tests, scores improved in reading 10 percentile ranks overall, scores improved in spelling by 8 percentile ranks overall and scores improved in math by 8 percentile ranks overall.

For the younger children (ages 3 to 5 years) utilizing the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test, language scores related to listening, comprehension and verbal ability increased by 7 percentile ranks overall. Language scores related to verbal expression increased by 13 percentile ranks overall.

This magnitude of growth occurred over a very short period of time (typically six months). There are many factors that contributed to these strides in development - such as consistency and stability in family life and school, good nutrition, attention to health needs, small number of children placed in one family for maximum interaction, and good communication between the resource family and the school. Other factors include the benefits of the Needs and Services planning meetings which track needs/gains, create individualized interventions for foster/adoptive parents and coordinate services to assure progress. Resource parents also regularly pursue ongoing training in order to meet the developmental needs of children with special attention to health needs, checking on diet and sleep patterns, checking on vision and hearing tests, etc., which impacts the growth and progress of the child. Low social worker caseloads and consistency contribute to the overall environment that promotes progress.

What are the implications? The foster care experience can help children overcome delays in language and academic skills. Improving skills for children in foster care can have wide reaching ramifications for resilience, self-esteem, problem-solving, school achievement, and social competence. Findings emphasize the importance of a regular review of children's skills and development while they are in foster care with the results translated into practical interventions which are coordinated by the team to assure progress.

In other words, GOOD JOB!

# Children's Bureau Launches *Be The Reason* Campaign to Encourage Community Members to Foster or Foster-Adopt Children in Need

In an effort to bring awareness to the need for community members to foster or foster-adopt children in need, Children's Bureau has launched a simple, yet compelling advertising campaign called *Be the Reason*. Four key messages can be seen on hundreds of digital and print billboards along with airport and shopping mall shelters throughout Southern California.

In Los Angeles County, the foster care population exceeds 21,000 children with 500 of those foster children waiting for an adoptive family. While Children's Bureau places more than 300 at-risk children in loving foster homes and finalizes 100 adoptions annually, the need continues for more individuals and/or families to become resource parents. Resource parents (foster and adoptive) are people who are concerned about the well-being of children and their families. Resource parents protect and nurture children, meet children's developmental needs, support children's relationships with their birth families and do all of this as a member of a professional team.

"Children's Bureau turns away at least 50 calls a day because we don't have enough resource families to meet the demanding need," said Amy Heilman, Children's Bureau's Director of Foster Care and Adoption. "We hope that this ad campaign inspires folks to see that they can be the reason a child feels loved, happy, safe, and thrives."

For 23 years, Children's Bureau has partnered with several outdoor advertising companies that post the ads at no cost to Children's Bureau at an estimated in-kind value of more than \$1 million. This broad reach in the community could not be achieved by Children's Bureau on its own. This year, those partners include Clear Channel Outdoor, EYE, Intersection, JC Decaux, Lamar Advertising, Martin Outdoor, Outfront Media, Regency Outdoor, Starlite Media, Summit Media and AdSpace Mall Networks.

"Lamar Advertising is proud to partner with Children's Bureau in helping to spread their very important message throughout the community. If we can help Children's Bureau make even one connection that impacts the life of a child in need, the campaign was a great success," said Mike Cossota, Sales Manager, Lamar Advertising – Los Angeles.



## May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month!

Foster Parent Appreciation Month in May provides a wonderful opportunity to honor and recognize the work of people making a difference in the lives of children in foster care. It is also a time to bring awareness to the great need for families to open their hearts and homes to these vulnerable children.

Children's Bureau greatly appreciates and applauds the foster and foster-adopt families in our program. Your dedication, patience and willingness to do whatever it takes for a child you don't know is truly admirable.

Foster children are placed in Children's Bureau homes on a daily basis. Did you know, there are over 20,000 children in Los Angeles County alone, who are in the foster care system? Approximately 50% of these children find comfort with extended family members. But where will the other children go? Now, more than ever, we are in need of finding more special individuals and families who are willing to help these precious children heal from the trauma experienced. We offer individuals and families a comprehensive, quality program that includes training, services, support groups and valuable resources needed to successfully care for the children in their home.

## Parent Socials/Support Groups Offered

Children's Bureau provides parent socials each month for our resource families. 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. All Approved resource parents receive two training hours for attending a meeting. We are currently offering support groups/parent socials in Palmdale and Los Angeles.

**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  
<https://www.all4kids.org/program/foster-care/>**