



# Foster Care & Adoption News

Fall 2012

Issue 17

## Lori & Samantha's Adoption Story

Lori's journey to adoption began when she turned 40 and realized, "I forgot to have kids. Do I want them?" Her answer was "Yes"! Lori tried the fertility route without any luck but found the answer in adoption. As a substitute teacher, she met children of all ages who needed a home and someone to care for them. An international or planned adoption was not an option for her. The foster- to-adopt track fit her single, working woman lifestyle and filled her desire to help a vulnerable child in her own community.

After seeing a Children's Bureau billboard, Lori saved the telephone number under "A" for adoption. It took more than a year before she called the agency and attended an information meeting. Lori never considered fostering a baby and initially thought that a child between the ages of five and 11 would be ideal. However, social workers handling the case of a bright, talented teenager named Samantha thought the two might be a perfect match.

Samantha was a 16 year old who was featured on Wednesday's Child, a weekly television segment on Fox 11 News that highlights children who are available for adoption. She was placed in foster care at age 11 as her mother was incapable of caring for her and her father was not around. She lived in four foster homes before meeting Lori.



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## November is National Adoption Awareness Month!

November is recognized as National Adoption Awareness Month. While all adoption-related issues are important, the particular focus of this month is the adoption of children currently in foster care. In California, approximately 60,000 children under age 18 are in foster care.

Children's Bureau began providing adoption services in the 1940's in response to the increased need of finding

homes for World War II refugee children and war orphans. Today, we help 500 at-risk children in caring foster homes and finalize over 100 adoptions each year.

Children's Bureau values each family for its special strengths and skills! If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about growing your family through foster care or adoption, please visit [www.all4kids.org](http://www.all4kids.org).



## Bobby's Journey

I am the proud mother of Bobby, a true adoption success story. Bobby has worked so hard to overcome his tough beginnings of panhandling with his mom, lack of food and moving from place to place. He has chosen not to be angry with his birth parents and loves them despite their weaknesses. He has been a teacher for me sent by God. His birth mother died of drug-related issues in 2010. His father remains out of prison and unfortunately still struggles with mental disorders. He rarely calls Bobby but they see each other twice a year. Bobby has been united a few times with his birth brothers who are four and eight years older than him. His Aunt Peggy came to his high school graduation. She lives in California (we now live in Georgia) but we see her a few times a year and have even vacationed with her family. Peggy calls Bobby every Saturday and has remained faithful to him, which makes me glad. Our blended families have worked out.

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*Photos from left to right: Finalizing the adoption with Judge Pellman; Samantha with her new cousin Kya; Samantha painting her room.*

Lori and Samantha fondly recall their first meeting as “the awkward picnic”. They were joined by their social workers and met at a local park. Lori says she was immediately drawn to Samantha, who seemed much more fragile than the girl who appeared on Wednesday’s Child. The meeting was a success and both Lori and Samantha wanted to move forward.

The two became a forever family in July 2012. Samantha, who is 17 years old now, has a lot of interests including drawing, photography, design and fashion. She loves to speak French and has an affinity for the language. She also loves animals and attends the Zoo Magnet program at North Hollywood High School.

During this journey to become a parent, Lori, who makes a living as a performer and writer, began writing a show about her experience which she found to be bizarre and humorous. The musical, called The Baby Project, takes on a comedic, fictionalized flair, yet, there are moments where art imitates reality. Lori was nervous as to how Samantha would react to the play but found a big fan in her adopted daughter.

As a single parent, Lori says that having an amazing network of friends gives her the support needed to navigate raising a

teenager. “You never know the true strength and endurance of certain relationships until you’re tested in situations like this. For me, when I am in need, there are definitely a handful of people I can call and they actually show up for me,” she said.

She also advises anyone considering adoption to do it. “It’s important to make sure you can financially care for a child, but, more importantly, that you can emotionally handle the responsibility. It really does take a village to raise a child. Find other people doing what you’re doing or who have already done what you’re doing to give you advice and support,” said Lori.

Lori recently received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to help fund The Baby Project. “It was huge honor to receive the NEA grant and now we have to raise funds to match and/or exceed the grant. We’re launching an online crowd fundraising campaign on kickstarter.com. There’s a video on the site with me and Samantha talking about how we found each other and the project,” said Lori.

Go to [www.kickerstarter.com](http://www.kickerstarter.com) and search The Baby Project by The Road Theater Company. The fundraising goal is \$20,000. Lori and Samantha hope you join them in promoting this wonderful story about foster care, adoption, love, family and more!

## Teens Are Waiting Children Too

Though most people think about adopting babies, there are many teens that wait for a forever family. Each year in Los Angeles County, more than 2,000 teenagers turn 18 and leave foster care without an adoptive home. Sadly, more than one third of these emancipated teens end up homeless or incarcerated.

Until fairly recently, teens in foster care were rarely considered for adoption. It is now realized, however, that it is never too late for someone to join a family. Like all of us, these kids need stability, a sense of belonging and opportunities to develop and grow.

“Adopting a teenager is often an easier, low-risk process than adopting a baby or young child. Teenagers have been through the reunification process with their families and it didn’t work out. Many have agreed in writing that they want

a family,” said Lou Graham, director of Children’s Bureau’s foster care and adoption program.

The main challenge for all teenagers is forming their own identity. They struggle with the questions, “Who am I?” and “Where do I belong?” Adopted teenagers, however, may question who they are more deeply than non-adopted peers. Families who consider adopting older children need to be strong, resilient and committed to making it work.

Children’s Bureau is experiencing an increased need for people to adopt teenagers. Those who’ve waited to have children later in life or parents who are empty nesters might consider adopting a teen. Our matching team is ready to place a child that suits your family’s situation. Give hope now to a teenager in need. For more information, please call us at 800.730.3933

## A WORD FROM LOU NIEMAN: *Change is Constant!*

Change is a constant theme for those touched by foster care and adoption. This year is no exception and I'm pleased to announce some changes that positively impact our wonderful families!

The new PRIDE Model of Practice --- designed to strengthen the quality of family foster care and adoption service via the development of families as partners in child protection --- continues to be well received by families in pre-certification and advanced training as well as by Children's Bureau staff. Dr. Eileen Pasztor serves as both teacher and mentor to our team led by trainers Cindy Stogel and Cathy Allan. New, returning and currently certified families are encouraged to take advantage of this training as it offers a wealth of knowledge and resources. Training credit will be given to families who have not yet learned the PRIDE model. This is an excellent way to earn Advanced Training Credit while getting to know our newest families!

A second major change is that the State of California approved a stipend increase for foster parents providing care in Foster Family Agencies such as Children's Bureau. Therefore, Children's Bureau families began receiving increased monthly stipends for each child beginning July 1, 2012. Many strong advocates made this change possible, including those we work with as members and participants in the California Alliance of Child and Family Services. In these challenging economic times, we hope this increase will assist all of our families in better providing for the costs of caring for children whom you have so graciously stepped forward to serve.

Furthermore, I am pleased to share that Jeanette Yoffe, MFT, has become the facilitator for the support group at our Magnolia Place Family Center in Los Angeles. Jeanette is a highly respected child and family therapist specializing in adoption and foster care issues. Children's Bureau is honored to have her join our fantastic team!

We recognize that all of our families have constant demands and challenges. We're here to help and offer a variety of training and support opportunities throughout the year. Thank you for making family a priority, especially to vulnerable children in need.



## Bobby's Journey continued from page 1



Bobby graduated high school with an 86% grade point average on a college prep diploma and is now in junior college. He is a very good artist and may choose to go into graphic arts or photography. He has wonderful friends, goes to youth group meetings at church and works part time (as a lifeguard and at McDonald's) as he's saving for a car. Once in a while this teen who walks on water is a normal

kid. Children's Bureau is a success for supporting Bobby and our family. He is the love of our life and a great young man. Keep him always in your hearts as one that was surrounded by all of your love. Blessings to you all.



## Annual Appreciation Luncheon is a Big Success!

On May 19th, 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 speaker, Dr. Eileen Pasztor, who co-authored Children's Bureau's current Foster Pride/Adopt Pride training curriculum. All parents received six hours of training while relaxing in the new Children's Bureau Magnolia Place Family Center and Conference Facility. Raffle prizes were awarded along with "childhoodnurtured" travel cups. 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 2013!

## 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 (July 2011 – June 2012), we welcomed the following to our Children's Bureau /Child Share Family:

Caroline & Anthony Parr	Alison Waller
Ellen Joe & Jeffrey Lee	Ana Velez & Juan Calle
Rebekah & Joshua Weigel	Cristi Lewis
Christine & Brandon Beckner	Victoria & Dale Abrahams
Sherry & Matthew Heyerly	

## Support Groups Offered

Children's Bureau provides support groups each month for families at both the Magnolia Family Place in Los Angeles and at the Antelope Valley office. 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. Check your calendar or ask your social worker for information on exact locations, dates and times.

## We Know It's Hard

It takes an extraordinary, selfless person to take on the role of foster parent to a child in need. While the experience has many rewards, there are often complex emotional challenges that families face. It's hard to love a child like your own and then have them leave. Particularly with babies, the priority is to reunite them with their biological parents or relatives. Foster families in this situation are feeling especially torn and are finding it difficult to foster another baby. To help ease the pain and distress, Children's Bureau provides an array of support services, counseling and resources to families struggling with these issues.

Pamela Pollard is a single adoptive parent who endured this heartache. Twice she was placed with babies and twice those babies left her foster home. Despite the pain, Pamela continued on, with encouraging support, and took in a third baby, Joshua. She proudly adopted Joshua three years ago. Pamela says that Joshua helped her personally grow and that they share a life filled with adventure, love and happiness.

We know it's hard, yet, it is our hope, that wonderful foster parents, like Pamela, continue to open their homes to children in need. If you are experiencing these feelings or issues, please call your social worker to discuss options that will help you and your family. Your strength and love are precious gifts to these fragile children who just want a place to call home.

## 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.

## A Home for the Holidays

Watch for "A Home for the Holidays" which will be scheduled to air in late December on CBS, Channel 2. Many families who have adopted a child or wish to adopt children are portrayed in this television special. Children waiting for adoptive homes are interviewed and there will also be performances by popular musicians. Please watch and support the Dave Thomas Foundation and Children's Action Network, who sponsor the show. The Dave Thomas Foundation was created by Dave Thomas, creator and owner of Wendy's Hamburgers, who was adopted and felt a great affinity to those children without a home.

**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](http://www.all4kids.org).**

**We would love to hear from you!**