

UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

FEBRUARY 2006



UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

QUARTERLY DCFS NEWSLETTER



In This Issue

3 Pillow Feathers

By: Dick DeRose

A young lady's heartfelt song to the grown-ups who helped raise her.

4 National Center for LD

A website designed to help those living with Learning Disabilities.

6 Advice for Adoptive Parents

By: Brenda McCreight

Helpful tips for adoptive parents.

8 Announcements

Local upcoming adoption events.

10 Self Care: Basics and Barriers for Foster/Adoptive Parents

By: Deena McMahon

Self-Care ideas for Foster and Adoptive parents.

12 Statewide Cluster Facilitator List

Contact information for all cluster facilitators near you.

14 Lessons I've Learned about Parenting

By: Terrell Woods

A foster child's journey to parenthood and the lessons he learned along the way.

February 2006

Kathy Searle, Editor

Lindsay Kaeding, Design Director

To submit articles or for a subscription, call (801) 265-0444 or toll free outside Salt Lake County call (866) 872-7212. This publication is funded by the State of Utah, Division of Child and Family Services. The Adoption Exchange prepares and prints the newsletter and the Division of Child and Family Services mails the publication. The mailing list is kept confidential. One can be removed from the mailing list by calling: (866) 872-7212 or 265-0444 within Salt Lake County.

Pillow Feathers

A young lady's heartfelt song to the grown-ups who helped raise her.

In a perfect world moms and dads would love each other,
And little boys and girls would feel secure in them
forever.
Forgiving one another...
Things would always get better...

In a perfect world, no daddy's heart
would roam,
No kid would ever have to
board an airplane alone,
No parenting by phone...
A safe and happy home...

Where a fight results in pil-
low feathers in the air,
The screams and shouts are of
delight not fear,
The threat of rain's the only
threat we hear,
And where touch is appropriate
care.

This is no perfect world, there are no
perfect families.
They brought me to your door a little girl
in my jammies.
You took your Orphan Annie.
Your hand was cold and clammy...

So maybe you thought I'd be a poster child.
You didn't send me back when I was bitter and wild.
You wondered when I'd smile...
I guess it took a while...

At a time in life when I was minus a dad,
I didn't care a thing about when you were a lad.
I know I made you sad...
When you were all I had...

No one forced you to, no you didn't have to care.
Like a mom you helped me figure out what to wear.
You helped me with my hair...
And took the time to share...

You can't force the petals of a rosebud to bloom.
I thank you that while nurturing you
gave me some room.
I went from doom and gloom...
To lighting up the room...

Where a fight results in pillow feathers
in the air,
The screams and shouts are of
delight not fear,
The threat of rain's the
only threat we hear,
And where touch is appropriate care.

I give gratitude for a certain
man and wife,
Who offered something peaceful
in a time of strife.
They shaped a little life...
Now I'm soon to be a wife...

I'm a big girl now, I will
stand in sparkling white.
My groom and I are happy but at
times we're gonna fight.
So with all of our might...
We want to do it right...

Where a fight results in pillow feathers in the air,
The screams and shouts are of delight not fear,
The threat of rain's the only threat we hear,
And where touch is appropriate care.

Where the family's happy that our daddy's the boss.
He works to see that we never suffer loss.
When it comes to love, we don't count the cost,
And we cherish the old rugged cross.

Where a fight results in pillow feathers in the air,
The screams and shouts...
The threat of rain's the only threat we hear...



National Center **for** Learning Disabilities

The power to hope, to learn, and to succeed

<http://www.nclld.org>

The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) works to ensure that the nation's 15 million children, adolescents and adults with learning disabilities have every opportunity to succeed in school, work and life.

NCLD provides essential information to parents, professionals and individuals with learning disabilities, promotes research and programs to foster effective learning, and advocates for policies to protect and strengthen educational rights and opportunities.

What you should know about learning disabilities (LD):

LDs are specific neurological disorders that affect the brain's ability to store, process or communicate information.

"Specific learning disability" (SLD) is the term used in the federal law for any LD.

LDs can affect different aspects of learning and functioning - see the chart below for specific types of learning disabilities and related disorders.

LDs can be compensated for and even overcome through alternate ways of learning, accommodations and modifications.

According to the US Department of Education, LDs affect approximately 5% of all children enrolled in public schools.

LDs can occur with other disorders (AD/HD, Information Processing Disorders).

LDs are NOT the same as mental retardation, autism, deafness, blindness, behavioral disorders or laziness.

LDs are not the result of economic disadvantage, environmental factors or cultural differences.

Programs of the National Center for Learning Disabilities:

Two Decades of Progress

History of the National Center for Learning Disabilities

Carrie Rozelle established the Foundation for Children with Learning Disabilities in 1977, with grant-making for special educational programming and remediation. The foundation became the National Center for Learning Disabilities in 1989, initiating programs focused on educational, public awareness, and advocacy activities for children and adults with LD. In 2000, responding to the changing needs of its constituents, NCLD developed new national and international objectives, including promoting early identification and intervention and driving research-based strategies into the nation's classrooms. Current programs include:

Public Awareness & Information

NCLD reaches out to millions of individuals each year—including individuals with LD and their families, the media, researchers, educators, and policy makers—through special campaigns and publications, and in response to thousands of requests for information and referrals. NCLD provides information on living with LD throughout the lifespan, and promotes understanding of how society can fully capitalize on the abilities of people with LD through early identification and treatment.

Research-to-Practice

NCLD is committed to bridging the gap between research and classroom practice. In collaboration with scientific, educational, health, and literacy organizations, NCLD promotes research and develops programs that identify effective learning strategies and emphasize the early identification and treatment of LD.

Public Policy

Unique among organizations devoted to learning disabilities, NCLD operates a public policy office in Washington, DC, and works closely with policy makers, their staffs, federal agencies, and other national organizations to ensure that the specific needs of people with learning disabilities are fully considered in the development of national policies and legislation.

For more information about learning disabilities and for helpful information for teens and adults living with learning disabilities, visit www.nclld.org.

advice for adoptive parents

by: brenda mcCreight



People often ask me what they need to know to successfully adopt and parent older children. Well, I don't have a magic answer (sorry, but I really don't think there is one), but I do have some suggestions to make it easier.

be prepared to change

When an older child joins the family, we need to learn what her needs are and how to meet them. I don't mean simply reading about the child's history or diagnoses, I mean finding out what the child needs from us, the parents. We should ask, "What does this child need for me to be her mom in a way that's going to make her life better and help her become part of the family?"

Too often, we go to conferences and therapists hoping to discover how to change our child's behavior. I'm the first to admit that the behaviors can be challenging (all right, they can be downright awful) and hard to live with. So, when I go to workshops to learn about how to manage a certain disorder, I reframe offered strategies to look at what I can do differently. I ask, "How can I change myself to make it easier for him to comply? What am I doing to make it easier for my child to live in this family?" I have to change myself to become the mom my child needs me to be (and I mean needs, not wants).

The wonderful part of this is that my kids don't need me to be perfect or right all the time. They just need me to be trying really hard, and they need me to be malleable, and they need me to have realistic expectations about what they can do at this point in time.

I'm not suggesting you have to change your values or core being; that all stays the same and is the foundation for everything you offer your child. But your skills and your approach will have to be tweaked for each child, because what each needs from you will be different from what the others need or from what you expect him to need. It's a constantly changing process. The payoff is that we can end up being more grounded, capable, loving, and (for some) more spiritual people than we ever dreamed we could be. That's partly why I have so many children; I keep trying to be a better person. But as my children remind me, "You're not there yet, Mom."

develop patience

An important change for many parents is the need to develop more patience. That has been hard for me (I really was made to run an army or a maximum security prison, or maybe rule some planet—anything where people would give me total and immediate obedience), but I make myself remember that my children need me to wait while they learn to behave and to belong. After all, my children waited years before they got the permanence and stability of their own family, so it's only fair that I wait for them to learn how to live with us. Parents have told me, "It's been six months, and we're still having these

problems." If the child is five or ten years old when he is adopted, six months is a drop in the bucket. The truth is our children are likely to have difficulties throughout the time we're raising them.

Patience also means developing a broader view. Although that's hard when we're in crisis, we still need to work on it. We need to say, "I can wait until you feel some kind of love for me. I'm not going to go anywhere. I can wait the rest of your life." It's not so much patience on a day-to-day basis, but rather a lifetime of patience. For us—as it was for our children—waiting is just part of the adoption package.

love kids for who they are now

I have heard so many people say, "I love who my son is going to be in five years. I can see so much potential." Can you imagine what that feels like to the son? It sounds like you love another child—a future son who may never exist.

Not long ago, friends of mine adopted a brother and sister, ages six and nine. They were experienced adoptive parents with 17 other children. Still, these new children had challenges my friends hadn't dealt with before and the initial months were rocky while their new daughter fought against connecting with them.

One morning, my friend Paula called me to report, "Angela spent all night long carving 'Mom is a _____.' and 'F__ Mom' and other things about me all over the house." (They have a wood beam house with lots of space for deep carving—they should have known better.)

I sympathized with my friend and asked how she was going to address this problem. She responded, "There's no problem. She spelled every word right!"

Clearly she missed the point, so I asked her if there was something else going on here. After thinking for a moment, Paula added, "You're right. She must not have attention deficit disorder—that took her all night! I'm so proud of her."

I wasn't done trying to get to the bottom of this episode, so I asked

her to look again at what had happened. After a few silent moments of deep thought, Paula answered excitedly, “You’re right again. She carved ‘Mom,’ not ‘Paula.’ She’s bonding! How could I have missed something so important!” I finally realized that it was me, not Paula, who had missed what was important here.

Loving our children for who they are now also means knowing and valuing their strengths. They have so many labels and diagnoses that it can be easy to forget that they are so much more than that. At a NACAC workshop I went to recently, the speakers talked about the gifts—like creativity and spontaneity—that go with attention deficit disorder. My oldest son, who has severe fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), has gifts of spirituality and forgiveness that are deeper and more sincere than I have ever witnessed before. I sometimes think that FAS—even though it took a lot away from him—gave him a level of kindness and generosity of spirit that is awe inspiring.

focus on commitment

In the early years of an older child adoption, we need to shift our focus from love and trust to commitment. Many of our children have no reason to trust anyone and they don’t know what parental love feels like. Their experience tells them that the minute they let down their guard, everything is going to fall apart. Adoptive parents need to prove this is the end of the road. We have to be there for them again and again. What sometimes feels like your child’s inability to learn from her mistakes is really her need to be shown that you are rock steady. Even when we don’t like our children and they don’t love us, we must remain committed to their place in our family.

We also have to earn the attachment we expect of them. If you have a newborn, you earn attachment and love in the first year. Your baby squeals and fusses, is an awfully demanding little nuisance, but you take care of him and nurture him despite sleep deprivation and frustration and the total destruction of your social life.

Older children need to feel the same level of commitment. They may not always recognize love, and they aren’t always ready to offer it, and in the early stages of an older child adoption, the child may mistake your commitment for stubbornness or he may think you’re just plain weird. But it’s commitment, not love or trust, that will get us through the days when nothing else is working for anyone.

embrace adoption for life

Adoption is forever. Where I live, many adoption professionals are going through a phase of telling children that they are going to be placed with their “growing up family” rather than with their “forever” family. The professionals fear that the adoptions won’t last. I still call adoptive families “forever families” because that’s what it’s about. Children may come and go from our lives for different reasons, but it doesn’t mean the end of an adoption.

At 15, my oldest son, Jason, was a plague on humanity; he set fires, stole cars (and crashed them because he didn’t know how to drive), pulled break and enters, and was very aggressive with his much younger brother. The aggression made him too dangerous to live in our home, and we weren’t sure what to do. Fortunately, his behaviors caused the law to intervene and the courts kindly offered him an alternative place to live, but only for a short time. After he was released from the detention center, I had to decide if he could safely come home. I was really fearful for my younger son, so I arranged for Jason to stay with his birth grandmother. That was the best thing I ever did.

However, not everyone agreed, and they were quick to tell me so.

Professionals and friends accused us of throwing our son out and “dissolving” the adoption. I pointed out that we hadn’t broken up the family at all. We paid child support to his grandmother, my son phoned home nightly, and visited often. We never thought he was out of our family; he was just out of the house. And it never occurred to him that he wasn’t ours. After he moved through this difficult stage, he bounced in and out of the house until he was finally successful with his independent adulthood. I never worried about losing Jason, and he never worried about losing us. He is always and forever my son, but that was the process we needed to go through with him to keep everyone safe.

When these situations come up in your family, remember that your commitment is forever. Your adoption, your family, isn’t going to end just because you have a crisis or because your child needs more help than you can give her at home. You are going to be the grandparents of your children’s children. You are there for the good and bad—forever. Maybe our kids can’t always live with us, but it doesn’t mean we have to leave them.

treasure other adoptive parents

I have deep respect for adoptive families because most of us cope very well with the transformation from a typical family to a family that daily has to deal with challenges that our friends and families only read about. Adoptive parents start out as pretty normal people, and then we adopt older children who dramatically change our lives. We have to give up being like other families, and we have to grieve that loss and focus on what we have gained.

And what have we gained? Well, how about a universe full of colors and richness and beauty. Learning to see the world through the eyes of a child with FAS means learning to see beyond the limits, learning to see the possible in all things. And learning to see the world through the eyes of a child who has been hurt beyond measure means learning to value all that is good and right and decent about ourselves and our lives. We all need to honor each other and value the knowledge and skills and joy and success that we have to offer.

To honor and value our families, we should do things like go to the NACAC conference. After all, adoption isn’t our hobby, it’s our lives. We need to share time with others traveling the same road. When we do, we go home to our children as stronger and more committed parents. For me, time with members of my adoption culture (as at NACAC), where we can share and strengthen one another, is no luxury; it’s essential.

be faithful and fearless

Basically, we adoptive parents have to be faithful and fearless—faithful to our children through thick and thin. We have to be faithful to who they are now and who they may become. We must faithfully meet their needs and be their parents. We also must be fearless—we cannot be afraid to turn ourselves into what they need us to be. We have to be brave enough to stretch ourselves with each new child so every one of them can find the safety and stability he or she needs.

About the Author:

Brenda McCreight has worked in adoption and foster care since 1982 and authored three books: *Recognizing and Managing Children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects: A Guidebook*, *Parenting Your Older Adopted Child* and *Eden’s Secret Journal: An Older Child Adoption Story*. She now counsels foster and adoptive families in British Columbia, offers telephone coaching internationally, and trains parents and professionals throughout North America. She is also mother to 14 children, 12 by adoption, and has two grandchildren.

From Adoptalk, published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, 970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 55114; 651-644-3036; www.nacac.org.”

announcements

mark your calendars for this years

post adoption conference

to be held May 18 and 19, 2006

at the southtowne expo center.

Look for more information to come or visit

www.Utahadoptioncouncil.org.

The adoption exchange would like to thank the following sponsors for all of their help with this years **Sub For Santa. With their help we were able to provide Christmas for 49 waiting children.**

Del and Julie Carter

alphagraphics

Beva Robbins

Matt Ostler

Amber Birk

Travis and Lindsay Kaeding

Kameo Campbell

Joslyn Brady

Tracy Brown

Raideen Pratt

Ruth Berry

Diana Parson

Brad Mertz

McGloskay Corp.

Orson Anderson

KUTV

Patty Jury

Mei Roberts

Michael Judd Corp.

Nate and Rajathi Noel

Brent Crabtree

Cynthia Gambill

Whimsy Floral

Brian Smith

Cory Mahaffie

Lance Black

Natalie Taylor

Kelly Sobotaka

Mary Hudson

Kevin and Annetta Gallagher

John Bell

Hope Woodside

Ned and Kathy Searle

The adoption exchange is in need of a Spanish speaking volunteer to help return phone calls to prospective adoptive parents.

if you are interested please contact The adoption exchange at 801.265.0444 or 1.866.872.7212

Tune in to KUTV channel 2 on Wednesday, March 8th to view the annual

Wednesday's Child Special

benefiting The adoption exchange.

This all day telethon will feature Wednesday's Children, successful adoption stories and donation opportunities.

Look for Utah's first annual

Heart gallery

to come to a location near you.

- **February 1st-28th* Union Station * Ogden**

Self-Care: Barriers and Basics

By: Deena

When a foster or adopted child has special needs, parents must juggle appointments with mental health therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, psychiatrists, ophthalmologists, allergists, and asthma specialists. They must attend IEP meetings, keep in touch with the school principal and their child's teacher, check in with the social worker, and establish a schedule for personal care attendants. Ongoing appointments and emergencies keep parents so busy that attending to their own feelings and needs may be put on hold.

Self-care however, is crucial for foster and adoptive parents. The physical and emotional toll of caring for traumatized children can be overwhelming. Children can project hurt onto parents and at the same time, blame parents for feelings of loss and despair. Parents must understand both the complexities of foster care and adoption, and their child's unique needs. With that knowledge and an ongoing commitment to self-care, parents can more easily remain effective and balanced.

Barriers to Good Self-Care

Unfortunately, adoptive and foster parents face many barriers to taking care of themselves.

To start, the phrase- "Take care of your self!" - has become so trite that, for many, it has lost all meaning. When someone casually tells an adoptive mom whose kids have special needs to take care of herself, she may feel frustrated and angry. It's easy to say. It's not easy to do.

Second, many who choose to foster and adopt are natural caregivers. They have pets, partners, children, and aging parents who all require care and attention. Most days, the amount of energy they devote to others' needs far exceeds any energy directed to their well-being. In fact, many caregivers are uncomfortable being on the receiving end of others' attention and assistance. They don't want to be too needy, or seem like they are not up to the challenges they have taken on.

Third, many adoptive and foster parents really want to be there for their families. They want to remember birthdays with a homemade cake. They want to be the cheerful volunteer at their child's school. They want to deliver a meal to a sick friend, help out at church, and serve on task forces that address children's needs. So, they work longer and try harder to meet their families' needs.

Fourth, too many parents simply do not know what would help them. They know something is missing, but can't put their finger on just what might make them feel

better. Parents are often told, "Call if there is anything you need," but it is hard to call and ask for help, especially when you cannot even articulate what you need. This leaves many parents vulnerable and exhausted.

Even more significantly, too many foster and adoptive parents believe they somehow shouldn't need support. Many times I have heard parents say that they are in no position to complain or ask for help since they chose to foster or adopt their children. But even when parents know what challenges the child faces, it is often impossible to predict how living with a certain child will change a family.

Compounding matters, recent disaster- 9/11, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the earthquake in Pakistan and the prolonged conflict in Iraq-remind us all that there are always other people who are worse off. We are taught as children to be happy with what we have since other people have it much harder. It is little wonder we sometimes feel guilty because our ongoing trauma pales in comparison to these catastrophic tragedies.

The Road to Good Self-Care

From working with parents, I know that to overcome social, mental and emotional barriers to self-care, you must first come to understand the importance of taking care of yourself, and then build self-care into your daily routine. You must believe that you are worth taking care of, and that your happiness and well-being are not peripheral to, but essential for good parenting. Once you can accept that:

Give yourself permission to need something.

It is okay to ask for help. Having needs and trying to meet them is not a sign of incompetence or weakness. It is part of healthy family life. Thirst is your body's signal to drink and prevent dehydration. In the same way, when you feel stressed out, it is time to take a break so you can regain perspective and deal with the issue at hand more constructively.

Keep it simple

Make life choices that fit your family. Develop consistent routines. Create a safe environment. Understand and respect both your limits and those of your children. Resist the impulse to over-commit what little time you have. Prioritize. Save energy for things that really matter, and seek outside help as soon as you need it. When possible, take advantage of respite opportunities to relieve some of the stress during really tough times.

Stop comparing yourself to other adults and families

They do not live your life, and they are not raising your children. Get comfortable with compromising and being dif-

for Foster/Adoptive Parents

Deena McMahon

ferent. Your child may talk, think, achieve, behave, and live differently than other children. Instead of measuring your family's expectations for your family based on your children's capabilities and your family's reality.

Know which part of the day is the hardest and have a plan to make it go more smoothly.

If getting ready for school is rough, prepare as much as you can the night before. If bedtime is hard, start early and set a predictable routine. Decide beforehand how you will respond to behaviors that make that time of day so trying. Accept that you won't get anything else done, and do only what you must to get through the hard parts.

Join a parent support group

Meeting with other parents who have similar experiences and feelings is one of the most powerful and renewing activities for anyone raising children who have special needs. Just knowing that you are with people who "get it" is affirming. Group members may also be able to trade respite care with you. If a group is not an option, find at least one person outside your immediate family with whom you can be real, and whom you can trust to understand.

Have down time every day

Maybe it's a morning walk. It might be 10 minutes with the paper and a good cup of coffee. It can be writing in your journal before bed. It could be the drive into work, or times of silent prayer in church. Your mind, body and soul need time to regenerate from life's stresses. If you have no down time—a time without distractions and demands—you cannot benefit from moments of reflection and calm that may help you to center and stay balanced.

Routinely have something to which you can look forward

Maybe it's coffee with a neighbor after the kids are at school, or a glass of wine Friday night. Or date night

with your partner. It could be going alone to the grocery store Saturday morning or having an uninterrupted bath. Remember, waiting too long to reward yourself for a job well done is not an effective way to shape your behavior. Immediate positive reinforcement works for adults too.

Accentuate the positive

It may not be easy, but as you step back to evaluate how you can the family are doing, find time to laugh at the silly situations that come up. Recognize the good in yourself and your children. Celebrate every step forward, no matter how small. Stay connected with your partner. Eat something you really enjoy. (Nutrition is important, indulgence is wonderful.) Find affirmation in the process of raising an adopted child.

Caring for children who have special needs is a matter of the heart. Self-care is a mind-set and a positive choice. If you can find a balance between caring for your children and meeting your own needs, you will ultimately be much better equipped to do both.

About the author:

A licensed independent social worker, Deena McMahon has worked with families and children for more than 20 years. She is currently director of in-home services at Therapeutic Services Agency, where she supervises more than 25 staff who deliver in-home services in nine east central Minnesota counties. She also conducts parenting assessments, provides attachment therapy, is a staff consultant for social services agencies, and presents at regional and national training events. Through the years, Deena has developed expertise in the areas of childhood trauma, childhood sexual abuse, grief and loss, family violence, adoption and attachment.

"From Adoptalk, published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, 970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 55114; 651-644-3036; www.nacac.org."

Taylor is waiting...



Taylor, age 14, dreams of being a surgeon when he grows up! He loves video games and reading; especially Harry Potter and Nancy Drew books. He has a great sense of humor. Taylor responds well to structure and nurturing. He has a strong need to feel safe. He participates in scouting and hopes to continue this activity in his new family.

Taylor's performance in school is at grade level and he benefits from individualized assistance. Taylor has some difficulty interacting with peers, but seems to relate well with adults. He is very vocal and talkative.

He will need a family that is patient and will allow him plenty of time to feel safe in their home. Taylor's case-worker feels he will do best in a two parent family. Taylor has two other siblings, an aunt and a current foster mother that he would like to remain in contact with.

Financial assistance for medical care, therapy and some adoption assistance may be available.

Statewide Cluster Facilitator List

Salt Lake Valley Region

Sandy and Draper- "Parents Pulling Together
in Sandy" (PPTS)

Facilitator- Naomi-604-6069

Kearns- "KFC- Kearns Family Cluster"

Facilitator- Elise- 849-8124

Tooele- "Tooele Lighthouse Cluster"

Facilitator- Debbie-435-843-8610

South Valley West- (Riverton, Herriman, Bluffdale,
South Jordan)

Facilitators- Glenna- 280-6205 and Cindy - 254-5012

Magna

Facilitator- Linda- 508-1982

West Jordan

Facilitator- Linda- 233-0894

East Granite-(zip codes 84117, 84121, 84124)

Facilitator- Linda P.- 233-0894

West Valley City

Facilitator- Linda- 508-1982

Murray/Midvale

Facilitator- Linda P.-233-0894

Structured Family Cluster

Facilitator- Nicole-302-9359

Salt Lake City

Facilitator-Connie- 596-7541

Spanish Speaking-

Facilitator-

Adoption

Facilitator-Debbie-435-843-8610

Northern Region

Box Elder (Brigham City, Perry, Willard, bear River City,
Garland, Tremonton, Fielding)

Facilitator-Brittani-435-279-8576

Cache Valley-(Logan, Nibley, Mendon, Wellsville,
Hyrum, Hyde Park, Lewiston, North Logan, Smithfield,
Richmond)

Facilitator-Susan- 435-755-7821

Ogden North- (North Ogden, Pleasant View, Harris-
ville, Plain City, Farr West)

Facilitator-Marilyn- 801- 782-9080

Ogden

Facilitator-

South/Central Davis-(Bountiful, West Bountiful, Farm-
ington, Centerville, WoodsCross, North Salt Lake)

Facilitator-Paula-451-2870

Weber West (Roy, Riverdale, Hooper, Sunset, Syra-
cuse, West Point, Clinton)

Facilitator-Natalie-801-731-1271

North Davis (Layton, HAFB, South Weber, Clearfield,
Kaysville, Emory, Huntsville, Eden, Liberty, Morgan,
Milton, Mt. Green)

Facilitator-Patty-801-544-7925

Structured Families

Facilitator-Maryanne-298-5865

Foster to Adopt

Facilitator-Janette- (801) 546-9465

Eastern Region

Price- Adoptive Family Cluster
Facilitator- Karen- 435- 748-5053

Moab- Peanut Cluster
Facilitator- Julie- 435- 259-1708
Alies- 435- 259-5869

Carbon/Emery– Carbon and Emery Counties
Glenna– 435-748-2626

Roosevelt
Facilitator– Raquel– 435-722-3841

Vernal
Facilitator–

Southwestern Region

Cedar/ Iron– Cedar and Iron Counties
Facilitator– Amy—435-586-7403

Manti/San Pete
Facilitator– Nancy- 435-529-1024

Richfield/Sevier
Facilitator– Marci-435-893-9160

St. George
Facilitator– Chantal– 435-986-8010

Western Region

Central- (Orem, Provo)
Facilitator– Stephanie– 224-3239

North- (Alpine, American Fork, Cedar Hills, Eagle Mtn, Highland, Lehi, Lindon, Pleasant Grove, Saratoga Springs)
Facilitator– Josie-796-6121

South- (Delta, Elberta, Elk Ridge, Fillmore, Goshen, Kanosh, Mammoth, Mapleton, Nephi, Payson, Salem, Santaquin, Spanish Fork, Springville)
Facilitator– Keith-489-7864

Wasatch/Heber- (Francis, Heber City, Kamas, Oakley, Park City, Woodland)
Facilitator- Carol-435-783-2116

Millard/Juab– Millard and Juab Counties
Facilitator– LaRene– 864-4473

Adoption-
Facilitator– Mary– 374-8760

Strutctured– Western Region
Facilitator– Cheryl-489-0271

There are many upcoming trainings and events, contact the cluster facilitator in your region for more details.

Clusters are groups of foster/adoptive/kinship families that meet together on a monthly basis. Clusters can help you obtain in-service training hours, meet other foster/adoptive/kinship families, arrange respite care, and provide fun family activities.

For further information about the cluster program, please contact the facilitator for your area or call Nikki MacKay at (801) 994-5205

Lessons I about P

By: Terra

I was initially removed from my mother's care (or lack thereof) at age 12. Her inability to be an ideal parent was evident to child protection through unhealthy relationships with men, physical and emotional abusiveness toward herself and her children, and continuous battles with drug and alcohol abuse. After being evicted from three apartments and being asked to leave two family shelter homes for anti-social behavior, things were ugly and got even uglier quite fast.

After three uncomfortable years of bouncing around in foster care, I was placed into a home with loving, caring, and nurturing foster parents who were employed by Family Alternatives. With these parents, I finally got the opportunity to live the life of a stable teenager, concentrate on academic achievement, and enjoy the many perks of living within a traditional family structure. It was about time!

My exposure to adverse conditions stemmed mostly from the immoral practices of unfit parents (both biological and foster). My opinions of how good parents might act were formulated through what I went through with my mother, and not having my father around. I saw my father only one time after my family left Chicago for Minnesota.

I began stating to myself that I would NEVER do to my children what was done to me. I would often ask myself why one might choose to have children only to harm them or not be around as a positive influence in their lives. I can remember making statements like these as early as seven and eight years old. This was obviously due to my absence of insight about why people actually choose to bring children into the world.

Once I had a conversation with my mother in which she stated that my oldest sister was conceived through rape. She also said she was not ready to have another child when I was conceived with a different man. My young-

est sister, she suggested, was the result of loving our dad so very much. She thought maybe she and my dad would always be together, but made it clear that she didn't necessarily want three children. It was at this time that I realized people could or WOULD have children without truly wanting them. I don't recall feeling enlightened by this newfound knowledge.

At the tender age of 10, I proclaimed my intent to not have children unless I was fit to have them. I also vowed never to tell them they were mistakes. This was when some of my present parental practices initially saw the light of day. Darn, I was sure growing up fast!

I recently had a conversation with my younger sister about our obstacles growing up and she told me she felt that I had it easy because I was considered to be our mother's best kid. After that talk, I started to remember how many times I heard this from my mother.

We all were called demeaning names when we "did something stupid," but my mother often said that I was the better kid of the three of us and the smartest. My youngest sister had it somewhat easier too because she was the youngest. When we got "whoopins," she didn't get hit as hard. My younger sister and I even got hit fewer times per spanking and with less physically damaging ob-



've Learned Parenting

ell Woods



jects than our older sister. “You’re the oldest, you should know better,” is what my mother often said when she chastised my older sister.

But as I think back, I can’t recall feeling special growing up. As a pre-teen, I would make statements to myself such as, “I will NEVER hit my kids,” and “I will NEVER be nicer to one kid than another.” I was off to a pretty good start parent-wise I would say!

Going into foster homes didn’t sweeten my life struggles any. The first home I was in gave me a taste of reverse-favoritism; there I suddenly became the least favorite sibling. I was once made to sit outside on the front step of my foster mother’s home on a 90+ degree day as my sisters were invited to accompany her grocery shopping. I was told that I was not trusted to be in her home alone.

When we had normal sibling rivalries, I was always marked as the antagonist and punished with no TV and no friends over for long periods. I was called a “worthless n——” and other degrading epithets regularly and told I would amount to nothing when I rebuked her hateful actions publicly. In this environment, my views on equal treatment

of children and determination to never shame my future children with name-calling were strengthened. I was getting good at this virtual parenting thing!

My early life was plagued with overwhelming negativity. Now, years later, I would have to say my life has undergone a metamorphosis. I am 28 years old, a graduate of Hamline University, a youth counselor, the father of a six-year-old daughter, a new home owner, and soon to be married. I still maintain a strong relationship with my foster parents and have opted to call them my real mom and dad.

I can also say I have committed NONE of the inhumanities that haunted me growing up. Freedom from drugs and alcohol and the desire to raise a physically, socially, and emotionally healthy child have become my paramount priorities. This is by no means peaches and cream, but Simone didn’t ask to be here, so I think I owe her nothing less. My past sufferings feel like warm embraces when my little princess says, “You’re the best daddy; I love you” multiple times a day. Her statement is just a tad bit of an exaggeration, but I believe she believes what she says. Ironically, my past suffering may be the very reason I now receive warm embraces.

About the author:

Since aging out of care at 18, Terrell has earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology and plans to get an MSW. He also works for The Storefront Group as a youth and family counselor for high-risk and economically disadvantaged African Americans, and serves as an on-call guidance counselor for homeless teens. Contact him at mtwoods@comcast.net.

“From Adoptalk, published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, 970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 55114; 651-644-3036; www.nacac.org.”



Utah!
Where Ideas connect!
Utah State Division of
Child and Family Services

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
P A I D
SLC UTAH
PERMIT 4621

302 West 5400 South Ste, 208
Murray, UT 84107

CALL YOUR POST-ADOPTION SPECIALIST

Northern Region:

Aubrey Myers (801) 626-5749

Salt Lake Region:

Vickie Steffey (801) 264-7500

Western Region:

Louise Brown (801) 376-8594

Southwest Region:

John Worthington (435) 867-2760

Eastern Region:

Blanding /Moab Steve Shafer (435) 259-3720
Price/Castledale Greg Daniels (435) 636-2360
Vernal/Roosevelt Fred Butterfield (435) 722-6550

If you would like to submit an article, poem or story to be published in Utah's Adoption Connection, please send your submittal along with your contact information to The Adoption Exchange or contact Lindsay at 801.265.0444