

# UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES



Adan and Gabe, ages 9 and 10 are waiting...

Don  
Polo



# UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

QUARTERLY DCFS NEWSLETTER



Wanda, age 13 is waiting...

Photographed by Julie Lloyd

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February 2007

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If you are interested in any of the waiting children you see in this publication, please contact  
The Adoption Exchange for more information at 801-265-0444.


# If I had one wish ...



If I had one wish  
You would be here  
And not away  
If I could I would run to you  
So you could hug me 'n' tell me it's  
all right  
If I had one wish  
I would forgive you  
For all that you did  
And just take you back  
So it could just be me and you  
And erase all of that  
If I had one wish  
I would tell you how much I want  
you to love me  
Just for me and not for something  
else  
Erase all my mistakes so I could be  
like you  
You weren't good but you  
weren't bad  
To me in my eyes you are all that I  
had  
If I had one wish you would be my  
dad  
And be the best  
That I could have  
But reality isn't fake even though  
My dreams I wish I could make  
If I had one wish it would be to get  
through this  
Without you and it not to be so  
hard  
And to keep doing without you.

-By Shaquan Searle, Adopted Child





# My Chance to Give Back

By Christopher H. Brown

I am a 22-year-old psychology major at Northern Kentucky University—a fate I couldn't have imagined when I was in foster care. Fortunately, being adopted changed my life from one of despair and hopelessness, to one where I am fulfilling the dreams I was once afraid to dream. Since being adopted, I have also been able use my experiences to make a difference in other kids' lives.

I entered foster care in April 1993 after my stepfather brutally murdered my mother. I was 11 years old. After cycling through emergency shelters and foster homes, I landed at Holly Hill Children's Home where I remained for just over a year and a half. Lonely and depressed, I spent two birthdays, two Christmases, and two anniversaries of my mother's death without family or friends. Most of the other kids were able to be with their families during holidays, so times that are supposed to be the happiest were the saddest for me.

Staff were good to me, but I soon began to lose hope that things would ever get better. I lost trust in others, lived each day as it came, and did not set or work toward any personal goals. School was an escape from the children's home, but there, in the rural all-white school, I encountered racial prejudice for the first time.

After a year at Holly Hill, I was assigned a volunteer "big brother" named Dave. He came into my life out of the clear blue one day, and I had no idea why. We started spending one day a week together, first at the children's home, and then on outings. I was skeptical and very quiet and shy at first, but he knew I loved basketball, so he would play with me on the out-

door court. At this point, playing basketball was the only thing I dared to dream about, even though I couldn't play at school.

Our first outing was to a high school basketball game. The next visit was to his home, where I discovered he had a lighted basketball court in his back yard. I was hooked! No matter what options Dave gave me for visit activities, my choice was always to go to his house and play basketball until he was exhausted. I also loved to just stare at all the food in his refrigerator, and watch TV without having to vote on the channel.

Dave and I grew closer over time, and eventually I started staying over on weekends. He became more involved in my life and really expressed concern if I wasn't doing well at school or at the home, or was just feeling sad or down on life. This made me realize that he cared for me, and that I needed to get on track.

As he earned my trust, I began telling him about my past and the things that happened in my life. Usually I opened up on the drive back to the children's home while listening to Tupac's "Dear Momma" on the stereo. I felt as if I had a reason to live again, and reasons to be happy. Having someone care about me made me start to care, and I began to dream about things being better. I began doing better in school, achieving my plan goals at Holly Hill, and even setting goals for myself.

Then, another loss seemed to be headed my way. Because I was doing so well, staff decided I was ready to move on. Unfortunately, they couldn't find any local foster or adoptive placements for a biracial teenage boy with "a lot of issues." In addition, Holly Hill was transitioning to an all-girls facility, so I had to



move—most likely to another children’s home elsewhere in the state.

I was afraid of being alone again, so I asked Dave if we would still be friends after I moved. He promised we would, and told me not to worry. One by one, the other boys transferred out of Holly Hill, but I still had no idea where I’d be going. During this time, I even had a dream that I would get to live with Dave, but I didn’t tell anyone because I was afraid it could never come true. We continued to have our visits, and Dave kept reassuring me that everything would be just fine.

Sharing this part of my story seems a bit strange since, for nearly nine years now, I have known Dave as Dad. What I didn’t know then was that Dave met with my social worker when he heard I would be moved, and asked if he could adopt me. He then spent the summer learning about parenting, and figuring out how he could make the adoption work. The hardest part for him was that he wasn’t allowed to tell me until he completed the training.

About a week before the boys’ unit was scheduled to close, Dave came out to the home, sat me on a picnic table in back of the cottage, and started his speech. What I most clearly remember is the part where he said, “Chris, I want to adopt you; I want to be your dad.” That was the happiest moment of my life. All I could do was smile.

My thoughts were a blur when Dave said he wanted to adopt me, but the one thing that stood out was that I had someone who loved me, and that I had a family again. When he asked how I felt about it, I simply said, “Cool!” Then I told him I wanted to change my last name to Brown, because it would look best on my school basketball jersey. Adoption was the biggest and best decision of my life.

So far, I owe my success in life to my father, Dave Brown. He turned my life completely around by showing me that he cared. He took me into his home with open arms, and opened up a whole new world for me to explore. He challenged and pushed me to

do well in school (I finished my senior year with straight As), and would not give up on me even in the toughest of times. I have a great life, and cannot fully describe how much I appreciate all I have been blessed with.

As I had dreamed, I also got to play basketball. What’s more, as starting point guard, I helped lead my team to a record number of wins my senior year. I was even recruited to play college basketball.

What my father did for me is the greatest thing anyone can do for someone, and I want to pass that on. My goal is to help children like my dad helped me. Since eighth grade, I have shared my experiences to help other kids have the opportunity I did. I also want to adopt someday.

What I didn’t anticipate was having a chance to directly change a child’s life so soon. In November 2002, Dad and I learned about Rashad, another teen who needed a family. The adoption worker thought we might be a good fit for him. Dad and I talked, and he emphasized that he would need my help to make another adoption work. I immediately accepted the idea; it fit with my goals, and I knew we would be a good family for Rashad.

What a great decision! I love having Rashad as part of our family. It is a privilege to have him as a younger brother, and to serve as a mentor and role model for him. When our dad leaves town for work, I provide for his needs and get to hang out with him as his big brother. It is so neat to see him starting to live his dreams.

When Rashad first moved in, it was tough for him. Like me, he had to adjust to a whole new lifestyle. His new family included a single white father and an older biracial brother. At his foster home, he was one of the older kids in an African American family. I knew what Rashad had to deal with, so I was able to be there for him and talk him through things. I also knew how to “manage” Dad after eight years of experience, and could really help Rashad in that area too.

Trust was one of the big issues our family had to deal with when Rashad first came. He needed to learn to trust Dad and me, and to be honest and open so we could help him work through his concerns. Knowing that I had faced similar issues, Rashad seemed to trust and bond with me fairly quickly. As good as I had it, I think he transitioned into the family much faster because he saw how happy and successful I had become with Dad.

Soon Rashad looked to me for support, advice, and guidance. I was suddenly living the role I had looked forward to and had wanted to take on.

More than a year later, Rashad is doing wonderfully. School is going well and he has made a lot of close friends. He had dreamed about playing football, and this year he got to start for his freshman team where he led in rushing yards and touchdowns scored. He even had the courage to try a new sport, and ended up finishing 26-16 on the varsity wrestling team.

The struggles we worked through seem forever ago. I love having Rashad as part of our family, and there is no one else I would rather have as my little brother. I now know the joy my dad feels seeing a young person find the love and happiness that comes with joining a family who will always be there, and always care. I thank God I was blessed with the opportunity to use my experiences to make a difference in his life, and I look forward to being a part of his life always. Rashad now believes, as do I, that dreams can come true.

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# Positive Adoption LANGUAGE



What we say and the words we use, communicate a lot about our values. The conscious and consistent use of positive adoption language affirms that adoption is as valid a way to build a family as birth. Choose the following positive adoption language instead of the negative phrases that helps perpetuate the myth that adoption is second best. By using positive adoption language you'll reflect the true nature of adoption.



NEGATIVE/OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE	POSITIVE/PREFERRED LANGUAGE	EXPLANATIONS
1. "REAL" or "NATURAL" (parent of child)  Who is the real parent? Which one is your natural child?	1. Birth parent; biological parent; genetic parent; family of origin.	1. The use of "real" implies that the adoption is not a reality or that it is unnatural. The term "birth parent/s" describes the life-giving roles these person/s play in the child's life.
2. "MY ADOPTED CHILD/ MY OWN"  Sue is my adopted child and Kevin is my own. Which is your own child?	2. My\our child; my/our son/daughter; my/our child whom I/we adopted.	2. Adoption is a process, not an adjective. When the process is completed, the adopted youngster becomes a "child" in the family just as any other and should be referred to as such. Saying "my adopted child" implies a second class or qualified relationship. Distinguishing between your "own" child and an adopted child reflects a sense of "ownership" of one and not the other. Both children belong equally to the family.
3. "ADOPTIVE" PARENT	3. Mother/Father.	It isn't wrong to say that you are an "adoptive" parent, but extended use by you or others (esp. in front of your children), continues to qualify your parental status.
4. "GIVE UP" "SURRENDER" "RELINQUISH" "ADOPT OUT" "PUT UP FOR ADOPTION"	4. Make an adoption plan; transfer parental rights; choose a family to parent the child.	4. Terms such as "give up" or "surrender" are emotionally charged terms that imply coercion rather than a thought-out decision made by the birth parents. In many cases, the birth parents actively participate in selecting adoptive parents for the child.
5. "CHOSEN" CHILD  We chose you because you were special.	5. No Substitute.	5. The term implies that the adoptive parent did all the choosing when, in fact; birth parents frequently choose a family for the child. This may set the stage for conflict between adopted children and birth children who weren't "chosen." A child may rationalize that if he/she was special enough to be "chosen" he/she must continue to be special to receive ongoing love and acceptance from the adoptive parent.
6. ADOPTION "TRIANGLE/TRIAD"	6. Adoption circle; parties to the adoption.	6. Triad or triangle can imply ill will between parties. It also identifies only three main characters in an adoption, thus leaving out important persons in the "adoption circle" such as the social worker, attorney, judge, grandparents, and/or other relatives.
7. "ILLEGITIMATE"... "UNWANTED"	7. No substitute.	Factors of birth should no longer stigmatize a child. Bury the word "illegitimate" with the past and let the child enjoy respect and full, unqualified rights as a family member. Birth Parents choose adoption for many reasons – rarely because the child was unwanted.
8. "UNMARRIED/UNWED MOTHER OR FATHER"	8. Birth Mother; birth father; biological parent.	8. These labels stigmatize and place moral judgments on the birth parents. They imply that only marriage legitimizes birth - - a cultural concept that ultimately hurts the child.
9. "REUNITE/REUNION"	9. Searching, locating, meeting, and making contact with biological relatives.	9. "Reunion/reunited" implies renewal of a <u>previous relationship</u> with a birth family and the dissolving of the adoptive family relationship. "Meeting" or "locating" biological relatives more accurately describes this contact.
10. "HARD TO PLACE"	10. Child with special needs (NOT special needs child); waiting child.	10. "HARD-TO-PLACE" implies that the child is less than desirable, less than normal.
11. "ADOPT-A-..." (Whale/kitten/highway, etc.)	11. Sponsor a (whale, kitten, highway, etc.).	11. Campaigns that use the slogan "Adopt-a-..." demean the dignity and self-worth of children who are adopted and those who are waiting to be adopted.
12. ADOPTED "CHILD" (in reference to an adult)	12. Son/daughter who was adopted as a child; adult adoptee.	12. The word "adopted" is so frequently connected to a "child" that it becomes habitual in thought and speech. An adult adoptee deserves not to be called a child.



# Statewide Cluster Facilitator Groups

## **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) "South Heart"

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

Magna

Facilitator- Linda C.- 508-1982

West Jordan

Facilitator- Linda P.- 233-0894

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

Facilitator- Linda P.- 233-0894

West Valley City

Facilitator- Linda C.- 508-1982

Murray/Midvale

Facilitator- Linda P.- 233-0894

Structured Family Cluster

Facilitator-

Salt Lake City

Facilitator-

Spanish Speaking-

Facilitator- Jessica- 577-7161

Adoption

Facilitator- Debbie- 435-843-8610

## **NORTHERN REGION**

Box Elder- (Brigham City, Perry, Willard, Collinston, 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, Harrisville, Plain City, Farr West)

Facilitator- Marilyn- (801) 782-9080

Ogden

Facilitator-

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

Facilitator- Becky- 597-1544

Weber West- (Roy, Riverdale, Hooper, Sunset, Syracuse, 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- 546-9465



## **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-

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

Millard/Juab- Millard and Juab Counties  
Facilitator- Jilean- 435-623-4049

Adoption-  
Facilitator- Pamela- momi2mykids@comcast.net

Strutctured- Western Region  
Facilitator- Cheryl- 489-0271

## **SOUTH WEST REGION**

Cedar/ Iron- Cedar and Iron Counties  
Facilitator- Cedar- Amy-435-586-7403  
Beaver- Lisa- 435-438-2651

Manti/San Pete  
Facilitator- Nancy- 435-283-5020

Richfield/Sevier  
Facilitator- Coylene- 435-896-2023

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

## **EASTERN REGION**

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

Moab- Peanut Cluster  
Facilitator- Caroline- 435-259-6497

Carbon/Emery- Carbon and Emery Counties  
Glenna- (435) 748-2626

Roosevelt  
Facilitator- Raquel- (435) 722-3841

Vernal  
Facilitator- McKay- 435-789-0833

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.

# What Are Schools

## The Question

One of our students is a 15 year old tenth grader who is diagnosed as “seriously emotionally disturbed.” Academically, he is functioning on approximately 2nd grade level. His current placement is 23.5 hours a week in a self-contained classroom, with 7.5 hours in general education - this placement is because of behavior problems.

School problem behaviors include: Cursing, threatening to kill teachers, threatening to kill administrators, fighting with peers, jumped out of moving school bus to fight, spitting on peer. Non-compliant. Total disregard for authority figures.

Home behavior includes: Running away, non-compliance, starting fires, threatening adults, threatening to blow up school, etc.

He was placed in residential treatment facility on an emergency basis. Because of insurance issues, he will be released in 48 hours. This placement was done by law enforcement and health agencies after a blow up at home.

School officials have met many times to review placement, goals and needs.

What obligations does the school system have? Must the school continue to provide special education services in the current setting if they believe the student is a danger to himself or others? What if the school has no alternative placement within the system that is appropriate? What about the safety of the other students, teachers, administrators?

A psychological report confirms that the student is a danger, capable of shooting others. This situation is immediate. Please respond.

## The Answer

### School's Legal Obligations

Regarding the school's legal obligations, you should read the U. S. Supreme Court's decision in *Honig v. Doe* that was issued in 1988. The legal citation for *Honig v. Doe* is 484 U.S. 305.

You will also find *Honig v. Doe* in our book, *Wrightslaw: Special Education Law*. The facts in *Honig* are similar to the facts you describe in your case.

### But What is Driving Him?

You need to know what is driving this kid to act the way he does. Did he pop out of the womb as an angry vicious young man? Or, did his anger develop slowly over time?

Schools often develop treatment plans (IEPs) without adequately studying the case history and why previous efforts failed or exacerbated the problem. As the kid gets worse, schools (and society) blame the kid, instead of looking at what should have been done and was not done, and what can be done now.

This is why, when I am consulted about a case, I insist on seeing the earliest reports and test data, I read everything in chronological order, pre-school and KG reports first, so I can see how the child evolved and what happened. By the time I get to the end of the very thick file, it all clicks and makes sense. The present situation is absolutely predictable. What to do?

### Organize the File

Get the entire file, put it all in chronological order, read through it slowly and carefully. Take all standardized test data, especially subtest data, and make a rough chart of the scores.

If you do this, it will help you see what happened. This will take several hours, but you'll probably have some good answers about what the true problem is -- but probably not the solution.

### Good Diagnostics Before Solutions

Coming up with the correct solution may require additional testing to narrow down, diagnose, and set up a treatment plan. It is hard work, but this is what it takes to change a child, not just pass the child on to someone else so he becomes their problem.

Shift to the medical model: Assume that you are a medical doctor. You are treating a patient for a cold. Several weeks have passed but your patient's cold hasn't gotten better. Instead, the patient continues to complain, is listless, the cough has worsened. Now, the patient is wheezing.



# ols Obligations?

By Pete Wright

Do you continue with the same treatment? Do you prescribe more cough medicine? Do you do a more thorough diagnostic workup? Do you think the patient coughing willfully? Do you decide that the patient is “choosing” to cough? Do you blame the patient when the situation spirals out of control?

## Need to Remediate Skills

- Why is this kid functioning at the second grade level after roughly 10 years of education?
- How can middle school and high school kids function with second grade skills?
- Why are schools content with this?
- Why are we surprised when kids erupt after years of frustration and failure?
- Who failed?

Private sector schools like Kildonan and Trident Academy take kids whose skills are many years delayed and teach basic reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic skills.

If this kid masters these basic skills, he will be able to learn other things through life.

This youngster probably needs to work with someone who is qualified and trained in Orton-Gillingham and can work with him several hours a day, one on one, to jump start his skills.

Many schools are inflexible and cannot or will not provide remediation. Others believe that you cannot remediate an adolescent which is simply not true.

So another lost angry kid is thrust out into society, takes out his frustrations on others, and is incarcerated.

Has a Functional Behavioral Assessment been completed on this boy?

At this point, you may be tempted to say, “You are a lawyer - what do you know about life in the trenches with these kids?”

## Work as Probation Officer

When I was in undergraduate school, I worked as a house parent in a juvenile training school and was assigned to the cottage/unit for the most serious offenders (rapists, murderers, violent offenders). After I graduated from college, I worked a counselor in three juvenile training schools and as a juvenile probation officer in Richmond VA.

As a probation officer, I secured a federal grant and designed a program for the most serious offenders. This program was called the “Mobile Probation and Camping Program” -- it received some national publicity between 1972-1974. The kids were divided into an experimental and a control group. The control group received the regular probation program.

We wanted kids who had already acted out and were destined to commit more major offenses soon, but who had not yet been incarcerated. All kids who were involved in this program had been convicted of several felonies (crimes against persons or property, not drug offenses.) The kids averaged 5.5 prior felony convictions. The average age was 15.5 years.

As part of this program, I obtained educational, neurological, psychological evaluations from the Medical College of Virginia. (As the P.O., I did the social histories).

Of the 15 kids in the experimental group, 13 had documented neurological problems related to LD issues, processing problems, etc. The two who did not have neuro issues had severe child abuse in early years (cigarette scars from burns inflicted by parents, etc.)

Their IQ's were within average range but their skills in reading, writing, spelling, and math were very low, averaging around 2nd to 3rd grade.

We used a wilderness camping model known as the “Campbell Loughmiller” approach (from Texas) that was based on William Glasser's Reality Therapy. We arranged for special ed graduate students to provide one-on-one tutoring for each kid. The tutors focused primarily on teaching these teenagers how to read.

After appropriate tutoring began, the kids' scores in reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic skills went up quickly. Their grades improved and school attendance also improved. Their physical appearances improved. Self-concepts improved too.

After a year or so, there was such an astounding difference that the program was written up as a model project under the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA).

Why do we have to reinvent the wheel again and again?

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# Calendar of Events

February 2007

## **8th Heart Gallery Opening Gala - St. George, UT**

Benefit Dinner, Auction and Unveiling of Portraits. \$50.00 for an individual, \$100.00 per couple or \$600.00 for a Corporate Table. All donations go to benefit The Adoption Exchange in finding homes for Utah's Waiting Children. If you would like to attend please register online at [www.adoptex.org](http://www.adoptex.org).

**Visit the Heart Gallery at the Rosenbruch Museum in St. George from February 9th until March 31st.**

March 2007

## **3rd Celebrating Wednesday's Child - Midway, UT**

Come out for a fun day of ice-skating, games, food, prizes and fun to help celebrate Wednesday's Child and adoption. Free ice-skating from 3:30-6:00 at the Midway Ice Skating Rink. For more information or to RSVP please contact The Adoption Exchange at 801-265-0444.

## **8th Power in Parents Conference - Salt Lake City, UT**

Governor Jon M. Huntsman and First Lady Mary Kaye Huntsman invite you to join the 2nd Annual Power in Parents Conference - Strengthening our Community and Protecting our Families. To be held Thursday, March 8th from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at Cottonwood High School. Childcare available for ages 2-4 and workshops for ages 5-11. For more information, visit [www.powerin-you.org](http://www.powerin-you.org).



April 2007

## **4th A Day for Wednesday's Child - Televised Special**

Help The Adoption Exchange raise money and awareness for many of the waiting children in Utah. This all-day televised special will air on KUTV from 5:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. If you are interested in being a volunteer, a corporate sponsor or giving a donation please contact The Adoption Exchange at 801-265-0444.

May 2007

## **21st and 22nd UAC Conference - Sandy, UT**

The Utah Adoption Conference will be held at the South Towne Expo Center and will feature Maris Blechner and many other adoption specialists. Catalogs will be coming out the first of Spring. For more information go to [www.utahadoptioncouncil.org](http://www.utahadoptioncouncil.org).

## **30th Wendy's Golf Tournament - Eagle Mountain, UT**

Join Wendy's, The Adoption Exchange and many local businesses in raising money and awareness for the children waiting in foster care. The tournament will be held at The Ranches golf course in Eagle Mountain. Many sponsorship levels are available. Please contact Lindsay at The Adoption Exchange if you would like to participate.

**Visit Heart Gallery Utah at Southern Utah University Library in Cedar City, from April 1st to May 31st.**



# If I Can Do It, So Can You

By Patricia Potts





Seventeen-year-old Joseph, dressed in a forest green Varsity Scout shirt, fidgeted on a folding chair while waiting for his name to be called. He was about to receive his seventh palm in the Scouting program. Receiving seven palms for any young man would be a sizable achievement, but for Joseph, a large, muscular, adopted Hispanic with ADHD it meant much more.

Joseph spent the first four years of his life suffering abuse and neglect from his single birth mom. His older sister was less than two years older, yet did much of the care-taking. He and his sister were often locked in their room for days and neglected by their mother. He was taught to steal and often that was the only way he and his sister could get food. Joseph's biological dad had disappeared somewhere in Mexico before he was born.

One day when he was four years old a person came to the house and took he and his sister away. Joseph and his sister only spoke Spanish at the time and when they were put on a plane, they were frightened because people were speaking in a new language. When they arrived in Utah, they were placed in a home where only English was spoken.

His first adoptive home did their best to help both siblings but finally gave up Joseph after a year because they could no longer handle his behavior. His adoptive mom took him to a shelter with a prayer that they, would be able to find him another home.

In the meantime, the Potts family consisting of Dan and Patricia and their four daughters, had been praying for a son. They felt God wanted them to raise a son and Patricia could no longer have children. They have been qualified for adoption and had been looking for a few years. Recently they began checking the The Adoption Exchange a few times a week.

A few days after Joseph had been taken to the shelter, Patricia and her daughter, Cindy, were looking at pictures of kids when they overheard the receptionist talking about a five and a half -year-old boy who needed a home. Patricia asked about the boy and was given the phone to talk to his adoptive mother. As it turned out, Patricia knew the woman who was Joseph's first adoptive mom because she had taught classes that the woman and her husband had attended. They say there are no coincidences in adoption, and this connection confirmed this fact. That afternoon both families met at the shelter and Joseph went home with the Potts.

The Potts became concerned when within a month Joseph was lying, stealing and disobeying. As Dan and Patricia talked about what they could do to help the situation, Dan felt that scouting may help him. He thought the structure and fun it offered, as well as the activities, camps, goals and interaction with boys and leaders could made a difference. So they anxiously waited for the day he would turn six.

Sure enough, Joseph took to scouting like a fish to water. It filled his need for fun and creativity, and gave him the chance to learn new skills and to work with a group. Mom and Dad also gave him the chance to earn extra money by earning badges (which he says beat the heck out of extra household chores).

As the years came and went, scouting continued to play a part as Joseph worked through life's challenges. With the help of a very good counselor, church friends, and deeply devoted scout leaders including his father he made measured progress. All of them looked beyond Joseph's behavior problems to see the great person inside,

Eventually, after much persistence and encouragement from Dan and others, Joseph earned his eagle. His eagle project was building quilt shelves for The Christmas Box, a place where children wait to be adopted. The sign outside the closet door where quilts are stored reads "My name is Joseph, I'm adopted and I'm an eagle scout. If I can do it so can you." Scouting remains a constant where he finds appreciation for his friendliness, sense of humor and his ever present voice proclaiming "if I can do it you can too!"

As an eagle scout, he sets the example of continuing to set goals and earn palms even though he no longer earns money for them. Young scouts need a role model to look up to and Joseph fits that role. Service has been a major hallmark of his growth. A neighbor, Blair Stephens says, "Joseph is not only an eagle scout, he's a hard worker and always willing to help us move, carry, clean out and dig up." Joseph said that losing his biological mom, his biological sister to a separate adoption and his first adoptive home has not been easy for him. He says scouting has given him something to hold onto amid the chaos. Joseph's accomplishments in scouting have helped him discover a deeper purpose within himself. It has helped fill the void his biological parents left behind.

The determination and persistence it took for Joseph to earn his eagle has now manifest itself in other talents and achievements, such as being a guitarist, a chef, an avid reader, and as a Certified Nurses Assistant at a local care center.

Joseph also enjoys speaking and is a young man who can inspire other adopted boys and challenge other scouts, particularly those who have ADHD, those who struggle to get good grades and those who are of a different race. Scouting remains a constant where he finds appreciation for his friendliness, sense of humor and his ever present voice proclaiming "if I can do it you can too!"



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### The Adoption Exchange is looking for your Adoption Stories, Artwork, Poetry & Photos!

The Adoption Exchange will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2007 and is collecting submissions to include in a book about adoption. Anyone whose life has been touched by adoption, including adoptive parents, foster children, adopted children and child welfare workers, are invited to share their stories, successes, struggles and challenges on how adoption changed their life. Send photos, kids' drawings, poetry, stories, interesting quotes, artwork. to:

The Adoption Exchange  
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Murray, UT 84107  
lindsay@adoptex.org  
or 801-265-0444