



UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

AUGUST 2010

Chloe, age 11 is waiting...

Photo by: Heather Brown

UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

QUARTERLY DCFS NEWSLETTER



Amanda, age 16 is waiting....

Photo By: Lori Jenkins

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

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"Getting adopted is like sitting down after standing up for a long time."
-Former foster child

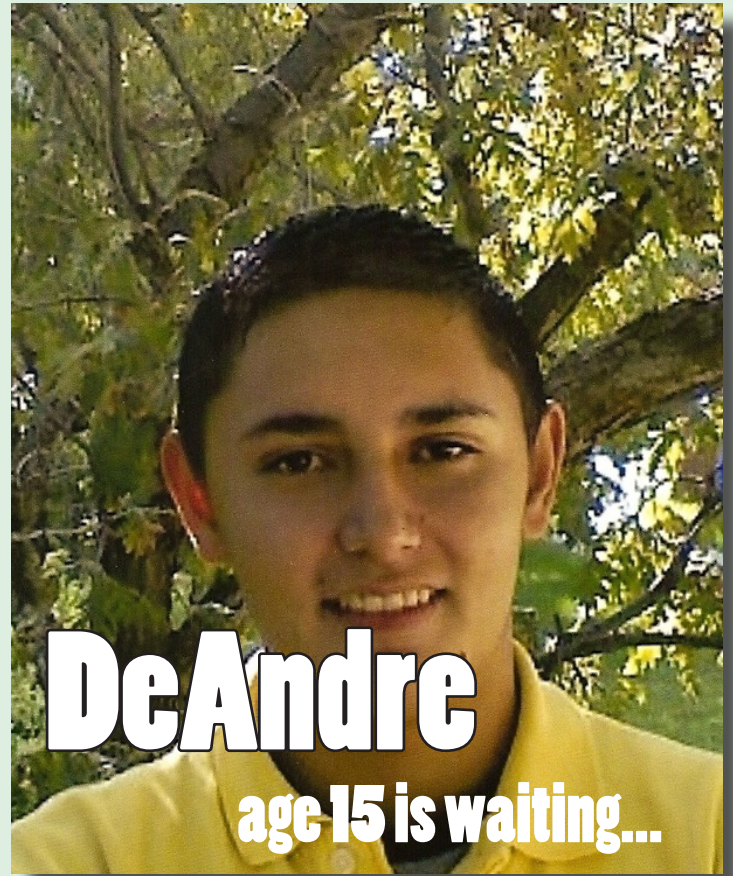
"Adoption is a special kind of love that is shared not by people who are related by blood, but by people who are related by love."
-Seventh grade girl

"I can tell my friends I never have to move."
-Eleven year old boy

"I have a mom and dad now, but my friend is still waiting. So are lots more! Please help them."
Thank you
-Jeremiah

"I hope that every child has the same opportunity to be adopted as I have been. There are too many children who are not being taken care of in the way that they deserve. My wish is for every child to be adopted into a loving home."
-Kenni, age eleven adopted into his forever family after being in foster care for four and a half years.

These thoughts were taken from the book: *Adoption: Stories of Lives Transformed* to purchase a copy visit: www.adoptex.org or amazon.com



Outgoing and friendly in nature, DeAndre makes friends easily, has a likeable personality, and gets along well with others. DeAndre's magnetic personality and active lifestyle keep him busy in various types of social activities. Among his favorites are volleyball, drama, art, choir, track, tumbling, modeling, cheerleading and participating in his school student government.

A ninth grader this year, DeAndre is doing well, staying on task, and has a great desire to continue to improve academically. He is currently attending counseling, which will need to continue after placement.

DeAndre is in need of a loving and stable forever family who will support him in keeping contact with his siblings. If your family is interested in this great teen, we urge you to inquire. Financial assistance may be available for adoption-related services.

For Utah children, only homestudied families from all states are encouraged to inquire.

Parenting a Child Who Has Been Sexually Abused: A Guide for Foster and Adoptive Parents Part 2

The first part of this article was printed in the May edition of Utah's Adoption Connection

Seeking Help

Responding to the needs of a child who has been sexually abused may involve the whole family and will likely have an impact on all family relationships. Mental health professionals (for example, counselors, therapists, or social workers) can help you and your family cope with reactions, thoughts, and feelings about the abuse.

Impact of Sexual Abuse on the Family

Being an adoptive or foster parent to sexually abused children can be stressful to marriages and relationships. Parenting in these situations may require some couples to be more open with each other and their children about sexuality than in the past. If one parent is more involved in addressing the issue than another, the imbalance can create difficulties in the parental relationship. A couple's sexual relationship can also be affected, if sex begins to feel like a troubled area of the family's life. When these problems emerge, it is often helpful to get professional advice.³

Your child's siblings (birth, foster, or adoptive) may be exposed to a new or focused attention on sexuality that can be challenging for them. If one child is acting out sexually, you may need to talk with siblings about what they see, think, and feel, as well as how to respond. Children may also need to be coached on what (and how much) to say about their sibling's problems to their friends. If your children see that you are actively managing the problem, they will feel more secure and will worry less.

When one child has been sexually abused, parents often become very protective of their other children. It is important to find a balance between reasonable worry and over protectiveness. Useful strategies to prevent further abuse may include teaching children to stand up for themselves, talking with them about being in charge of their bodies, and fostering open communication with your children.

Counseling for Parents and Children

Talking with a mental health professional who specializes in child sexual abuse as soon as problems arise can help parents determine if their children's behavior is cause for concern. Specialists can also provide parents with guidance in responding to their children's difficulties and offer suggestions for how to talk with their children. A mental health professional may suggest special areas of attention in family life and offer specific suggestions for creating structured, safe, and nurturing environments.

To help a child who has been abused, many mental health professionals will begin with a thorough assessment to explore how the child functions in all areas of life. The specialist will want to know about:

- Past stressors (e.g., history of abuse, frequent moves and other losses)

³ For more information about sustaining a healthy marriage, visit the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center website: www.healthymarriageinfo.org

- Current stressors (e.g., a medical problem or learning disability)
- Emotional state (e.g., Is the child usually happy or anxious?)
- Coping strategies (e.g., Does the child withdraw or act out when angry or sad?)
- The child's friendships
- The child's strengths (e.g., Is the child creative, athletic, organized?)
- The child's communication skills
- The child's attachments to adults in his or her life

After a thorough assessment, the mental health professional will decide if the child and family could benefit from therapy. Not all abused children require therapy. For those who do, the mental health professional will develop a plan tailored to the child and family's strengths and needs. This plan may include one or more of the following types of therapy:

- **Individual therapy.** The frequency and duration of therapy can vary tremendously. The style of therapy will depend on the child's age and the therapist's training. Some therapists, use creative techniques (for example, art, play, and music therapy) to help children who are uncomfortable talking about their experiences. Other therapists use traditional talk therapy or a combination of approaches.
- **Group therapy.** Meeting in groups with other children who have been sexually abused can help children understand themselves; feel less alone (by interacting with others who have had similar experiences); and learn new skills through role plays, discussion, games, and play.
- **Family therapy.** Many therapists will see children and parents together to support positive parent-child communication and to guide parent in learning new skills that will help their children feel better and behave appropriately.

Your Child Welfare Agency

If you are a foster parent or seeking to adopt a child, you may wish to talk with your social worker about what you discovered about your child's history and any behaviors that worry you. Sharing your concerns will help your social worker help you and your family. If your child exhibits problematic sexual behaviors, be aware that you may also be required to report these to child protective services in order to comply with mandated reporting laws in your jurisdiction.⁴

Many adoptive parents also call their local child welfare agency to seek advice if their child shows troubling behaviors. Child welfare workers are often good sources of information, can offer advice, and are familiar with community resources. Adoption agencies may also be able to provide additional post adoption services or support to adoptive parents who find out about their child's history of sexual abuse after the adoption is finalized. For more information about post adoption services, see the Information Gateway web section: www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/postadoption/

What to Look for in a Mental Health Professional⁵

Finding a knowledgeable and experienced mental health professional is key to getting the help your family needs. Some communities have special programs for treating children who have been sexually abused, such as child protection teams and child advocacy centers. You may also find qualified specialists in your community through the organizations noted below.

- Child advocacy centers
- Rape crisis or sexual assault centers
- Local psychological or psychiatric association referral services

⁴ See information Gateway's Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect at www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/manda.cfm

⁵ The following information is adapted from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's Parental Guidelines in Case Your Child Might Someday Be the Victim of Sexual Exploitation: www.missingkids.com

- Child abuse hotlines (*See the Information Gateway publication, Child Abuse Reporting Numbers: www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/relist/rl_dsp.cfm?rs_id5&rate_chno=11-11172*)
- Child protective services (CPS) agencies
- Nonprofit service providers serving families of missing or exploited children
- University departments of social work, psychology, or psychiatry
- Crime victim assistance programs in the law enforcement agency, prosecutors, or district attorney's office
- Family court services, including court appointed special advocate (CASA) groups or guardians *ad litem*

Therapy for children who have been sexually abused is specialized work. When selecting a mental health professional, look for the following:

- Advanced degree in a recognized mental health specialty such as psychiatry (M.D.), psychology (Ph.D.) or Psy.D), social work (M.S.W.), counseling (L.P.C.), or psychiatric nursing (R.N.)
- Licensure to practice as a mental health professional in your State (Some mental health services are provided by students under the supervision of licensed professional.)
- Special training in child sexual abuse, including the dynamics of abuse, how it affects children and adults, and the use of goal-oriented treatment plans
- Knowledge about the legal issues involved in child sexual abuse, especially the laws about reporting child sexual victimization, procedures used by law enforcement and protective services, evidence collection, and expert testimony in your State

Conclusion

Many people want to help children who have been sexually abused, but many struggle with feelings of anger and disgust as they learn more about the abuse. You may need help to resolve these struggles and to move toward acceptance of your child's background.

If you were (or suspect you may have been) sexually abused as a child, dealing with your own child's difficulties may be particularly challenging, and reading this factsheet may have brought up difficult thoughts and feelings. Your courage in facing these issues and tackling a personally difficult and painful subject can actually be helpful to your children by demonstrating to them that sexual abuse experiences can be managed and overcome.

Creating a structured, safe, and nurturing home is the greatest gift that you can give to all of your children. Seek help when you need it, share your successes with your social worker, and remember that a healthy relationship with your children allows them to begin the recovery process. It is in the parent-child relationship that your child learns trust and respect, two important building blocks of your children's safety and well-being.

Acknowledgement: Child Welfare Information Gateway would like to acknowledge the contributions of Eliana Gil, Ph.D, Director of Clinical Services for Childhelp® and a nationally known lecturer, author, and clinician specializing in working with children who have been abused and their families; and Susan A. Rich, Ph.D., a psychologist in private practice in Canada who specializes in working with children who have been abused and those with sexual behavior problems and offers consultation and training to child welfare agencies and foster adoptive parents.



Utah Foster/Adoptive Families Association

Serving the foster/adoptive/kinship families in Utah

Guess what? By adopting a child who has been in the custody of the state, you are automatically a member of UFAFA! There are no dues required, no memberships to renew every year – you just get to reap the benefits of belonging to a group of the most amazing families in the world!

UFAFA has been in existence off and on for the past twenty years. The roles of UFAFA have changed as the needs of its members have changed. Currently, UFAFA fills the role of advocacy and support for foster/adoptive/kinship families within the state of Utah. We are a non-profit charitable organization run strictly by volunteers. All positions are filled by current members. We partner with DCFS, DHS, Utah Foster Care Foundation, The Adoption Exchange and others in an effort to provide services to our members.

Our mission statement is: UFAFA (Utah Foster/Adoptive Families Association) is dedicated to providing support, encouragement and advocacy for foster/adoptive/kinship families who open their hearts and homes, temporarily or permanently to a child in need.

You may be asking “What does this mean to me?” Well, it means that you now have a way to connect to other families who know just what you are going through. They experience on a daily basis the highs and the lows, the twists and the turns of this incredible roller coaster that we have chosen for our lives. UFAFA strives to bring our special community together, even though many miles may separate us. We have a website (www.myufafa.com) that contains many items but most importantly, it has a “Connect to Others” forum. It’s a discussion board that is dedicated to fostering and adopting! There are many categories including specific behavior issues (such as RAD and ADHD), the section we call The Good, The Bad and The Ugly, tips for maintaining relationships with biological families, different therapies and books that have helped others, etc.

UFAFA is also one of the very few organizations in the state that can advocate at the legislative level for our families. We realize that it takes amazing people to open their homes and their hearts, by rearranging their own lives, for children in need. We strive to give these incredible families a voice, not only within the Child Welfare System, but in the government and in the community. We are committed to get policies and programs in place that will protect and help all foster/adoptive/kinship families at legislative and departmental levels. It truly takes a “village” to raise any child, with education and advocacy being the keys in making this a reality.

As one of our Regional Representatives, Happie, said “We are asking the family to make this child a part of their family unit. No system could ever work, if we did not encourage, support and advocate for the whole. By strengthening the very family that we are asking to take the child, we are building a stronger unit from the inside out, instead of the other way around.”

Contact info: www.myufafa.com or ufafal@gmail.com



Battling the Back to School Blues

Parents can make the first days of school fun rather than frustrating

By: Dr. Charles Fay

Too frequently, children begin the school year unprepared to succeed, quickly experience frustration and failure, and get turned-off to learning. However, kids can love instead of loath the first days of school; they just need a little help from mom and dad. Here's how:

Tip #1: Give your children the gift of chores.

Children who regularly do chores at home find it much easier to do assignments at school. Why? Both schoolwork and chores require perseverance, delayed gratification, and attention to detail. When parents expect chores to be done without reminders and without pay, children also learn how to work independently and to enjoy the intrinsic rewards of accomplishment.

Tip #2: In a loving way, hold your children accountable for their chores.

Parents who nag and remind their children to do chores raise kids who expect their teachers to nag and remind them to do assignments. These children don't do well in school. Smarter parents ask their children to do their chores, but their tongues, and let empathy and consequences do the teaching. Why empathy? When parents deliver sincere doses of empathy or sadness before describing consequences, their children learn responsibility rather than resentment. A parent might say:

How sad...I love you so much, but you forgot to clean your bathroom today. Now I don't have the energy to take you swimming. This really stinks.

Tip #3: Limit television, videos, videogames, and other entertaining activities.

Children who are used to being entertained during the summer by fast-paced TV shows, movies, games and trips to the amusement park go into shock when they enter the classroom. Before long, they begin to complain about how "boring" their teachers are and how much they dislike school. Love and Logic parents help their children transition back to school by making their homes so "boring" that their kids can't wait to be back in class!

Tip #4: Have fun with reading and writing.

During the first week of school, teachers can always tell the difference between the children who've been read to during the summer and those who have not. Spend at least 20 minutes per day reading with your kids. Experiment with reading one page, asking your child to read the next, and alternating back and forth. Writing is important too! Experiment with having your child spend the two weeks prior to the start of school making and writing cards for friends and relatives. Your child's writing skills will grow...and so will these relationships!

With these practical tips from The Love and Logic Institute, you can give your kids an advantage in school that will last for months, years, and a lifetime! Parents around the world have benefited from the power of these four down-to-earth tips. Now it's your turn to give your kids the head start they deserve!

Dr. Charles Fay is a nationally known speaker, parent and school psychologist with The Love and Logic Institute in Golden, Colorado. His new video, *Hope for Underachieving Kids*, and his book, *Love and Logic Magic for Early Childhood*, provide a wealth of ideas for raising kids who are ready to learn and ready for the real world. For more information about Love and Logic parenting and teaching techniques, call 1-800-LUV-LOGIC or visit www.loveandlogic.com.



Feelings, Behaviors, and Relationships

*(This article is based off the book “Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control.”
Visit our website at www.beyondconsequences.com)*

By: Heather T. Forbes, LCSW
author of **“Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control”**
www.BeyondConsequences.com

Children need unconditional love and unconditional acceptance from their parents; we all know this and believe this. However, do we ever stop to consider how so many of the traditional parenting techniques accepted in our culture work contrary to this primal goal? Traditional parenting techniques that involve consequences, controlling directives, and punishment are fear-based and fear-driven. They have the ability to undermine the parent-child relationship and because they are tied into behavior, children easily interpret these actions to mean, “If I’m not good, I am not lovable.” Thus, children often build a subconscious foundation that says that love and approval is based off of performance.

Parenting from a love-based paradigm means going beyond our children’s behavior and beyond consequences to first see that negative behavior is a form of communication and that negative behavior is a response to stress. If we see the kicking and screaming child as one who is having difficulty regulating due to an overflow of feelings, we can learn to stay present with the child in order to help him modulate these feelings and thus, help him to build his emotional regulatory system. A child kicking and screaming or in a rage is a child who

has been "emotionally hijacked". Emotions are not logical or rational ; this hitting and kicking is the body's natural fear reaction gone awry.

Allowing a child emotional space to safely dissipate this energy will then allow him to calm down. As we provide reassurance, unconditional love, and emotional presence for our children, the need to kick and scream will disappear. Many times our children kick and scream simply because they do not feel that they are being listened to nor do they feel as if they have been heard. Staying present and reassuring a child that you really are listening to him, can be enough to help them begin to regulate. The life lesson that kicking and screaming is inappropriate does indeed need to be reinforced. But, this life lesson can only happen once the child is fully regulated (when the child is calm) and his cognitive thinking is intact. This is also the time to present alternatives to kicking and screaming. This is a way of teaching our children instead of punishing them. The definition of discipline is to teach. The more we can stay focused on the relationship with our child and strengthening this relationship instead of controlling it through consequences, the more we will be helping our child learn to work through their stress appropriately. Below are four pointers to help you stay in a loving and emotionally open place for your children:

Just Be Happy!—*But I'm not!* Did anyone ever tell you, “Just think happy thoughts and it will be okay.”? Did it really work? Probably not. Emotions do not simply disappear. If feelings are not released and acknowledged, they are stored and become part of our physical make-up. Research has convincingly shown that being able to express feelings like anger and grief can improve survival rates in cancer patients. With our children, feelings that become stored and “stuffed” become activators for negative behaviors.

ALL Feelings are Good Feelings - As parents, it is important for us to understand the necessity of emotional expression, both in teaching it to our children and in modeling it to our children. Blocked feelings can inhibit growth, learning, and the building of a trusting relationship between the parent and child. The first step to take is to recognize that *ALL* emotions are healthy. In our culture, feelings such as joy, peace, and courage are seen as good feelings, yet feelings such as sad, mad, and scared are seen as bad feelings. Let's rethink this to understand that it is not the feeling itself that creates negativity; it is the lack of expression of the feeling that creates negativity. And in children, this negativity is often expressed through poor behaviors.

Getting to the Core of the Behavior – When children are acting out and being defiant, we need to begin to understand that their behaviors are simply a communication of an emotional state that is driving these behaviors. If we simply address the behavior, we miss the opportunity to help children express and understand themselves from a deeper level. Start by modeling basic feeling words to your child. Keep it simple and teach the five basic feeling words: sad, mad, bad, scared, and happy. Even the youngest of children can learn to say, “I’m mad!” When the toddler is throwing his toys or the teenager is throwing his backpack across the room, encourage him at that moment to get to the core of the behavior through emotional expression. Remember...it really isn't about the toys or the backpack; and they really do know better than to do the negative behaviors.

Responding vs. Reacting – So the next time your child becomes defiant, talks back, or is simply “ugly” to you, work to be in a place not to react to the behavior, but respond to your child. Respond to your child in an open way—open to meeting him in his heart and helping him understand the overload of feelings that are driving the behaviors. He doesn’t need a consequence or another parental directive at that moment; he just needs you to be present with him. As your children learn to respond back to you through the parent-child relationship, they won’t have the need to communicate through negative behaviors anymore. You’ll both have more energy for each other, building a relationship that will last a lifetime.

About the Author:

Heather T. Forbes, LCSW



Heather Forbes, LCSW, is the co-founder of the Beyond Consequences Institute, LLC. Ms. Forbes has been training in the field of trauma and attachment with nationally recognized, first-generation attachment therapists since 1999. She has been active in the field of adoption with experience ranging from pre-adoption to post-adoption clinical work. Ms. Forbes is an internationally published author, with her most recent book titled, *Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control: A Love-based Approach for Helping Attachment-Challenged Children With Severe Behaviors*, endorsed by Sir Richard Bowlby, son of John Bowlby. As a speaker, her passion for families is known throughout the nation. Ms. Forbes consults and coaches both nationally and internationally with families struggling with children with severe behaviors. Much of her experience and insight on understanding trauma, disruptive behaviors, and attachment related issues has come from her direct mothering experience of her two adopted children.

The book, “Beyond Consequences, Logic and Control”
is available in Utah’s Adoption Connection Lending Library at
www.utdcfsadopt.org

My Life:



From Rage...



To Reason.

By Serena Pickle

from the Winter 2010 issue of Adoptalk: reprinted with permission

Hello! My name is Serena and I'd like to take you through the journey of my life so far.

Unfortunately, it didn't start out very well. I was born in Tennessee and doctors needed to detoxify me right away because of the drugs and alcohol in my system. Ten days later, after nurses told my birth mom that no one would adopt a drug baby, she took me home to live with my older brother and sister, Scott and Gina.

A year later, social services removed Scott, Gina, and me due to neglect and abuse. Gina went to live with her birth dad, but my brother and I entered foster care. By the time I was four, Scott and I had been through 14 placements. Some were with relatives, some with foster parents, and at times we lived in a Methodist children's home. Some placements lasted only a week. They tell me that my screaming and violent behavior, and the need to keep Scott and me together, caused a lot of the moves.

Then, when I was 4 and Scott was 7, we met our adoptive parents. They were therapeutic foster parents, but they were not prepared. Nothing they tried could settle me down. I kicked holes in my bedroom wall and door, and Mom and Dad had to board up my window so I couldn't throw myself out of it. Mom says my room was like a bomb area, with everything in ruins. Mom and Dad spent hours holding me close to keep me safe.

All I can remember about that time is that I was very angry, and I didn't know why. I had no idea how to keep myself from lashing out, screaming, and raging when I felt negative emotions starting to build inside me.

Less than a year after Mom adopted me, she took me to a psychiatric facility. She and Dad were exhausted from living in constant turmoil and losing sleep to make sure I wasn't going to hurt myself or anyone else. They also didn't think Scott's needs were being adequately addressed.

Doctors, however, couldn't come up with a definite diagnosis for me. Their theories ranged from autism, to identity disorder, to multiple personality disorder. Medications, some of which were not intended for young children, didn't help. The only point of agreement between the doctors was that I would never be able to function normally in a family.

While I was in the hospital, Mom did some reading and found out about attachment disorder. Suddenly, my troubling behavior began to make sense. The closer Mom and Dad got, the more scared I became and the harder I fought to push them away. Mom wasn't going to give up on me and she refused to put me in a group home.

Within a few years, Mom and Dad moved the family to Colorado so we could be closer to an out-of-home treatment program that seemed promising. Scott got help too. Mom and Dad were involved in the treatment and visited me regularly in the out-of-home placement.

Sometime when I was nine, things started to click in my head. I was in isolation after having a tantrum and began to realize that I was only hurting myself by acting out that way. It dawned on me that my behavior was a choice, and something I could change.

Life wasn't great right away, of course, but I steadily made progress and was able to end therapy by the time I was 14. School success, happily, came far more easily. I graduated from high school ahead of schedule and went on to college. The doctors' grim predictions when I was five never came true.

Children in my therapeutic foster placements were the first to inspire me to consider teaching. One girl had multiple disabilities, and a boy I knew was blind and had cerebral palsy. While going through treatment, these children were the first people I learned to love and wanted to help. Then, in middle school, I got involved in Special Olympics, and served as a summer camp counselor, a teacher, and a coach.

I now hold a master of arts degree in education/special education, and bachelor of arts degree in English and secondary education. Currently I'm teaching middle school English to a classroom of students that all have different abilities. It is just what I wanted to do.

The most important thing in my life, though, is my family. My parents helped me conquer unnamed demons, and taught me how to value family and live life. My mom and I talk constantly these days and get together two to three times a week. When my dad died unexpectedly this summer, she was my rock even as she grieved her loss. And when I got engaged at Christmas, she was there to celebrate with me.

My siblings, Scott and Gina, are precious too. Thanks to Mom's sleuthing, we were able to reconnect with Gina and her family when I was 14. Now all three of us are a part of both families, and we even celebrate some holidays together. The relationships I have with my family seem much like the relationships my friends have with their families, but there's an important difference. I don't take my family for granted, and the chaos I experienced early on makes me deeply value family in ways my friends can't quite understand.

At my wedding this February, Gina was my matron of honor, and Scott walked me down the aisle to the man who is now my husband. My family is now connected with my husband's family (and vice versa), and I couldn't be happier.

More than 10 years ago, on the day I was confirmed at church, I suddenly noticed that my mom had tears streaming down her face. I asked what was wrong, and she told me that she had been praying for help and God kept assuring her that everything would work out. She was finally able to see that the many trials we endured had led to good. And every day since, she has been able to see how her and Dad's love and dedication transformed an angry, out-of-control pre-schooler into the happy, healthy, and productive young woman I've become.

"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."



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National Adoption Month
Celebration at



November 13, 2010
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Free to all Adoptive Families

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