

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Meet This Month's Shining Stars: **Brayden**

Brayden is a social guy who loves to meet new people.

He has a love for cars, and hopes to be a mechanic when he gets older. For now, Brayden just wants to learn where to start when it comes to fixing cars.

Basketball, video games and working with technology are hobbies Brayden enjoys. Once he was able to take apart an MP3 player and a laptop to see their inner-workings.

Cooking — including Fettuccine Chicken Alfredo and breakfast sandwiches — is another thing Brayden enjoys.

Brayden says he would like his forever family to be talkative and enjoy low-key activities at home. He also hopes his forever family will be open in allowing him to maintain contact with his brother. Brayden would like to have a sibling and a dog in his forever family.

Brayden was born in 2000.



★★ Shining Stars ★★

Meet This Month's Shining Star: **George**

George is a kind-hearted boy who loves Christian music and would like to be a preacher when he grows up!

If George was given three wishes they would be: to have more wishes, to meet Jesus face to face, and for there to be a better world with "less bad things" going on.

George is proud of how good he is at Minecraft. He would like to get better at his balance in basketball. When George is with his friends they like to hang out, talk and watch movies. If George could go anywhere in the world he would pick Hawaii because "it looks really pretty and there are coconuts!"

George loves almost all food but his favorite meal is enchiladas. His favorite subject in school is art because he enjoys drawing and



making different types of art. He also enjoys riding his bike, playing basketball and flag football.

George was born in 2001.



Summer 2016

In This Issue...

- Shining Stars: Brayden and George ■ 1
 - Celebrating Foster Care Month ■ 2
 - HB 2442 (Jacob's Law) — What Does it Mean for Children and Families? ■ 2
 - Dr. Sue Stephens Reflects on CMDP ■ 3
 - Introducing Dr. Sara Parks, CMDP Medical Director ■ 3
 - Ask Dr. Sara About the Importance of Head Start ■ 3
 - Looking Back, Looking Forward: Dimon Sanders ■ 4
 - Free Adoption and Guardianship Training Offered ■ 4
 - A Bright Future for Your Child: What is in the Best Interest of the Child? ■ 4
 - AZAFAP Courage for Children Awards ■ 5
 - Shining Stars: Justice and Jenna L. ■ 6
- The Arizona Statewide is published quarterly by the Arizona Department of Child Safety.*

Arizonans Commemorate May as Foster Care Month

Arizona celebrated National Foster Care Month 2016 with a number of public and private events to raise awareness of the need for more foster homes and to recognize and reward the families who have so generously opened their doors to children in need.



The annual Arizona Blue Ribbon event, a collaboration between the Department, Hope and A Future and various community and faith-based organizations joined with the both the Arizona Coyotes and Phoenix Mercury providing foster families and the children in their

care with free tickets to a game.

The Annual Tucson Blue Ribbon Event (pictured) was held at Thoroughbred Nissan on May 1 with several hundred people in attendance.

This year DCS also celebrated the month with daily social media updates via Facebook and twitter. In addition, DCS Director Greg McKay hosted a press conference at the Capitol featuring foster parents and radio personalities JohnJay and Rich. Video of this 30-minute

event may be viewed at <http://bit.ly/1UjIsrC>.

The Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation (AFFCF), Arizona Association for Foster and Adoptive Parents (AZAFAP), Arizona Helping Hands and Voices for CASA Children have joined together to help create a two minute video that tells the story of individuals and organizations who turn around the lives of children in foster care 'every day.' The link to the video is <http://bit.ly/1RTkpxY>.



Shining Stars Featured in Children's Heart Gallery

Each issue of the *Arizona Statewide* features Shining Stars, Arizona children who are free for adoption with no identified placement. For more information on any of these children, please visit The Children's Heart Gallery (CHG) childrensheartgallery.org

Double Check for Kids in Cars!

Place something you use often, like a purse or phone, into the back seat of the car to create a habit of going to that part of the car to grab it. Or place a large stuffed animal in the front seat of the car every single time that your baby is in the back seat. That way, when you're driving and you look and see that stuffed animal, you'll remember that your child is in the back row.

Jacob's Law: What Does it Mean for Foster Caregivers, Adoptive Parents and Children in Care?

Did you know on March 24, 2016, the Governor signed Jacob's Law (House Bill 2442)?

Part of this bill helps you as foster caregivers and adoptive families gain easier access to Behavioral Health Services provided by the Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHA) and the oversight agency, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS).

What does this mean for you?

- You may directly contact the RBHA for a screening and evaluation if you identify an urgent need for the child in your care.
- You can call the RBHA and AHCCCS directly if services are not provided within 21 days after the initial evaluation of the child to document that services are not being provided and to get services for the child.
- You may use any AHCCCS registered provider to obtain the needed services, if the services have not been provided within the 21 days of the initial evaluation.
- If you feel that your child is in need of crisis services and the crisis service provider is not being responsive, you may directly contact the RBHA designated point of contact to coordinate crisis services for the child.
- If a child comes to your home from another county where they were receiving services, you may decide to keep the same service providers who provided the child's Behavioral Health services in the past or elect to find new services in the county you live in. (At times children form therapeutic bonds with

their therapists and it may be detrimental to change providers.)

Important Timeframes

- 72 Hours or 2 Hours - The RBHA will dispatch an assessment team within 72 hours after being notified that the child has entered care in an out of home placement* OR within 2 hours after being notified that the child has an urgent need.
- 7 Days — The RBHA will provide an initial evaluation within 7 days of a referral or request for services.
- 21 Days — If at the initial evaluation the child is found to need services, the RBHA will provide the initial appointment for services within 21 days of the initial evaluation.
- 72 Hours — If you make a request for residential treatment due to threatening behavior of your child, the RBHA must provide a response within 72 hours of the request.

*Jacob's Law defines "Out-of-Home Placement" as a foster home, kinship foster care, a shelter care provider, a receiving home or a group foster home.

How Do You Get the Services Outlined Above?

By contacting the designated Department of Child Safety (DCS) point of contact at the RBHA. These are individuals from the RBHA dedicated to working specifically with the foster caregivers and adoptive families. Download the flyer here: https://www.azahcccs.gov/Members/Downloads/Resources/DCS_Point_of_Contacts_4_11_16.pdf

Dr. Sue Stephens: Reflections on CMDP

When I started in my role as the Medical Director of the Comprehensive Medical & Dental Program (CMDP) back in January 2003, little did I know that I would still be here so many years later and that I would have experienced so many changes!

What has kept me here so long? The kids who need us, the people, the passion, the mission, the need to build upon previous improvements, never getting bored, always facing new challenges, always new problems that needed solving, and the mixture of the business of Medicaid and child welfare. All of these factors have made this a custom career opportunity for me!

Arizona is still the only state that maintains the unique model where the Child Welfare System and the Medicaid Health Plan (CMDP) are parts of the same agency, now called the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS). This model presents so many opportunities and strengths and much of CMDP's success, is in part, because of this model.

The clinical staff at CMDP now has very close working relationships with the DCS Specialists in all aspects of service planning and referrals for medical, behavioral health and oral health care. We encourage the DCS Specialist to contact CMDP to assist with the development of the medical and behavioral health care plans.

The most recent AHCCCS Report Card for the Pediatric Performance Measures demonstrates that CMDP exceeded

the statewide AHCCCS Health Plan average for all 8 pediatric measures!

Much of the success we enjoy in our personal life or work life comes from the support of coworkers, colleagues and friends made along the way. In my role as the Medical Director of CMDP, I have greatly appreciated the support and the important work from many DCS Specialists, DCS leadership, foster caregivers and advocacy groups. Thank you for all the support and positive reinforcement that we can make a difference in the lives of DCS-involved children and families!

However, there is more work that needs to be done over the next couple of years, re: SB 1375 & HB 2442! The recommendations from SB 1375 are that Arizona develops the system infrastructure to transition to an Integrated Health Plan (for medical and behavioral health) under CMDP. An integrated model under CMDP supports recommendations provided by key stakeholders including child advocacy organizations; reinforces the DCS mission to serve the unique needs of children in foster care; integrates all healthcare services; and leverages payment modernization strategies within a contracted network to maximize access to specialized trauma informed services.

CMDP will need your ongoing involvement, support and input for the successful implementation of these upcoming changes!

Dr. Sara Park named CMDP Medical Director

Dr. Sara Park has been named CMDP's Medical Director. Dr. Park initially joined CMDP as a consultant through District Medical Group and then accepted a part-time position with CMDP in March 2015. She has been working full-time with CMDP since October 2015 and has been a valuable member of our organization!

Dr. Park attended medical school at the University of Chicago, Pritzker School of Medicine and completed her pediatric internship and residency at Phoenix Children's Hospital and Maricopa Medical Center Pediatric Residency Program.

Her work experience includes: private practice in

Scottsdale, locum tenens in Kentucky, Alabama and Utah and, most recently, Dr. Park has served as an attending with District Medical Group (DMG) in Phoenix, Arizona. DMG is a nonprofit physician organization that works with the Maricopa Integrated Health System (MIHS) to care for patients and train medical students and pediatric residents in the care of underserved pediatric populations at this county.

Dr. Park's special interest is in the healthcare of the refugee population. She created the Pediatric Refugee Clinic at MIHS in June 2014, and worked with the refugees through her departure in September 2015. CMDP is very pleased to have her onboard!

Ask Dr. Sara

Is Early Head Start Important for Children in Foster Care?

Yes! The goal of the Head Start Program is to help prepare children and families for success and independence.

The program provides added support services to families. Although Head Start has a wait list, the two needs that will BUMP your family to the top of the list are 1) a child being in foster care and 2) a child with a disability.

The enrollment age for Early Head Start is 0 – 3 years (including expectant mothers) and 3 – 5 years for regular Head Start.

Early Head Start provides services to pregnant teens and women. These services include ensuring the family has a medical and dental provider, and that many baseline measures (such as height and weight, and hearing and vision screenings), as well as current exams have been conducted.

They also:

- Provide individualized nutrition assistance (meal planning and encourage enrollment in WIC);
- Ensure that there is a referral for a Well Baby check-up within 90 days of enrollment
- Complete a developmental screening within 45 days

of enrollment and provide a referral for a full Assessment/Evaluation to AzEIP (Arizona Early Intervention Program);

- Encourage parent involvement in monthly classroom parent meetings (leadership and advocacy);
- Encourage parents who are enrolled in the Home Based program to participate in bimonthly socializations with other Home Based parents and children;
- Encourage parent's participation in trainings to develop skills/knowledge of parenting;
- Encourage parent advocacy in curriculum implementation with the school (school readiness); and
- Work with the parents to identify areas where they need support or training (Connection to community resources – self-sufficiency).

Prepare your child and family for future success — enroll in the Head Start program. Find your local Head Start Provider at <http://1.usa.gov/1bxN89S>.

— Sara Park, M.D., is the Medical Director of the Arizona Comprehensive Medical & Dental Program.

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Looking Back — Looking Forward: Dimon Sanders

When Dimon Sanders came into foster care at the age of 8, she struggled to accept the foster parents who were trying to help her. “I was a troublemaker then,” Dimon explained. Over the next six years this Pima County native would cycle through 13 foster homes.

But that was then. “I had a lifetime of pain and issues from before I was taken away from my bio parents and while in the foster care system,” Dimon stated, adding, “I had a lot of trust issues.” It was the stability of her relationship with Cynthia Dean, her Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) that helped Dimon move ahead.

As she began to trust again, Dimon also became open to new possibilities and her grades improved. At an after school activity sponsored by the National Society of Black Engineers she met Apache Sanders, who came every other week to talk with students about science and engineering. What began as a mentoring relationship grew and in 2014 Dimon was adopted by the Sanders family.

Now, as the reigning Miss City of Maricopa’s Outstanding Teen, Dimon focuses

on service to other children in foster care, including speaking to prospective foster and adoptive parent panels. “The cool thing about panels are that I have an opportunity to give them a small glimpse of my life in preparation for their kids,” Dimon explained. “I also love that I get to team up with my mom and volunteer with her!”

“There is no doubt in my mind that my path would be totally different if it weren’t for my parents. If I can reach back and encourage families to foster and adopt, then I’m helping the next. Thank you, foster parents, for all that you do. I would not be who I am if I hadn’t met my Mommie and Daddy!”



Dimon Sanders competes in the Miss Teen Arizona pageant on June 24. Follow the pageant at <http://www.missarizona.org>.

Adoption and Guardianship Training

DCS is offering a free informational session for families caring for children in the custody of DCS who are considering adopting or becoming a guardian.

Foster parents may receive 2 hours of credit toward their required renewal hours. Child care is available for children ages 2 and older.

Topics include: Visitation, Parental Rights, Liability and Court Involvement and Support

and Resources. Classes run from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on the following Wednesdays: July 13, August 10, and October 12. On September 14, the presentation will be in Spanish.

All classes will be held at Arizona’s Children Association, 711 E Missouri Ave Suite 300, Phoenix. Registration is required. To register or for more information, call Arizona Kinship Support Services at (480) 748-9269.

What Is In the Best Interest of the Child?

I must ask myself this question multiple times in a day. From the moment we say yes to a placement, all we know is that we will have the opportunity to share our love with yet one more child, and hopefully be able to give them a sense of security and love. Many of us may not really understand the depth of what the child in our care has gone through, but just the fact that they have been removed from maybe the only family they have ever known, is traumatizing within itself.



A Bright Future for Your Child

So from the time a child walks through our door, our mission is to minimize additional trauma. Often when we question ourselves about how something may or may not be affecting the child in our care, we can do this by asking, “What truly is in the best interest of this child?”

When we are able to identify things or people that put a smile on their face, we want to put our efforts there whenever possible. One of our jobs as a foster parent is to always help our child feel safe, loved and a sense of belonging. This is our foundation for how we will go forward and advocate for what is in their best interest.

How do the children react when they have had or will have parent time (visits)? This answer will vary from child to child, but for

the most part, we know that a child and parents relationship is important, and we want to help to nurture that the best we can. On our end we can be excited for the child that they will have this time. We can talk about it multiple times before pick up time, and then when they return we can be excited to find out what a great time they had.

Some of our children need to go to various doctor appointments. When there is not a safety issue it is in the child’s best interest for the parents to participate as well. After all, when a case plan is family reunification, we want the parents to stay tuned in to their child’s needs.

As a foster parent we become the main caregiver and learn what makes our child tick. It is important that we never stop advocating for what truly is in their best interest, whether it be something that took place during parent time, a play date with a neighbor, therapy session or even a party in your own home. This is when we need to take a moment and step back from the situation and concentrate on the child. We are learning what gets the child upset, what relaxes him/her, where he/she needs growth, what makes him feel safe. It is not what we like or are comfortable with, but what is going to benefit the child most. What is in their best interest?

— Mimi Condon is a foster and adoptive mom. Her column, “A Bright Future for Your Child,” is a regular feature in the Arizona Statewide.

CMDP Covered Services

Foster caregivers do not pay for medically necessary or dental fees for children in foster care. Members and foster caregivers should not be billed for any services that CMDP covers. Be sure you list CMDP as the responsible party. Do not give your own personal information. If you have to sign any forms, please write “(foster parent’s name) for DCS/CMDP.” Should you receive a bill, contact a CMDP Member Services representative at 1-800-201-1795. Also visit the CMDP website for a wealth of health care information. Check it out at

<https://dcs.az.gov/cmdp>.

AZAFAP Courage for Children Awards Honors Foster and Adoptive Parents

The Arizona Association for Foster and Adoptive Parents recently held their annual Courage for Children Awards Celebration. Award recipients were:

■ **Lyle and Sandy Reed**, Queen Creek, received the *No Place Like Home Award*, given to a foster and/or adoptive family that has cared for children in the system for a minimum of twenty years (does not have to be consecutive).

They were nominated by Maxine Arrington, who said, “Sandy and Lyle Reed are truly an inspiration to all of us in the foster adopt world. Their continued willingness to provide for not only those that have been adopted but for the orphans of our state is so Christ like and uplifting. They deserve to be recognized for their love and devotion to all children that enter their home and even those living outside of their home. Thank you Sandy and Lyle for touching my life.”

■ **Jacquelyn and Martin Dalton**, Gilbert, received the *Healer Award*, given to a family that has worked extensively with medical and/or behavioral health issues in their foster and/or adopted children.

They were nominated by Laura Riggs who said, “I’ve gotten to know the Dalton Family since 2011 and admire all they have done with the children they have raised, fostered and adopted — from special needs, hearing impaired, handicapped, to all the above that require such unconditional love and care.”

■ **Mathew and Maxine Arrington**, Mesa, received the *Second Mile Award*, given to an outstanding family that goes the second mile for their foster and/or adopted children, i.e., to keep a sibling group together, with new experiences, etc.

They were nominated by Kathryn Pidgeon who said, “Maxine and Mathew Arrington are angels from above! They are foster/adoptive parents who have successfully adopted eight former foster children into their home, including 2 sets of siblings. Along with their biological son — they are now a family of 11! Maxine and Mathew did not intend to end up with such a large family. A year ago they were a family of eight: Mom, Dad and 4 sons and 2 daughters. However, they could not turn their backs on siblings that needed to stay together so they lovingly opened their hearts and their home this past year to accommodate 3 sisters and never looked back! The Arrington children are bright, engaging, kind and loving.”

■ **Michele Case**, Peoria, received the *Take a Break Award*, given to a respite family who cheerfully and dependably provides respite for other foster and/or adoptive families.

She was nominated by Tyra Sosnicki who said, “Michele provides respite for the hard child, the aggressive child, the loving child, the angry child, any child — any child who needs a break from their placement. She does it with a loving heart and never says no. She even said yes to a child when his current placement could no longer keep him and became his full time foster mom. Michele has received extra training to help all children with needs. She wants them to be successful in her home and their foster/adoptive home. Everyone loves to go to Meema’s house.”

■ **Tarisha Caldwell**, Phoenix, received the *I Can’t Hear You Over the Noise Award*, presented to an adoptive family that has adopted teens or a foster family that specialize in fostering teens.

She was nominated by Lisa Marks who said, “Tarisha Caldwell is an admirable example of an incredible foster parent who goes above and beyond for each child she cares for. Tarisha only fosters teenagers, and teenage boys at that! She fiercely advocates for the educational, social, and emotional needs of the youth in her care and is unbelievably proactive in their treatment plans, case plans, and ensuring their mental and behavioral health needs are being met all while providing a tremendous amount of love to any child in her care. Not only that, but she truly values sibling relationships and works diligently in preserving those relationships. She adopted 2 brothers a year and a half ago who also had an additional older brother that had not yet achieved permanency. Shortly after she adopted the 2 brothers, she moved forward to have their older brother placed with them. A few months ago, Tarisha adopted their older brother, just months before his 18th birthday. It was his dream to be adopted by Tarisha and he is so grateful to be a part of her family and home. The children in her care are continuously prospering because of the nurturing, structured and loving home that Tarisha provides.”

■ **Darci and George Rivera**, Gilbert, received the *Family to Family Award*, given to a foster family who is especially good at working with biological families toward reunification and/or adoptive families toward unification.

They were nominated by Kim Eacott who said, “Darci and George Rivera were instrumental in our decision to do foster care. They were becoming licensed and hoping to foster/adopt. We became inspired and decided to foster only, although we ended up adopting three children. Over the past three years, Darci and George have had 12 children in their home. Even though none have gone to severance, they have helped bio parents reunify with their children, and continue to support and guide some of the families.”

■ **Angela Teachout, Anika Robinson and Susan Woodruff** received the *Courage for Children Award* for their work in passing HB 2442, also known as Jacob’s Law (see the article on page 2). This award is presented to a group or individual who leads systematic change that improves services for children in Arizona through legislative, political and/or social action. Recipients of this award are selected by the AZAFAP Board.

Congratulations to these foster and adoptive parents and thank you to all our wonderful foster parents for the wonderful work you do!

Your work to help Arizona’s most vulnerable children — those who cannot help themselves — and to support their biological families is very much appreciated. As a Department, DCS could not do the work we are mandated to do without you! You are very much appreciated.

Need to Change your Child Care Provider?

No need to request a new DCS Child Care Assistance Referral. Now you can contact your assigned DES Child Care Specialist to make this change! Their name and phone number can be found at the bottom of the Child Care Assistance Approval notice or you can call toll free 1 (877) 822-2322.

Watch Kids Around Water!

Good water safety practices and constant supervision is the cure to prevent child drowning and non-fatal drowning incidents. Most children drown in backyard pools, but some children drown in areas of open water, toilets, buckets and bathtubs.

DCS Seeks to Improve Foster Parent’s Experiences

DCS is in the process of improving the way it recruits, develops and supports foster families. In an effort to solicit ideas on how best to improve the current system, focus groups with newly licensed foster parents were held in Tucson and Phoenix in March. Using a method designed to solicit ideas for improvements, facilitators from the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids (NRCDR) led focus group participants in an exercise to solicit ideas for improving DCS recruitment, orientation and ongoing support of foster parents. The full report is available online at <http://1.usa.gov/1UruS9C>.

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Justice

Justice is a girly girl with a vibrant personality. She enjoys doing her makeup, nails, and hair. She loves to express herself artistically and best shows it through writing, drawing, and painting. Someday in the future, Justice hopes to write a book about her life journey and how far she has come.

Justice is a social butterfly. She loves spending time with other people and likes to make others laugh. She maintains a good academic standing in school when she applies herself and hopes to try out for cheer and volleyball when she gets to high school. Justice looks forward to any opportunities that she can travel and her favorite spots include visiting California and Northern Arizona.

Justice says all she wants is "to be happy and loved." She is an amazing girl who needs someone to show her what a real family is. She hopes to be a part of a one- or two-parent home where she is either the only child, or the oldest child.

Justice was born in 2001.



★ *Shining Star* ★

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Meet This Month's Shining Star: Jenna L.

Jenna is a generous girl who is always thinking of others before herself. And she is proud of making things for her friends. She recently decorated a picture frame to give to one of her friends. Jenna is very social, friendly, and great with other kids.

Jenna has several different favorites when it comes to food. She loves donuts and Takis but she especially loves teriyaki chicken with rice. In addition, Jenna says "fruit snacks are everyone's best friend!" But she doesn't like peanut butter and jelly.

Jenna's favorite color is pink and her favorite movie is *Legally Blonde*. She likes to go shopping on weekends or play sports with her friends. Jenna likes to play soccer, football, basketball and volleyball.

Jenna was born in 2003.

★ *Shining Star* ★