

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Meet This Month's Shining Stars: Aaron, Erica and Samantha

Erica, Aaron and Samantha are a close knit sibling group who enjoy spending time outdoors.

Erica says she is a good friend because she will always stick up for people. She hopes to be a professional track runner when she grows up, or possibly be an artist. She is proud of being the fastest female track runner at her school right now. Erica says she enjoys math class because, "I like how it makes me think!" Erica would like to get better at art and dreams of going to Disneyland one day.

Aaron has aspirations of becoming an engineer when he grows up as he loves to build things. He also enjoys swimming, playing the game *Subway Surfers*, and watching cartoons. Aaron is proud that he knows how to cook and bake. He says he is best at making hamburgers. Aaron loves animals — dogs, cats, birds — you name it! Aaron would like to visit Egypt one day to see the

pyramids.

Samantha loves practicing cartwheels, playing basketball, and swimming. Her favorite subject in school is math and she especially likes multiplication and division. When Samantha is with her friends, they like to play tag and talk. Samantha loves *Star Wars* movies and the TV show, *Girl Meets World*. Samantha's taste in clothing matches her personality; she loves to wear bright colors.

Erica was born in 2004. Aaron was born in 2006. Samantha was born in 2007.



★★ Shining Stars ★★

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Betty

Betty is a bubbly, thoughtful and artistic girl who loves to read. She enjoys going to school and learning; her favorite subject is reading because she loves diving into a good book.

When Betty isn't reading, she likes to play Barbie's with her friends and design different outfits, especially dresses, in her sketch book. In fact, Betty wants to be a fashion designer when she grows up.

Betty has a passion for singing and dancing, which is why she particularly loves *American Idol* and a variety of Disney movies. When Betty wants to jam out, she listens to Mariah Carey or Beyoncé so she can sing along to their music.

Betty would like to try gymnastics or join a cheerleading team one day, and hopes her forever family will let her explore these



opportunities. She dreams of visiting Disneyland one day.

Betty was born in 2004.



Fall 2016

In This Issue...

Shining Stars: Erica, Aaron and Samantha, and Betty ■ 1

Foster Care Tax Donations ■ 2

Hotline and DDD Policy Changes ■ 2

Reviewing Your House Rules ■ 3

Vaccines, Measles and the Flu ■ 3

Ask Dr. Sara About Zika ■ 3

Looking Back, Looking Forward: Simone Biles ■ 4

Additional Adoption and Guardianship Trainings Offered ■ 4

A Bright Future for Your Child: Advocating for the Child in Your Care ■ 4

The Importance of Family Meals ■ 5

Helping Children with School Issues ■ 5

Shining Stars: Patrick and Jayden M. ■ 6

The Arizona Statewide is published quarterly by the Arizona Department of Child Safety.

Foster Care Tax Donations Cost Zero and Benefit Foster Families Statewide

Every day organizations across the state reach out to children in foster care and their caregivers to offer support and services that change lives. Swim lessons paid by Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation. Parent’s Night Out or Christmas in July from the Arizona Association for Foster and Adoptive Parents. A beautiful recycled bicycle from Recycle Your Bicycle. Shoes and socks from Casa De Los Niños. A family friendly visitation room in Yavapai County. A bed from Arizona Helping Hands. Clothing from Helen’s Hope Chest. Backpacks and back to school clothes from Navajo County Friends of CASA. Art camp from Free Arts for Abused Children. Each of these organizations, plus 22 additional organizations, benefit from the Qualifying Foster Care Tax Credit, which in turn, benefits children in foster care.

Mostly what we hear about this tax credit is, “it seems too good to be true.” The good news is, it’s not. It’s great, and it helps organizations across the state to meet the needs of the growing number of children coming into foster care. For 2016 there have been two important changes to this *credit*. First, the donation limit has been increased to \$500 for individuals and \$1,000 for those filing jointly, and second, you can make your donation until April 17, 2017, (the tax filing deadline for 2016) and it will count for your 2016 tax year.

Here’s how you can help. For FREE!

Go to the Arizona Department of Revenue website at www.azdor.gov

Click on “Tax Credits,” and then click on “Qualifying Foster Care Charitable Organizations for 2016.”

Look over the list of 30 organizations and donate up to \$500 if you’re single and up to \$1,000 if you are a married couple filing jointly to one or more of the organizations on the list. You do not need to itemize to qualify for the tax credit.

When it comes time to file your 2016 taxes, go to the www.azdor.gov website and print out Form 321 or take the receipt for your donation to your tax preparer and you will get a credit for your donation. It is that simple, and true. This valuable donation will do a lot of good for children in foster care. (Please note that the credit taken cannot exceed tax calculated. Please seek advice from your tax advisor.

Questions? Contact Lin LeClair, tax preparer, adoptive mom and member of the board of the Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation, 520-320-1041 or email lin@1stchoicetaxservices.com.

— by Kris Jacober, Executive Director
Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation

Jacob’s Law — In Case You Missed it
Check out our previous issue of the *Arizona Statewide* newsletter for an in-depth article on Jacob’s Law, H.B. 2442. This new legislation provides parameters for 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). The issue is available online at <http://bit.ly/2c9AXpl>.

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

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.

Hotline Reporting Policy Changes

The DCS Office of Quality Improvement has issued a brief summary regarding when the DCS Hotline is and is not required to take reports. These policies and procedures were effective August 6, 2016.

■ If the identity or location of the victim, victim’s family or perpetrator is unknown or cannot be reasonably ascertained, the Hotline is not required to take a report. Prior to making a report screening decision, the Hotline will take steps to ascertain the family’s identity and/or their location.

■ The Hotline is not required to take a report if all of the following apply:

- ❖ The suspected conduct is not criminal conduct; and
- ❖ The suspected conduct occurred more than 3 years ago; and
- ❖ There is no information or indication

that a child is currently being abused or neglected; and

❖ The alleged child victim is not currently vulnerable.

■ The Hotline is not required to take a report solely because:

- ❖ The parent is seeking inpatient treatment or an out-of-home placement for a child’s behavioral health needs; or
- ❖ The parent brought into the home a child whose behavioral health needs pose a risk to the family.
- The Hotline will no longer take reports on DES certified child care homes.

More detailed information is available in Chapter 1, Centralized Intake Hotline in the Policy Manual, available at <http://bit.ly/2bOdpGn>.

DDD Policy Change Announced

Another new policy effective August 6, 2016, focuses on children with developmental disabilities (DDD) in out-of-home care.

As of August 6, 2016, if a child becomes eligible for DDD services while in a licensed foster home, the licensed foster home is to be referred to DDD to become a Child Developmental Certified Home.

If the licensed foster home chooses not to, or is denied certification, the child can remain in the placement if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child.

More detailed information about the changes please refer to Chapter 3 Section 9.3 in the DCS Policy Manual, available at <http://bit.ly/2bOdpGn>.

Double Check for Kids in Cars

The weather may be cooling down somewhat, but it is still too hot for children to be left in the car. To help you remember your precious cargo, place something you use often, like a purse or phone, in 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.

Reviewing Your House Rules

Whenever a new child is placed in your home, it provides foster parents an opportunity to review, update or modify any household rules. It also provides the child entering the home the opportunity to learn about how your family operates, what is expected of him or her, and the consequences for not following rules.

Following are some tips for creating, modifying, and maintaining the household rules for your home and family:

- **Keep in mind the child’s age and their level of development.** Children hit developmental milestones at different rates. This can be more pronounced if a child has any special needs or a history of trauma.
- **Consider the child’s history.** A child’s history and experience can impact what rules you may want to set and maintain, such as rules about privacy.
- **Keep things simple.** This tip is especially true for younger children and for children who may be more concrete in their understanding and comprehension. For older

children and youth, talking about household rules can create an opportunity for discussion and negotiation about rules and expectations, which can help an older child feel some sense of control over his or her life.

■ **Keep rules posted in an open area for all household members to see.** Doing so can be a good visual reminder of the house rules and expectations. This can be especially helpful for new children or youth who are still learning the rules.

■ **Review and modify as needed.** Keep in mind that household rules can be modified and changed to fit your parenting style and how your family is working at any given time.

Household rules can help all of the children — current children and new children alike — know what is expected of them and what they can expect from you, all with the goal of helping children and youth feel safe and secure in your care.

— Taken from *Adoption Resources of Wisconsin*

Vaccines: Be Prepared for Flu Season and Avoid the Measles

With Fall just around the corner, can the flu season be far behind? Here’s some helpful information to help you stay healthy.

Children under 6 months of age are too young to get immunized. So it’s up to us to protect them — by making sure all the people around them get immunized.

Children can get their first flu vaccine at 6 months of age. When they first get the flu vaccine, they need a booster 1 month later (this applies to children under 9 years of age). They can then get the vaccine yearly.

The flu virus changes every year. How well the flu

vaccine works can vary. This year, the nasal flu vaccine was found to not be as effective. So the only option for this season is the injection.

Another important vaccination is the MMR shots for Measles, Mumps and Rubella. There is no treatment for Measles. So prevention is the only solution.

You have the power to prevent your child from getting the measles. Children need two doses of the MMR for the best protection; the first at 12- 15 month of age and the second at 4- 6 years of age. Vaccines are free to CMDP members.

Ask Dr. Sara

Staying Safe From Mosquitoes and the Zika Virus

As Monsoon Season winds down in Arizona, what does that mean for you and your family? For many of us it is not only the start of school, but also mosquito season.

There are a number of diseases that can be spread by mosquitoes. West Nile, Malaria and of course, in the news now, the Zika virus. So what is the Zika virus and why is everyone so worried?

Zika is a virus that causes a fever rash, joint pain and pink eye. It can also cause muscle pain and headaches. Symptoms can last for several days to a week. Most people are not ill enough to go to the hospital. Once infected with Zika, you are likely to be protected from future infections.

Most people get Zika by being bitten by an infected mosquito. It can also spread from a mother to her fetus and through sex. When an infected person is bitten by a mosquito, the insect then can infect another person

Getting Zika infection while pregnant can cause the baby to have microcephaly, a birth defect of the brain and other severe fetal brain defects. There have also been increased reports of Guillan-Barre syndrome, an illness of the nervous system in areas affected by Zika. There have already been 1,658 cases of ZIKA in the US. In July, the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported local spread of the Zika Virus in Florida.

There is no vaccine or medication for the Zika Virus. So what can you do to avoid getting the Zika Virus?

- Avoid areas that have the Zika Virus. The CDC has advised pregnant women not to travel to countries with local

transmission, and authorities have issued a travel advisory for Miami.

■ Take steps to avoid mosquito bites. Mosquitoes that spread Zika are aggressive daytime biters, but they can also bite at night.

■ Dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs.

■ Cover the crib, baby stroller and baby carrier with mosquito netting (be careful that the infant cannot get entangled in the netting).

■ For babies and children – always follow instructions when applying insect repellent.

■ Do not use insect repellent on infants under 2 months of age.

■ Do not use products containing oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-menthane-diol (PMD) on children under 3 years of age.

■ Use screens on windows and doors.

■ Empty standing water around your house.

No cases of Zika virus infection associated with breastfeeding have been reported.

Visit the CDC website for more information on how to prevent mosquito bites: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/prevent-mosquito-bites.htm>.

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

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Looking Back — Looking Forward: Simone Biles

Editor's note: This column typically tells the story of an Arizona child, but with the Olympics so fresh on our minds, we are expanding our horizon for this issue.

At 4 feet. 9 inches tall, 19-year-old Simone Biles is the most decorated U.S. gymnast (male or female) of all time. With her Olympic wins in Rio, Biles became the sixth woman to have won an individual all-around title at both the World Championships and the Olympic Games.

While her sparkling smile and bubbly energy shines through her routines, Biles life didn't begin as happily. As a child, her mother struggled with substance abuse and her father was not around. Through the dedication of her

grandparents, Biles and her sister moved from Ohio to Texas.

On Christmas Eve in 2002, the Biles formally adopted the girls. Biles first tried gymnastics during a day-care field trip at the age of six.

"When I was younger, I thought every kid was adopted," she says. "I didn't understand why people made it such a big deal. To me it's just normal."

"Raising kids is just a wonderful thing" said Ron Biles, Simone's adoptive dad. "You get to see them grow and be a part of that and I can't think of anything more satisfying."

Congratulations to Simone Biles and everyone on Team USA!

Additional Dates for Adoption and Guardianship Training

DCS continues to offer 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, Support and Resources, Liability and

Court Involvement. Classes run from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on the following Wednesdays: October 12, November 9, and December 14. On September 14, the presentation will be in Spanish.

All classes are 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.

Advocating for the Child in Your Care

When a child is placed in our home we immediately become a member of the child's DCS team. With our state at just over 18,000 children in care, we as foster parents need to help our children's families reunify as quickly as possible and/or help our children reach a healthy permanency outside of their biological parents. When we follow through on the areas listed below, we can be a great help to the entire team.

■ **Rapid Response** (within 72 hours of placement): When children first enter into the DCS system, a Rapid Response behavioral health service provider will come to the child's placement to assess their immediate behavioral

Threats; Children's Needs; and Characteristics of out of home placement for each child. DCS encourages the participation of parents, children age 12 and older, out-of-home care providers and, when appropriate, extended family members in the case planning process.

An additional focus of the family-centered case plan is a description of the behavioral changes of the parents necessary for the children to safely return home. A list of services provided to the family is also included.

■ **Communication** (weekly or monthly): It is beneficial for the parent to stay closely involved in their child's life so that the transition home is successful and smooth for both parent and child. Check with your DCS Specialist (DCSS) first, but if there are no safety concerns, consider using a journal that will go back and forth to visits with the child or set up an email account, should that be the preferred method. Share the child's needs, happenings, improvements, upcoming appointments or any facts that may be important. Similarly, weekly or monthly emails are a great help to the rest of the team. Team members will vary, but at the very least you will want to include the DCSS and the Guardian ad Litem (GAL).

If at anytime you need assistance with any of the above, or simply need contact information, and are unable to communicate with your DCSS or his or her supervisor, please call the Warm Line at 1-877-543-7633, Option #3.

Thank you for advocating for our kids!!
— Mimi Condon is a foster and adoptive mom. Her column, "A Bright Future for Your Child," is a regular feature in the Arizona Statewide.

DCS Seeks to Improve Foster Parent's Experiences

DCS is in the process of improving the way it recruits, develops and supports foster families. 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 comprised of recently licensed foster parents 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>.

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>.



A Bright Future for Your Child

health needs, provide valuable information to their placement about connecting the child to Behavioral Health services through a Provider Agency and depending upon region of the state, may enroll into behavioral health services. If a child in DCS custody is not currently receiving behavioral health services, then the child should be enrolled with a behavioral health provider, if needed (For more information visit <http://bit.ly/2d0w4IV>).

■ **Case Planning** (within 60 days of child coming into out of home care): Every child and family receiving ongoing services from DCS has an individualized family centered case plan. The family centered case plan includes the following components: Permanency Goal for the child, and expected date of achievement; Risk areas; Safety

**Free Newborn
Intensive Care
Program (NICP)**

Any baby who has spent at least 5 days in a newborn intensive care unit (NICU) qualifies for this free statewide program. NICP provides in home community health nursing services provided by a Registered Nurse (RN) to assist families caring for NICU discharged babies. Families can be birth families, or caregivers such as relatives or foster parents. Services include physical assessments and evaluations regarding nutrition, feeding, and child development, as well as assistance finding medical care, community resources, counseling, and parenting skills. Visits may continue for 12 months or longer if needed. Available in all areas of the state, referrals usually come from the hospital but may also come from the provider community or parents and caregivers. For more information, contact Brenda Nichols at 602-364-1462 or Brenda.Nichols@azdhs.gov.

**Behavioral Health
Services for Children
in Foster Care!**

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) is committed to ensuring the availability of timely, quality health care for foster children, including behavioral health services through their three contracted regional behavioral health authorities (RBHAs) and the Children's Rehabilitative Services (CRS) program. For more information visit <http://bit.ly/2d0w4IV>.

The Importance of Family Meal Times

Surveys tell us that less than half of the families in the United States actually sit down to a meal on a regular basis. But family meals are strongly related to the development of adolescent mental health and stability. One Harvard Medical School study found that there are nutritional, as well as social, emotional and academic advantages for children whose families share meals together.

Family mealtimes are important because they:

- Offer a sense of belonging and mutual trust.
- Provide opportunities for adults to model table manners and nutritious food choices.
- Encourage adult-child communication skills such as listening patiently to each other and expressing one's opinion in a respectful manner.
- Foster family traditions and enhance

cultural heritages.

Busy families may want to consider the following to promote family meal times:

- Is your family too busy? Are there creative ways to fit a family meal time into your schedule?
- Can you limit distractions? Do you need to wean your family away from TV during meals?
- A great conversation starter is to ask about each other's day. But be sure to focus on the positive. Take turns listening and make sure everyone feels respected.
- Build teamwork by preparing and serving meals together.

Making the family meal time a priority may be one way you can model healthy family life to the children for whom you are caring. They may not seem to appreciate it now, but you are sowing seeds into their future!

Helping Children Who Have Issues at School

Foster children typically perform poorly in school for several reasons. Multiple displacement from home to home often times results in foster children becoming dissatisfied with school, and quickly losing interest. Transcripts and school records are often missing or incomplete when a student enrolls into a new school, many times resulting in the children not being enrolled in classes designed to best help them, nor the resources they need to succeed. Along with this, many times, teachers and administrators are not aware that the student is a foster child, nor aware of the many emotional difficulties and traumas that foster children face, in general.

For a foster child to succeed in school, the foster parents need to act as an advocate for the child. Everything about a new school, from the teachers, students, hallways, classrooms, cafeteria, and all that happens inside the walls of the building, will be a reminder to the student that he is in foster care, and not his own school, nor his own home. Foster parents can help this time of transition and displacement, as they help their foster child adjust to a new home and new school.

Often times when a foster child is enrolled into a new school, a period of time may elapse before the new school gets the transcripts from the previous school. This may result in the child being placed in the wrong classrooms and courses, or classes in which the child is simply not equipped to succeed. Foster parents need to ensure that all transcripts, grades, and school records are sent to the new school as soon as possible. Foster parents can best aid their child by calling the previous school and having them sent over to the new school.

At the outset, foster parents should meet with the child's teachers, school counselor, and administrators upon enrollment of the child. During this meeting, foster parents need to begin building a strong foster parent-school partnership. If possible, the foster parent should inform these school employees appropriate information about the child. This information may go a long way in helping school employees understand the foster child's background. Foster parents can also suggest

that teachers set reasonable homework tasks during the first few weeks and months of the child's placement.

Communication is vital in order for a foster parent and school partnership to work effectively. Foster parents must work even more diligently than other parents at two way communications between school and community via phone calls, emails and the school website. Foster parents also need to embrace the newest technology in such communication modes as SKYPE and other virtual media that favor meaningful parental involvement. Another way foster parents can be involved is by attending school functions, student activities, parent nights and find ways to volunteer within the school.

Visitations with birth parents and biological family members can often be stressful emotionally for a child in foster care. Indeed, foster parents may find that they are "starting over again" with the child. This can very well carry over into school the day after the visit, or even the day of, as the child becomes anxious about the visit. Consider informing teachers about any upcoming visits in advance, as well as letting those involved know what transpires in a visitation setting, the possible outcomes afterwards, and how to best respond to them. This simple step, of informing teachers and school administrators beforehand, can go a long way in helping all to understand the child's behavior, as well as helping to defuse any problems that may occur.

Foster children do indeed have a tremendous amount of challenges awaiting them as they move to a new home and to a new school. By setting up weekly contact, establishing homework strategies, and by creating a working relationship with teachers and school administrators, foster parents will be able to help their foster child be successful both in academics and behavior in school, in home, and later on in society, as well.

— Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for 14 years; he and his wife have cared for more than 50 children. He can be reached at drjohndegarmo@gmail.com or at his website <http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com>.

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Patrick

Patrick has one dream and that is to be adopted! He says he would love to belong to a forever family and adds that “sometimes in life, something bad happens to you so you can get into something good.” Patrick gets along great with other kids and makes friends easily.

Math is Patrick's favorite subject in school and he hopes to be an architect when he grows up. He's proud of how well he performs in math class.

Patrick enjoys drawing, playing video games, having water balloon fights, throwing around a basketball, and making new friends. He is one social kid who has a great sense of humor!

Patrick likes to stay busy during breaks from school and he especially loves going to Dave and Busters or Castles N' Coasters. He also enjoys going to the movies and swimming.

Patrick was born in 2003.

★*Shining Star*★



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Meet This Month's Shining Star: Jayden M.

Jayden is one hilarious boy who has an incredible sense of humor. He hopes to become a basketball player when he gets older and wants to be “the greatest ever.” His favorite basketball player is Michael Jordan.

Jayden could eat breakfast foods for all meals of the day. He loves waffles, pancakes, and Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal. Jayden says he also likes pizza, but not with cheese!

Jayden enjoys playing Minecraft, Digimon and all kinds of sports. A Justin Bieber fan, Jayden makes it clear that he is definitely *not* a country music fan! Jayden's favorite class in school is computer lab. He also enjoys P.E. and trying out different sports.

Jayden just got a harmonica and is learning how to play. He hopes to get really good at it! Jayden was born in 2007.

★*Shining Star*★