

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Meet This Month's Shining Stars: **Monica and Connor**

Monica is a very bright girl who enjoys being active. Gymnastics is her sport, especially doing cartwheels, handstands and the bridge.

She has four American Girl dolls and loves to play house with them. When she's not playing with her dolls, she likes to play *Minecraft* — but she's quick to remind you that it's just a game. She also likes the movie *Hook*, and says she used to like the movie *Frozen*, but she's watched it so much she's now tired of it.

When she grows up, Monica wants to be a hair stylist. And she's off to a good start. In school she likes math (she's learning division) and writing stories about her dolls. Monica says she is proud of earning 3 "Bark Paws" at school. Monica is not a picky eater. She says she like donuts — glazed donuts with lots of sugar — as well as pepperoni pizza, tacos, spaghetti, hot dogs, corn, broccoli, apples and ice cream.

Connor is an extremely intelligent young man who loves *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* — especially Leonardo. In fact, he even has his own reversible shell and shield! Even his T-shirt and flip flops match.

Beyond the turtles in a half-shell,

Connor enjoys playing video games with the X-box 1, particularly *Killer Instinct*. His favorite comic book is *Dr. Strange*, the master of the mystic arts, who uses spells for good.

In school, Connor likes science. He is currently working on a slide show project on Uranus for an astronomy class.

Connor says he likes all kinds of pizza. He also says he is a good friend because he's been working on being able to hold his anger and is protective of his friends.

If he could visit anywhere, Connor says he would like to visit San Francisco — because it looks nice and he's never been there. He says his favorite holiday is Christmas because it's cold and he might have the chance to see snow for the first time.

Monica was born in 2008; Connor was born in 2006.



★★ **Shining Stars** ★★

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



When it comes to sports, José is all in! He enjoys watching the Giants play football and he also enjoys playing soccer. If he can't do either of these, he likes to play *Lego Batman* games and quad racing games on the Xbox 306.

José enjoys math class; he is currently learning about the metric system. When it comes to food, he enjoys pepperoni pizza, hot dogs, ice cream, corn, tamales and, of course, enchiladas.

When asked what he's most proud of, José says he's proud of the ways he has learned to handle his anger management issues.

José was born in 2006.



Special Adoption Issue 2016

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

Arizona Celebrates Adoption Month

Governor Doug Ducey has proclaimed November 2016 as Adoption Month in Arizona. The state recognized National Adoption Day events at courts throughout Arizona as over 450 children become part of forever families.

Maricopa County’s Superior Court celebrated 285 finalized adoptions, the most of any courthouse in the country for the ninth consecutive year. Celebrations were also held in Pima, Pinal, Yavapai and Yuma Counties.

“Arizonans owe a debt of gratitude to the families who have opened their hearts and homes to children who, until now, have only hoped and prayed for a forever family to love them,” said Governor Ducey. “This Thanksgiving, these precious children will be celebrating as a permanent

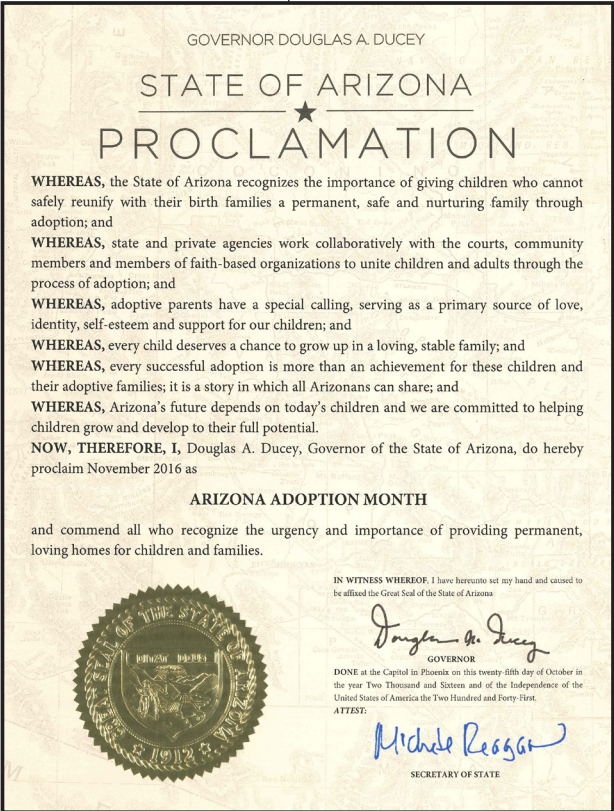
member of a real family, and the thanksgiving around each of these tables will be full of joy. We don’t want any child to remain in the foster care system because every child deserves a loving, forever family.”

National Adoption Month also helps raise awareness for over 400,000 children in foster care across the nation, and over 18,000 Arizona children in foster care. These children, through no fault of their own, come into state care as a result of neglect or abuse. With help and support, some can be safely reunified with their families. For many, their greatest hope is that a loving family will embrace them as their own.

“Children suffering from the trauma of abuse, neglect, and detachment deserve a chance to heal and have a safe, forever family,” said DCS Director Gregory McKay. “Every Arizonan should consider children in foster care as their own, finding a creative way to help. Adoption is the biggest leap of faith and brings children stability, hope, and renewal. We are eternally grateful for everyone who helps kids in foster care and proudly acknowledge the courage of those taking the ultimate leap of adoption.”

The Governor’s Office and the Department of Child Safety extend their heartfelt gratitude to the hundreds of selfless families who will step forward this month to welcome children into their homes. The judges, court staff, and community volunteers are also deserving of thanks and recognition for the countless hours spent to help children in the foster system find permanent homes.

Thank you!



Safe Sleep Tips for Babies

Safe sleep practices help reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS):

- Baby should always sleep in a separate space such as a crib, play yard, or baby box.
- Avoid co-sleeping (sharing the bed with baby).
- Sleep spaces should be clutter free. Avoid blankets, toys, pillows and bumpers in the crib.
- Baby should always sleep on his or her back. Avoid positioning babies on their tummy, side, or propped up because they can roll over and suffocate.
- Keep the room at a good temperature and dress baby in breathable fabrics. Avoid

overheating by not using blankets or swaddling too tight.

- Avoid smoking around baby.
- Consider where baby will be sleeping while you’re not home; bring a portable pack and play or baby box. Avoid using the couch or recliner to place a sleeping baby, as many babies have died on these pieces of furniture by rolling over and suffocating.
- Other caregivers involved should be educated on safe sleep practices as well, so baby is always sleeping safely.
- Remember: You won’t hear a baby suffocate; it is a silent death and babies can suffocate in less than a minute.

Meet This Month’s Shining Star: Zoran



Zoran is fun and artistic! He loves to play video games, especially *Minecraft*. Zoran also loves to play and talk about *Pokémon*. In fact, he even draws his own *Pokémon*!

When he is not playing video games or drawing *Pokémon*, Zoran loves to watch cartoons and eat anything that doesn’t move. He has also discovered that he is a naturally fast runner and is considering joining his school’s track team.

Zoran was born in 2001.

★ *Shining Star* ★

**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. These children are also featured in the Children’s Heart Gallery. For more information on any of these children, and to see additional photos, please visit The Children’s Heart Gallery (CHG) childrensheartgallery.org

Federal Law Limits Long-Term Foster Care

Long-Term Foster Care, Long-Term Placement with a Relative, Long-Term Placement with a Non-Relative, or Independent Living — they are all formally known as Another Planned Permanency Living Arrangement (APPLA). But these case plan goals are no longer allowable for a child under the age of 16 under Public Law 113-183 (Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act).

Effective immediately, no child under the age of 16 may have a goal of Long-Term Foster Care, Long-Term Placement with a Relative, Long-Term Placement with a Non-Relative, or Independent Living.

Intensive and ongoing efforts to achieve permanency through reunification, adoption, or guardianship must be pursued for all children in care who are younger than 16. For children age 16 or older with a goal of APPLA, DCS must demonstrate that ongoing, intensive efforts toward reunification, adoption, or guardianship continue to be unsuccessful.

The permanency goal of APPLA may only be selected as

the permanency plan for youth in out-of-home care, age 16 and older, and only after all other preferred permanency options have been fully explored and there is a continuing compelling reason to assign APPLA as the permanency plan.

When a child has a goal of APPLA, states are required to show evidence of intensive, ongoing, efforts for family placement, including thorough efforts that utilize search technology to find relatives (including social media).

For youth under age 16 who already has a permanency plan of APPLA, federal guidance directs that the plan must be changed at the next permanency hearing. The decision on which goal to select will be made with the child and their service team in accordance with the policies and procedures set forth in Chapter 3: Section 2 — Family Centered Case Planning and Reassessment of the Case Plan.

The permanency goal/plan options for a youth under age 16 in out-of-home care are (in order of preference): Return to Family, Adoption and, lastly, Permanent Guardianship.

Easing Separation Anxiety Through Stability

Dealing with separation and loss is difficult for anybody. As adults, most have experienced this, and know who and where to reach out to when in need of help.

Separation anxiety, an excessive concern that children struggle with concerning the separation from their home, family, and those they are attached to the most, is a common issue for children in foster care. Indeed, the more a child is moved, from home to home or from foster placement to another foster placement, the bigger the concern becomes.

Children in foster care generally do not know how to handle these feelings and emotions. In attempting to do so, children may end up lying to their foster families, as they try to keep their new family at a distance, and at the same time, give the child a sense of personal control. They may create walls to separate themselves in an attempt to not let

others into their lives. Or they may express these feelings of isolation by lashing out in anger and frustration to those around them.

Though children in foster care do not necessarily blame their foster parents, the feelings of frustration and loss are strong within them, and foster parents may be the only people with whom they can release their emotions.

Placement disruptions in a child’s life increase the chances that the child will experience greater risks for future mental health services. The longer a foster child stays within the same foster home, the greater chance of emotional bonding. A sense of stability is formed, which is beneficial in regard to social behavior, and academic performance in school, in the community, as well as in your foster home.

Thank you for your patience and commitment!

Ask Dr. Park

Are My Children Getting the Medical Care They Deserve?

CMDP recognizes that the children in our care deserve special care and attention due to the trauma or neglect they may have encountered before coming into foster care, and due to the transitions and ever-changing situations that children in foster care may endure.

In addition to the routine well checks that every child should receive, it is expected that children in CMDP receive the recommended screening, assessment and enhanced visitation schedules for children in care. These include:

- Younger or nonverbal children who are suspected victims of abuse or any child with a chronic medical or developmental condition should be seen within 24 hours.
- An initial health screening or visit within 72 hours of removal so that the doctor can:
 - ❖ Evaluate for signs and/or symptoms of neglect, abuse or injury;
 - ❖ Evaluate current medical needs;
 - ❖ Check the medical stability of the child;
 - ❖ Prescribe medications or medical devices that the child needs; and
 - ❖ Schedule the comprehensive care visit (if it will be with the same provider, which is preferable, if possible).
- In the first 30 days of removal, children should receive a comprehensive evaluation called a Well Child or EPSDT visit. At this visit, the child is expected to have an

in-depth evaluation of growth, nutrition, developmental status, educational status, immunizations, behavioral health needs, dental health, physical health and additional needs. This visit should also include: referrals to specialists as needed, routine screenings, labs as needed and medications if necessary.

After the well visit, CMDP recommends a visit once a month for the next couple of months. This allows the doctor to monitor the child’s adjustment to the placement and assist you in helping the child.

Many caregivers ask CMDP how many visits a child receives at a certain ages. CMDP recommends that children are seen:

- Every month in the first 6 months of life
- Every 3 months from 6- 24 months of age
- And then, at a minimum, every 6 months to monitor their health, emotional well-being, development, psychosocial stressors, continued adjustment to their foster family and visitation with birth parents or other relatives. Transitions in placement, changes in visitation and separation of siblings are also events that indicate the need for closer support and supervision.

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

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provide sign language interpreters for people who are deaf, a wheelchair accessible location, or enlarged print materials. It also means that the Department will take any other reasonable action that allows you to take part in and understand a program or activity, including making reasonable changes to an activity. If you believe that you will not be able to understand or take part in a program or activity because of your disability, please let us know of your disability needs in advance if at all possible. To request this document in alternative format or for further information about this policy, contact your local office; TTY/TDD Services: 7-1-1. Free language assistance for Department services is available upon request.

The Importance of Maintaining Sibling Connections

Children and youth in foster care — and those who were adopted — lose many things and people who were familiar to them. But losing their siblings shouldn't be acceptable. Sometimes, however, due to difficult situations and limited space, siblings are separated. Research shows that sibling connections are essential to a child's development and emotional well-being. So, if siblings are separated, what can and should be done?

Maintaining safe and appropriate connections is crucial. Caregivers of separated siblings should work to ensure that, whenever possible, sibling relationships and connections continue and are nurtured. When that doesn't happen, children may feel a sense of great loss and grief which can lead to challenging emotional issues including:

- Sleeplessness and/ or nightmares
- Withdrawal from others and/ or once enjoyable activities
- Sadness, crying and/ or anger

- Confusion
- Loss of appetite
- Physical ailments (headaches and stomach aches)

Here are some suggestions on how you might help keep separated siblings connected, even when they can't live together:

- Plan regular and consistent visits
- Arrange for joint outings and/or camp experiences
- Set up joint respite care stays
- Phone calls
- Written letters, drawings, cards, and/ or emails
- Display photographs and/or artwork from siblings in your child's bedroom and the family home
- Include birth siblings in scrapbooks and/or life books
- Online video chatting
- Social media (when age appropriate)

“Sibling relationships — and 80 percent of Americans have at least one — outlast marriages, survive the death of parents, resurface after quarrels that would sink any friendship. They flourish in a thousand incarnations of closeness and distance, warmth, loyalty and distrust.”

— Erica E. Goode, Author of “The Secret World of Siblings”
for U.S. News & World Report

Celebrate Our Children Every Day!

How many children do you have? How many did you plan on? Our children are such incredible gifts and there is just no way to plan a family when you are a foster parent.

Early on, in many cases, we may be asked if we would be interested in adopting the child/ children in our care. This question is not asked because the DCS Specialist (DCSS) knows the parent's rights will be severed, and it does not mean that we, as their current placement, will be adopting them. Asking this question just helps the DCSS take note, should there be a need for a permanent home outside of the children's current parents.

A Bright Future for Your Child

Additionally, if you answered “no” to the question, it doesn't mean that you couldn't change your mind if the case plan changes from reunification to severance/adoption.

When you receive a placement it is always nice to know if they have any siblings. Whether you have a child in your home for a few months or adopt him/her, a precious gift that we can give these children is a way to help them keep healthy family connections.

If you adopt a younger child you may notice that they may not appear so bonded to their blood siblings, but this changes as they get older. Just knowing that they have other family outside of your home is an important fact that will give them another connection in their big world to help sort through future emotions.

What about a child's history with their biological family? You can go to <https://dcs.az.gov/data/dcs-forms> and download the

DCS Records Request form, CSO-1036A.

This tool is not only for you as the foster or adoptive parent but is also a resource for your child when they become an adult and need to review the facts for themselves. Another great resource is the hospital. If you need access to the child's birth records, contact your DCSS for assistance.

Whether or not you adopt the child in your care, there is a great organization out there with whom your family should engage. The Arizona Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents (AZAFAP) is truly a must for all foster and/or adoptive families.

My family just returned from the yearly camp trip up in Prescott. It was the most amazing adventure. For an extremely low price your family will spend a fun-filled weekend with other foster/adoptive families. Each family has their own cabin and are fed three full meals daily. Just some of the activities include a super cool playground, horseback riding, hiking, fishing, rock climbing, arts and crafts, ropes course, basketball, tennis, volleyball, bonfires and so much more!

AZAFAP also offers yearly trainings, a Christmas party, Dad's night out, Mom's night out, Christmas gifts, free bikes and many opportunities to make new friends, nurture old friends that share a strong common bond.

Thank you for all your love that you continue to share with your children. Remember that you are never alone in this beautiful life journey.

— 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>.

Jacob's Law — 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>.

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.

Suicide/Crisis Hotlines by County

Arizona child suicides increased from 38 in 2014 to 47 in 2015 and accounted for six percent of all child deaths. Here are the suicide/ crisis hotline numbers by County:

Maricopa County served by Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care: 1-800-631-1314 or 602-222-9444
Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz and Yuma Counties served by Cenpatco Integrated Care: 1-866-495-6735
Apache, Coconino, Gila, Mohave, Navajo and Yavapai Counties served by Health Choice Integrated Care: 1-877-756-4090
Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities served by EMPACT: 1-800-259-3449

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



Spunky and outgoing are only two words that describe Aaishah. She loves to write poetry and is very creative. Aaishah is a stylish young lady who loves dancing, spending time on the computer, and maintaining contact with friends. She has big plans for her future that include a college education and a visit overseas to China or Japan.

Her interests span the length of her imagination. Aaishah has a love for cooking and enjoys baking cakes; she dreams of whipping up culinary delights like fettuccine alfredo. Aaishah's enthusiasm, curiosity and zest for life are contagious. Like most girls, she enjoys painting her nails, making homemade jewelry and chatting about girl stuff. She likes helping others, particularly younger children in foster care. She also likes fashion and putting together stylish outfits.

Aaishah is interested in becoming a teacher, perhaps in special education. "I think I'll work as a special education teacher because special education kids are awesome and they show you cool things."

She is hoping to find a forever family with lots of love. She would like older and younger siblings and a pet. She said she would like to have someone help her with her homework every night; walk with her to the park and take her to a professional sporting event. "I want a family that's loving, caring and one that if you need them, they'll be there," she said. "They'll be there when you need them." Aaishah was born in 1999.

Reasonable and Prudent Social Media Use

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, WeChat, FireChat ... the list of social media platforms is growing and changing all the time. And so are the policies and laws governing foster care.

The federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act mandates "normalcy" for children in foster care by means of a "reasonable and prudent parenting standard" for decisions made by a caregiver. Normalcy means children in foster care are allowed the freedom to do the kinds of activities their friends do and to have the opportunity to participate in experiences similar to those of their peers who are not in out-of-home care. And as anyone with children in their homes can attest, normal activities for youth nowadays include social media.

Below are some tips for use of social media that aligns with "reasonable and prudent parenting." Use of social media by foster parents and the children in their care requires careful management and considerate monitoring. But social media use by foster parents also requires a critical decision before posting information to the internet.

While it may be tempting to forbid youth to use social media, this is seldom realistic nor does it comply with reasonable and prudent parenting standards to provide normalcy.

According to the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), "the Internet and mobile devices are too widespread and accessible. In addition, forbidding social networking may make it harder for youth to fit in with friends. Instead, foster parents can provide guidance and boundaries to help youth use media safely" (CWLA, Social Media: Tips for Foster Parents).

There are benefits to the use of social media including:

- Maintaining social ties to existing friends, siblings and others;

- Providing support when youth can share experiences with peers (e.g. FosterClub at <https://www.fosterclub.com/>);

- Maintaining family connections by sharing posts with approved family members; and

- Helping with self-expression by sharing videos, blogs, and other media to express their feelings and ideas, which can help them shape their identity and contribute to healing from childhood trauma.

Tips for Using Social Media:

- Never identify a foster child by name or by any other personally identifiable information (including their date of birth or initials).

- Never publish information specific to a child's case such as court outcomes, case plan activity or the status of the birth family.

- Be mindful of who will view social media posts. This may include the foster child's family and friends who may be extremely sensitive reading about their biological children on the internet, knowing it has become public information.

- Discuss social media use with youth in your care, particularly the CWLA series' tip sheet for youth <http://bit.ly/1cuP0k9>.

- Talk with your child's DCS Specialist about safety needs or concerns that may affect the youth's use of social media, especially if there have been any past issues with social media use.

- Set house rules early on for what's okay and what's not (samples of family media agreements for different age groups can be found at <http://bit.ly/28NbEeC>).

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

Xavier has life-long medical needs due to neglect that led to a brain injury early in life. But despite his limitations, this sweet boy is already a patriot. In fact, his favorite part of the day is when his school classmates bring out small American flags and all say the Pledge of Allegiance together out loud.

At school he also follows a command to use a mechanical device that turns on music in his classroom and engages in several therapeutic services at school. Xavier loves to be around people and responds well to tactile contact.

Listening to music — especially familiar Disney tunes — is one of Xavier's favorite at-home activities. He especially enjoys having others sing along and likes to hold hands and "dance" with others while in his assistance chair.

Since Xavier is non-ambulatory and utilizes a feeding tube, it's important that his adoptive family is located where he will be able to maintain the excellent services

he currently receives. Xavier needs a family who will be devoted to him and his lifetime need of care and who will utilize the life-long and late-in-life care that is available for Xavier upon adoption.

Xavier was born in 2008.



★ **Shining Star** ★

Arizona Statewide

Arizona Department of Child Safety
P.O. Box 6030, Site Code CH010-22
Phoenix, AZ 85005-6030



Arizona Statewide is published by the Arizona Department of Child Safety to inform foster, kinship and adoptive families across the state.
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Meet This Month's Shining Stars: **Azera and Aaron**



Azera and Aaron are a hoot to be around and would add a lot of joy to any family!

Azera says she is a good friend because she sticks up for people. She is proud of being a good friend to others.

When Azera is with her friends, they like to paint their nails, especially with pink, mint, and

glitter polish! Azera loves to go swimming, eat s'mores, play football and basketball, and play in fake snow. She is a talented singer and hopes to be a professional singer or performer when she grows up.

Azera's favorite foods are donuts with sprinkles, apples, carrots and broccoli. She says she could eat carrots all day!

Aaron loves to ride his bike, play outside, play video games and watch television. He enjoys playing baseball and says he'd like to get better at it, too. When Aaron spends time with friends, he likes to build with Legos and race toy cars.

Some of Aaron's favorite shows are *Ninja Turtles*, *Transformers*...anything on Cartoon Network! Aaron says that Buzz Light Year from the movie, *Toy Story*, is his hero. When asked what he wants to do when he grows up, Aaron says, "I want to be a firefighter man and a cowboy man."

Aaron I would like to tell his forever family that, "I'm smart, I can count to 115, and I like Burger King."

Azera was born in 2006. Aaron was born in 2009.

★ **Shining Star** ★