

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Meet This Month's Shining Stars: Sarah and Trina

Separated by only 2-3 minutes, Sarah and Trina are your typical bubbly and happy "girly girl" twins. Both love perfecting their artistic abilities. Each girl can spend hours coloring, drawing, painting, and even sculpting in different media, including clay and origami!

Outdoors, Sarah and Trina stay active jumping on the trampoline, playing basketball, or playing on their jungle gym. Although they share the same birthday and creativity, each girl shines with her own talents and abilities.

Sarah, the oldest, is currently involved in cheerleading and loves the challenge it presents to her. A former gymnastic student, she likes to participate in competitive events with her squad and see how far she can push herself. She also enjoys swimming and family outings like camping. On a rainy day, Sarah can be found listening to music, watching Anime, and completing large puzzles.

On the other hand, Trina is more the hands-on sister. While both girls are extremely crafty, Trina likes to express herself in a more artistic and abstract way. She finds great enjoyment in painting, sewing, knitting, and making different kinds of jewelry. Trina also likes to sing and play basketball. She would like

to attend ASU one day and study Paleontology.



Together, Sarah and Trina are a joy to be around! They are learning to support each other in new ways as they grow into young ladies, and they balance each other out very well.

These sisters are looking to be adopted together into a family who will teach, guide, and nurture them. The girls would thrive in a one or two parent home with other siblings, but not in a home with boys younger than them. Pets are joyously welcomed, especially cats and dogs. Sarah and Trina were born in 2004.

★★ Shining Stars ★★

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Trystin

Looking good and "presenting well" are both very important to Trystin. A quiet boy, he enjoys "just hanging out" with his friends during recess.

Basketball is Trystin's favorite sport, and one he would like to get better at playing. Off the court, Trystin enjoys playing various board games. He also likes to play *Minecraft* and old Atari games including *Centipede* and *Pac Man*. In the winter, he enjoys playing in the snow.

When it comes to music, Trystin has eclectic tastes: He enjoys both rap and country and would like to learn how to play the accordion!

Trystin was born in 2006.



Summer 2017

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Celebrating Foster Care Month 2017

National Foster Care Month was celebrated in May again this year, and Arizona's foster parents received recognition from both DCS Director Greg McKay and Governor Doug Ducey.

Director McKay thanked foster parents via email saying, in part, "By opening your hearts and home to one or more children you have shown them by example that love does indeed prevail, especially in the most difficult times.

"Caring for a child that has experienced the trauma of being removed from their home requires a special dedication and great sacrifice. Countless appointments. Paperwork. Obstacles. Frustrations.

"But along with that, I know you have also experienced joy, hope, laughter and the truest sense of purpose. Becoming a foster parent is never easy, but I'm sure you will agree, it is worth it. You are truly making a difference."

Governor Ducey issued a proclamation declaring May 2017 as Foster Care Awareness Month, and recognizing foster parents for providing



Arizona's children with "the opportunity to be part of a caring family while helping them reconnect with their families through reunification."

The Foster and Adoptive Coalition of Tucson held their 10th annual Blue Ribbon Celebration, hosted by Thoroughbred Nissan (see photos) where Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild echoed the Governor's sentiments in his proclamation adding, "Many young people reach their 18th birthday and age out of foster care too often unprepared and without the ongoing support and guidance of caring adults."

Around other parts of the state blue ribbons were tied to commemorate the number of children in foster care.



Upcoming Foster Parent Celebrations

Even though the official month to celebrate foster care has ended, Arizona Blue Ribbon has several events coming up to honor foster families.

Registration has opened for an Arizona Rattlers playoff game on Saturday, June 24, 2017. The game is free for all children in foster care and their families and caregivers, but advance registration is required.

Please keep in mind that there will be

loud noises, bright lights, darkness, and large crowds, so this event is not for people with sensory difficulties.

In late June, registration will open for the Sunday, July 30th Phoenix Mercury game. The Mercury will be playing the San Antonio Stars.

Registration and other details for both events are available at <http://arizonablueribbon.org>.

Arizona Budget Supports Foster Care

Governor Ducey signed Arizona's 2018 budget into law on May 12, 2017. Here are two highlights from the new budget that support foster care:

■ **\$6.1 Million To Upgrade The Arizona Department Of Child Safety's Outdated Electronic Management System CHILDS:** For too long, the agency has utilized an outdated IT system that makes it unnecessarily difficult to track cases and serve customers. By investing in critical updates to this digital infrastructure, DCS will come into the 21st century, guaranteeing that families can be served in the most efficient way possible.

■ **\$2 Million For Kinship Caregivers:** Family members, including fictive kin, are often the best option for children entering foster care as they provide a sense of normalcy and belonging during times of chaos and uncertainty. Unfortunately, little financial

support is available to assist these families with the daily needs of the children placed in their care.

A licensed foster parent receives a monthly stipend to help with the cost of bringing a foster child into their home. But most extended family members and fictive kin (a placement with a significant relationship to the child) are not licensed foster parents at the time of placement.

The newly authorized "kinship stipend" provides a little extra financial support to eligible family members and fictive kin and, while the amount is less than what a licensed foster parent receives, it can help provide for the little things that are important for the care of the children.

The Department encourages all kinship caregivers to consider becoming licensed to receive expanded financial and other supports from a licensing agency.

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.

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>.

Outcomes Improve for Arizona Children in Foster Care

The Arizona Department of Child Safety has seen significant achievements over the past two years resulting in improved outcomes for children in out-of-home care:

- More children are exiting the Arizona foster care system than are entering it for the first time in seven years.
- From April 2016 to April 2017, the amount of time it takes to place children decreased from 32 hours to 8 hours.
- In 2016, DCS achieved an 11 percent increase in children achieving permanency over the prior year.
- The total number of open reports has been reduced from more than 33,000 in April 2015 to less than 6,500 today.
- Over the past two years, DCS has safely reduced the

backlog of inactive cases from more than 16,000 to less than 500 today.

By supplementing policy and process improvements with investments in programs that work, we can help ensure that children and families throughout Arizona are safe and secure. While these changes have garnered the Department national recognition, it would not have been possible without the support of you, our foster, adoptive and kinship families.

Thank you for what you do every day to care for, encourage and support Arizona’s children in foster care. You are a valuable part of the team and we couldn’t do it without you!

Again, thank you!!

Ask Dr. Park

What is Trauma-Informed Care?

When talking about trauma-informed care, we are not talking about a trauma center or hospital that is taking care of people who have had traumatic injuries from a car accident or a fall that resulted in a physical injury.

Trauma-informed care or the trauma-informed approach means that health care providers, doctors, psychologists, therapists, teachers, parents and those involved with a child understand the effects of traumatic experiences. This knowledge helps everyone understand the child who has experienced these traumatic experiences.

How does trauma affect a child?

- Trauma can affect the child’s ability to protect themselves from abuse.
- You may notice the child’s inability to control mood or behavior. This can be overwhelming to the caregiver and cause feelings of frustration and anger.
- The child may not be able to describe traumatic events that have occurred.
- The child may not be able to trust the adults or providers around them, and may not be able to tell you about their experiences or feelings.

Being exposed to trauma can dull the child’s emotions.

The child’s previous exposures to trauma can make them see the world very differently, and can lead to behaviors that may be self-destructive or dangerous.

What can you expect from your health care providers?

Your health care providers need to have the same trauma informed approach when treating your child.

A trauma informed provider will

- Realize the impact of trauma;
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma;
- Respond by using this knowledge to treat your child; and,
- Work to prevent more trauma.

How can you, as a caregiver, help this child?

Caring for a child who has had traumatic events in their life can be challenging. Caregivers may feel frustrated at their attempts to connect with their child.

One of the foundations that can be used to develop this relationship or connection with your child is safety.

When a child has been removed from their family, they may have had experiences of abuse or neglect. And although they are safe now, the child cannot experience the

safety of your family until they develop trust for you and others in your home. Although children may now be secure and happy, and can recognize that they are now safe, they still love their family of origin, miss them, and worry about them.

Tips for Building Trust with a Child

Here are some ideas on how to build trust with a child for whom you are caring:

- Learn about the hard experiences they have endured
- Learn the child’s likes and dislikes
- Do what you say you will do — follow through
- When you make a mistake, apologize, and ask for forgiveness
- Play with them, let the child decide what to play
- Give them options to choose from
- Notice when they feel scared; protect them from fear
- Explain the “why” of your behavior, sometimes even if they don’t ask
- Listen to what they have to say (even if it seems inconsequential)
- Accept that they may love their biological parents forever
- Find things to enjoy about the child
- Help them identify their emotions
- Change habits of sarcasm to habits of sincerity
- When giving consequences, explain why
- Avoid saying anything negative about them or their family
- Help them understand the difference between a bad behavior and a bad person; they are not bad just because they had a bad behavior
- Always be bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind visit www.circleofsecurity.net for more ideas.

— Sara Park, M.D., is the Chief Medical Officer of the Arizona Comprehensive Medical & Dental Program (CMDP) for the Department of Child Safety.

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Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors and Kinship Caregivers

Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors (AZGA) started in Tucson in 2010, as an informal group of grandparents who found themselves raising their grandchildren. Some were struggling financially; others needed help with medical, legal or other resources. Everyone needed other grandparents to share their stories, cry, vent and — more importantly — to laugh and feel good about their grandchildren.

Today AZGA shares the common goal of becoming advocates for children in grandparent/kinship care. They host an annual statewide Advocacy Summit for grandfamilies and other kinship families. Summits include sharing stories, resources, and developing advocacy skills. They also host monthly regional meetings, regular advocacy trainings, and keep members informed of opportunities to be heard at the Legislature.

AZGA's policy agenda includes:

- Financial stability for kinship families
- Simplifying navigation of complex state services
- Respite and recreation for grandparents and grandchildren
- Greater access to higher education

Currently there are three regional Grandparent Ambassador Groups that work together to form the Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors.

Ursula Garza Named Statewide Kinship Specialist

Ursula Garza is the new statewide DCS Kinship Specialist, replacing Lauri Devine who has retired.

Garza has a long history working in child welfare. She began her career working for the Department in Casa Grande. She later worked for Arizona's Children Association in northern Arizona before moving to Phoenix.

A kinship caregiver herself, Garza well understands the needs of kinship caregivers and works with families to help them understand the DCS system.

Based at the DCS Central Office in mid-town Phoenix, she can be reached at 602-255-2628 or Ursula.Garza1@AZDCS.GOV.

We Say Goodbye

As foster parents we love our child and support reunification until our child's plan changes from reunification to severance. Once the case plan changes, we then wait for a few court dates including a possible severance trial. These trials can be nonexistent because the parents don't show up for court or can last as long as three days.

In the end, when and if the judge rules to terminate the parents' rights, it is a huge loss for many. Not only have parents lost their child, but a child has lost their parents.

I have witnessed at least six severance trials and, even if I know the right ruling is severance, because that truly is in the best interest of the child, there isn't a time that I didn't have a heavy heart and eyes filled with tears for the biological parents.



A Bright Future for Your Child

Within my journey as a foster parent a very good friend taught me that some of our children's parents "don't know what they don't know." In other words, if a parent is in the right frame of mind, or perhaps had a different upbringing, they wouldn't have had their child removed to begin with. It truly is a very sad day when our children lose their birth parents.

In a training about attachment and bonding, the doctor stated that although some of our children don't ever attach to their birth mothers, they do bond. The nine months that they are carried would leave an unexplained hole in a child's inner self, if they were removed at birth and never told that they were adopted. Wow!

It is not uncommon for my children and me to chat at the meal table about fostering,

adoption, birth parents, judges, GAL's, and DCS. I believe it is important for them to know where they came from and why. We keep our discussions about our current foster child in a positive light out of respect for his parents as well as for the birth parents of our other adopted children.

One day our children may need the emotional support of each other. It is important that they know that their birth parents do love them and that the judge carefully made the decision for them not to return home in order to keep them safe.

A couple of weeks ago, our current foster child, whose parents' rights were recently terminated, was scheduled for a goodbye visit with his parents. I spent the evening prior to the visit writing this letter to them (name has been changed for confidentiality):

"I am truly sorry that Nathan is not coming home. It has always been our intention to love Nathan and keep him safe until it was time for him to leave our home. We now promise to continue to love Nathan unconditionally, keep him safe, healthy, help him to grow spiritually, intellectually, let him be a kid and guide him into adulthood.

"Nathan will know he is adopted and he will know that you both loved him very much. When the day comes and Nathan is an adult and he inquires, we will carefully provide documents to answer his questions.

"You have created a beautiful little human. He is so happy, funny, dramatic, sensitive, inquisitive and loving. Please take care of yourselves."

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

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Central Arizona GA (602) 465-0762
centralazga@gmail.com
Southern Arizona GA
(520) 722-5945
ldjas@msn.com

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
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

A Look at the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Ensuring educational stability and normalcy for children in foster care is a goal of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). This is a federal law and its provisions strengthen and improve upon the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth. ESSA is the first major overhaul of federal education law since No Child Left Behind. The ESSA contains key protections

for students in foster care to promote school stability and success, and requires collaboration with child welfare partners.

The key points for children in foster care include supporting children to remain in their home school, limiting changes in school placements and providing transportation to school in a manner that is "normal" and that ensures the safety of each individual child.

Legislative Updates

The recent legislative session ended with the passage of several bills of interest to foster parents. They go into effect in August.

S.B. 1360 — Limits the former placements that the Department must notify when a foster child returns to state care to only those that do not have substantiated or outstanding allegations, reports, or investigations.

S.B. 1380 — Clarifies that a denial, suspension, or revocation of a family foster home license based on a failure to obtain or maintain a fingerprint clearance is not an appealable agency action. Appeals must go through the fingerprint clearance board, not OLR.

S.B. 1380 also expands the confidential intermediary program (for adopted children wishing to contact bio family members once they turn 18) to include biological grandparents and other members of the child's extended biological family

S.B. 1194 — Authorizes the Department to consent to medical treatment after the Department has temporary custody of a child (fills in the three day waiting period from when the child is taken into custody to when temporary orders are signed). This authority continues as long as the child is in the custody of the Department.

Foster Parent Surveys Yield Strong Results

You've probably seen the email asking you to complete the DCS foster parent survey — and many of you have done just that! More than 1,600 foster parents have responded to the Department's survey, providing a 34 percent response rate.

Another 326 former foster parents (out of 943 who were contacted) — 35 percent — have responded to the foster parent "exit" survey. It is the intention of the Department to continue the exit survey as an ongoing, or rolling, survey.

Both anonymous surveys launched in Spring 2017 and the response rate has been exceptionally exciting, especially considering there was no added incentive offered to families who completed the survey. Administered by Arizona State University's College of Public Service and Community

Solutions — Center for Child, the survey is already providing valuable data to the Department. ASU staff will complete a formal report on each survey by the end of 2017, which will be posted on the DCS website.

This data is further supported by a recent doctoral thesis by Dr. Kimberley Watson entitled, *Seeking to Understand Motivation to Retain Foster Parent Licensure Using Self-Determination Theory*. Watson, who graduated from Grand Canyon University this Spring, worked with the Arizona Association for Foster and Adoptive Parents to gather survey data.

DCS is also continuing work with the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids to improve foster parent recruitment and retention. Results from this work will also be made available.

Comforting the Infant in Your Care

Babies suffering from abuse may show a number of symptoms. They may have a hard time getting to sleep, or waking up. Their body may be wracked with movement during sleep. Some babies suffer from delays in motor skills, as well as in speech.

Another effect of trauma may be displayed in a baby who is quiet and non-responsive. Other babies will seem depressed and withdrawn, and will not look you in the eye. Despite your attempts, you simply may be unable to soothe or comfort the baby.

Others will suffer from minimal weight or height gain. Babies suffering from drug related problems, due to prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol from their birth mother's pregnancy, may also suffer from prolonged crying, as well as being startled easily. Oftentimes, these babies will be overly sensitive to lights and sounds as well.

As a foster parent, it is important to provide consistent physical comfort to a baby

suffering from these symptoms. To develop healthy relationships, the baby will need to be held in your arms, providing love and warmth.

In fact, babies in foster care require a great deal of hugs, kisses, and physical contact from their foster parents. Physical contact helps babies learn how to develop trust in others. Speak to them often, in warm and pleasant tones, and with positive words of love and comfort. Encourage baby to be social, to interact with you and others, and to make eye contact.

It will also be important for their senses to develop further. Find ways for baby to use all of their senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching. Try to allow them to experience each of these every day.

— Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for more than 14 years; he is the author of *The Foster Parenting Manual*. He can be reached at drjohndegarmo@gmail.com or at his website <http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com>.

\$2 Million approved for Kinship Stipend
The Arizona Legislature approved \$2 Million to be used for a stipend of seventy-five dollars per month for a both relatives and non-relatives (also known as "fictive kin") providing care to dependent children placed in their homes by the DCS. This new Kinship Stipend, which goes into effect in August, replaces the Grandparent Stipend, which was not available to other relatives or to fictive kin caring for children in DCS custody. To be eligible for the stipend, the caregiver's income may not exceed two hundred percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

TANF Change to Support Fictive Kin
The Arizona Legislature approved an important change to the TANF "child only" cash assistance program, suspending the TANF "benefit cap" for children in DCS or tribal custody placed with "fictive kin," a placement with a significant relationship to the child. The Department of Economic Security shall allow cash assistance for an otherwise eligible dependent child during the period in which the dependent child is in the legal custody of the department of child safety, a tribal court or a tribal child welfare agency located in this state and is placed in unlicensed kinship foster care with a non-parent relative or unrelated adult.

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Kimberly

Kimberly loves to laugh, and will keep any family smiling! An active girl, she loves to play soccer and volleyball, and swim. She also enjoys doing arts and crafts and collecting jewelry.

When it comes to music, Kimberly especially enjoys Mariah Carey. Her favorite TV show is *Zoey 101*.

A good student, Kimberly says she likes school because of the "learning and friends." Science is her favorite subject, she says math is her easiest.

Kimberly would like to be in a home with a mom and a dad or two moms, and would like to have a sister her age to play with, but she is open to other family possibilities — as long as they are an active and encouraging family who spends a lot of time together.

Kimberly was born in 2006.



★ *Shining Star* ★

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Meet This Month's Shining Stars: Jason and Brian



★ *Shining Stars* ★

Jason and Brian are twins who are very caring, social and energetic!

The boys are proud to have recently taken on the important role of being the main caregivers for two puppies that their foster family recently adopted. They have taken on this role with great compassion as they see the puppies situation as similar to their own.

Jason is proud to say he is the oldest brother by two minutes. Both Brian and Jason love music. Brian enjoys country music while Jason enjoys the sound of hip-hop and R&B. However, both boys don't mind listening to the other's genre of music.

Jason and Brian love sports and seem to be pretty athletic. They have not been exposed to organized youth sports teams yet but they hope to in the near future. Jason and Brian show excitement and enthusiasm when introduced to new activities where their creative, imaginative and active personalities can shine.

Jason and Brian were born in 2005.