

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

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

Isaac has one thing on his mind — video games! Isaac loves all things “gaming,” and will talk at length about his favorite games and gaming systems. In addition to his love of video games, Isaac is a very creative boy who likes to draw and write stories. He would like to get more involved in physical activities like martial arts or basketball.

Isaac is an extremely bright boy, and does well in school. He is smart, animated, curious and artistic, too. His favorite subjects in school are Science, Computer Lab, and Art. At recess, you'll probably find him on the swings.

Isaac is very articulate, and does a great job of advocating for his own wants and needs.

One of Isaac's wishes is to master another game system, the Wii U.

He's got another wish figured out, too: “A million more wishes.”

Isaac was born in 2002.



★★★Shining Stars★★★

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

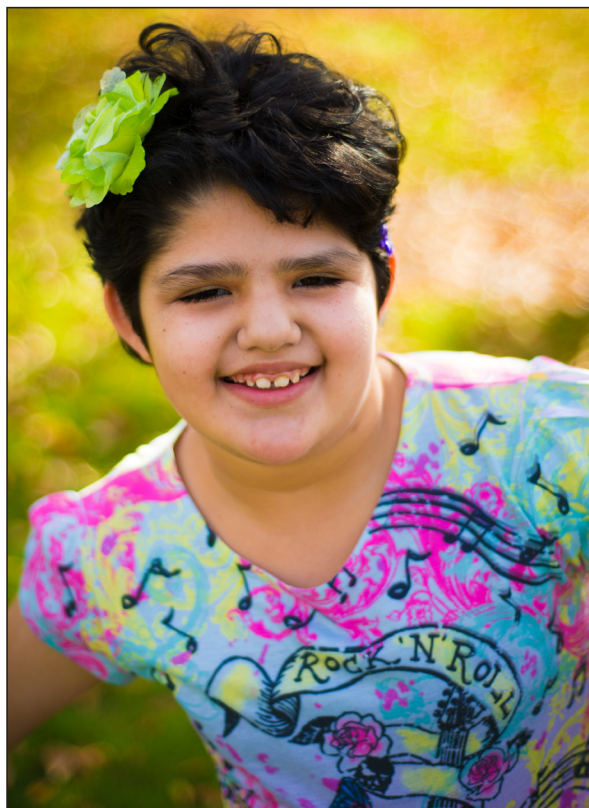
Lizeth, who likes to go by “Lizzy,” is a sweet girl. She has a beautiful smile and playful personality.

In her spare time, she enjoys playing on the playground, dressing up, playing with her dolls and watching movies.

Some of her favorite movies are Home Alone and Tangled.

Lizzy loves to show off her dance moves. At a recent trip to the Musical Instrument Museum, she enjoyed shaking the maracas over her head and dancing around! She quickly jumped from one instrument to the next, loving all the different sounds that were produced.

Lizzy was born in 2003.



Special Adoption Issue
Winter 2015

In This Issue...

Shining Stars: Isaac and Lizeth ■ 1

Adoption Month Highlights ■ 2

Shining Star: Maurice ■ 2

Shining Star: Arturo ■ 3

Looking Back, Looking Forward — Millie Etherton ■ 3

Ask Dr. Sue About Trans-Fats ■ 3

Foster Parent Kudos ■ 4

A Bright Future: Adoption Finalization Tips ■ 4

Chandler Church Supports Independent Living Youth ■ 5

AFFCF Helps Teens in Foster Care Find Careers and Employment ■ 5

Kids-NeedU Region Training Dates Set ■ 5

Shining Stars: Chayton and Elijah ■ 6

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Arizona Celebrates Adoption Month in November

Across the U.S., November is National Adoption Month, but it seems no state does as much as Arizona. Across the state nearly 500 children were adopted at celebrations in five counties: Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Yavapai and Yuma.

Governor Janice K. Brewer proclaimed November as Adoption Month in Arizona. In her proclamation, she said, “Arizonans in every community are stepping up to give the more than 15,000 Arizona children and youth in foster care the support they need, serving as mentors, teachers, faith leaders, caseworkers, advocates and family members — individuals dedicated to making a difference.” She also recognized the collaborative efforts of DCS through the Children’s Heart Gallery, noting that “the community has come alongside the State to support children in need of an adoptive placement through the Children’s Heart Gallery, which features children in need of a forever family.”

Once again Maricopa County’s

volunteers were on hand to assist as the adoptions of more than 320 children were finalized on November 22. This marked the 15th annual celebration; over the past 15 years more than 3,000 children have been adopted on Adoption Days in Maricopa County.

November 8 was the 14th annual celebration for Pima County, where 103 children were adopted by 74 families. Udall



Adoption Day Photos are courtesy of the Pima County Juvenile Court.



celebration, held at Durango Juvenile Court, was the largest in the nation. More than 250

Park hosted the event on Saturday November 8, where park gazebos were transformed into makeshift courtrooms where judges and court clerks filed formal adoption proceedings.

Pinal County’s celebration was held on November 1, where 29 families adopted 38 children. On November 22, 17 children were adopted by 11 families in Yuma and another 13 children were adopted in Yavapai County.

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 www.azdes.gov/cmdp.

Meet This Month’s Shining Star: **Maurice**



Maurice is a huge fan of fast cars, sports, and science experiments. When given the option to pick his favorite car, he could not name just one! Maurice has 3 favorite cars...A Lamborghini, Ferrari and Bugatti. He hopes to build a car one day that is faster than a Bugatti. His love of cars does not stop there; Maurice enjoys playing any video game that involves racing.

Maurice’s favorite subject in school is science, because he loves doing experiments. Maurice has even made a ‘steam powered rocket boat’ before! Maurice’s favorite field trip was to the science fair. He was fascinated by the various experiments.

Maurice is proud of his responsibilities when it comes to household chores. He is on “doggy duty” and pulls weeds. He says he would like to get better at pulling weeds “so he doesn’t have to pull weeds so much”.

Maurice’s favorite foods are pepperoni pizza and doughnuts; he likes all kinds of doughnuts but chocolate is his top choice. When asked if there was something special about him that he would like others to know, Maurice happily said that he likes to make other people laugh.

Maurice was born in 2002.

★ **Shining Star** ★

Meet This Month’s Shining Star:

Arturo

Arturo wants to make the world a better place. He has two wishes: to end world hunger and for peace throughout the universe.

His favorite holiday is Christmas, but not for the usual reasons. He prefers to give presents than to get them. If he knows one of his friends wants something, he tries his best to get it for them for Christmas.

In school, he enjoys Art and Math classes. He draws for fun. He also enjoys playing video games and loves racing games, especially the Need for Speed games.

Arturo was born in 2000.

★Shining Star★



Looking Back, Looking Forward — We Are Worth It!

I spent about 10 years of my life going from one placement to another. I finally aged out of the system at 18 years of age. As a result of my life growing up, the ones I needed most hurt me and left me empty. I became numb to life and reality. I was a master at smiling and saying I am ok to people when really deep down I was so crushed.

All I ever wanted was a forever family. Honestly, my pillow was my best friend. It caught all my tears; it listened to me, and did not label me or judge me and it was always there to give me a hug. I was unwanted, neglected, abused, not loved, unseen, worthless, a mistake and unheard by many.

At age 29, I could tell something in my life needed to change. I had so many walls around me and convinced myself that I did not need people. Surviving and isolation was my way of living for many years. I was trapped in the battle of my own thoughts, shame for nothing I did wrong, and guilt. I began to come out of hiding little by little where I felt the safest and that was in my church. I then took a risk and started to build relationships with people and accepted community. Of course I did everything I possibly could to sabotage them, justify, and even asked people to go away. This did not work. I then started to let my wall down and I began to feel, dream, and trust again once I knew no one was

going anywhere!

All because someone knew how hurt and wounded I was, I was able to begin my journey to healing. For the first time EVER, I have the biggest family through community. God has given me earthly parents who I adore with all of my heart. I even gained a sister who was adopted a year ago out of the system.

My mom and dad inspire me daily. Moving into family hasn’t been the easiest thing for me; however I am loved, cared for, and not alone.

I have had to fight for my own life every day since birth. Sometimes I really felt hopeless and even planned my own death and did things that most people would not understand, but I can tell you most of my acting out was unintentional. I don’t believe I would be so in love with Jesus, alive, and or healing if it wasn’t for strangers who fought for me and still fight for me and my freedom. On those days when I just can’t fight, I know I have people who are praying for me and fighting. Love has changed me in so many ways.

Every child, no matter the age was made for love. We matter, have purpose, and are not a screw up or a mistake! We are all worth it!!!

— By Mille Etherton

Ask Dr. Sue

What Are Trans-fats and Where Are They Found?

Eating foods with trans-fat (or trans fatty acids) raises low-density lipoprotein (“bad” cholesterol), lowers your high-density lipoprotein (“good” cholesterol) and is linked to heart disease. Trans fat provides no health benefit and there’s no safe level of eating trans-fat. The FDA, American Heart Association, and the Institute of Medicine all agree that trans fatty acids have a stronger effect on the risk of heart disease than other unhealthy fat.

The most commonly eaten form of trans-fat is in processed food. Manufacturers have voluntarily reduced or removed trans-fat from their products; however, trans-fat can still be found in foods that label the amount of trans-fat

as “0 grams.” Manufacturers are allowed to label products containing between 0 to 0.5 grams of trans-fat per serving as “0 grams.” This labeling is a problem because people that see the 0 g trans-fat on the nutrition facts label probably don’t know that they’re still eating consuming trans-fat. Trans-fat can still be found in foods like crackers, cookies, cakes, frozen pies and other baked goods, snack foods (like microwave popcorn), frozen pizza, and coffee creamers.

— Susan M. Stephens, M.D., is the Medical Director of the Arizona Comprehensive Medical & Dental Program.

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Kudos to Foster Parent Toniann Jeffrey

I first had the pleasure of working with Toniann Jeffrey about a year ago when she was the foster placement for one of my most difficult teens. This particular teen had severe behaviors that ultimately led to her disrupting due to safety concerns for the placement. During the time she was placed with this foster mom, however, Toniann was always fair, level-headed and incredibly kind towards this youth.

Toniann had informed me that her passion was helping teens and to let her know if I ever had another youth that I felt would be a good fit for her. When Megan’s therapeutic foster placement disrupted through no fault of her own, I immediately thought of Toniann as placement.

Megan needed a kind and gentle foster family who was willing to open their home to her and help her move forward while not forcing her to try to forget her past. Most of all, Megan needed someone who would understand her and not give up on her. Toniann and her entire family have done exactly this.

Toniann truly has gone above and beyond the call of being just a foster placement and has allowed Megan to become part of her family. Toniann shows support for Megan in all areas of her life including but not limited to being her number one advocate at school, spending countless hours in the hospital with Megan when her stomach pains became very severe, having girl’s nights, helping Megan to track her food and control her stomach pain and helping Megan find supports in the community while helping to continue relationships Megan values from her past.

Having Toniann involved with Megan’s life has made my job as a case manager much less stressful as I have a placement I know will do what my young adult needs and truly supports her. Foster placements like Toniann are few and far between and I cannot express how much I appreciate having her in my young adult’s life.

Editor’s note: This foster parent recognition was written and submitted by Mollie Linden, MSW, a DCS Specialist IV in the Young Adult Program in Maricopa County.

Liquid Nicotine is Toxic

Liquid nicotine, used to refill e-cigarettes, is a highly toxic substance, especially when ingested or absorbed through the skin. It quickly produces serious or even fatal effects in children. Yet liquid nicotine containers are not required to have child-resistant packaging. Please keep nicotine products out of reach, locked and away from children.

Adoption Finalization Tips

Adoption! What an exciting time for your family. The day our adoption became a reality was when we received a letter in the mail from our attorney, stating the date and time of our adoption, and to bring our child with us. This was one of the most exciting moments of our lives — almost like going to the hospital to deliver!

The adoption day can be overwhelming for your child. Depending on their age, one could over stimulate them with the celebration that we have planned. If I could do it all over again for one of our children, I would not have left the court house and headed straight to Disney Land. Yes, we had fun, but the first 24 – 36 hours were very exhausting for our 4-year-old to process. Mom of the year award?

If your Adoption Specialist doesn’t have the records from the hospital for your child, they can request them for you. Should you have an older child, you can go through their current doctor for medical records or even contact CMDP, depending how long your child has been in care.

How much will it cost to adopt my child?

Nothing! The only cost to you will be when you go to apply for the Birth Certificate.

Do I need a lawyer and how do I choose one?

Yes. Your Adoption Specialist will provide a list of attorneys for you to choose from. The State covers up to approximately \$2000, which normally will cover all costs.

Although there is one special day when you adopt your child, the days that follow are equally important for the stability of your entire family.

Never stop reassuring your child how special they are, that you are so fortunate that they are your son/daughter, and that you love them more now than you did one minute ago. And when the opportunity is there for you to spell out all the

names in your family, just watch their eyes light up when everyone, including them has the same last name.

— Mimi Condon, pictured above at the finalization of her son, is a foster and adoptive mom. Her column, “A Bright Future,” is a regular feature in the Arizona Statewide.

Save the Date!

The 2015 Foster Carnival will be held at Encanto Park’s Enchanted Island in Phoenix on Saturday, March 7, 2015, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event is free for children in foster care and their families. It will include food, drinks and educational events, in addition to amusement park rides. Major sponsors of the event are Grace Walk Community Church, the owners of Enchanted Island Amusement Park and Arizonans for Children.

A Bright Future for Your Child

Some fun thoughts for you as your plan your adoption:

- Put together a birth announcement to mail out
- Plan to take photos at the end with the Judge (no videos)
- Who do you want to invite to the court room? (court rooms are small)

Important steps leading up to the adoption day:

- Do you need an adoption certification or do you need to renew it? (Certification is good for 18 months.)
- Have you and every adult in your household been fingerprinted? (Adoption fingerprint requirements are not the same as for Foster Care)
- If you will be receiving adoption subsidies, work with your ADCS Adoption Specialist to be sure that your child is at the correct level (1,2,3).

Some Frequently Asked Questions:

How do I get questions answered about my child’s health history since birth?



Chandler Church Supports Independent Living Youth

Christmas can be a difficult time for youth who have aged out of foster care and have limited or no family connections. This year, however, youth who participate in Arizona's Independent Living Subsidy Program Maricopa and Pinal Counties are experiencing the joy of receiving. Through the generosity of Chandler Christian Church in Chandler, each of the more than 300 youth received two fabric shopping bags — one bag filled with personal grooming items including towels, toothpaste, deodorant, hair care products and brushes, and the other bag filled with household cleaning supplies. In addition, another 40 or so youth who most recently moved into their own homes received kitchen starter kits, including dishes, pots and pans and other handy utensils.

Planning began in September with a meeting including DCS staff, Chandler Christian Church staff and Arizona 1.27. Following that, Danny Hughes, Pastor of

Outreach Ministries, developed promotional materials to engage their congregation. "We called our little gift project 'Foster Christmas' with the tagline 'Foster Love. Foster Hope. Foster Christmas,'" Hughes explained. They handed out bags with lists of items to purchase following each of their four Sunday services. After the first week, more than 800 bags were distributed.

Sunday, December 7, members of the congregation gathered to organize all the donations (see photos) and fill the grocery bags with gifts. The gift bags were delivered to DCS offices in Phoenix and Apache Junction to be distributed to the youth by their case managers.

Pam Harris, DCS Youth Engagement

Specialist, oversaw the Maricopa County distribution. She reported, "We have reports of tears being shed due to the supplies that were gifted to one young lady in our program who was given her supplies this morning. She said that she has never received a gift like this before and she was incredibly thankful! Thank you so much for your beautiful ministry touching the lives of our youth!!"

Left photo: Bags are filled with personal care items for youth in the Independent Living Program are gathered in the foyer of Chandler Christian Church. Below: Members of the church sort items donated by members in preparation for assembling bags.



Kids-NeedU Regional Training!

Online registration is open for the Tucson training, which will be held Saturday January 31 at the Hilton Tucson East. On Saturday, February 7, training will be held at the Prescott Resort and Conference Center. Denise Goodman is this year's keynote speaker at both trainings. Six hours of advanced training credit will be available for those who attend the entire day. Training will be held in the Phoenix area in May 2015. Register for all trainings at <http://www.register6.net/AZDCS/>.

AFFCF Helps Teens in Foster Care Find Careers and Employment

Phoenix-based Arizona Friends of Foster Care Foundation has launched Keys to Success, a program that has already changed the lives of a dozen young men and women. These young people completed the pilot program last summer and are working, volunteering and planning for the future.

"For youth in foster care, the future is not statistically bright," said Kris Jacober, AFFCF Director. "As youth in foster care approach the age of 18, they must make the transition

to adulthood without family relationships to support them, and with few financial resources. The Keys to Success program is our way of bridging the gap and helping these youth have the best possible start when they leave foster care."

As a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, AFFCF receives no state funding. Funding comes entirely from generous individual, foundation and corporate donors. Learn more at www.affcf.org.

Meet This Month's Shining Star:

Chayton

Chayton wants to be a rapper when he grows up, like his favorite artist, Lil Wayne. Chayton chuckles and adds that he would “also like to be a wrapper, like on a candy bar,” so he can be famous.

Chayton is playful, friendly, funny, and sports-minded. His number one sport is football, but Chayton also enjoys playing soccer, baseball, and basketball. When he gets older, Chayton dreams of attending ASU on a football scholarship.

Chayton's favorite subject in school is math, and his favorite food is hotdogs. If Chayton had three wishes, he would wish to: be 19 years old, have a car, and be a wrapper/rapper.

Chayton wants to visit Jupiter (even if he can't land), Candyland (even if it isn't real), and Legoland because “it sounds like fun.” If Jupiter doesn't end up working out, he would also like to visit a beach.

Chayton was born in 2002.



★Shining Star★

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Meet This Month's Shining Star:

Elijah

Elijah loves cartoons and coloring! He has yet to meet a school arts and crafts project he does not love! Elijah also excels at drawing and painting.

Elijah is thoughtful and affectionate. He is eager to help around the house, either with running errands or doing chores.

He likes picking out a special treat when he goes to the grocery store and his favorite food is spaghetti and meatballs.

It is important for Elijah to have adoptive parents who will love and cherish him, and who will ensure that he has regular opportunities to feel connected with his Native American heritage.

Elijah was born in 2004.

★Shining Star★