

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Meet This Month's Shining Star:

Raneesha

Raneesha is lively, engaging and intelligent. While shy at first, she becomes quite outgoing once you spend a little time with her. She enjoys staying busy and is open to try any new, fun activity. Raneesha enjoys school and particularly favors science and reading. She has a particular knack for writing stories and letters. She has set goals for herself and hopes to become a doctor one day!

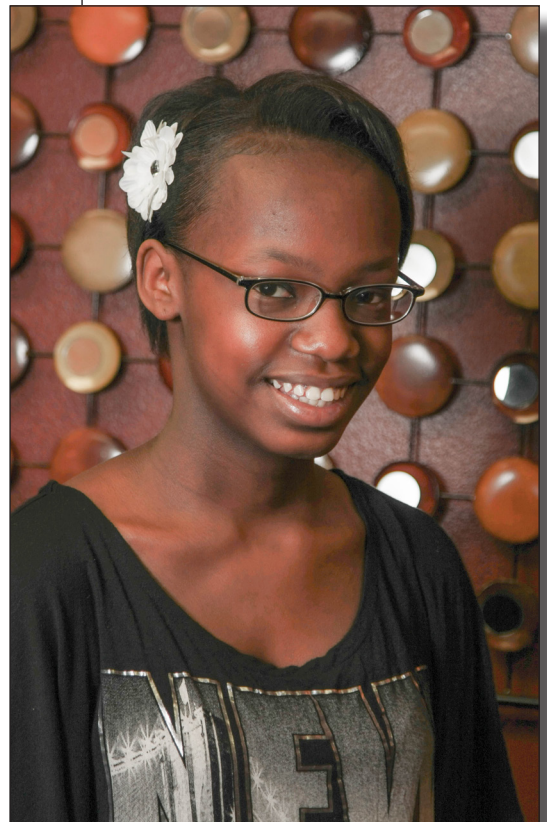
When she is stuck in the house, she likes TV, but you can usually find her in her room listening to music. Her favorite artists are Chris Brown, Trey Songz and Justin Bieber.

While she likes to try new foods, her favorites are hot wings, Mexican food and pizza. She also enjoys the things most girls her age enjoy such as staying up late to watch movies with her friends. She is also very fashion forward and would love to be able to have someone with whom she

can discuss the latest fashions. Raneesha does not mind doing chores or helping around the house and she knows that everyone in a family must pull their own weight.

When asked about what she misses most about being part of a family, Raneesha will tell you that she just misses the overall togetherness and closeness. Specifically, she misses staying up late to watch movies and having a family to laugh at jokes with. Raneesha relishes the thought of being a big sister and having someone to dote on.

Raneesha would excel with a loving family who enjoys doing things together. She is the kind of girl who lights up a room. Raneesha was born in 1999.



★★★Shining Stars★★★

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Steven

Steven is smart, gentle, and has quite a sense of humor.

Steven is a big football fan, especially the Dallas Cowboys and the ASU Sun Devils. He hopes to play well enough that he can attend college and play at ASU, then be drafted into the NFL. He recently went on a school field trip to the ASU campus and has since been set on going to college there.

In school, he likes science and math — he finds both interesting and likes to learn new things about them. Outside of school, he also likes to play football and basketball, and likes to hang out at home playing the video game *Call of Duty*. He likes listening to rap music, especially Eminem and Hopsin. He knows how to play the clarinet as he learned to play in school, but hasn't had the chance to play recently. He considers himself a good



artist and enjoys drawing, especially drawing animals. His favorite movie is *Paranormal Activity* and his favorite TV show is *Family Guy*.

Steven was born in 2002.



Spring/Summer 2015

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

Arizona Celebrates Foster Care Month in May

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



Ribbon event, a collaboration between the Department, the Arizona Diamondbacks (MLB), Hope & A Future and various community and faith-based organizations was held April 25. This event supports foster families

and the children in their care by providing free tickets to a Diamondbacks game which includes many additional family-friendly activities. Nearly 500 families comprised of more than three thousand children and adults attended this event.



On May 2, the Arizona Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents (AZAFAP) hosted their traditional ribbon-tying event. Touted as one of the few events that honors the children in care, volunteers tied a blue ribbon for each child in the Arizona foster care system.

The event began with a brief program that included comments from Department of Child Safety Director Greg McKay, Phoenix District 8 Councilwoman Kate Gallego, Bishop Alexis Thomas from Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, and Roy Dawson of the Faith Opportunity Zone.

Members of three historically African American Church, First Institutional Baptist Church, Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church and Historical Tanner Chapel AME Church, hosted the event which stretched nine blocks, past the

three churches, down a major thoroughfare in Phoenix. Joining them in tying ribbons were AZAFAP members, friends, families and other supporters of children in foster care.



The Tucson Blue Ribbon Event was held at Thoroughbred Nissan on May 3. Several hundred people gathered as Pima County foster families were honored. The family-friendly event included bounce houses, food, music and a raffle; and ended with their traditional launch of balloons to represent each child in foster care in Pima County. In addition to these public events, many HRSS contractors hosted private celebrations to honor their families.



Photos: Top left — Children enjoying the Diamondbacks game at the Arizona Blue Ribbon Event. Lower left — DCS Director Greg McKay tying blue ribbons at the AZAFAP event. Top right — Community supporters line Jefferson St. with blue ribbons at the AZAFAP Event. Above — Tasty food, bounce houses and a balloon launch are highlights in Tucson.

Foster Dads Rock!

When one thinks about caring for children, it's often the traditional image of a mother providing empathetic and nurturing love to her children. But in today's society more and more men are stepping up to care for children. Think back to the Super Bowl ads: Many commercials had messages of fatherhood and empowering dads to have a active and strong role in the lives of their children. Foster dads are no different, and they are often the unsung heroes when it comes to caring for children in need.

Dr. John Degarmo, a foster and adoptive father to over 40 children writes, "For many years, the perception of the stereotypical father figure was that of breadwinner and disciplinarian.... Today's foster fathers, however, must be much more involved in all areas of child care, not only for the benefit of the foster child, but for the benefit of all who live in the home."

Dr. Degarmo points out that taking care of a child is a 24/7 job and men play a critical role in caring for and shaping a child's future. Many children in foster care may have negatively skewed perceptions of men and fathers. They may have witnessed domestic violence, endured physical abuse, experienced neglect, or their father may simply have not have been present in their upbringing.

Exposing these children to loving and involved fathers can have a monumental impact on their sense of well-being and safety, and can also begin to change their perceptions on how they view men and fathers.

When it comes to co-parenting with birth parents, foster fathers can also serve as role models and mentors for fathers who are trying to improve their skills as parents.

Thank you, Dads, for all you do!

Arizona Helping Hands Offers Birthday Gifts for Children in Foster Care

Arizona Helping Hands (AHH) has launched a new program, “Birthday Dreams for Foster Kids.” The goal of the program is to ensure that each child in the Department of Child Safety system receives a gift for his or her birthday. In December, AHH conducted a holiday toy drive which provided toys to over 19,000 children, and they will continue to collect new, unwrapped toys for this new initiative.

“Licensed foster families receive little support to cover special events such as birthdays and graduations,” AHH Executive Director Dan Shufelt said. “Even more telling, according to Arizona’s Kinship Foster Care Program Report for 2014, there were 4,769 children placed in kinship foster care (with relatives). We’ve met many families whose resources are tapped out by providing basic needs for kids they have taken in — there’s nothing left for special events. Through this program we hope to make each foster child’s birthday a day they’ll remember.” The program will provide a toy, a book and a birthday note to children to make their day special.

Foster Families can apply for a birthday package for

their child up to one month prior to their birthday. The on-line application is at www.azhelpinghands.org.

“This is an expansion of our Helping Hands for Foster Kids Program, which provides beds, cribs, clothing, diapers and other basic needs to foster families for children in their care,” Shufelt stated. “AHH assisted over 1,200 foster children through this program in 2014. We feel privileged to lend a hand to the families who are life lines for 17,000 children in the foster care system in Arizona.”

“We work every day to assist foster families, and to make it easier for those dedicated individuals who make the decision to take in children in foster care,” added Shufelt.

Together with an army of Dreamcatchers (volunteers), AHH works in partnership with other foster care organizations, DCS caseworkers and individual families to make lives better for all Arizonans, one child at a time, one dream at a time, one family at a time.

For more information about Arizona Helping Hands, please contact Dan Shufelt, 602-315-3439, dshufelt@azhelpinghands.org.

OLR Re: Car Seats and Second Floor Bedrooms Opening to a Pool

The Office of Licensing and Regulation (OLR) has been doing an intense policy and procedures review. One area of review has been in the area of requiring car seats and cribs at time of licensure. Upon further investigation, consultation with the Arizona Attorney General’s Office and studying rule in other states, OLR has determined that it is no longer required for families to have car seats and cribs on premises at time of licensure, although they must be present at the time of placement for a child who needs them.

OLR has also determined that second level windows and doors that open into the pool enclosure will not be treated the same as ground level windows and doors that open into the pool enclosure. In a bedroom located on the second floor with a door opening onto a balcony that leads to the pool enclosure, it is highly recommended to secure the door with a quick release top lock. It is also highly recommended not to place any children under 6 years old in second level bedrooms that open into a pool enclosure.

Ask Dr. Sue

Whooping Cough — What All Caregivers and Parents Need to Know

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough, or pertussis, is a serious illness. It starts like a cold with a cough and then the cough can become very severe and last for six or more weeks. Whooping cough is caused by a germ that passes from person to person through the air. Whooping cough is very dangerous for babies. Babies with whooping cough have trouble breathing and may have to go to the hospital. Sadly, some babies with whooping cough die.

How do babies catch whooping cough?

Babies usually catch whooping cough from their family members or caregivers. Adults and older children with whooping cough may not be very sick and, without knowing it, pass the illness to babies for whom they are caring. Young babies get shots (DTaP) to fight whooping cough at 2 months, 4 months and 6 months old. Babies need all their shots on time to be protected. It is important to know that babies can catch whooping cough at home from people who care for them before the baby is old enough for shots or before the young baby has gotten all three DTaP shots that protect against whooping cough.

How can whooping cough be prevented in young babies?

Young babies can be protected from whooping cough by making sure that all family members who care for the baby have gotten their whooping cough shot (Tdap)! Moms should get a Tdap shot during every pregnancy. A pregnant mom who gets a Tdap gives her unborn baby some protection against whooping cough before the baby is born. All adults and teens living with or taking care of the baby need to be sure to have one Tdap shot. All children in the family need to be up to date with their DTaP or Tdap shots too. We can protect our babies from whooping cough by making sure that everyone around them has had their whooping cough shots (DTaP or Tdap)!

How do I get a whooping cough shot?

Ask your doctor or nurse about which whooping cough shot is right for you. (One may be better for children and another for adults.) Don’t wait — be sure you are protected against whooping cough. Keep babies safe from whooping cough — get your Tdap shot!

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

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Successful Co-Parenting

Parenting is arguably one of the most rewarding yet challenging experiences of all time. It can be exhausting just thinking about some of the basics involved, such as establishing rules and boundaries, following through with discipline, learning to be patient with your child, and recognizing and understanding his or her age appropriate developmental milestones. As if that weren't complicated enough, throw in having to work with another person (or multiple persons) who may provide caregiver responsibilities to your child, who may or may not live in the same household! While differences among those who are co-parenting together has the potential to bring on more challenges, it certainly doesn't have to end in disaster.

Here are three simple yet helpful strategies to consider when parenting with others to increase mutual understanding and lessen the chance of disagreements:

■ **Parenting styles can be different and consistency is key.** Work together to establish a few basic ground rules for your child that are important to you and the individual or individuals with whom you may be co-parenting. Learn to be comfortable and flexible

with anything outside of those basic rules.

■ **Model respect and appreciation for one other in the presence of your child.**

Avoid speaking ill of another co-parent in front of your child. In the event that you and a co-parent may become involved in a disagreement when your child is present, be cautious of the messages you may be sending through your non-verbals and the language you choose to use. If you are unable to come to a peaceful resolution, agree to table it for discussion at a later time. Follow up with your child afterwards to gauge his understanding of the conflict and to help him understand the outcome of the disagreement once it's resolved. This will teach him that disputes can be handled in a respectful and healthy manner.

■ **Sharing is caring.** Communicate openly and regularly with one another regarding your child's needs and behaviors. Put your child at the forefront and challenge yourself to think of a co-parent as a valuable resource. Be open to exchanging feedback with a co-parent; it will only help you become a better parent to your child.

— Taken from the Wisconsin Coalition for Children, Youth & Families

Tips for Staying Organized

Foster parents juggle many schedules and tasks. It can be challenging to manage schedules for yourself and the children for whom you care.

A calendar or dry erase board with everyone's activities, due dates, visits, chores, and appointments can be a helpful way to keep everyone in the household organized.

For those who are list-makers, there are a number of ways to keep and update checklists besides paper and pen. Many applications (apps) are free to download on your phone, tablet, or other personal device to help keep you on top of everything and allow you to have all of your lists and notes with you at all times, especially for those who are always on the go.

Celebrate Foster Care Everyday!

May is Foster Care Month! I thought everyday was Foster Care Day! I would like to participate in the celebration of Foster Care Month by saying *thank you* for:

- Loving all the children who have come into your home.
- Being able to forget the not-so-good moments when you have great moments.
- Signing up for that extra training — even though you don't need more hours.
- Telling your child how beautiful, smart and special he or she is.
- Taking off work when your child is sick.



A Bright Future for Your Child

- Running around town to multiple appointments in one week.
- Just sitting near your child while you wait for them to calm down.
- Making sure your child receives at least 12 hugs that day.
- Finding the good choices your child made today.
- Not getting upset when your child didn't make the best choice.
- Laughing with your child.
- Crying with your child.
- Making their favorite food.
- Taking them to the Urgent Care after bedtime.

- Showing compassion when it is the hardest thing you do all day.
- Putting your child in "Time In" by your side, instead of "Time Out" away from you.
- Making exercise fun when you see your child needs a break (exercise will bring oxygen to their minds and make a real difference!).
- Researching a provider that will best suite your child's needs.
- Taking pictures to start a life book for your child.
- Keeping a journal of your child's day (for them or their forever home one day).
- Reading to your child, coloring or painting with them, playing a game with them.
- Emailing your case manager and GAL with monthly updates.
- Going to court and FCRB.
- Setting up that play date with your child's siblings.
- Helping them with their homework.
- Monitoring their internet access.
- Supporting another foster parent because you know first hand what they are going through.

Please give yourself a huge pat on your back and embrace all your household members. You are making a difference!

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

Safe Sleep for Babies

The only safe place to put a baby to sleep is in a crib or bassinet that is compliant with current U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission standards. Even in a crib or bassinet, be mindful of excessive bedding, crib bumpers, stuffed toys or other objects that can strangle, choke or suffocate a baby. Do not place sleeping babies on adult beds, couches, bean bags, car seats or any place that is not intended for an infant.

Mimi Condon's Recommendations

The organizations below will help give even more to your child and at no cost to you!

- SWIMkids USA swim lessons for your 2 – 7 month old
- Arizona Helping Hands – new bed, bedding, highchair, clothing, diapers
- Hope and a Future – camp
- Arizona Friends of Foster Children – sport lessons, bikes, helmets
- WIC – food for children 0 – 4
- Helen's Hope Chest and Jose's Closet - clothes

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.

Vaccination Cuts Chickenpox Deaths 97% Among Children

The Center for Disease Control (CDC), reporting data from 1990 to 2007, said that the percentage of adolescents and children who died from chickenpox declined 97% after the U.S. started its vaccination program in 1995.

Researchers also saw a 96% reduction in deaths from the infection among adults under the age of 50. The findings are published in the journal *Pediatrics*.

Summer Memories are Waiting to Happen!

Ahh...summer. Days filled with visits to theme parks, sports, lessons and just about anything under the sun. As a foster family, you know that the state provides children in foster care with the necessities — food, shelter and basic health care, but there's more you may want to give your children. As much as you want to provide those extras, you may not be able to afford to do more.

Enter Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation (AFFCF)! For more than 30 years, AFFCF has been providing awards for social, athletic and educational activities and items for children in foster care.

The goal of AFFCF is simple: to promote the self-esteem and enrich the lives of children in foster care by funding activities and other needs that allow them to experience the kind of childhood that every child deserves. Since their beginning in 1984, AFFCF has awarded more than \$5.7 million to more than 26,000 children in foster care in Arizona.

Summer camp, theme park admission, skateboards, bicycles, sports activities...these are the things that make summertime fun. And they happen to be some of the activities funded by AFFCF!

Applying for an award is easy. Simply visit www.affcf.org and click on the awards section. There you can view award guidelines, as well as a complete list of activities AFFCF funds. Their online application makes it easy to request an award and automatically notifies your caseworker, who must verify that the child

or children are in Arizona's foster care system. You also can download and complete a PDF version. From the time AFFCF receives your application, it generally takes approximately 10 days to review and grant your request.

Keep in mind that AFFCF does not reimburse items paid for prior to an applicant both submitting an award application and receiving notification of approval from the AFFCF review committee. AFFCF also features a list of preferred vendors who offer special discounts on a variety of items and services for children in foster care.

How can AFFCF support so many requests? As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, AFFCF receives no state or federal funding, relying entirely on the kindness of individual, foundation and corporate donors to support children in Arizona's foster care system. We are also a qualifying organization for the Foster Care Charitable Organization Tax Credit.

So what kind of summer memories are the children in your care hoping to make? Let AFFCF make those dreams come true. Visit www.affcf.org or call 602-252-9445 to learn more and apply for an award today.

And, if you are interested in helping AFFCF determine the items and activities that should be funded in the future, please take the time to respond to this one question survey: If you could have anything for the foster child/ren in your life in the next 30 days, what would it be? Please e-mail your response to info@affcf.org.



Foster Parent Survey Results

Findings are out from the Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey, administered by the Center for Applied Behavioral Health Policy (CABHP) at Arizona State University's School of Social Work in partnership with DCS. The report includes the following 16 recommendations, which the Department has already begun implementing:

- Use information on the motivation to be a foster parent provided by parents as a guide for recruitment and retention of foster parents.

- Continue to pursue targeted foster parent recruitment for adolescents and young adults ages 13 and older.

- Consider evaluating the process for placing children in foster homes to better match foster home licensing parameters and preferences.

- Consider evaluating the process for amending foster home licenses to accommodate sibling groups across ages.

- Encourage licensing agencies to create and support new opportunities for foster parents to become more involved in recruitment efforts, mentoring, and support of other foster parents.

- Encourage licensing agencies to evaluate their policies and procedures regarding the provision and coordination of respite for foster families.

- Consider new and innovative ways for DCS Specialists to obtain and promptly disseminate accurate and concise information about children placed with foster parents in

order to best care for the children in their home.

- Continue efforts to implement training for DCS Specialists and Supervisors regarding best practices in collaborating with foster families.

- Consider evaluating current pre-service training to incorporate new content and modalities to best prepare and support the needs of new foster parents.

- Consider offering online training and education to satisfy annual training and more accessible means of notification for available trainings.

- Explore options for providing childcare for pre-service and annual training for foster parents.

- Consider publicizing and supporting resources for foster parent groups, events, and opportunities.

- Consider new opportunities to recognize foster parents and families.

- Future surveys with foster parents should be conducted biannually and include questions about the court/legal system and process and transportation.

- Acknowledge DCS and licensing agency staff who provide quality services to foster parents.

- Consider offering and requiring on-going training to licensing agency partners regarding DCS policy and procedures and legal processes so that they can better support and train foster parents with whom they work.

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Brady

Brady has stated that he needs a family who will provide him with honesty, respect, trust and fairness. He is looking for parents who will show him unconditional love and acceptance. Brady would love to have siblings who welcome him into the family, look out for him and make him feel accepted. He enjoys going to church, and in his words, "worshiping the Lord." Brady continues to mention a desire to be baptized.

Born in 2001, Brady likes spending time outside, camping, swimming and playing all kinds of sports. He also likes watching his favorite football team, the Green Bay Packers or watching Ninja Turtles. Not only is Brady a big sports fan, but he's a video game "professional" as well and can figure out the game rules really fast! His favorite game right now is "Friday Nights at Freddy's" and he is sure he can teach just about anyone to play it too!

Brady is fond of animals and would love his forever family to have some pets. He also hopes that his forever family will be active, go to church, and understand how important it is for him to maintain contact with his sister.



★ *Shining Star* ★

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Meet This Month's Shining Star: Alexia

Alexia is proud to be herself. Funny and smart are two words her friends use to describe her. Alexia feels honesty is one of her best character traits. Others describe her as being extremely optimistic, generous and kind-hearted.

She likes to read and said her favorite book is "Insurgent" by Veronica Roth. She has dreams to attend college in Oregon and would like to study either art or the modeling industry.

Alexia got her first bike for Christmas this year and loves it! She also enjoys singing and loves a good comedy. Bringing colors to life in art class is also a favorite pastime for Alexia, who gives her art teacher credit for encouraging her to express herself.

Alexia hopes her forever family will go for walks, bike rides and swim with her.

Alexia was born in 2000.