

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Ashley



Ashley is the biggest Dr. Seuss fan that one could ever meet! She can read Dr. Seuss books for hours on end.

Not only does Ashley love Dr. Seuss books, but she also enjoys playing ball, trying on shoes, and helping her foster mom plant flowers in her garden.

Ashley's best subject in school is art and painting is her favorite activity. She hopes to get better at drawing. Ashley does great in school and is a good friend.

She loves to share her toys and gives a hug to her peers when they need one. Ashley has a contagious smile that comes with a 'can do' attitude at all times!

Ashley loves going to the zoo, but especially enjoys going to petting zoos. Petting all the animals makes Ashley one very happy girl!

Ashley was born in 2002.



★ ★ Shining Stars ★ ★

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Thomas

Thomas loves the outdoors, especially hiking, golfing, fishing, football, bike riding and basketball!

He says he is a good friend because he is caring, compassionate and tells funny jokes. He adds that he is good at being patient and cheering others up. Thomas likes to talk, laugh and watch movies with his friends

Thomas likes to stay busy by being out in the community. His favorite things to do when he has a break from school are going to movies, laser tag, and spending time at the water park.

When asked about wishes, Thomas has three and they are in a particular order: First and most important, he says he dreams of having a forever family. Second, he would like to raise a family of his own one day. Third, he would like to own an old-school Mustang or new Camaro.



Thomas enjoys listening to music, and his favorite styles are pop and Christian music. He hopes to visit Africa one day as he would like to see wild zebras, elephants and giraffes.

Thomas was born in 2000.



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Siblings Are Important!

According to Denise Goodman, siblings are important for several reasons: They help children learn and practice essential social skills, they provide each other a built-in support system throughout life, and they help children develop their self-identity as well as positive self esteem. The sibling bond tends to increase with age. Sibling relationships are the longest-lasting relationships in life. So let's keep those siblings together!

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.

Got Questions?

The Fostering Inclusion Respect Support Trust (FIRST) Advisory Commission, has launched a new website to provide resources for foster and kinship parents. The FIRST Commission is comprised of a multidisciplinary group of professionals and community partners who are volunteering to assist DCS reshape Arizona's foster care system. Check out the website at azfamilyresources.org.

Parenting from the Trenches — Denise Goodman

Editor's Note: Denise Goodman, nationally known social worker, trainer and former foster parent was the keynote speaker at the recent KIDS-NEEDU conferences. The conferences, which provided 6 training hours, were sponsored by DCS. They were held in Tucson, Prescott and Phoenix. Following are highlights from her presentations.

"We can all agree we want children to behave, even when we're not there, and to grow up to be a successful member of the community," Goodman stated. She set forth the following building blocks of discipline:

■ **Build trust.** As foster parents, it is important to show that you, as the adult, are trustworthy. If you state there will be a consequence for an action, or that there will be a reward for another action, you need to follow through.

As foster parents, you need to be very clear about cause and effect. Walk children through the process so they make the connection. Sometimes parents need to "create" natural consequences. For example, if someone in the home uses bad language, he or she has to put a quarter in the jar.

Be respectful of the children in your care and don't make fun of their fears. When children trust you, they believe you.

■ **Build self-esteem.** Many of our children do not have high self-esteem. Many do not care about school or their appearance. It is up to you as their foster parents to build this up. One way to do this would be to offer choices, but only offer choices that are acceptable to you. Asking a child if he or she would prefer to do homework after school or before dinner sets a clear precedent: Homework will be done. But the child has a choice of when — not if.

Be quick to appreciate your children. Saying, "Thanks for your help," and praising them for doing their best gives a boost your child may have never experienced before. Even better, brag about them in front of others! The key here is to notice something that will be meaningful to the child; make it personal.

■ **Teach new behaviors and skills.** Understanding the importance of good hygiene, picking up after themselves, manners — even how to use a fork — are skills that

many of our children have never learned. As a foster parent, you can make a big difference in the life of a child by teaching these basics.

■ **Re-teach behaviors.** Some children come into care with behaviors, such as hoarding food, that may have been a survival strategy. As children feel safe in your home you have the opportunity to re-teach them more positive behaviors.

■ **Give opportunities to exercise self-control.** Children in foster care need to learn self-control because they will not always be with you. It may be hard sometimes, especially when you think about what the child has been through, but it's an important part of learning and growing up. Set up opportunities to demonstrate this in your home. Keep in mind that children misbehave because they crave attention. The best thing you can do for your children is turn off the TV and spend time with them.

■ **Leave children in a time-out; don't put them in a time-out.** Frustrations occur — that's a given. But when you are frustrated, leave children in a time-out. Walk away. Don't send them to their room. Children in foster care have experienced trauma and often have very negative self-talk. When you put a child in a time-out, you are sentencing them to time along with his or her negative thoughts. It's better to admit, "I am so angry, I have to walk away right now."

■ **Be committed.** Children need your love when they least deserve it. Sometimes parents just aren't feeling committed to the children for whom they are caring. That's when you, as a parent, may have to recommit, fake-commit or rejuvenate your commitment. But however you do it, it's important that you are committed to your children every day. Remember that the deal breaker for our children is our commitment. As the adults, we care for the children without expecting them to give back in return. What will happen to this child if I don't help him?

■ **Keep a diary or journal of the child's progress.** Look through it on challenging days. You may be reinvigorated by reminding yourself of all the progress he or she has already made.

Exploring Birth Order Myths

You may have heard that the oldest child in a family is likely to work hard, achieve great things, and perhaps take on a leadership role. On the other hand, the youngest child in a family has a reputation for being rebellious. Whether or not you believe these statements, myths about birth order have been around for a long time.

Another myth that has been circulating around the adoption world for some time is that families should not adopt out of birth order. In other words, if a parent(s) has a five-year-old child in their home and wishes to adopt, the traditional recommendation would be to only adopt a child younger than five. Yet little is known about where this suggestion came from and why families should continue to take it into consideration.

Many adoption experts nowadays believe that, for the majority of families, adopting out of birth order can and does work. While many families have adopted out of birth order

successfully, it may not be right for every family. If you already have children in your home and are considering disrupting the birth order, think about how your child(ren) would handle this. Would your child embrace this new sibling as a role model and additional playmate, or would they have issues transitioning to a new role in the family? Keep in mind that there may be additional challenges when disrupting birth order, but you can often prepare for and deal with these challenges.

Talk to the children in your household (as well as the child being adopted) ahead of time about family dynamics in order to minimize unrealistic expectations. Keep in mind that sibling rivalry is normal and occurs in every type of family, whether formed through birth or adoption. It takes time for families to adjust to each other and to a new norm following ANY adoption.

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

Santa's Sleigh Arrives at AHH with Toys for Children



Santa was on hand Monday August 24th as Arizona Helping Hands (AHH) received two semis loaded with toys for Arizona children. Dan Shufelt, president and CEO says,

“These toys will support both our Holiday Toy Drive and our Birthday Dreams for Foster Kids programs. We have contacted DCS Director Greg McKay and caseworkers from multiple DCS locations to inform them we can stock their toy closets to help kids in foster care. We are reaching out to our fellow foster charities and organizations we collaborated with last year to provide toys early for this year’s holidays.

“The bottom line is that we are here for the kids and one way or another Arizona Helping Hands will ensure that this blessing ends up in the hands of boys and girls,” Shufelt added. “Our community partners help make all of our programs possible, we’re so thankful to be able to brighten birthdays and holidays for children in need.”

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

Robson Ranch Needlecrafters Support Infants in Foster Care

Women from the Robson Ranch Needlecrafters group donated nearly 200 homemade hats to the Juvenile Court Community Advisory Board Baby Bag Project for infants in foster care.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) supervisor Donna McBride and coordinator Pam Burke received hats during a presentation about CASA and foster care in Pinal County.

The hats, made in sizes from premature newborns up to 1-year-olds, will stay with each child and serve as a special gift they can call their own.

The Needlecrafters meet weekly at the Creative Arts Center at Robson Ranch where they work on individual items and group projects for charity. This is a small, relaxed group of women who enjoy reaching out to their community.

The group also plans to make small cuddly animals for the foster children.

If any generous member of the public has yarn he or she would

like to donate to this cause, they may drop it off at the Creative Arts Center on Thursday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon or call Pam Burke about CASA at (520) 866-7710.

Robson Ranch Needlecrafters pictured are: Kathy Muhlbeier, Judy Ault, Pam Burke, Donna McBride, Phyllis Flail and Jan Strycker. Several knitters who live locally and contributed to these projects are away for the summer.



Normalcy for Children in Foster Care

The federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act mandates “normalcy” for children in foster care. 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.

For many young people in care, normalcy is participation in those extracurricular and every day activities that their peers enjoy, such as sports, student government, theater, art, science, or socializing with friends. Extracurricular activities help them to connect to the things they care about. Every day “normal” activities that most people take for granted are also important, such as using a telephone or computer, going on school field trips, and taking a vacation.

To achieve this goal, the law requires the Department of Child Safety to implement a “reasonable and prudent parent standard” for decisions made by a caregiver (a caregiver is defined as a foster parent or a designated official for a congregate care facility). The reasonable and prudent parent standard is defined as the careful and sensible decisions that maintain a child’s health, safety, and best interests while simultaneously encouraging the child’s emotional and developmental growth, which an out-of-home caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow the child to

participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

More information will be forthcoming, however, helpful tips for caregivers to implement the reasonable and prudent standard include:

- Compile adequate information about the activity;
- Assess the appropriateness of an activity for the child’s age, maturity and developmental level (cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral);
- Assess foreseeable risks and potential hazards and what safety factors and level of supervision may be involved in the activity;
- Consider where the activity will be held, with whom the foster child will be going, and when they will return; and
- Determine if the activity maintains or promotes the child’s health, safety, and best interests and well-being.

Decisions made under the reasonable and prudent parent standard shall not conflict with any existing court orders, including but not limited to visitation and therapy orders, unless specifically approved by the Child Safety Specialist and the court. When possible, and especially when reunification is the case plan goal, caregivers should consult with the biological parents and/or the child’s extended family in consideration of religious and cultural beliefs that may impact or influence any decisions made by the caregivers.

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Ideas How Teachers Can Help a Child in Foster Care

One of the greatest ways a teacher can help a foster child is with academic understanding. Many teachers expect good grades and school performance to be a priority in the lives of the majority of their students. Yet, for children in foster care, school is not a priority, and is not a focus.

Instead, the main focus and priority for many students who are placed into foster homes is that of survival; survival from moving from home to home, survival from the abuse and neglect they may have faced in their lives, survival from living apart from their other family members, and survival from moving from school to school. Children in foster care are often behind academically. In addition they struggle with the fact that they are coming from outside school districts with different expectations, teachers need to be conscious of this fact. There are sure to be gaps in learning and disabilities due to the instability and multiple placements.

In addition, children in foster care struggle with many personal and emotional issues while in the foster home, and homework is often not the main objective while in the home each evening. Instead, the emotional issues your child faces may take center stage on a particular evening.

Teachers need to assign homework keeping in mind a sensitivity to their issues. School educators should avoid assigning school tasks and projects that are insensitive to children in foster care. These might include projects which ask for students to

write about a mother or father before Mother's/ Father's Day, bringing in pictures from home, tracing a family tree, or reporting on a family member that is an inspiration.

Along with this, teachers should be cautious when assigning homework to be sure there is someone who is at home who can be of help and assistance. Teachers can also create lesson plans with them in mind and engage in daily conversation that incorporates the student.

Finally, teachers can be of tremendous help to both foster parents and the children they care for by allowing flexibility on deadlines and due dates for homework, as well as quiz and test taking. This is particularly important when assigning home work or test dates around visitations with birth parents and biological family members.

Often, children in care may experience anxiety on the day of a visitation, as well as on the following day, as they try to process the swirling emotions that come with visiting with someone who may have neglected or abused them, or a family member in jail. Furthermore, sometimes these visitations lead to false promises and false hopes of being reunited soon with birth family members; promise and hopes that leave the children incapable of completing homework and studying for quizzes and tests in an appropriate and focused manner.

— For more, contact Dr. John Degarmo at <http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com>

Tips for a Happier School Year

With the kiddos back in school, many parents may be looking for suggestions for happier mornings, successful days at school and calmer homework sessions.

Keep in mind that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends elementary school age children get 10-11 hours of sleep each night. For older children and youth they recommend 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep per night.

Before your children go to bed have them choose their clothes, including shoes. Also have them pack up their back pack.



A Bright Future for Your Child

When your children get up, have them get dressed, brush their hair and eat breakfast. Pack lunch, unless this works out better to do the night before, and then brush teeth. Try to allow for free time when everything is done.

If your child can pack his or her own lunch, put out items to choose from, or make a list of fruits, snack and vegetable choices. Have your child bring home whatever they don't eat. Should they get sick, it is important for you to know what they ate that day. If our children tend to act out more in the afternoon, it may be because they have not properly nourished their brain at lunch time. Additionally you will see what shouldn't be packed anymore, because they really don't seem to like it.

When your children come home from school, have them empty their back pack and lunch. Be sure to allow time for a light snack and conversation before starting their homework.

When it comes to the amount of homework, each child should have no more than 10 minutes per grade (1st grade 10 minutes, 2nd grade 20 minutes and so on). We need to meet the needs of our children. It's

important to communicate your child's needs to the teacher and ask for advice if the amount of homework seems excessive.

Sometimes children and parents get frustrated with each other while working on homework together. My older daughter used to go to a friend's home and read with their first grader for an hour once a week. This was a nice break for both mother and child and children really like to help one another.

You may want to email your child's teacher to let him or her know of any life changes that may affect your child's school day. Is a parent in the hospital? Was there an upsetting visit or a missed visit? Compassion is needed for our children to be successful. Share what you feel may be important.

Is there a counselor at school they can meet with periodically? It is a proactive step should our child have the need one day. If your child has the ability to feel anxious or over stimulated from time to time, tell them that it is a good choice to ask your teacher for help. Whatever routine you have at home for this, share it with the teacher in advance.

Anticipation of a fun event is hard to hold in sometimes. Try to wait for the last minute to let your child know when you are going on a trip, someone is coming over, or anything outside of your routine that may be taking place. My eight year old will now say to me, "Mom, why did you tell me? You know that I get too excited."

Each of our children is so incredibly gifted in their own way. Don't stress about the level your child may be at academically. Just research for resources and then know that you will continue to meet your child where they are at. This will fill your home with so much additional joy.

— 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.

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>.

Looking Back, Looking Forward — the Charlebois Family

When Richard and Paula Charlebois married, they wanted children but their personal circumstances didn't allow for them to come traditionally. Fortunately for the 35 children they've either fostered or adopted since, they found their true calling in foster care and adoption.

The Charlebois family is currently 18 strong (13 legal adoptions, 2 permanent legal guardianships, a little boy in their care they are hoping to adopt, Paula and Richard). You might think a home with a brood this large would be chaos, but it actually runs very smoothly,



according to Jessica, a former Wednesday's Child who was adopted by the couple about 17 years ago when she was eight.

"I love being in a big family. It's not as crazy as people think it is. One of the best things is that we are always there for each other," said Jessica. "There are a lot of us, and we all come from different lifestyles. What makes it so awesome is that even though we are each unique, we know deep down that we are pieces of the same big puzzle; and ever since

we came into this family, we fit together to create one whole picture."

Justin, another former Wednesday's Child, was adopted over 18 years ago and was the Charlebois' first child. "I was 7 or 8 when they adopted me. At the time I wanted a mom and dad so badly. They took me in and raised me as their own. I feel they saved my life by steering me in the right direction, helping me out and being the people I could always rely on, no matter what."

This crew is a family in the most cohesive sense of the word. Though their heritages might be different, they are truly brothers and sisters. "This family has taught me that no matter what you are as a person or where you have come from, there is no judgement. They fight for you. They love you. They bring out the best in you and give you an amazing life," said Jessica.

Richard and Paula Charlebois give everything of themselves to help these kids grow up in a safe and loving home. "It hasn't been an easy or perfect journey, but we did it together. It's not about asking the kids to fit into your family, it's about us fitting into their world and embracing them. You have to build relationships over time. You have to stay the course and build bricks in the foundation of the relationship. And you have to be on the same team, because you are building a home," said Paula.

"We don't see our kids as throwaways like a lot of society does. We see them like butterflies coming out of their cocoon finding their wings. And we're along for the journey to guide and encourage them."

The Charlebois family was recently featured in *People* magazine.

Foster Care: There's an App for That!

The Nathanson Family Resilience Center at UCLA has launched the *FOCUS on Foster Families* app with the intent of fostering connections in a system than can be isolating for the children, parents and professionals involved.

The Nathanson Center works on developing programs that help build families, particularly within underserved communities.

For this project, funded by the Pritzker Foster Care Initiative, the center's staff spent 10 months talking to local foster parents, kinship care families and foster youth in the Los Angeles area about their experiences. They then used these stories as the basis of a free mobile application that distills these experiences into an interactive format.

According to William Saltzman, Ph.D., the center's associate director, the most important aspect of the app is that it carries the voice of actual foster youth.

"A lot of people feel isolated in foster care, so we wanted to make the voices of others who have experienced the same thing accessible to all."

The app has two main pathways, one for foster caregivers and one for kids. Both pathways have a variety of resources focusing on building five main skill areas: communicating, overcoming stressful or

traumatic situations, solving problems, dealing with tough emotions and setting goals.

A significant part of the app is the hundreds of video resources, capturing interviews with former foster youth and parents sharing advice.

The foster parent videos cover everything from dealing with tantrums to managing visits with birth parents to advocating for a child at the school level. For foster youth, the videos range from the very practical ("advice for dealing with attorneys, court, and social workers") to the more abstract ("you have to be your own voice"). However, running through every video is a spirit of new connection within the system, between those youth who are in foster care now and those who have come before.

"Our goal was to create this sense of community," said Ashley Jupin, intervention delivery support specialist at the center. "I hope that [this app] is a resource that helps youth both learn concrete skills and learn that they are important, that their stories are important. I hope it can be a connection for them if they ever feel that they are alone."

The FOCUS on Foster Families app can be downloaded for free from the iTunes store or from Google Play. Watch the brief launch video at <https://vimeo.com/125626878>.

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*.

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Joseph

Joseph openly talks about wanting to be part of a family and that his favorite part of the holiday season is to spend time with family. His CASA says that Joseph would like nothing more than to be part of a family that he can call his own.

Joseph comes off as a shy kid, but he is respectful and easy to get along with. He adds that his greatest gift is being a good friend to others. He loves to play sports, especially basketball and football. Watching the NBA finals is Joseph's favorite part of the year and he dreams of meeting the Cavaliers one day. Joseph also likes sport-related video games! It is no surprise that his favorite class is P.E.

Joseph is exploring career options at this time and is debating between joining the NBA, the Border Patrol, Army, or possibly being a rap star. Joseph's CASA adds, "yes, his favorite music is rap and hip-hop"!

Joseph likes to be well-coordinated and fashionable. He enjoys going window shopping with his CASA followed by a trip to any Mexican food restaurant!

Joseph was born in 2000.



★Shining Star★

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Meet This Month's Shining Star: Brianna

Brianna is an active, enthusiastic, and artistic girl. She loves to write her own music, sing, and play her guitar. In fact, Brianna actively participates in her school choir and is proud of doing a solo in front of her peers recently.

She is described as always laughing and smiling and has an outgoing and expressive personality.

She enjoys reading and dreaming about her future. She would love to one day be a professional singer or run her own business working with animals.

Brianna has dreams to try out for the cheerleading team and continue to learn the guitar.

Brianna was born in 2000.

★Shining Star★