

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Fall 2012



877-543-7633

Arizona Department
of Economic Security
Division of Children,
Youth and Families

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For more information
on Arizona's children
in need of foster or
adoptive families,
please call:
877-KIDS-NEED-U
(877-543-7633)
or visit our website
azkidsneedu.gov.

Meet This Month's Shining Stars:

Jayde

Jayde, 14, is funny, talkative and sweet. She likes to sing and dance, especially to country music. She also likes to watch movies and TV. Jayde is active in the Boys and Girls Club.

She enjoys outings, especially going to the movies, the mall and eating out. She attends church and enjoys singing in the choir. In addition to making good grades, Jayde is looking forward to attending high school next year and participating in extra-curricular activities.

Jayde's forever family will need to have patience, understanding and experience working with teenagers.



Jesse

Jesse, 11, is full of energy and curiosity. He loves to put together 500-piece puzzles and has put together more than 10 of them that he has framed and proudly displays.

He likes football, track, basketball and swimming. He has won ribbons in the city track meet for long jump, the 4 x 4 relay and the 100-yard dash.

Jesse's favorite subject in school is math. He practices his multiplication skills every day. He is very proud that he can do more than 80 problems in less than a minute. He is challenging himself to do 80 multiplication problems quicker than his teacher for a classroom ice cream party.

Jessie would like a family that would help him maintain contact with his older brother and sister.



Justin

Loving, affectionate, and helpful are words to describe Justin. He enjoys the outdoors, especially playing basketball, tag and jumping on the trampoline.

Justin, 13, is in the 7th grade. He does very well in school and enjoys time with his peers. He also likes to help his teachers. Justin is in a star system where he is able to earn up to 15 stars per day. Most days he brings home all 15 stars!

A great helper around the house, Justin would do best with a two-parent home with few other children. His family will need to have a flexible schedule as Justin has ongoing appointments that need to be kept.



Arizona's Kids Need Homes!

DCYF is experiencing a severe shortage of foster and adoptive parents. If you know someone who would be a good foster or adoptive parent, please encourage them to call 1-877-KIDS-NEEDU (877-543-7633) for information. Homes are needed for children of all ages and ethnicities, but especially for American Indian children, African American children and sibling groups.

iFoster.org Provides Discounts for Children and Families

iFoster is a free membership community for transition-age youth in foster, kinship or adoptive care, and the families and agencies that support them. The service is also for biological families at risk of entry into child welfare. iFoster provides life changing resources for at-risk children and youth to put them on the path to becoming independent successful adults. Discounts include national, regional and local retailers; food, clothing and school supplies; personal and household items; restaurants, entertainment, sports and recreation. Join the community at www.ifoster.org.

New Support Is Available for Foster Parents

In a continuing effort to meet the needs of Arizona's children in foster care, the Division launched a "Warm Line." This toll-free line is for resource parents who are experiencing crisis situations and cannot reach their Child Protective Services' (CPS) case manager in a timely manner. The line was activated in July. By calling 1-877-KIDSNEEDU (1-877-543-7633) and selecting Option 3, resource parents will be connected to the Warm Line. A Warm Line designee is available from 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. However, resource parents will have the option of leaving a message at any time of the day or night. Staff's goal is to respond to those messages within the next business day so that resource parents feel supported in getting their needs met in serving our children. The Warm Line is staffed by two individuals who have a combined experience of 25 years in investigations, supervisory responsibilities, ongoing and adoptions case management. "Being a foster parent is TOUGH!!!" stated a current foster parent. "The community doesn't know how to deal

with our family and quite often neither does our immediate family (relatives). Other than getting together with a few other foster families, we often feel isolated." Another foster parent added, "If people considering becoming foster parents knew that there was support for them after they get a placement, I think more people would become foster parents." The intent of the Warm Line is to provide resource parents with information, assistance with authorizations for services, timely communication, and support. It is not intended to discourage or replace direct and regular communication between the CPS case manager and the resource parent. Within the initial weeks of its launch, Warm Line staff provided resolution for 100 percent of its callers. It is hoped that the Warm Line will help minimize some of the isolation resource parents may feel. One of our caregivers said it best, "As foster parents, any type of help is greatly appreciated."

Foster Care Fusion Hits Three Arizona Locations

Around 450 foster and kinship parents participated in Foster Care Fusion, a training event held in Prescott, Tucson and Phoenix in September and October. Each of the one-day trainings offered participants six hours of advanced training credit. All locations followed the same agenda and offered the same workshop sessions, which included topics on accessing RBHA services, Internet safety, trauma informed care and a workshop designed specifically for kinship care providers. Michael Shupp, an adoptive parent from Dallas, Texas, keynoted the events. Shupp, a National Certified Counselor, spoke of his own family's journey in adoption.

While admitting that he was at first reluctant to consider adoption, Shupp told of his wife's desire to open their home to a child in need. As they progressed through the training and home study, he said they "felt the permanency immediately," even though their soon-to-be adopted teenage daughter did not. "She tested us to make sure our commitment was real," he said, adding that she had believed a lot of lies about herself. He explained their family policy of telling the truth and encouraged her to not believe the lies in her head, but to replace those negative lies with truth. "The truth offered hope and healing for her." Shupp also encouraged foster parents to remember that they have accomplished great

things. "You are a hero," he said. "You have changed the trajectory of the children in your care. You are breaking generational cycles. "You have to tell these kids what you see in them and you have to tell them what they can do. Girls need to know they are beautiful, and not in a sexual way." He added, "Boys need to hear what they do well." Shupp encouraged parents to not give up. "If you make a difference in just one child's life, you will impact thousands over generations," he stated. "You're saving generations and you don't even know it.... You have planted a seed in them that will grow. You had an impact on their lives, even if it is just for a short time."



Michael Shupp, keynote speaker and adoptive dad

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Looking Back, Looking Forward — with Shannon Clayton

Editor's note: Feedback from a recent survey of Arizona foster parents indicated that many parents want to know the stories of youth who were in foster care and how they are faring as adults. In this inaugural feature we chat with Shannon Clayton, who entered Arizona's foster care system when she was 16 years old.

New Zealand native Shannon Clayton entered foster care in Arizona when her mother was incarcerated and no one was able to locate her biological father in New Zealand. Over the course of her time in foster care she transferred high schools seven times. She had one unlicensed non-relative placement, lived in two group homes and reunified with her ex-stepfather before turning 18. She then entered Arizona's Independent Living Program (ILP), left for college, and exited the ILP at 21.

■ **AZ Statewide: Was there a turning point for you when you determined to rise above your circumstances?**

Clayton: My time in care became a time of proving people wrong. There were two instances that gave me the determination to be better than the statistics. The first was when my unlicensed placement kicked me out of their home.

I was in the middle of a mental health intake when my foster mother told my worker that I could not come home. When I went to the placement to get my things, both of the parents stood outside and told me that I had to leave because they had other children to worry about.

I became determined to show them that I was someone worth worrying about. I became determined to be a person of worth in every way that I could. Someday, somehow, I would make them regret abandoning me. They had told me that they would love me forever and then turned around and told me that my mere existence in their home was a bother.

The other instance would be when my first group home manager said that she didn't think I would graduate high school. I had always been an intelligent youth; I had been in AP and Honors classes prior to coming into care – but I was never at a school long enough to do the AP testing to get back into the classes. I sent them graduation announcements and told them I was speaking at graduation, and had received a scholarship to NAU.

■ **AZ Statewide: What would you say to teens currently in foster care who may be facing the decisions around aging out or participating in the Independent**

"Teach us what it means to be part of a loving family. You are our example of a healthy relationship."

Living Program?

Clayton: Be educated about your decisions. Understand the pros and cons of what you want to do. Ultimately you will do what you want when you age out, what will be the best way to do it? What will benefit you the most? Be engaged in your transition planning and be honest about what your plans are with your team; they can't support you if you don't tell them. Make back-up plans for your back-up plans. Learn to advocate for yourself and feel comfortable asking questions.

■ **AZ Statewide: What would you say to parents who are caring for teens?**

Clayton: First things first, you are our *parents*. We may not be your blood or legally yours, but we are your children. Treat us as such.

Our lives have been full of people who simply get rid of us when we are doing what we know. You wouldn't do that to your own children, don't do it to us. Be patient. Teach us what it means to be part of a loving family. You are our example of a healthy relationship. Model healthy relationships, encourage us to have a healthy relationship with you, with others in the home, and with other people we meet.

Have honest dialogues if we are doing something that we shouldn't – have a discussion about it. Ask *why* we are doing something. Show us how to be forgiving and understanding. Continue to be patient.

Most of the time we come to you with years of unhealthy relationships and behaviors being modeled for us; they have been reinforced and no one has discussed that they are not acceptable or why. We will test you. It means we are beginning to care about you and it is petrifying. People we care about have dismissed us. It is easier that you dismiss me now, than later when I care more. Believe in us. Sometimes all we need is someone who tells us, and honestly believes, we can succeed.

■ **AZ Statewide: What do you do now?**

Clayton: I am currently the Independent Living Project Specialist for DCYF, which means I educate staff, caregivers, stakeholders and others on the challenges facing youth in transition, and develop and maintain statewide youth advocacy and collaborative efforts such as the state youth advisory board and the annual youth conference.

Ask Dr. Sue

Sun Safety and Skin Cancer in the Pediatric Population

Now that the weather is beginning to cool down, families can enjoy more time outdoors. But with the fresh air comes the responsibility to be cautious while in the sun.

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the world. Although most skin cancers appear later in life, they are the result of sunburn and UV light damage that occurred earlier in life.

Sun safety is important because Arizona ranks No. 2 in the world in skin cancer incidence rates. (Australia is No. 1). Since the majority of a person's lifetime exposure to the sun occurs by the age of 18, it's crucial to protect and educate children in order to reduce skin cancer rates in our state.

Learn how to protect your child now to keep them healthy later.

Sunscreen Rules:

- Make sure it is a minimum SPF 30 or higher
- Apply 30 minutes before outdoor exposure
- Re-apply every 90-120 minutes
- Re-apply more if swimming/sweating
- Water Resistant: 40 minutes

Sunscreen Tips:

- Protect your eyes with sunglasses
- Wear a sun protective shirt with long-sleeves
- Wear long pants when possible
- Limit time in the sun and seek shade
- Avoid the intense sun between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Wear a broad spectrum sunscreen
- Use extra caution around snow, water and sand
- Avoid tanning beds

The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) began promoting the SunWise Program in January 2003. In August 2005, Arizona became the first state to mandate sun safety education by requiring that all K-8 public and charter schools teach the SunWise Skin Cancer Prevention School Program. For more information, including downloadable activity sheets for children, visit the ADHS website, <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/sunwise/download.htm>.

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

Listening to Foster Parents

In July 2012 the Division launched a Foster Parent Support and Retention Survey. The purpose of the survey was to explore ways the Division could be more responsive to the needs and concerns of current foster parents.

The survey was emailed to more than 2,600 families and 515 families responded. While there is still some analysis to be completed, the Division is already responding, as reflected by some of the new features in this newsletter.

For example, foster parents asked for more information on the children available for adoption. So we are now featuring three

children as *Shining Stars*. Parents also asked for information on how youth who had been in foster care are faring as adults. So we have added the *Looking Back, Looking Forward* section. In response to comments about the need for trainings to be held outside of Maricopa County, Foster Care Fusion trainings were held in Prescott and Tucson, in addition to Phoenix.

This survey has also led to several projects that will study the access between foster families and various types of support services and support groups available to families. Findings will be reported in future newsletters.

The Unique Dynamics of Kinship Foster Care — Part 1: Gains and Losses

Editor’s Note: When children need to be removed from their biological families, research demonstrates that the very best place for the child to be placed is with a family member. But there are unique dynamics that can occur for both the children and the caregivers within these families. Over the next several issues of the Arizona Statewide, we will explore some of the unique dynamics of kinship foster care.

There are a number of losses that both the kinship caregiver and the child may experience. Kinship caregivers sometimes report that they have faced a loss of financial security, particularly if the kinship caregiver does not become a licensed foster home. This loss can be particularly significant for grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren while they themselves are on a fixed income. The Division recommends that all kinship care providers explore the possibility of becoming licensed foster parents because of the increased level of support available.

Another loss may include losing friends who may not be able to relate to this changed

situation, or simply a change in interests and focus. It is important for kinship caregivers to take care of the themselves in order to provide the best care for the child. Support groups are one way to do this. Some kinship caregivers say they were hesitant at first to attend a support group because they didn’t want to talk about their family situation with others.

However, those who have made the time to go a support group report learning about other supports and resources that are available in their community. They also discover that they are not alone in their struggles.

There are also significant gains for kinship caregivers. One of the biggest gains is the time spent together with the child and the depth of the relationship they develop with one another. Similarly, children placed with kin often learn more of his or her family history, traditions and culture.

There also may be an increase of peace of mind, knowing the child is safe and well cared for. Kinship caregivers also report that having a child in their home makes them feel younger.



Quilt Project Warms Hearts for Foster Children

Dozens of Maricopa County children in foster care will receive their own hand-made personalized “love,” thanks to the work of a generous group of women in Paradise Valley.

Valley resident Ann Gainey has always liked to sew. She came up with the idea after reading the book “The Lost Boy” a true story by David Pelzer. She spoke with her pastor at the Ascension Lutheran Church in Paradise Valley; he introduced her to another church member, Marga Alseike and the women quickly enlisted her friends to help out. Called the Pocket Pal Project, they’ve made 58 blankets in all colors, patterns and fabrics: 34 for older children, three for 3- to 7-year-olds and 21 for little ones.

The ladies hope to expand the Pocket Pal Project to other area churches. They would love to see the project grow large enough to provide a blanket for every child who enters the Arizona foster care system.

“Our biggest problem, of course, is getting funding for buying material (bright colors for

children) needed to sew the quilts,” Alseike adds.

The blankets mean as much to the volunteers as they do to the children. Each one made with love, compassion and a little bit of wisdom sewn in the seams. It’s just their way of showing a little love for Arizona’s children in foster care — stitch by stitch.

Anyone interested in forming a Pocket Pals Project sewing group can contact Jayne Baker, Diaconal Minister at Ascension Lutheran Church at 602-565-2955.



Mark Your Calendars for Adoption Month!

November is National Adoption Month and once again Arizona will be celebrating with events around the state.

Saturday, November 3, is Pima County’s annual Adoption in the Park, held at Udall Park.

Friday, November 16, is Yuma County’s adoption day at the juvenile court.

Saturday, November 17, is Maricopa County’s celebration at Durango Court, as well as Prescott’s adoption day, held at the Prescott Courthouse.

Phoenix Area Advanced Trainings

Visit www.cfcare.org and click on the “News and Events” tab to access a calendar of trainings for all Phoenix area agencies. Click on the individual training and the information about that training will pop up. Christian Family Care lists all the trainings they are aware of on their calendar as a service to their families as well as families from other agencies.

Renew Fingerprint Clearance Cards!

Fingerprint clearance cards may take several months to be issued. Therefore, it is critically important for families to begin their license renewal process early. Please work with your agency to get all renewal materials submitted early.

CMDP Website

The Comprehensive Medical and Dental Program (CMDP) website has a lot of health care information. The site has past editions of CMDP newsletters for members and health care providers. It also has a list of health care providers and a list of preferred medications.

Check it out at www.azdes.gov/cmdp.

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 DES/CMDP." Should you receive a bill, contact a CMDP Member Services representative at 1-800-201-1795.

Annual Youth Conference Held in Flagstaff

Seventy-five youth in foster care, ages of 16 to 20 from across the state came together in August to participate in the DES sponsored annual Independent Living Youth Conference.

With the theme "It's a Jungle Out There," youth participated in team building activities as well as workshops on topics including budgeting, healthy living, after care services, healthy nutrition and mentoring. For many youth this was their first opportunity to stay in a hotel and a chance to get to know other youth who are navigating their way to adulthood within the system of foster care.

Each year, youth plan and implement the event. Youth from all areas of the state put together the agenda, plan the activities and serve as presenters of the workshops.

Alumni of foster care also participate, sharing their knowledge and concerns while providing an opportunity for youth to ask questions.

The conference also took on a serious topic as Bobbie Sudberry, a mother who lost her daughter to a terrible act of teen domestic violence and started the non-profit "Kaity's Way," provided the Keynote speech. Bobbie shared Kaity's Story, exposed the warning signs and patterns of abusive relationships; provided information about Kaity's Law and promoted healthy relationships.

Participants also celebrated their extraordinary gifts, which were showcased in a talent show! Musicians, singers, comedians, a drum circle and even some chaperons stepped up to share in the fun. The annual youth conference is more than just a chance for young people to come together and learn life skills. It is also a time for these amazing young people to experience new friendships, freedoms, and to make their own life decisions, all helpful in developing competence, usefulness, belonging and empowerment!

Arizona Launches Statewide Heart Gallery

On September 29, the Department of Economic Security launched a new project to raise awareness of the need for foster and adoptive families across the state. The project, known as the Children's Heart Gallery, will develop a traveling multi-media exhibit dedicated to finding adoptive homes, or 'forever families,' for children currently in foster care in Arizona.

The Children's Heart Gallery hopes to create photo profiles for at least 75 children who are currently in the Arizona foster care system and who have a case plan goal of adoption with no identified placement. The exhibits will be featured throughout Arizona.

"This new project brings together community volunteers and businesses who are partnering with DES with the ultimate goal of finding these very deserving children new forever homes," said Director Clarence Carter. "It takes the entire community to come together to help these children. These folks are prime examples of how everyone can play a role. We sincerely appreciate the support and dedication our volunteers are giving to the Children's Heart Gallery project."

The first photo shoot of the project took place at the Arizona Biltmore Resort. Twelve children in foster care from the Phoenix metro area, ages seven to 17, were professionally styled and photographed by volunteer professionals to be featured in the project. The Biltmore Resort donated the use of their Presidential Suite for preparations for the photos, which were taken in various locations on the resort's grounds.

Plans are still being finalized for a second photo shoot in December, which will be held in Tucson.

The concept of a Heart Gallery was first developed in New Mexico. Currently more than 120 Heart Galleries are placed in communities throughout the United States. A

Heart Gallery heightens the visibility of children in foster care awaiting families--the 'waiting children'--by featuring them in a traveling multi-media exhibit.

The project harnesses the power of photography to capture each child's unique spirit and story in a profile. The photo journalistic profiles are featured in exhibits online, art galleries, and in larger public forums like airports and malls. With the aid and support of the media and the public, Heart Galleries all across America continue to assist child advocates with finding homes for hundreds of children in foster care each year.

The most recent DES reports show the number of Arizona children in foster care as of March 31, 2012, has risen to 12,453. Children range in age from birth to 18, and the majority of them -- 4,313 kids to be exact (34.7 percent) -- are 5 years of age or younger. The next largest group in out-of-home care is the 13-17-year-olds -- over 3,000 teen-aged children in Arizona are currently in foster care. Sadly, more than half the children ages 16-18 are not currently residing with a family. They are also the least adopted age group of all children in Arizona's foster care system.

To volunteer or to donate to the Children's Heart Gallery, please contact Regina Weiler, DES Volunteer Program Administrator at 602-542-7957 or email her at Rweiler@azdes.gov.

Before and after: Julia Gillespie, DCYF Child Specific Recruitment Specialist, helps Aaishah with her makeover before her Children's Heart Gallery photoshoot.





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Vaccines Prevent Illnesses

Most parents today have never seen first-hand the devastating consequences that vaccine-preventable diseases can have on a child, a family, or community. Thanks to vaccines, many of these diseases are not common in the U.S., but they persist around the world. Immunizations are still the best way to protect children from 14 vaccine-preventable diseases when parents follow CDC's recommended immunization schedule.

Seasonal influenza immunizations are recommended for all people, including all children and adolescents, 6 months of age and older during the 2012–2013 influenza season, especially people with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes mellitus, immunosuppression, or neurologic disorders months; pregnant and nursing mothers and those who work with vulnerable populations.

Aging Out of Foster Care: Important Information for Teens

Intended for adolescents in foster care in the District of Columbia, this brochure explains key steps teens should take to prepare themselves for transitioning to adulthood when they age out of foster care. Actions teens should take each year from age 15 through 20 are listed and a checklist is provided. Download it at bit.ly/Oh5a3E.

CMDP has a new Pharmacy Benefit Manager!

CMDP is pleased to announce that as of Monday, October 1, 2012, a new Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM) is providing prescription coverage services for CMDP Members.

The new PBM is Medimpact. Medimpact was founded by Pharmacists in 1989 on a philosophy that combines integrity, expertise and service. They are passionate about improving health care, working in the best interest of their clients and consumers.

CMDP members can continue to use the pharmacies that they are currently using. Members will receive new Member ID Cards that will contain the contact information for Medimpact. For CMDP members that are taking a specialty medication, Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy (Diplomat) will begin to fill the prescription that they are currently taking on October 1, 2012.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact the Provider Services Department at (602) 351-2245 or toll free at (800) 201-1795.

Car Seat Helper App for iPhone, iPad and Android

Selecting the right car seat for your child can be difficult. You need to factor in the child's age, height, weight and any special needs, the latest pediatric recommendations and state laws. The Car Seat Helper App can help with that, and more. Search for "car seat helper" in the iTunes App Store and the Android Market.

Recycle Your Bicycle for a Kid in Foster Care

The Arizona Association for Foster and Adoptive Parents and Boy Scouts of America Grand Canyon Council have joined together for their third annual bike drive.

Their goal is to deliver 500 like new bicycles to kids in foster care on Saturday, December 15. This is a significant increase from the 275 bicycles delivered in 2011.

Supported by The Arizona Republic, AZ Central, KPNX Channel 12 and Earnhardt Auto Dealers, the groups will collect bicycles starting the weekend of October 6-7 through the end of November. Between October and December volunteers will refurbish (or re-cycle) the bicycles. Bicycles will be distributed for children and young adults in the Arizona foster care system on December 15.

For more information on how to donate a bicycle or to volunteer, please visit www.recycleyourbicycleaz.com for details.

CMDP Covers Medications to Help Teens Stop Smoking

As most of us know, tobacco is a major health hazard to infants, children, teens, and families. Tobacco use by children and teens causes long-term and recurring medical problems. Tobacco use by children and teens is often seen with other risky behaviors, such as rebelling, early sexual activity, school problems, and use of other medicines and street drugs.

Nicotine is an addicting drug, which is more likely to lead to the use of street drugs. TV and radio ads encourage tobacco and make it seem attractive to teens. Many teens and pre-teens try cigarettes, cigars, and chewing or smokeless tobacco.

CMDP covers medications that can help addicted teens stop smoking! Please have the teen's PCP submit a prior authorization form to CMDP for coverage of this type of medicine.