

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Spring 2014



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Arizona Division of
Child Safety and
Family Services

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

Meet This Month's Shining Stars: **Nasia**

Nasia is blessed with a giant heart. She loves talking to new people, helping with chores, and has a deep love for animals. She recalls going to the zoo as one of her most treasured pastimes. As an animal admirer, Nasia's favorite animal is a zebra, but she also loves dogs.

Nasia always looks forward to school; her best subject is math. She also enjoys singing in the school choir. During recess at school, she loves playing on the playground, especially swinging on the swings and going down the slide.

She's most proud of being on her best behavior, and being acknowledged for it. The people that she looks up to the most are her older siblings.

Nasia enjoys eating different types of

food. Her favorite dishes are macaroni and cheese and spaghetti with meat sauce.

Nasia is a very inquisitive young lady with an infectious personality. She likes asking questions, reflecting an innate curiosity about the world and the people in it. If her colorful wardrobe doesn't accurately show her bright spirit, then her constant smile definitely does.

Nasia was born in 2001.



Shyanne



Shyanne is a huge football fan who loves watching and playing football with her friends. During holidays, she can't wait for the big games to come on!

Shyanne does well in school and she

is not afraid to ask for help when needed. Her favorite subject is science because she gets to do experiments. When she's not at school, Shyanne likes to draw; she is proud of her drawing techniques. Shyanne's favorite things to draw are imaginary characters.

Two of Shyanne's favorite artists are Katy Perry and Justin Bieber. Shyanne also spends time playing video games such as "Mario and Luigi" and "Hello Kitty."

She enjoys spending time with friends and helping others in class. Shyanne says she is a good listener when her friends are sad. In the future, Shyanne would like to become a hair stylist. She hopes to visit Disneyland someday.

Shyanne was born in 2002.

Jonathan (Mac)

Jonathan (Mac) has an infectious smile. His foster mom describes him as "affectionate, imaginative, outgoing and loving." He likes to give hugs and cares about others.

Mac is a cowboy at heart and he loves horses. In his current placement he is able to ride horses. He is so fond of horses he doesn't even mind helping out when it's time to scoop manure. Going to the rodeo and watching the bucking broncos is a highlight for Mac.

When it comes to school, Mac's favorite time is recess, time spent "riding" on the swings. Known to be a hearty eater, pizza is his favorite food. He burns off

energy by jumping on the trampoline.

Mac needs a forever family who has experience working with autism. He needs a family who will work with his needs with structure, routine and commitment. The family will need to be open to allow Jonathan to still maintain contact with his grandparents and sister. But one thing Jonathan wants from a family is lots of hugs!

Mac was born in 2005.



A Message From Director Flanagan....

May is national Foster Care month and I would like to personally thank each of you for all you do in caring for children who have experienced so much in their young lives.

Your work is incredibly important to these children and our community.



When Governor Brewer honored me with the appointment as the Director of the new Division of Child Safety and Family Services (DCSFS), I knew this would be a challenging though rewarding position. In the brief time I have been with the Division, I have had the opportunity to meet some of you and hear your stories firsthand. I have no doubt that you are an essential part of our success in caring for children throughout Arizona.

It is truly a selfless and gracious act to open your home to children that are either displaced family members or complete strangers. For this, I am so grateful to you for offering stability and safety to children facing uncertainty during difficult times. Every child deserves to feel the safety and comfort of being in an environment that promotes their wellbeing, growth and care.

That said, it is my belief that our foster, adoptive and kinship parents are our partners and our peers. One of my priorities is to ensure our parents have a voice, that they are engaged, informed and represented in the process. I know we face challenges and I am committed to making the changes necessary to create an environment of mutual trust and respect. I look forward to working with you as we continue to improve the lives of the children in our care and I promise to include your voice in our agency operations and planning for our future.

There are several events happening during this month to honor foster parents, including many gatherings hosted by licensing agencies, the Arizona Blue Ribbon Event Diamondback's baseball game and the tying of blue ribbons in downtown Phoenix. I encourage you to participate and network with people who share the same passion and calling to help children.

Again, THANK YOU so much for being who you are, doing what you do and investing in the future by serving the vulnerable children of Arizona.

Charles Flanagan, Director

Our Kids, Our Care — The Solution Is Us

"Our Kids, Our Care," a faith-based call for the Tucson community was held February 1 at Victory Worship Center in Tucson.

The event gave Christian communities an opportunity to listen and learn from speakers and presenters about how to help the more than 3,000 children in Pima County who live in out-of-home care. With less than 800 homes available county-wide, the need for foster homes has never been greater. More than 140 people attended; 70 of whom remained following the event to begin the process by being fingerprinted.

"It is part of the Christian mandate in the Bible to care for the orphans and the 'least of these' in our society," said Founding Pastor of the Oasis Church, founder of 4Tucson and foster parent Mark Harris. "I believe the faith community is largely unaware of the severity of the problem in our community. Once they become aware of the problem, Christians often try to work toward positive solutions."

4Tucson, one of the event's organizers, is a faith-based organization that unites Christians with different issues in the community with the common goal of helping to improve the lives of Pima County residents. Joining 4Tucson in sponsoring the event were Arizona Baptist

Children's Services, Christian Family Care, Family Life Radio and St. Nicholas of Myra Adoptions.

Other speakers were Chad Haynes, a foster dad and founding pastor of Second Mile Church; Berisha Black, an alumna of the foster care system where she spent 15 years in care before aging out; Dennis Bloodworth, an adoptee and foster dad who is also the neighborhood pastor at Christ Church of the Valley in Phoenix.

Acting Child Welfare Program Administrator for the

Division of Child Safety and Family Services, Deidre Calcoate, was the closing speaker. She spoke from her heart as an adoptee and mother of an adopted daughter about the challenges and rewards of caring for children in foster care. DCSFS also supported the event by designing and printing promotional materials for the event.

"Probably the most important thing Christians can do is pray," said David Drum, church domain director of 4Tucson. "Over and over again in the Bible, when someone starts praying for a need and begins to gain God's heart and perspective on that need, God shows the person praying how they can be part of the solution."



CMDP Website

The Comprehensive Medical and Dental Program (CMDP) website has a wealth 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.

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Looking Back, Looking Forward — No Child Is “Unadoptable”

In the Winter 2012 issue of the Arizona Statewide, we featured Elizabeth (Beth) Shevat who, at the age of 15, was celebrating her adoption. We are pleased to check in with Elizabeth and her parents, Matt and Terese Shevat for an update!

Matt and Terese Shevat thought they knew about Beth well before they met her, having reviewed her case file. But reading what was in the file had not prepared them for the in-person meeting at the bowling alley match meeting. Elizabeth’s personality and the personal connection they made simply could not be “read” on paper.

Today Beth is an active teen who gets mostly A’s and B’s in school, and is already taking college classes. Her parents support her participation in school plays and attend many sporting events — Beth was the high school football manager last fall. She also competed in the Navajo County Rodeo Queen Pageant, a 12-hour test of beauty, modeling, speeches, interviews and horsemanship.

Not bad for a teen who had once been mislabeled as “unadoptable.”

And what do her parents say? “To me it wouldn’t have mattered if she was fifteen or two. I feel that I’ve had her since birth,” says her mom, Terese. “We are so glad we adopted her.”

Beth has some advise for teens who are currently where

she was: “My advise for teens who are not sure if they want to be adopted is to think about their goals in life and then think about how they are going to get there. Think about what type of support system they need and if a family would be beneficial for them. I believe

that having a family is very wonderful and opens up doors and many opportunities. For all you teens that want a family to belong to, keep your chin up and don’t give up hope.”



New Committee Established for Working with Families Caring for American Indian Children

In November 2013 the Urban Indian Coalition of Arizona approved a sub-committee to focus on an American Indian Foster Care Recruitment Initiative. The subcommittee is comprised of foster care licensing agencies, Casey Family Programs, the Division of Child Safety and Family Services and the Phoenix Indian Center. Others are also welcome to join the committee. The formal title of the group at this time is the “Urban Indian Child Welfare Committee.” Although in the early stages of development, the overall concept of this work is to:

- Increase the percentage of American Indian children in out-of-home care who are placed with American Indian families.
- Identify some of the cultural and historical factors in identifying American Indian families interested in becoming

licensed foster homes.

- Providing training and resources for foster homes and adoptive homes that are caring for American Indian children.

The Urban Indian Child Welfare Committee is held the Fourth Thursday of the month. If you are interested in becoming a committee member, please contact DCSCS staff Vickie Lynn Steinhoff, ICWA specialist /tribal liaison at 602-542-2356 or Patricia Carey, statewide foster care specialist at 602-542-2431.

If you are a licensed foster home carrying for American Indian children and seeking resources and tribal events, please contact Loren Ashley Buford, project specialist at the Phoenix Indian Center 602-648-9708.

To learn about becoming a licensed foster parent, please visit www.azkidsneedu.gov or call 1-877-543-7633.

Ask Dr. Sue

Why Do Babies Need to See the Dentist?

The first set of teeth which are often called “baby teeth” are important and should be cared for. The teeth begin to appear in a child’s mouth at six months of age. Baby teeth not only help your baby chew and later speak, but they also help save room for the permanent teeth.

Tooth decay can occur in the baby teeth, especially if they have not been taken care of, so it’s important to start dental care at an early age. Most children do not see a dentist before 4 or 5 years of age.

Tooth decay in young children can result in pain, prevent the child from eating and chewing properly and affect normal sleeping habits. Untreated tooth decay can rapidly damage the teeth which may result in tooth abscess and infection.

CMDP members should start dental services at an early age. The American Dental Association recommends that you bring your baby to the dentist by one year of age. This

early visit to the dental office is known as a “well baby checkup” and establishes the dental home.

At the first visit, the dentist will check for tooth decay and other things that may affect the teeth as well as show you how to properly clean your baby’s teeth.

Regular dental checkups every six months following the first visit allow the dentist to look for decay and begin any necessary treatment as soon as possible. Usually at these checkups, a dental cleaning and fluoride treatment are completed as well as ways to care for the child’s teeth and gums.

Remember, starting early care for your baby’s mouth is the key to a healthy smile for life.

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

Safety and Privacy Concerns for Foster Parents

Social media provides many support opportunities for foster and adoptive parents. There are, however, some safety and privacy concerns to keep in mind. Dr. John DeGarmo, a nationally recognized educator, author and speaker who is also a foster and adoptive dad, offers these cautions:

“To be sure, there are wonderful foster care support groups through FaceBook and other social media sites, and I belong to many of them. It’s important to remember, though, that it is most unwise, and even against many state regulations and policies to share any information about the children, even by indicating them with an initial, because they can be tracked down. Let us remember that there are sexual predators who roam through social media sites, specifically looking for children in foster care, as these children are often the most vulnerable and weakest, and easiest to ensnare in their sexual traps. We also must remember that what goes online, stays online, FOREVER!”

While many posts from foster parents on social media do use an initial for the child’s name, the poster’s name is there, too. The groups posted in are often “closed,” but there is nothing to prevent someone who knows the family or the child from being a member of the group. In fact, a birth parent may even be a

member, or find the foster family through their own social media page.

DeGarmo warns that social media sites make it quite easy for birth parents and other biological family to spy on foster parents. “Time and time again, when I host training seminars across the nation, I hear of stories of foster parents who have been stalked by their child’s biological family members through social networking. For those foster parents who post all of their actions, movements, weekend plans, and vacation destinations through social network sites, birth parents have easy and ready access to this information. These biological family members are able to determine where the foster parents will be next, along with the child, and arrive at the same location.”

DeGarmo stresses that before speaking to anyone, anywhere, about a child you’re caring for in your home to think about PRIVACY.

“It is simply not allowed, not permissible, and can place a child in danger,” DeGarmo said. So, in this world where we are so accustomed to just hitting that “post” button from our phone or laptop to social media – think twice for any child in your home, and if you are a foster parent, please know that for you, you may also be breaking laws and opening the door to problems you never dreamed of.

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.

Supporting Reunification Efforts

Anyone who works or volunteers within the Division of Child Safety and Family Services (DCSFS) is working with vulnerable children. Okay, all children are vulnerable. Whether you are the case aide picking up a child or the foster parent dropping off your child, remember that there are child friendly conversations and then there are adult conversations. We may not realize that we are doing it in the moment, or we may be in an emotional state, but either way, because we are the adults, it is up to us to protect the innocence

(judge, assistant attorney general, mom’s lawyer, GAL, case manager, counselor, parent aide, foster parent, C.A.S.A.) we assisted a very young child reunite with his mother over the course of 10 months.

There were tears of joy and sadness outside and inside the courtroom on reunification day. But what was totally awesome is that everyone’s goal was to reunify the child with his family, if it was truly in his best interest, and in a healthy frame of time. One of the key ingredients throughout this case was the relationship between the mother, father, foster parent and child. Mom often shared that not only did the foster parent care for her child, but for mom as well.

The ways the foster parent supported mom as well was by:

- Incorporating journal writing back and forth to the parents
- Helping out with transportation to and from visits during the transition period when there was no parent aide
- Sending pictures of the child when mom communicated through email that she was having a bad day

We become attached to the child in our care, and maybe more so when we are the ones to take them home from the hospital just days after they arrive on this earth. But it is important that we start off and remain an active member of the team. If the child goes home, then hopefully you can remain in their lives, if they need permanency, then hopefully it will be with your family, and should there be a third option, you can be confident that you gave this child unconditional love that will make an everlasting impact in their life.

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



A Bright Future for Your Child

of our children. Please never underestimate the intelligence of your children. Children hear and understand most everything we say.

It is so powerful to a child’s mental and physical health to be surrounded by love. When a child comes into care it is devastating to them, no matter what age. For a newborn, they have been in their mother’s womb for 9 months hearing her voice, and so they began their first bond. For an infant or toddler, add on smell, touch, family and overall environment. For a young child now imagine their school, home, friends, and routine. When we say, “yes,” to the DCSFS employee asking us if we have an open bed, we are saying, “Yes, I will care for this child and keep them safe until their mother and/or father can safely reunite, or a permanent placement can be found for them.”

After six years of being a Foster Parent, I became a C.A.S.A. (Court Appointed Special Advocate). This is almost as rewarding as being a Foster Parent. In the month of January, I am happy to report, that together as a team,

Lions and Tigers and Boas (Oh my!)

The Office of Licensing, Certification and Regulation (OLCR) is frequently asked if rule prohibits certain animal species or breeds. Rule isn’t that specific, but it does state that pets must not pose a hazard due to behavior or disease. As a standard practice, OLCR considers most exotic, constricting, and venomous animals to be hazards and will cite the presence of these animals in the home as a life-safety violation. These animals include: pythons, boa constrictors, scorpions, monkeys (or other primates), and big cats (not fat domesticated cats; but cougars, mountain lions, and tigers).

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

HPV Vaccine

Effective January 1, 2014, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) began covering the HPV vaccine for both males and females through 26 years of age.

There's Still Time to Sign-Up for a Shoes Gift Certificate

While more than 7,000 gift certificates for shoes have been given out, the offer is still available. If you have not requested a gift certificate for each child you are caring for who is in foster care, you can register online at <http://foster.centralaz.com>. If you do not have access to the Internet or have any additional questions, please call Shawna Weeks from Central Church at 480.924.4946 Ext 313.

Sewing Project for Arizona Children in Foster Care

Since 2005, foster mother Adriane Grimaldi and her husband, Victor, have opened their Scottsdale home to more than a dozen children in foster care, but were disheartened several years ago when two of those children arrived at their home with their belongings in trash bags.

"I thought about how demeaning it was and not very kid-friendly," Grimaldi remembers. "I wondered why can't kid-friendly king-sized pillowcases with backpack straps or duffle bags be used instead?"

An avid sewer, Grimaldi quickly got to work sending out a simple email request to some friends asking for help to sew pillowcases.

"I only expected to receive about 300 pillow cases, but the idea caught on and since then there has been no turning back," she adds. "It's been awesome to see how many people are wanting to make a difference in a child's life.

People do care."

Since February 2008, Grimaldi and the project she named "The Sewing Project to Help Foster Kids" have received more than 8,000 kid-friendly pillowcases from sewers all around the Valley. The Project has also donated more than a thousand bags to Mesa United Way's Helen's Hope Chest, which offers free clothing and toys to children in foster care.

Visit www.handsonphoenix.org/ for more information.



Organizations Raise Funds to Support Foster Care

Volunteers from organizations all across Arizona donate their time and talents to support children in foster care. One example of this community engagement is evident in the planning of the Arizona Blue Ribbon event.

DES Public Information Officer Nicole Moon (pictured) organized several bake sales to raise funds for families to attend the event, featuring a Diamondback's



baseball game.

Additional fund raisers were held at Peter Piper Pizza, Chili's, The Old Spaghetti Factory and Buffalo Wild Wings. More than 1,000 foster families and the children they care for were able to attend the game at no charge. In addition to admission to the game, each person received a \$5 concessions voucher.

More details and photos will be in the next issue of the *Arizona Statewide*.

Central Christian Church Supports Children in Care

"When we discovered that there were 15,000 children in Arizona's Foster Care program, we were both shocked and saddened. We had to do something," said Cal Jernigan, senior pastor at Central Christian Church of Arizona. That "something" became a \$15 gift certificate to Payless Shoes for every child in the Arizona foster care system.

Funds for the gift certificates came by way of donations received from members of Central's church family. One of the largest churches in Arizona, Central meets at five locations across the valley, in Mesa, Gilbert, Glendale, Queen Creek and Ahwatukee.

"The giving of shoes was simply our way of blessing these children while encouraging the adults who care enough to care for them," Jernigan added.

The DCSFS Central Office worked with Central Christian Church to coordinate the give away while maintaining the confidentiality of the children and their foster families. Notification was sent to families through contracted agencies to notify licensed foster parents and through a mailed letter to reach

non-licensed families. Staff also worked with the Office of Licensing, Certification and Regulation (OLCR) to invite group home participation.

"All throughout the Bible we see God's heart for vulnerable people," stated Jeremy Jernigan, executive pastor of Creative Arts, who is also a foster parent. "This is fully displayed through Jesus and then modeled by His early followers in the Church. Whenever we can rally today's Church to sacrifice for the vulnerable among us we have tapped into God's heartbeat since the beginning of time."

But the blessings have gone both ways, based on the comments parents have sent to the church: "Thank you so much!! This could not have come at a better time. Just before we heard of your program we got a new placement and had one of our foster kiddos come back into our home after being gone (returned to her family) for a week. She came back in the middle of the night with only her pjs and a blanket. We have not received any of the clothes, shoes or jackets we had bought for her and sent her home with. Thank you for all you do!!"

Thank you so much for the voucher; it's nice things like this that really add up for helping take care of our son in foster care. The gesture is greatly appreciated!

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Andy

Andy is an active young man who enjoys sports, especially football, basketball, baseball and soccer. He has never tried hockey or boxing, but says that he'd like to.

Andy enjoys school and his favorite subjects are science, reading, and history. He recalls a few special teachers that have motivated and cheered him on.

When he's not at school, Andy listens to music; rap music is his favorite. Andy is good at memorizing lyrics. He also enjoys drawing. During school breaks, he likes to swim, be outside, and play video games. During quiet times, Andy likes to read- getting better at reading is one of his goals.

Andy likes being helpful, including taking out the trash, doing the dishes and helping others with their homework. Andy says he is a good friend and others come to him for advice.

Andy's favorite foods are orange chicken, chow mein, tacos, burritos and cheesecake.

Andy is proud to be getting an education, and feels blessed to have his sister and brothers. In the future, Andy aspires to have a career in the NFL or the FBI.

If he could go anyplace on Earth, Andy says that he'd like to go to California and visit the beaches.

Andy was born in 2000.



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Kinship Care Information Sessions

Information Sessions are now available for kinship caregivers in the Phoenix area. Advance registration is required and free child care is offered for children (ages 3 years old and up only). For information on upcoming dates, times and locations, call 602-233-0017 and ask for a Kinship Navigator. Space is limited.

Topics included are:

- What goes on at court and how does it affect me and the children?
- What are the CPS policies and rules I need to know about?
- What financial benefits are there?
- What is involved in getting licensed as a foster caregiver?
- What required medical, dental and vision care is available for the children?
- What can Arizona Kinship Support Services do to help me?

These information sessions are similar to those offered to kinship families in the Tucson area.

New DCSFS Leadership

DCSFS Director Charles Flanagan has named Eric Jorgensen Deputy Director. Jorgensen has 10 years of experience in state finance and operations, having previously served as the Chief Financial Officer of the Arizona Department of Administration, Benefit Services Division; and the Assistant Director of the Arizona Joint Legislative Budget Committee. Jorgensen earned a B.A., in International Political Science at Brigham Young University and a Masters of International Affairs, Economic Policy from Columbia University — School of International and Public Affairs.

Robert Bell has been named Bureau Chief in charge of Field Investigations. He will serve as a counterpart to Chief Gregory McKay, who leads the Office of Child Welfare Investigations (OCWI). Together, they will oversee all of the child welfare investigations conducted by DCSFS. Bell, a member of the Governor's CARE Team, was the Children's Justice Coordinator for Maricopa County for Childhelp Children's Center of Arizona, as well as a former Arizona law enforcement officer. Bell holds a B.S. in Education and a Master of Administration with an emphasis on leadership, both from Northern Arizona University.