

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Meet This Month's Shining Stars: **Tony and Jessica**

Tony is a talkative boy with a bright smile! He loves to tell stories and is learning to play with others. Tony likes to play basketball, hike and participate in family activities — especially if Legos are involved.

Tony also enjoys listening to music and pretending to be the lead singer. He is currently educated in the home through the district home-bound schooling program.

Tony's sister, Jessica, is a friendly child who has a beautiful smile! She is eager to learn and is very observant of her surroundings. Jessica loves to draw and play with baby dolls, but her favorite toys are ponies. She also likes to play catch.

It is also important that Jessica's forever family is comfortable with managing medical needs and able to provide a consistent, structured environment. Like her brother, Jessica

is also being educated in the home through the district home-bound schooling program.

Tony and Jessica need a two-parent home that can offer a consistent, structured environment. It is also important for their forever family to have some knowledge of sign language in order to communicate with Jessica.

Tony was born 2004. Jessica was born in 2006.



★★ Shining Stars ★★

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

Douglas is a very gracious, respectful and well-mannered young man. He is quite mature and perceptive for his age. Douglas is an avid reader

who loves school and gets good grades.

When Douglas learned that his grandfather fought in World War II, this sparked his interest in World War II history, battles and different kinds of planes. Douglas likes to read books on history and hopes to earn a history degree in college. After college, Douglas would like to join the Marines.

Besides history, Douglas' other passion is baseball. Douglas plays catcher on his baseball team and hopes to play on the high school baseball team next year.

Douglas is a laid-back and easy-going young man and a joy to be around. Like most teens, Douglas loves pizza and ice cream.

Douglas was born in 1999.



Summer 2014

In This Issue...

Shining Stars: Tony, Jessica and Douglas ■ 1

Department of Child Safety Formed ■ 2

Obituary: Flora Sotomayor ■ 2

Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey Initial Results ■ 2

Looking Back, Looking Forward — Raymundo Cruz ■ 3

Self Care and the Single Parent ■ 3

Ask Dr. Sue About Head Start ■ 3

OLCR Changes ■ 4

Grandparent Stipend ■ 4

A Bright Future: Communicating About Your Child's Case Plan ■ 4

Shining Star: Eve ■ 5

Navajo Nation Agreement with U.S. DHHS ■ 5

DCS Media Campaign ■ 5

Shining Stars: Mina and Camron ■ 6

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

A Fruit and Veggie Tale

September is Fruits and Veggies More Matters Month and is the perfect time to pledge to do something healthy! More than 90 percent of both adults and children do not eat the amount of fruits and vegetables recommended by the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the MyPlate nutrition guide. But just remember two things: Fill half your plate with fruits and veggies at every eating occasion (including snacks) AND all forms...fresh, frozen, canned, dried and 100% juice...count toward your daily intake.

AFFCF Supports Children in Care

In April and May, the Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation (AFFCF) helped children in foster care by funding bicycles, prom dresses, camp registrations, music lessons, theme park admissions and sports participation fees. Learn how to apply for a grant on behalf of the children in your care at www.affcf.org.

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.

Department of Child Safety Formed

In late May, the Governor called a special session of the Arizona Legislature, which statutorily created and funded the new Department of Child Safety (DCS) — a permanent, stand-alone agency with the express mission of safeguarding Arizona's abused and neglected children — and mandated transparency and accountability. Charles Flanagan is the director of the new agency.

"It is a momentous day for Arizona, as we take the boldest and most meaningful step in state history to reform and replace our problem-plagued child welfare system," said Governor Janice K. Brewer upon signing the legislation into law. "This new agency, under the devoted, tireless and passionate leadership of Charles Flanagan, is a critical step forward in creating a child safety system that lives up to its name and mission.

"With this historic legislation, we begin to

reverse a long-standing crisis and implement long-lasting change. Through necessary resources, safeguards, checks and balances and oversight — as well as a clearly-defined core mission of child safety — there will be no room for excuses, secrets or faceless decision makers....

"Certainly, a system that has been broken for decades will take time to repair. Implementing true and lasting reform in any agency — especially one with such a vital mission and vulnerable population — will take time. But for the first time in state history, we are on a clear path to a successful child safety system that will not fail in its mission....

"This is only the beginning, and it will be incumbent upon future governors and legislators to continue our remarkable progress. But today, we can take pride in knowing that we made history — and we made a difference."

Obituary: Flora Sotomayor

Flora Sotomayor, Assistant Director for the Division of Child Safety and Family Services, passed away on May 28, 2014. Sotomayor worked tirelessly for more than 30 years in child welfare with DES.

She achieved her dream job when she was named the Assistant Director for what was then DCYF. Prior to that she served as the Acting Program Manager in Pima Region. Her dedication to the children we serve was clearly evident.

Having come from the case management ranks, Flora had a deep understanding of the challenges case workers face on a daily basis and always had that in mind when she was planning how to improve the system or responding to questions from others.

Memorial services were held in Tucson and Phoenix. Her family has asked that in lieu of flowers, those who wish to honor Flora's memory may donate to Arizona Friends of Foster Care Foundation, among others.

Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey Initial Results

Over the past several months, licensed foster parents were invited to participate in a satisfaction survey. The survey was conducted on behalf of the Department by the Arizona State University Center for Applied and Behavioral Health Policy. More than 1,000 — specifically 1,095 — licensed foster parents responded to the survey. Data from the survey will take time to fully analyze, but here are some of the initial findings.

■ While most of the parents responding (878 parents, or 81 percent) have been licensed for five years or less, 20 foster parents reported being licensed foster parent for 20 years or more.

■ Each of Arizona's 15 counties were represented in the responses, but as one might expect, the majority of the respondents were from Maricopa County (583 parents, or 54 percent).

■ Respondents also represented every foster care licensing agency in the state.

■ When families were asked to think back to when they first became licensed, 32 percent (337 parents) said they went into foster parenting with the intention of providing care to children for 10 years or more.

■ Eighty-six percent (896 parents) responded that the children placed in their home were consistent with their placement preferences.

■ Ninety-one percent (928 parents) either completely agree or mostly agree with the statement, "I receive calls in a timely manner from my licensing agency."

Regarding CPS visits, 76 percent (758

parents) either completely agree or mostly agree with the statement, "Children placed in my home are receiving regular visits from the DCYF CPS Specialists."

■ The numbers are a bit lower when it comes to DCS staff returning phone calls. Fifty-seven percent (575 parents) either completely agree or mostly agree with the statement, "I receive return calls in a timely manner from DCYF CPS Specialists and/or CPS Unit Supervisors."

■ With regard to pre-service training, 76 percent (717 parents) either completely agree or mostly agree with the statement, "The pre-service training (PS-MAPP or Deciding Together) I received adequately prepared me to be a foster parent."

■ Eighty-five percent (798 parents) either completely agree or mostly agree with the statement, "If training were available on-line it would be easier for me to find topics that are more relevant to me and the children I am caring for."

■ Ninety-nine percent of parents said they have access to the Internet; 90 percent through a computer in their home.

■ With regards to this newsletter, the Arizona Statewide, 40 percent (371 parents) prefer receiving it in the mail; 22 percent (205 parents) would like to have the newsletter posted online and receive an email announcement; 21 percent (197 parents) said they would like to receive the newsletter as an e-newsletter. Fifty-one percent (471 parents) said they would like to receive the newsletter monthly, while 47 percent (433 parents) like receiving it quarterly.

Looking Back, Looking Forward — Raymundo Cruz

When Ray Cruz was 10 years old, he and his siblings were removed from their parents. Ray was scared and worried; but not for long: “My foster family really helped me,” he says, adding, “They took me to school and helped me with my homework. I like to call it a “boys and girls club home” because we got to meet new people and have fun. They took really good care of me and treated me as one of their own, not a ‘rent-a-kid.’”

Ray says that his favorite part about being with his foster family was “the genuine love I felt. I didn’t feel like a stranger — I felt like part of their family. It was that love that really helped me overcome everything. It was an awesome feeling.”

Ray had his younger brother with him. “We grew really close, but it was really hard being separated from my other siblings,” he explains. “Being separated from my other siblings made me realize how much I love them and had previously taken them for granted. It made me reach out to my siblings, to try and work things out and to figure out how we can get through things together.

“Now,” he adds, “we only look out for each other, we don’t argue. We really are closer.”

Ray credits his foster parents with helping him grow. “Now I’m able to move forward. When I have struggles or sorrows in my life I can look back and remember what I have



already been through.”

Ray remains involved with DCS through the Young Adult Program. He is studying business entrepreneurship and marketing at ASU with a full-ride scholarship. He is also featured in the DCS media campaign (see page 5).

Self Care and the Single Parent

For years people have been talking about self care, but for single parents, the issue of self care can become even more vital — and even more complicated.

It may seem impossible at times, but it truly is important to take some time for yourself. Do your best to schedule one night a month where a friend or relative can take care of your child. Then, get out of the house — either alone or with another friend or group of friends — and purposefully avoid returning until after bedtime. Do something you enjoy; see a movie, treat yourself to an ice cream, or simply browse at a local bookstore. Do whatever most appeals to you!

The factor that can raise average parents to good parents, good parents to great parents, and great parents to amazing parents is who you surround yourself with. As a single parent, you do not have a natural tag team partner and, as a result, you may want to consider creating a support network of people who will be there to empower you to be the best parent that you can possibly be. This

support network may include a variety of people who fulfill multi-faceted needs including parenting, social, physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects.

Welcome people in your life who stimulate your mind and challenge you on an intellectual level, as well as those who keep you active physically. On the intellectual level, this may be a book club or a chat room on a topic you enjoy, or perhaps a co-worker with whom you enjoy discussing the day’s events.

It can also be helpful to develop a network of mutually satisfying relationships that fulfill your social and emotional needs. These are the people in your life who accept you for who you are.

If you can allow them to be good friends to you and graciously accept their assistance when they offer, it can be reassuring to know that you have trusted people in your life who will be there for you no matter what. Depending on your personality, this can vary from a few close friends to a larger group of people such as a support group.

Ask Dr. Sue

Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start and Early Head Start are child development programs that serve children from birth to age 5, pregnant women and their families. Their overall goal is to increase school readiness of young children who are in low-income families.

The intent of the Head Start Program is to assist families to become independent. The program provides added supervision and support services to families and is a great resource for kinship families.

Although Head Start is federally mandated to have a wait list, the two needs that will BUMP your family to the

top of the list are 1) A child being in foster care, and 2) A child with a disability. The enrollment age must be 0 to 3 years for Early Head Start (including expectant mothers) and 3 to 5 years for regular Head Start. Early Head Start also provides comprehensive services to pregnant teens and women. For more Head Start information visit their Web site <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc> or contact them by phone at 1-866-763-6481.

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

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program • Under Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI & VII), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) of 2008; the Department prohibits discrimination in admissions, programs, services, activities, or employment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetics and retaliation. The Department must make a reasonable accommodation to allow a person with a disability to take part in a program, service or activity. For example, this means if necessary, the Department must

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OLCR Changes

The passage of recent legislation creating DCS has impacted the Office of Licensing, Certification and Regulation. The authority for licensing family foster homes, group homes for children, child placing agencies and adoption agencies has been transferred to DCS and will be known as the Office of Licensing and

Regulation (OLR).

The authority for licensing child and adult developmental homes and certifying providers for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) will now be under the Division of Developmental Disabilities and will continue to be called OLCR.

Grandparent Stipend

In January 2014, the Department of Child Safety began the Grandparent Foster Care Stipend Program providing grandparents a monthly stipend of \$75 per grandchild to offset some of the costs of caring for their grandchildren while in foster care. As of the beginning of June, DCS had an average of 853 children enrolled in the stipend, assisting 461 grandparents each month!

Grandparents must meet eligibility

requirements: They cannot be licensed foster parents, cannot be receiving TANF benefits on behalf of the child and their income level cannot be above 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Grandparents who meet the eligibility requirements but are not receiving the stipend should contact their case manager to receive the application form. Once the form is submitted and eligibility is determined, stipend payments will be authorized..

Youth Convening Held in June

The Maricopa County Youth Convening event for Maricopa County teenagers living in foster care was held in late June. Celebrating its sixth year, this annual event is a “lock-in” for teens who are living independently or in group homes and will age out of the foster care system in the next few years.

Teens had the opportunity to get to know each other, have fun, play games and learn about important topics that will help them as they grow to adulthood. This year’s

event focused on healthy relationships. There were workshops on self-worth, self-esteem and healthy friendships. In addition, youth attended workshops to develop banking and budgeting skills, as well as learning about using credit responsibly.

The DCS Young Adult Program and several community partners created the event in 2009 as a way to engage teens in foster care. In lieu of state money, the entire event is funded through sponsor donations.

Communicating About Your Child’s Case Plan

A child’s team is so very important. Whether a child has been with you a day or a year, it is natural for a foster parent to think about: Will our child be going home? Will they be going to a family placement? Will the child in our care stay in our home as their forever family? Many foster parents have asked these same questions as the one year mark approaches. Each member on our team has a specific job, and sometimes we may not understand why something is taking place at a certain time in a case plan.

environment for the child in our care.

No matter what kind of a home a child is coming from, when someone from DCS removes them from that biological member, it is a traumatic event for the child. Everyone who comes in contact with the child needs to understand what they might be going through and how to minimize their trauma.

There are amazing resources out there for children, parents and families. Foster Parents can reach out to their pediatricians, websites (attachment.org, empoweredtoconnect.org, loveandlogic.com), licensing agency staff and even a local church in your community that may be involved with foster care. Even though you may only need six hours of training yearly for your foster care license, there are so many trainings that can be helpful to the support that the child in your care may need.

Each child who comes into our care is unique, and we need to meet each child where he or she is at. When we are able to take advantage of the education that is available for us as foster parents, we can in turn share this knowledge — with the biological parents through journaling, the child’s CM at monthly visits and your licensing agency staff to share with other foster families.

Save the date on your calendar today! September 27th, How To Help Children Overcome The Influences of Trauma. Visit azafap.org for registration details.

Together we can make an amazing difference for our children and bring permanency to them in a healthy way.

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

Worth Mentioning Again...

It may sound familiar, but 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. The most recent Arizona Child Fatality Report showed Arizona still had more than 70 preventable deaths per year from unsafe sleep practices.

A Bright Future for Your Child

One team member that foster parents are rarely in communication with is the Assistant Attorney General, (AAG). The AAG is the attorney for the Department of Child Safety (DCS), and sits next to the Case Manager (CM) in the court room.

Did you know that you can communicate with the AAG? Ask questions. You will either gain new knowledge that will bring clarity to understanding your child’s permanency, or you will bring something up that may not have been looked into yet. Communication is key. It is so important that the AAG follow both Federal and State statutes so that there is minimum to no chance of appeal at the end of a case. This in turn will allow a child to reach permanency sooner.

The majority of children come to our homes with a case plan goal of family reunification. As a foster parent, it is our main goal to provide a loving, nurturing and safe

You May Feel a Slight Prick....

August is National Immunization Awareness month! Immunizations are a basic healthcare service that is covered under CMDP for children and youth in out-of-home care. Immunizations need to be given at the primary care physician’s office; those given at pharmacies are not covered by 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 DCS/CMDP." Should you receive a bill, contact a CMDP Member Services representative at 1-800-201-1795.

New Shoes for Back to School! Gift Certificates are available

Central Christian Church members have donated funds for each child in foster care to receive a \$15 gift certificate from Payless Shoes. 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 Christian Church at 480.924.4946 Ext 313.

Meet This Month's Shining Star: Eve

Eve says that she is a good friend because she is a great listener and is caring. She is a fan of S.E. Hinton books, scary movies and One Direction. When Eve is outdoors, she likes to go hiking and play football.

One of her favorite things to do is draw and she is a budding artist. Eve is proud of her drawing abilities, but would like to pursue art classes to enhance her skills.

Eve recently traveled to Rocky Point and particularly enjoyed this vacation. She loved hanging out on the beach and trying different foods.

If Eve could visit anywhere in the world, it would be a tie between London, Israel and China!

Eve was born in 2000.



★ Shining Star ★

Navajo Nation Makes Historic Agreement With U.S. DHHS for its Tribal Foster Care

On June 27, 2014, the Navajo Nation made an historic pact with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to execute a direct funding agreement through the Title IV-E program under the Social Security Act that will reimburse the tribe for federally eligible foster care, adoption and guardianship expenditures.

The reimbursements cover maintenance, including room and board; administration, including determination of Title IV-E eligibility, placement of the child, development of a case plan and other administrative duties under the act; and short- and long-term training for the tribe. Title IV-E reimbursements are open-ended and are not a grant, according to the U.S. DHHS. The Navajo Nation tribal jurisdiction covers three states: New Mexico, Arizona and Utah.

"Title IV-E is a model program for other Indian tribes throughout the United States," said Sharon Begay-McCabe, director of the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services. "Because tribes have an input on how their program will be administered and [how to] incorporate their tribal culture into the plan. Native Americans, including Navajo, believe that children should be raised within their immediate family or within their Indian tribe. The Navajo family bond is their matrilineal clan system and families can exercise these traditional customs by keeping the children in kinship and permanent placement. Our children are the future leaders of our tribes and we must continue to hold them sacredly and keep them safe." Tribal officials said the program is set to go into effect October 1, 2014. — Taken in part from *Indian Country Today*

DCS Media Campaign

DCS has signed a Task Order with Geo & Associates, a Tucson-based marketing and advertising firm, to conduct a 12-month general marketing campaign to recruit and retain additional foster and adoptive families. The campaign will include TV, radio Public Service announcements and digital geo-targeted internet and social media.

The theme of the campaign is dispelling myths about foster care and supporting current families. The ads feature current foster and adoptive families and former youth in foster care. Interviews were shot at Reid Park in Tucson in June and July.

"In the creative process, we started off thinking that two commercials (1 English and 1 Spanish) would encompass the entire scope," said Georgia Lacy, owner. "When we actually got into recording the testimonials, we saw that the message was much broader. It is with great pride that Geo will provide two of the additional TV spots at no charge."

The tentative launch date for the first ads is late August. The campaign will run first in Pima County, and after three months the campaign will grow to be statewide.

DCS decided to begin the campaign in Pima County following an analysis of data that showed Pima County as having the highest

percentage of children in congregate care of any county in the state.

In addition, DCS is currently receiving technical assistance from both the NRC for Child Welfare Data and Technology (NRC-CWDT) and the NRC for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSkids (NRC-DR). The purpose of this technical assistance is to identify and better define the characteristics of people most likely to become foster parents. This will allow DCS to focus efforts toward those most likely to become licensed foster parents.

Below: Geo & Associates staff prepare to interview foster parents as part of the upcoming DCS media campaign.



Meet This Month's Shining Star: Mina



Mina is an inquisitive girl whose favorite subject in school is science, because she likes learning how things work. When she grows up she wants to be a paleontologist.

Mina is an avid reader and a big fan of sci-fi books. She is proud of her reading abilities and spelling bee accomplishments. Mina placed 7th in her district spelling bee this year!

If Mina had three wishes, they would be: to have a roomful of Reese's peanut butter cups, money to buy books and a boom box to play her favorite music.

She also likes playing outside, basketball, volleyball and baseball. Mina is active in extracurricular activities at her school and plays clarinet for her school's band.

Mina's favorite holidays are Valentine's Day and Christmas. She enjoys Valentine's Day because she likes handing out boxes of candy to others. Christmas is a favorite because she likes opening presents.

Mina was born in 2001.

★Shining Star★

Arizona
Statewide

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P.O. Box 6123, SC 940A
Phoenix, AZ 85005-6123



Arizona Statewide is published by
the Arizona Department of Child
Safety to inform foster, kinship and
adoptive families across the state.
Roxann L. Miller, editor.

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602-542-2359



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Meet This Month's Shining Star: Camron

Camron is a joy to be around! He loves to watch movies and can easily imitate characters from movies. He also loves to re-enact some of his favorite scenes from Toy Story, acting as Woody, Buzz and the rest of the gang . Camron also enjoys singing songs from his favorite movies as well.

He is an affectionate boy who gives sporadic hugs to friends. Camron has a big heart and is always going out of his way to make sure the people around him are smiling or laughing.

He enjoys spending time at school with his friends and teachers. His favorite part of school is learning math and listening to music.

Camron receives occupational and physical therapy to strengthen his skills and is currently being taught how to read Braille in school because he is partially blind.

When Camron thinks of all the possibilities that his future holds, he dreams of owning a video store when he gets older, as he is a huge movie buff!

Camron was born in 2000.

★Shining Star★

