

Arizona Statewide

News for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Families Across Arizona

Winter 2013



877-543-7633

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

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adoptive families,
please call:
877-KIDS-NEED-U
(877-543-7633)
or visit our website
azkidsneedu.gov.

Meet This Month's Shining Stars: Troy

Troy, 15, is an engaging and well-spoken young man. Extremely smart and possessing a great sense of humor, Troy is also a very thoughtful young man who considers the needs of others. He is an active participant in finding his forever family.

With a knack for technology, Troy enjoys working on computers and building gadgets. He has set ambitious goals for his life and is working hard to achieve them. He wants to go to college to study computer technology and would like to work for a major computer company someday, perhaps as a video game developer. Troy says he likes school, especially learning new things. He enjoys reading, and going to the library, although he admits that math is challenging. His free time is spent playing video games, reading fiction books, and listening to music.

Troy also enjoys taking care of animals and would love to have pets of his own. He likes to spend time with people who are both humorous and respectful. Above all, Troy wants a family who will respect him, offer support to him, and show him appreciation. He would like to



continue to have contact with his extended family.

Troy understands that an adoptive family wants to help him, but he would like to help them in any way that he can, as well. He has voiced his desire for a forever family "who would love and accept me as I am."

Aaishah



Spunky and outgoing are only two of the words that describe Aaishah, 13. She is very creative and especially likes to write poetry. She is a stylish young woman who loves dancing, spending time on the computer, and maintaining contact with friends.

This lively girl has big plans for her future that include a college education and a visit overseas to China or Japan. Her interests span the length of her imagination. Aaishah has a penchant

for cooking and particularly enjoys baking cakes; she dreams of whipping up culinary delights such as fettuccine alfredo.

Her enthusiasm, curiosity and zest for life is contagious! Like most girls, she enjoys painting her nails, making homemade jewelry and chatting about girl stuff. She likes helping others, particularly younger children in foster care. She also is skilled in fashion and likes putting together stylish outfits.

Aaishah desires to become a teacher, perhaps in special education. "I think I'll work as a special education teacher because special education kids are awesome and they show you cool things."

She is hoping to find a forever family with lots of love. She would like older and younger siblings and a pet. She said she would like to have someone help her with her homework every night; walk with her to the park and take her to a professional sporting event.

"I want a family that's loving, caring and one that if you need them, they'll be there," she said. "They'll be there when you need them," she emphasized.

Arizona Celebrates Adoption Month

Five communities across Arizona celebrated National Adoption Awareness Month in November, finalizing the adoptions of more than 400 children and youth. "Adoption days are truly remarkable events to witness

as parents and children come together to form a forever family," said DES Director Clarence Carter. "The joy you get just from merely observing the official ceremonies is beyond words. Seeing how happy these children are to be part of a loving family is truly priceless."

Celebrations kicked off on Saturday, November 3, where 82 children were adopted by 60 families at Udall Park in Tucson.

Pinal County Superior Court also opened its doors on Saturday, November 3, in Florence. This is the first time Pinal County has participated in National Adoption Month. In all, 22 families finalized adoptions of 31 children in Pinal County.

On Friday, November 16, Yuma County celebrated at the county's Juvenile Justice Center, finalizing 15 adoptions.

Saturday, November 17, was Adoption Day in both Phoenix and Prescott. Twelve

adoptions were finalized at the Yavapai Courthouse in Prescott.

Once again one of the largest adoption events in the nation was held at the Durango Juvenile Court in Phoenix. More than 330 adoptions were finalized, approximately a 13 percent increase over last year.

Governor Janice K. Brewer issued a proclamation naming November 2012 as "Arizona Adoption Month."

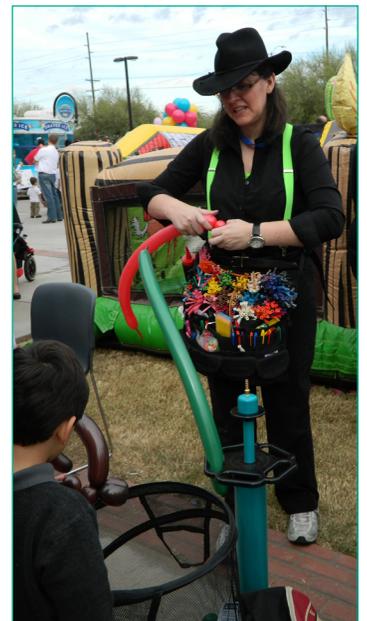
"Arizona recognizes the importance that support services have in seeing families through the adoption process and beyond," said Carter. "As Governor Brewer points out in her proclamation, adoptive parents have a special calling — sharing a loving home with children in need, offering them hope for a brighter future."

Preliminary data shows that between April 2008 and the end of September 2012, more than 9,000 Arizona

children in foster care have found permanent homes in adoptive families. As of September 30, 2012, of the 14,200 children in foster care, more than 2,680 or 19 percent, have a case plan goal of adoption.



Photos: The cakewalk, with goodies prepared by the Tucson Adoption Subsidy staff (above) is always a popular attraction. Below right: families prepare for a balloon launch in Florence. Far right: balloon animals and other attractions highlight Phoenix's adoption day.



Meet This Month's Shining Stars: JT

JT, 12, is a huge Michael Jackson fan. He can dance and moon walk and is hoping to be a performer himself when he is older. He takes pride in his appearance and likes to be a sharp dresser. JT may appear shy, but he is very talkative when you get to know him.

He is very interested in computers and technology, and is hoping to have an iPad soon. On Saturdays, he mentors younger children, answering their questions and guiding them during field trips. He has a soft heart and looks out for those younger than he is. He also likes to be helpful around the house.

JT is an active participant in his case and does a good job sharing his wants and needs. He would like to maintain contact with his siblings and wants a family who is kind and loving.



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.

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Looking Back, Looking Forward — by Millie (Adams) Etherton

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.

"Am I the only one? Why do I feel so alone? I have a home to live in and food, so no need to be upset! 'Kay, I can do this on my own! Why not? I've been doing it my whole life...."

Like many other young adults who live in the system, these are our beliefs. We believe we are "no one" and that we don't need help to overcome abuse and addiction because we are strong. We have also become numb to the fact that we could need and or benefit from a family.

I was a child who lived in the foster care system. At 4 years old my sister and I were placed in a foster home. After three years we were sent back to my father and stepmother. By age 13, we were sent back again to the state system. At that time I knew I would *never* be with my siblings again. Being the oldest of five kids, it made me sad because I could not protect them anymore.

By the time I aged out of care at age 18, I had a total of six different placements. My sisters and I were never together. My brothers thankfully ended up with a family! As a result of not feeling that I was "wanted," I lack self-confidence, which is something I work on every day.

I encourage everyone, and particularly foster parents, to invite young adults into your home. I know that the word teenager is intimidating, but we all are just as important. We did not choose our abuse or ask to be called a "foster child."

Many young adults have not had someone who stood beside them. If you have a young adult in your home for one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, one year, or a lifetime, please support them. Listen to them. Provide them with at least one life-long skill. You never know if you are the only person who has done this and honestly, that moment of care will last a lifetime in our hearts!!!!

Millie Etherton, 28, is married and has two daughters. She lives in northern Arizona.



Children's Heart Gallery in Tucson

On December 1, 2012, volunteer photographers and hairstylists who are creating the Children's Heart Gallery visited Tucson. More than 20 people assisted nearly 30 children and youth — like the Shining Stars on pages 1 and 2 — as they prepared for their moment in the spotlight.

Loews Ventana Canyon Resort served as the backdrop for the photos and donated the use of two hospitality suites

for preparations. Pantano Christian Church provided food. Thank you to all the volunteers: hair stylists, photographers, those who transported the children, DCYF staff, guides and especially the foster parents who prepared and brought the children in their care to be photographed.

Visit the Children's Heart Gallery at childrensheartgallery.org/.

Ask Dr. Sue

Helping Children Cope After Experiencing Trauma

Children and youth can face emotional strains after a traumatic event such as a car crash or violence. Disasters also may leave them with long-lasting harmful effects. When children experience a trauma, or watch it on TV, or overhear others discussing it, they can feel scared, confused, or anxious. Young people react to trauma differently than adults. Some may react right away; others may show signs that they are having a difficult time much later. Adults do not always know when a child needs help coping. Here are some tips to help parents learn some common reactions, respond in a helpful way, and know when to seek support.

Infants and Toddlers, 0–2 years old, cannot understand a trauma is happening, but they know when their caregiver is upset. They may start to show the same emotions as their caregivers, or they may act differently, like crying for no reason or withdrawing from people and not playing with their toys.

Children, 3–5 years old, can understand the effects of trauma. They may have trouble adjusting to change and loss. They may depend on the adults around them to help them feel better.

Children, 6–10 years old, may fear going to school and stop spending time with friends. They may have trouble paying attention and do poorly in school overall. Some may become aggressive for no clear reason. Or they may act younger than their age by asking to be fed or dressed by their parent or caregiver.

Youth and Adolescents, 11–19 years old, go through a lot of physical and emotional changes because of their developmental stage. So, it may be even harder for them to cope with trauma. Older teens may deny their reactions to themselves and their caregivers. They may respond with a routine "I'm OK" or even silence when they are upset. Or, they may complain about physical aches or pains because they cannot identify what is really bothering them

emotionally. Some may start arguments at home and/or at school, resisting any structure or authority. They also may engage in risky behaviors such as using alcohol or drugs.

The good news is children and youth are usually quite resilient. Most of the time they get back to feeling OK soon after a trauma. With the right support from the adults around them, they can thrive and recover. The most important ways to help are to make sure children feel connected, cared about, and loved.

Pay attention and be a good listener. Help children express their emotions through conversation, writing, drawing, and singing. Most children want to talk about a trauma, so let them. Accept their feelings and tell them it is OK to feel sad, upset, or stressed. Crying is often a way to relieve stress and grief.

Allow them to ask questions. Don't let talking about the trauma take over the family discussion for long periods of time.

Encourage helping activities. Children may better cope with a trauma or disaster by helping others. They can write caring letters to those who have been hurt or have lost their homes; they can send thank you notes to people who helped.

Let children know that they are not to blame when bad things happen. This may be a good opportunity to talk with children about discrimination and diversity.

Model self-care, set routines, eat healthy meals, get enough sleep, and exercise to handle stress.

Information in this article was taken from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's publication No. (SMA) 12-4732.

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

Fourth Annual PJs and Eggs

On October 12, 2012, Hickman's Family Farms partnered for the fourth year in a row with some of the state's favorite breakfast restaurants to celebrate PJs & Eggs. The "breakfast for dinner event" benefited Arizona's Children Association (AzCA) foster care programs statewide.

Customers were invited to wear their pajamas and asked to bring a new pair of pajamas (any size for kids ages newborn to 18) to be donated to children in AzCA's foster care programs. In return, each customer received a certificate for a free dozen Hickman's eggs.

The Division of Children, Youth and Families used the event as an opportunity to

highlight children who are free for adoption with no identified placement. Each of the 12 participating restaurants received a 20 x 30 inch poster with photos and information on five or six children.

"PJs & Eggs offers a unique opportunity to share in an event that is fun and extremely useful," says Sharman Hickman of Hickman's Family Farms. "It's hands on help for our local communities' kids in foster care. Participants know whatever donations they make go directly to local children in need."

More than 1,000 pajamas were collected statewide. For additional information about PJs & Eggs, visit www.pjsandeggsaz.com.

Mark Your Calendars for Foster Care Celebrations!

May is National Foster Care Month and Arizona will be celebrating in style. In addition to the many local activities that will be held across the state, there will be two major celebrations.

The Tucson Blue Ribbon Event will be held Saturday, May 4, 2013, from 4-7 p.m. at Thoroughbred Nissan (22nd St. between Swan & Craycroft). This free event features food, entertainment, activities for the kids, special speakers, a raffle and a balloon-launch. More information about the Tucson event is available at <http://tucsonblueribbonevent.com/>. On Saturday, May 11, 2013, foster families will be welcomed at Chase Field in Phoenix for a Diamondbacks game and other family-friendly activities. For more information, including family sponsorships, please visit <http://arizonablueribbon.org/>.

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.

The Unique Dynamics of Kinship Foster Care — Part 2: Caring for Yourself

Kinship caregivers face unique challenges: They are not only caring for children as all foster parents do; they may also be in the midst of the situation which brought the children into care in the first place. At the recent Foster Care Fusion event in Prescott, these tips were shared:

■ Just like when you fly, "put on your own oxygen mask before helping others." In other words, you need to care for yourself to make sure you have



the strength to help others.

■ It may feel you are moving "at the speed of them" — have patience with the children, the case manager and the system.

■ Remember that family is for a lifetime — it's common to feel torn between wanting the children to go home and wanting them to stay with you. You have taken on additions that

others do not.

■ Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Child Safety Task Force Update

One of the recommendations of the Child Safety Task Force was to increase the number and retention of quality foster families by ensuring sufficient resources to assist foster family recruitment efforts; and enhancing the capacity of the system to assist in matching kids with appropriate families to ensure a one-time placement.

DCYF has diligently addressed this recommendation by developing and implementing activities focused on foster home recruitment and retention throughout the state. Many of these activities involved public/private partnerships, active collaborations with Arizona's faith-based communities, and a systemic focus on "matching" children with appropriate families so as to reduce the need for placement changes. Highlights include:

■ Expanding the *Arizona Statewide* newsletter by 50% (from four pages to six pages) so more information could be provided to families in a timely manner while, for the most part, keeping the costs the same.

■ Partnering with over fifteen churches to greatly expand our outreach for foster home recruitment.

■ Utilizing caller information from the foster home toll-free recruitment line to periodically follow-up with those callers who have received information on foster and adoptive parenting but have not followed through in enrolling with a Home Recruitment Study and Supervision (HRSS) licensing agency.

■ Establishing the Warm Line (see article on page 6).

■ Hosting Foster Care Fusion Training

events in Prescott, Phoenix and Tucson. Families commented they appreciated the opportunity to receive training by DES and that this training was closer to their homes.

■ Launching the "segmentation study" to narrow our recruitment focus on families most likely to become foster and adoptive parents. Using "segmentation categories," foster home recruitment efforts can be better targeted toward reaching the demographics of the community who are most likely interested in becoming foster parents. This is also a more cost-effective method of recruitment as efforts are targeted toward the populations most likely to complete the foster home licensing process.

■ Conducting the foster parent support and retention survey to gain insights into areas of need and ways to better support families. More analyses regarding ways to support families are underway.

■ Continuing the Foster Parent Exit Survey which includes questions about the viability of families reopening their home to children in need. The survey also includes data which can give insight into other retention efforts.

■ Enhancing Blue Ribbon Foster Care Month celebrations during the month of May each year (see article on page 2).

■ Celebrating November as National Adoption Month in five locations statewide (see article on page 2).

■ Launching the "Children's Heart Gallery" in an effort to find adoptive homes for children who are legally free for adoption but do not have an identified adoptive family (see article on page 3).

OLCR Program Administrator David Matthews

OLCR Program Administrator David L. Matthews passed away on Nov. 29, 2012. He was 56. David was the founding Administrator of the Office of Licensing, Certification and Regulation (OLCR) and personally active in community and volunteer services. In particular, David was dedicated to helping at-risk youth. Each year, he would lead a group of pre-teens and teens on hikes and camping in the Grand Canyon.

For over thirty years, David was committed to social service, beginning his work in Arizona as a Residential Services Manager for the Arizona Training and Evaluation Center in 1986. In 1990, he began working as a Licensing Specialist for the DES Division of Developmental Disabilities. He continued to work directly for DDD as the Program Monitoring and Licensing Manager and then as the Program Operations Administrator until OLCR was formed.

Born in Mount Pleasant, Pa., he moved to Arizona in 1986 and lived in Waddell, Ariz. David met his wife Cindy, at Harmony Heart Church Camp in Scranton, Pa., in 1975 and they married on January 7, 1977. David received a dual degree from Philadelphia Biblical University in 1979 (Bachelors of Science in Social Work and Bible) and was ordained as a pastor a few years later. David had a passion for the Grand Canyon, having hiked the Grand Canyon more than 70 times and was an avid back country hiker.



David is survived by his wife of 35 years, Cindy; two children, Sarah and son-in-law Daniel Horacek and Joshua and daughter-in-law Justine Matthews; two grandchildren; two brothers; and two sisters. David is preceded in death by his parents and two nieces. A memorial service was held Saturday, December 8, 2012, at Christ Church of the Valley in Surprise, Ariz. Memorial contributions may be made in David's memory to the Hospice of the Valley or the American Cancer Society.

NOTICE: Untimely Annual License Renewals

Foster home licenses expire one year after issuance unless renewed every 12 months.

This means that all requirements for renewal must be met and submitted to your licensing agency **BEFORE YOUR**

LICENSE EXPIRES.

When a foster home license is not renewed within the 12 month annual period, foster home payments cannot be issued by DES because the foster home becomes temporarily "unlicensed." Please make sure you have a current Fingerprint Clearance Card and all of your required annual training completed **BEFORE** your foster home license is up for renewal.

The responsibility for having a **TIMELY** annual foster home license renewal is shared between the foster parent and their licensing agency.

Never Too Old to Be Adopted

Any time a child comes into foster care, the goal is permanency for that child. But when returning to his or her biological parents is not an option, adoption is — regardless of the child's age. During National Adoption Month celebrations, two newly adopted teens and their families took time to talk about their experiences.

At the November 3, 2012, Tucson Adoption in the Park Celebration, Jason and Carrie De LaFont adopted their niece, Mikala. A Junior in high school, Mikala wants to be a mechanic in the Air Force.

"It feels really great to have a family to care about and be part of," Mikala stated. "With my family being here for me, it's going to be a whole lot easier than being by myself."

She added: "I would definitely recommend adoption. It's one thing to go through life and go from family to family. But it's so much better to have one that you can live with and be with forever."

Zendra Hines, 17, was adopted during the festivities in Phoenix on November 17. "I looked at it as it's never too late. I had this chance to do it before I turned 18 and I'm really happy with my decision," she explained. "I felt like I wanted to have that closure and I wanted it to be done before I turned 18."

Her parents, Leslie Lido and Ben Monclair were thrilled. "We recognized that if we didn't adopt her it was almost like a temporary thing,"

Leslie said, adding, "It is a way to give back to this world and to also embrace the love and affection that comes with the process."

Ben agreed and encouraged other foster parents to adopt teens: "In this system, the rate of adoption falls dramatically after a certain age and it's a pretty early age, which leaves a lot of kids fending for themselves. In a system that's overwhelmed by the numbers, I would encourage perspective parents to think outside the box."

The couple also spoke about the importance of supporting teens who, they said, are on the brink of aging out of the system without that family.

"You engage people where they're at," Ben added. "And there are a lot of great kids who are older than six."

Left: Mikala and Mom Carrie De LaFont at the Tucson Adoption in the Park Celebration. Below: Zendra Hines and her parents pose for photos with the judge following the finalization of Zendra's adoption in Phoenix on November 18, 2012.





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Give Babies Room to Breathe

To lower the risk of infant death while sleeping:

- Always put infants to sleep alone, on their backs, and in a crib or other firm sleeping surface.
- Never put babies to sleep with soft bedding, pillows, bumper pads, or stuffed animals that may interfere with a baby's ability to breathe.
- Never sleep with infants while you are under the influence of alcohol or any drug or medication that causes drowsiness.
- Never sleep with an infant if you are obese or extremely fatigued.
- Never expose an infant to second hand smoke.

Healthy Snacks Help Kids Feel Fuller Faster

A healthy snack of cheese and vegetables can satisfy a child's appetite while also resulting in the consumption of fewer calories, researchers found. In a study measuring children's snack consumption when presented with various snack options while watching television, those given a combination vegetable and cheese snack consumed significantly fewer calories before being satiated than those who were served potato chips.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/UCyxPy>.

Foster Parent Warm Line

The Foster Parent Warm Line is a toll-free number for resource parents who are experiencing crisis situations and cannot reach their Child Protective Services' (CPS) case manager in a timely manner. By calling 1-877-KIDSNEEDU (1-877-543-7633) and selecting Option 3, resource parents will be connected to a Warm Line designee. The line is staffed from 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Messages may be left at any time of the day or night. Staff's goal is to respond to those messages within the next business day so resource parents feel supported in getting their needs met in serving our children.

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.

HPV Vaccination Doesn't Spur Sexual Activity in Young Girls

Data on more than 1,300 preteen girls who received at least one dose of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine showed getting the vaccine was *not* linked to a significant increase in pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections or contraceptive counseling. The study, published in the journal *Pediatrics*, was the first to show vaccination did not alter the sexual behavior of young girls.

Whooping Cough on the Rise in Ariz.

Over 850 cases of pertussis (whooping cough) were reported in Arizona in 2011. There have already been over 750 cases reported along with one infant death as of November 2012. All adult caregivers are asked to get immunized against pertussis to decrease the spread of this contagious disease.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Tdap vaccination of adults (caregivers, grandparents, etc.) reduces the incidence of pertussis in infants and others who are at high risk of complications of the disease.

There's Still Time for Flu Vaccines

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends annual trivalent seasonal influenza immunization for all people, including all children and adolescents 6 months of age and older during the 2012–2013 influenza season.

In addition, special efforts should be made to vaccinate people in the following groups:

- All children, including infants born pre-term, who are 6 months of age and older with conditions that increase the risk of complications from influenza (e.g., children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes mellitus, immunosuppression, or neurologic disorders);
- All household contacts and out-of-home care providers of:
 - Children with high-risk conditions; and
 - Children younger than 5 years, especially infants older than 6 months;
- All health care personnel (HCP); and
- All women who are pregnant, are considering pregnancy, have just delivered, or are breast feeding during the influenza season.