



Willie's Voice

Providing Services to Maintain, Support, and Strengthen Families Created Through Adoption

Volume IV, Issue I

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Call for more information on these services:

- Camps for children (ages 8-17) who have been adopted
- Camps for parents & families created through adoption
- Crisis Services to help preserve the adoptive family unit
- Educational Workshops for adoptive parents
- Community Resource referrals
- Lending Library
- Respite Services

A Little Goes A Long Way

Children, parents and families whose lives have been touched by adoption often require on-going support and understanding. Sometimes parents are able to receive that support through attending a special weekend retreat to meet other adoptive parents; and their children certainly benefit from the opportunity our camps provide to connect with peers that have shared similar experiences. However, when a family is in crisis they need more support in the form of Adoption Preservation Services so that they are able to remain together. These are just a couple of the ways that Children Unlimited supports families created through adoption across the state of South Carolina.

More than ever in our challenging economy we rely on individual donations to help fund our valuable programs that are not completely covered by grants. In an effort to provide this opportunity I have included a Donation Form. Whether you are able to give a little or a lot, all donations are much appreciated and tax deductible.

Young Adults Reaching Out To Their Birth Families

By: Jennifer Ream

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“Search is something all human beings do in one way or another... It is a human need to know as much as we can about who we are.” -Joyce Maguire Pavao

Why do children seek their birth family?

It is normal and healthy for young adults to start wondering about their identities and why they are who they are today. Adopted youth have an extreme curiosity about where they came from and how this relates to who they are today. In the case of adopted youth, this curiosity might lead them into a search for answers from their biological past. These answers can help them form their own personal identity and build their self-esteem. Some of these questions might include:

- Why he/she was placed for adoption?
 - What his/her past genetic history entails?
 - Where members of the birth family are?
- Where he/she belongs in terms of social class, education, culture, etc.?

In a study of American young adults, it has been discovered that 72% of adopted youth want to know why they were adopted, 65% want to meet their birth parents, and 94% want

to know which birth parent they look like. It is important for the adoptive parent and child to understand that some adoption reunions lead to happy new relationships while others may not. Every search and discovery will be different for each family. However, most young adults are content to have found the truth about themselves and/or their past and are ready to focus on the future.

What to do as the adoptive parent?

One of the most common misconceptions among adoptive parents is the idea that they have done something to make their child want to search for his/her biological family. This is simply not true. Providing support to young adults during this search process can be a hard task to accomplish as an adoptive parent. However, adoptive parents do not need to feel alarmed or offended by this natural curiosity. Remember, this search is NOT a reflection of the adoptive parents' skills. Some normal feelings may consist of:

- Fear of losing the adopted youth
- Sadness that the young adult might be hurt by their findings

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WILLIE'S STORY

I am a child, my age is twelve
 On my past, I tend not to dwell.
 My past is full of hurt and pain,
 I saw little sunshine, but a whole lot of rain.
 At the age of one strangers entered my door,
 All because my mom could not care for me anymore.
 They whisked me up along with a couple of my things,
 I wished someone would have asked me what I wanted to bring.
 Maybe I would have reached for my favorite blanket or toy,
 Something special to comfort a confused little boy.
 As I was put in the car, tears rolled down my face,
 I was being taken away from my familiar place.
 It's hard to explain to a one year old who's crying and confused,
 That it is not okay for him to ever be abused;
 That he should be clothed, washed, and fed
 And tucked every night into his cozy little bed.
 That those people are not being mean by taking him away,
 They just want to make sure he gets what he needs each and every day.
 They want him to have no cares, worries, or fears,
 And thrive like normal kids, year after year.
 They did what they needed to do to help me succeed,
 And placed me with people who were supposed to meet my needs.
 From home to home I began to travel,

And along the way everything started to unravel.
 I started to think my needs were too great,
 Why else would I be bounced around all over the state?
 I was told that one day the traveling would end,
 And with my forever family, a new life would begin.
 I told myself, this cannot be true,
 You've been to all of these different homes and none of them wanted you.
 When your behaviors became too much, they sent you away
 So what makes you think someone would want you to stay?
 I was ready to give up on finding a family of my own,
 I really started to believe I would never find a place to call home
 But I went out on a limb and opened up my heart,
 To see if this ten year old could make a new start.
 A new beginning with a family who said they wanted me,
 Not just for a month or two, but permanently.
 I went to live with them to see if permanency I could achieve,
 And although my behavior was bad at times, they never told me to leave.
 They supported me and encouraged me every step of the way,
 And I knew with them is where I wanted to stay.
 I am thankful to have my dream turned into a reality,
 And now I, Willie, know what it means to have a family!

Five Things We Can Learn From OUR Children By Monica Anderson

How often do we think to ourselves, "This kid did not get this behavior from me," "I wish she would do it right the first time I tell her," or my personal favorite, "If I have to repeat myself one more time..." as we wonder aloud how we as parents and caretakers have not learned to raise the "perfect child." Here are five things that we can learn from our children when we feel like we are not making a difference in their lives.

First, there is no such thing as a perfect child. Instead, remember that your child is prone to making mistakes and will continue to do so, just like we did when we were young.

Second, you are not perfect, and trying to make your child think you never failed and tried something again will set them up for failure every time.

Third, if your child does mimic your behaviors, the good and not so good, then at least you know they were paying attention! Now that you have their attention, be sure to try to model the results you want to see.

Fourth, encourage them to learn from their mistakes and keep trying to do their best.

And finally, or fifth for those of you keeping count and those who have lost count reading this, never ever think you have not affected your child in a positive way. So often I "preach" about adoptive parents giving a child a good quality life instead of a large quantity of life. We can spend all the money in the world on OUR children, but nothing can compare with the time and energy invested into their future as responsible persons who take responsibility for their actions and strive to improve with each learning lesson.

Upcoming Events In 2010

Love & Logic: "Parenting a Challenging Child." A 6 hour class offered at no charge to DSS Adoptive Families (all other adoptive families call for class opportunities)

January & February 2010 **

- Feb 27: Florence

March 2010 **

- 20: Columbia

April 2010 **

- 10 : Charleston

September 2010 **

- 18: Upstate Region



May 2010

- 15-16: Parent Support Weekend Retreat/Camp Kinard, Leesville, SC

Summer 2010

- June 18-20: Youth Adoption Retreat (ages 8-12)
- July 16-18: Teen Adoption Retreat (ages 13-17)



September 2010

- 11-12: Adoptive Family Retreat (for everyone living within the adoptive home)/Camp Kinard, Leesville, SC



**** Day camps offered for participants' children ages 12 and under!**

Call 803-217-3161 or email dbeecken@children-unlimited.org to add your children & family to the mailing list or to ask about registering for an event!

November 2009

- TBA: Adoptive Parent Conference



If you adopted a child in 2009 don't forget to call and add him/her to the camp mailing list.

Be sure to check our website for changes in event dates/locations: www.fsconline.org

SC State Resources for Adoptive Families: Post Legal

www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/index.html

State Adoption Subsidy & Medical Subsidy:

Thomas Roberts
1535 Confederate Avenue
PO Box 1520
Columbia, SC 29202
803-898-7405

- Contact to utilize medical subsidy or for subsidy questions

SC State Reunion Registry and State Search Information:

Bernadette Rogers
1535 Confederate Avenue
PO Box 1520
Columbia, SC 29202
803-898-7561
800-922-2504

- Email: brogers@dss.state.sc.us
- Adoptees can add name to registry and search after age 21

SC Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA):

1535 Confederate Avenue
PO Box 1520
Columbia, SC 29202
803-898-7566

- Contact to transfer subsidy if moving out of state

Adoption Support Groups in SC

The SC Foster Parents Association:

- 42 support groups for foster/adoptive families
- Contact: Carl Brown, Ex. Dir.
Ph & Fax: 803-865-2020
800-475-7650
e-mail: cbrown39@aol.com
Web: www.SCFPA.com

SC Council on Adoptable Children:

- Contact: Gail Groomster
- Ph: 803-256-2622

Charleston: Call Debra Beecken about a support group in your area

Children Unlimited of FSC:

- Parent Support Weekend-meets once a year over a weekend
- Contact: Debra Beecken
Ph: 803-217-3161
Email: dbeecken@children-unlimited.org

Adoptive Families Group:

Meets 10 times a year in the midlands
Contact: Sunny Jewell, President
Ph: (803) 808-6315
Email: jewellsunny@gmail.com

Can't find a support group in your area?



Are you interested in starting a support group? Call me for tips on how to get started!

Also check out: <http://www.nacac.org/parentgroups/>

Contact Debra Beecken at 803-217-3161 or email: dbeecken@children-unlimited.org to add your support group to the listing or to locate the nearest support group.

Mark Your Calendar for the Upcoming CU Retreats!

If your adopted child is between the ages of 8-17, we have a weekend retreat opportunity just for them!

Children Unlimited hosts two weekend retreats in the summer; one for youth ages 8-12 and one for teens ages 13-17. These camps are specifically for children who have been adopted. Activities are centered around team building skills and youth and teens walk away from this retreat with a greater sense of themselves and with many lifetime connections.

Are you an adoptive parent needing a

getaway? Would you like the opportunity to meet other adoptive parents? Are you interested in learning more about topics that relate to parenting your children and their special needs? If so, then the Parent Support Weekend is right for you. Parents gather for two days to relax, refresh, and learn something new.



Would you like a chance for your whole family to meet other adoptive families? Once a year Children Unlimited hosts a weekend retreat for the entire adoptive family. Families

come from all over South Carolina to enjoy a weekend of fun that includes a hay ride, camp fire with s'mores, activities for the children, fishing, swimming, and a workshop presentation for the parents.

You can find the dates and locations for these events and more on page 3 or go to www.children-unlimited.org.

If you have recently finalized an adoption, don't forget to call and add him/her to the children's retreat mailing list. Retreat invitations are sent directly to children on this list.

Internet Resources for Adoptive Families

Adoption Coalition for Education and Support (ACES) -
www.aceskids.org

South Carolina based website dedicated to identifying resources for adoptive families

Adoption Support for Children with Special Needs: <http://adopting.com/special.html>

North American Council on Adoptable Children:
www.nacac.org/

Adoptuskids: www.adoptuskids.org/
National photo listing of waiting children

Adopting.com: www.adopting.com
Resources for Children with Special Needs

Adopt America Network:
www.adoptamericanetwork.org

Older Child Adoption On-line Magazine: www.olderchildadoption.com

The Dave Thomas Foundation:
www.davethomasfoundation.org/html/home

This organization plays a significant role inspiring people to action and positively affects the image of adoption and the children who wait.

Internet Highway to More Resources: check out these websites!

Special Education Law & Advocacy:

- www.proparents.org/
- www.wrightslaw.com
- www.reedmartin.com/

Children with Disabilities:

- NICHCY Kids: www.kidsource.com/NICHCY
- NICHCY: www.nichev.org
- Medical University of SC: <http://www.musckids.com/depts/>
- Family Connection South Carolina: <http://www.familyconnectionsc.org/>
- Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN): <http://www.state.sc.us/ddsn/index.html>
- Easter Seals: www.sc.easterseals.com
- Sensory Processing Disorder Network: <http://www.idfoundation.org/>

- Children and Adults with Attention Disorders (CHADD): www.chadd.org
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder links: <http://www.fasdnorthwest.org/facts/>
<http://www.come-over.to>
<http://fasalaska.com/brochures/Characteristics.doc>
www.ggc.org (Greenwood Genetics Center)
www.nofas.org/resource/

Mental Health/Mental Illness:

- SC Department of Mental Health: www.state.sc.us/dmh/
- Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health of SC: www.fedfamsc.org/

- NAMI: www.nami.org
National Alliance on Mental Illness
- Nancy Thomas: www.nancythomasparenting.com
- National Mental Health Info Center: <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/>
- www.mentalhelp.net
- ATTACH: www.ATTACH.org
- <http://www.instituteforattachment.org/>
- Continuum of Care for Emotionally Disturbed Children: <http://www.coc.state.sc.us/>
- Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation: www.bpkids.org/site/PageServer
- Child Trauma Institute: child-trauma.com
- YouthNet: www.scyouthnet.net

“Young Adults Reaching Out to Their Birth Families” Continued...

Angry with current laws governing the possibility to retrieve information that the child desires.

Regardless of how parents feel about their son's/daughter's search, it is important to stay focused on what is best for the child and can keep the communication open. Without support, the young adult can feel as though he/she must embark on this search alone.

Young adult adoptees often feel as though they have had little control over previous life decisions. Therefore, parents need to help their son or daughter feel included in the decision making

process.

Things to Remember

- Everyone has an innate curiosity to find out who they are
- Be emotionally strong and prepared for any outcome
- The adoptee might feel that he/she is abandoning the adoptive family, resulting in feelings of guilt
- Maintaining a supportive and loving environment can only strengthen the relationship with the adoptive family

Resources

- www.statistics.adoption.com
- www.childwelfare.gov
- www.adoptionsupport.com

Helpful Resources in this area

SC Adoption Reunion Registry:
www.southcarolinaadoptions.com
 For additional information please contact
 Bernadette Rogers at (803) 898-7561

With Heartfelt Gratitude...thanks for making a difference in the life of a child

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 SC Department of Social Services

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 Mark & Vicie McLees
 Randy & Sandra Funderburk
 Steven & Rachelle McLees
 SC Commission on Education
 Ted & Betty Centers

Join the CU Volunteer Corps!

We are looking for individuals with time and heart to spare! Whether you have an hour, a weekend, or more time to give, we can use your help!

Projects currently needing volunteers include:

- Summer Retreats (Fri-Sun) for children who have been adopted (Volunteers must be at least 21 years old)
- Day Camps for children who have been adopted (Volunteers must be at least 16



years old)

- Adult Adoptee panel: if you are 18 or older and were adopted, call to find out more about how you can help youth and teens by sharing your adoption experience.
- Other: maybe you are not able to donate your time with one of the other opportunities, but would still like to help: preparing crafts for camps, donating snacks/drinks for camps, sponsor a child's birthday or Christmas, providing door prizes for parent support groups, donate



services (ex: be a workshop presenter, etc.)

Current needs include:
 craft items for camps and school supplies.

Call 803-217-3161 for more information or to receive an application! You can also download an application from our website:
www.fsconline.org



Sheriesh

DOB:
08/30/93



Creating Families Through Adoption: A Child is Waiting to Come Home



Carey

DOB:
2/21/94

Sheriesh is an intelligent young lady with a great personality to match. She has a love for food and fashion. Sheriesh cannot leave the house without properly accessorizing her outfit. She has a positive attitude, great sense of humor, and a love for creative writing. She expresses her feelings through stories and poems. Sheriesh feels that she has tough skin and is able to take on any challenge she encounters due to her life experiences.

All the things she has experienced in life have helped her to grow into a wise young lady. In addition, Sheriesh really enjoys being a member of the Girl Scouts. Sheriesh will need a family that will provide her with stability and motivate her academically. Sheriesh is legally free for adoption and subsidies are negotiable.

For Sheriesh call: Nicole Buie, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Adoption Recruiter, at 803-733-5457 or 800-922-5651, x. 3168. Email: nbuie@children-unlimited.org.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids is the direct-service signature program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption that moves children from foster care into permanent, loving adoptive homes. We are proud to introduce two Wendy's Wonderful Kids who are currently available for adoption. If you are interested in providing one of these children with a "forever family," please contact their recruiter.

Wait until you meet this handsome young man! Carey is very quiet and thoughtful. He enjoys swimming, skateboarding, playing basketball, football and riding his bicycle. He likes to color and draw and is proud of his accomplishments. He enjoys watching wrestling and is interested in one day becoming a wrestler. His favorite foods are hamburgers, tacos, and French fries. Carey likes school and being the center of attention; he flourishes with praise and is eager to please.

Carey needs the structure of a self-contained classroom to succeed in middle school. He needs a family who would provide him with a lot of love, structure, patience and encouragement. Carey would do best placed in a family as the only child or youngest child. Carey is legally free for adoption.

For Carey call: LaFawn Hughes, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Adoption Recruiter, at 800-467-6882, x 3326. Email: LaFawn@children-unlimited.org

CHILDREN UNLIMITED OF FAMILY SERVICE CENTER

PO Box 7876
Columbia, SC 29202

Phone: 803-733-5450
Fax: 803-922-5651

E-mail: dbeecken@children-unlimited.org



We're on the web!

Check it out!

www.fsconline.org