

REACH Tulare County

Resource Education Advocacy Crisis Intervention Hope

Aspiranet and Tulare County Post Adoption Support



May 2008

Post-Adoption Services Program

In May, most parents begin summer planning for children. There are some great and affordable summer activities available throughout Tulare County. The City of Visalia sends a quarterly Parks and Recreation Schedule to families who reside within City limits. These Parks and Recreation Schedules include a variety of activities including sports activities, arts and crafts, music, and many educational courses. Other resources include:

- Most local churches offer summer programs for children of various ages. Contact your local church for their schedules.
- Arts & Crafts through several venues such as The Home Depot, Lowe's, JoAnn Fabrics, Michael's, Arts Visalia, and Clay Café to name a few.
- A variety of sports camps. Watch the local newspaper for sign ups or look for signs posted in your community.
- Boys & Girls Clubs offer summer programs for a nominal fee.
- Your local YMCA has many programs including a week long summer camp. Scholarships are available.
- Tulare County Office of Education offers a summer musical. This would be a good opportunity to try out, work behind the scenes or come watch it.
- Tulare County Libraries have summer reading programs with prizes and incentives. Local bookstores have storytime for the younger groups.

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Your REACH Tulare County Support Team

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Post-Adoption Parent Evening Retreat and Simultaneous Child Play Group

Open to all **Tulare County** families who have adopted or are currently in the process of adoption. Share your concerns and learn with others in a supportive environment. Meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 6:30 - 8 p.m. at the Visalia YMCA, located at 211 W. Tulare.

Upcoming Topics:

- May 13: Advocating for My Child in School
- May 27: Maintaining Cultural Ties
- June 10: Navigating the CPS and Court System
- June 24: Who am I? The Search for Identity

REACH is looking at starting support groups in the Tulare and Porterville areas. However, we do not want to begin a group if there is not interest for this service. Please contact Angela or Marji at (559) 741-7358 if you would be interested in attending a Support Group/Parent Evening Retreat in either of these areas or in a different area of Tulare County.

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SUPPORT GROUPS

POST-ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUP

The **Kings County** REACH Post-Adoption Support Group meets the second Monday of the month in Hanford at Jefferson Elementary from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. Support groups in Madera and Oakhurst are also provided on a monthly basis. Contact Kathy Steele, LCSW, at 222-4969 for more information. This month, the Hanford group will be held on Monday, May 12. Please RSVP.

REACTIVE ATTACHMENT DISORDER

Meets the fourth Tuesday of every month from 7 - 9 p.m. at Porterville Youth Services. The meetings are comprised of an educational and group interaction component, Q&A time and networking, where parents/caretakers can learn and encourage each other. This educational component has a strong emphasis on parent interventions for the child with special needs. For more information, please contact Nancy Gomes at Porterville Youth Services at (559) 782-4165.

FOSTER & KINSHIP CARE EDUCATION PROGRAM: SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

To register for these workshops, or for more information, please contact Linda Paredez, Director, FKCE/ILP, at (559) 737-4842 or lindap@cos.edu. Pre-registration is highly recommended, so that you may be notified of any changes to the class schedule, if they should occur.

PARENTING WITH LOVE & LOGIC (9 Hours):

3 Thursdays, May 1, 8 & 15, 6 - 9 p.m.

COS Tule 512 - Beverly Anderson, MFT

This interactive class provides students with instruction on the Parenting with Love and Logic techniques for dealing with the challenging child, helping that child to become joyful, productive and responsible.

ADHD (3 Hours): 1 Wednesday, May 7, 6 - 9 p.m.

Kings County HSA Training Room, Hanford
Beverly Anderson, MFT

This class explores the signs and symptoms of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, other possible causes for the same behaviors, treatment and behavior management.

WHAT DO I DO WHEN? (3 Hours):

Monday, May 12, 6 - 9 p.m.

Kings County HSA Training Room, Hanford
Tina Garcia, MSW

Helping children learn to channel aggressive impulses constructively is a crucial task of parenting. This parent edu-

cation program reviews the concepts of aggression, the role of parents in the socialization process, and the basic principles for understanding and changing behavior. Specific methods of responding to defiance and aggression and strategies for teaching pro-social behavior are a key feature of the program. The program is best suited for children in the preschool through mid-elementary ages.

BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY (6.5 Hours):

1 Friday, May 16, 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

COS Sequoias Room I, Visalia

Jodi Pfarr, Consultant, aha! Process, Inc.

Bridges Out of Poverty represents a powerful tool for change. Based in part on Dr. Ruby Payne's myth-shattering "A Framework for Understanding Poverty," Bridges reaches out to the millions of service providers and businesses whose daily work connects them with the lives of people in poverty. Continental breakfast & lunch provided. Advance registration required by Monday, May 12! Seating is VERY limited—register early!

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES (3 Hours):

1 Monday, May 19, 6 - 9 p.m.

Kings County HSA Training Room, Hanford

Connie Treis, RN, MFT

This class focuses on common mental health diagnosis for youth in the foster care system, modes of treatment, and available services.

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION (6 Hours):

2 Tuesdays, May 20 & 27, 6 - 9 p.m.

COS Tule 512, Terry de Forrest, MFT, PhD

Although there are certain limits, such as temperamental or emotional influences related to ADHD or depression, all children function more effectively under the right set of consequences. This class gives you methods to use for defining, observing, and measuring behaviors, as well as designing effective interventions.

SELF-CARE (2 Hours):

1 Thursday, May 22, 7 - 9 p.m.

Tulare County HHSA Licensing/Adoptions Office, Visalia
Ronda Braithwaite

Self-neglect takes a toll on your health, relationships and your efficacy. Self-care strengthens your resiliency which can reduce susceptibility to burnout. Self-care is not just a matter of making healthy lifestyle choices. It also includes self-compassion, healthy boundaries, being attuned to your needs and staying true to your values. In this class, you will learn ways to recognize and counteract causes of stress, be more effective with the children in your care, and take care of yourself to better cope with daily life.

Summer Activities for Children

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- The Bustamonte Learning Center in Visalia has library books and videos available for check out, computers for use and they have a summer reading contest that involves a treasure hunt and ends with a summer reading party. Visalia Oaks offer a kids discount package to attend a variety of baseball games.

Some other fun activities might include:

- Trips to Fresno Children's Museum
- Visiting the Fresno Zoo
- Waterparks to beat the Central Valley Heat!
- Horseback Riding
- Miniature Golfing
- Visiting the Sequoia's to see the Giant Sequoia's, Crystal Cave, and the Museum. Look into special bus trips from Visalia for a small fee.
- Providing children with additional chores (i.e. washing the family car, watering the yard, and keeping their room clean daily) where they can earn money for their favorite activity (i.e. ice cream, movies, etc.)

Some other family friendly, free (or semi-free) activities might include:

- Family participation in board games or cards. Make it even more fun by agreeing to have the winner choose the meal for the night, or other fun incentives.
- Family night with homemade popcorn and videos/ DVD's.
- Visits to the local parks. Head to the dollar store and pick up some bubbles, and squirt guns to make it memorable.
- Riding bicycles together, taking a walk, going on a nature walk, camping out in the backyard, having Barbeques and playing in the sprinklers.
- Designate each family member a night to make the family meal or have one night a week where the family cooks together. Make it even more fun by creating a special family recipe. Creating family traditions is such an important part of family bonding.
- Teach your children a special talent that you may have, including knitting, crochet, mechanics, gardening, playing the piano, singing or cooking.

Integrating Adoption into Everyday Icons and a Working Class Hero

by Alison M. Acton, LMFT

Did you know that the red Power Ranger, Bowen, was adopted? This can go far with little adopted boys. Faith Hill? Three of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt's children, one of Madonna's children, both of Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise's children, Sheryl Crow's son? Those are adoptees that come immediately into my mind. How about our Tulare Sheriff's Department's fallen Deputy of 2007?

Mythical figures, successful country and rock stars, famous actors' children, and a fallen working class hero. Adoption cuts across all sections of life even with our popular icons, heroes and persons whose names we are familiar with through the media. Our fascination with popular culture and news keeps topics in the media and the topic of adoption is no different. As one delves deeper into this topic you can find adopted historical figures, writers, and musicians including Alexander the Great, Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, Mark Twain, Crazy Horse, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bo Diddley, and John Lennon. Adopted biblical figures include Moses and Jesus (adopted by Joseph the carpenter). Probably the most famous adopted hero is Superman! Behind these famous adoptees are their proud adoptive parents.

If you adopted a child or children from the Child Welfare System, you are likely a true and probably unspoken hero. We need our icons and heroes to keep the issue alive in the news but most of all we need loving adoptive parents who are committed to raising children.



State Budget Threatens Services to Children and Families

By Dennis Bush, Communication Director and Melissa Sweat, Creative Communications Assistant of Aspiranet

On January 10, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger released a dismal budget proposal for 2008-2009, calling for massive cuts that particularly target California's social programs and threaten the well-being of our communities, children and families. Some of the proposed cuts include:

- A \$175 million cut from the Children and Family Services Division of the Department of Social Services, which serves foster and adoptive children and families.
- A 10 percent decrease in funding for education—including a \$4.4 billion cut from K-12 education.
- A \$1.13 billion reduction from the California Department of Health Care Services. This reduction includes the removal of dental care for low-income, Medi-Cal patients.

Foster and adoptive children and families will feel the affects of the budget squeeze with a proposed \$175 million cut to the Children and Family Services Division of the Department of Social Services. This cut could result in a significant decline in the quality of services offered, and could furthermore give rise to the number of children who fall through the system's cracks. Private Foster Family Agencies' (FFA) requests for cost-of-living increases have been rejected seven years in a row. Without cost-of-living increases and now, with a cut in support from the state, FFAs will have to make some difficult choices regarding services and coverage areas.

In terms of education, California ranks 43rd in the nation in per-pupil spending (approx. \$2,000 below the national average of \$9,000). A cut of \$4.4 billion from K-12 education would even further impair an already cash-strapped system.

That Gov. Schwarzenegger had declared 2008 the "Year of Education" seems a terrible irony.

For our children and families who rely on state health care services, a \$1.13 billion cut could greatly reduce the quality of care, and could eliminate dental services for some patients. The governor also proposed an increase in out-of-pocket costs for those in the state's Healthy Families program, which provides low-cost insurance for children and teens who do not qualify for Medi-Cal—making it that much more difficult to receive quality care.

Aspiranet believes that healthy, educated and well-cared for children and families are the future of California and our world—and Gov. Schwarzenegger's state budget proposal is a threat to this vision. Despite the dismal news, as Californians, we have the opportunity to make our voices heard in the state legislature by writing or calling your representatives to express your opinion about cuts to the foster and adoptive care budgets. Your REACH Tulare County advocates can provide you with the current status of the budget. Now is the time to get involved and give our children a voice!

- Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger: State Capitol Building, Sacramento, CA 95814; Ph: (916) 445-2841; Fax: (916) 558-3160; Email: <http://gov.ca.gov/interact>.
- To find your local legislators, visit: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html>.

To Re-Name or Not

By Alison M. Acton, LMFT

Most children come to adoptive parents with appropriate given names, right? Not categorically so with CWS detained infants. Some birthparents leave the hospital without naming the infant; thus, the infant is initially deemed 'Baby Boy' or 'Baby Girl' for their first name. Other birthparents give their child inappropriate names such as the name of a drug (this has occurred several times), the name of a vascular organ (actual case), a completely made up and never heard of name, or a very misspelled and hard to pronounce name. Some birthparents frequently change the given first or last name until they are legally unable to do so (very confusing and frustrating for adoptive parents who are sorting through paperwork and court documents, and getting the child connected to necessary services while the name continues to be changed repeatedly).

There is a camp of widely known and respected profession-

als working in the field of adoption who believe that an adoptive parent should not change a child's name even if the child is a newborn infant. Proponents of this viewpoint would argue that keeping the name bestowed upon the child by the birthparent both carries on the birth family's history and helps the adoptee to integrate the best of both their birth history and life as an adoptee. It is hard to fathom that when formulating this viewpoint these professionals could have been thinking about CWS foster care adoption in which most children have atrocious abusive histories (including drug and or alcohol exposure in the womb) prior to being detained by CWS. While this stance on renaming a child is certainly one opinion, it is not the only one and rarely the one chosen by Tulare county fost-adopt parents who adopt infants. In speak-

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ing with Tulare County Adoption Social Worker staff, almost all non-relative adoptive parents who adopt infants from CWS change their names. Adopting an infant is akin to a birth for the adoptive family and needs to be respected as such. Birthparents can still be honored and appreciated by adoptive parents and when the time is right the adoptee can still be given information about this past history. Naming a newborn child is one of the joys of being a parent and not one that should be denied the adoptive parents.

In the case of adopting an older child from CWS re-naming happens less often; however, it does occur and often Tulare County's adoptive parents involve the child appropriately in this decision. Some older children have expressed a desire to keep their first or last name, to make one of their given names a middle name, or to change their name completely. Some children have been very involved in the decision as to what the new name will be.

In the end, the decision to rename a child or retain their given name is up to the adoptive parents who will be raising that child. I am confident that adoptive parents are up to the task of making the best decision for their family.

Post Adoption Services

Our website is continually evolving. Please visit our website at www.reachtularecounty.org for additional adoptive support information. We have also added more adoption related books to our Lending Library and we invite you to check out our lending library in person or on the website. Thank you for allowing us to serve you and do not hesitate to come by our office or contact us to find out more information about our services. As a recap, we offer the following services:

- Information and Referral Services
- Twice a month Support Groups/ Parent Retreat & Educational Groups
- Post Adoption Crisis Counseling & Case Management
- Newsletter
- Lending Library
- Website

Book Reviews

Books reviewed in this section are available to check out at our Adoption Lending Library. A complete listing of available titles can be accessed through our website at www.reachtularecounty.org.

You can also request a list of titles to be mailed to you upon request. We welcome reviews from you, our adoptive families. Please contact Angela Rodd-Terry or Marji Peterson at 741-7358.

Nurturing Adoptions: Creating Resilience after Neglect and Trauma

By Deborah D. Gray

Perspectives Press, Inc. 2007

This is a comprehensive book for professionals, therapists, social workers and adoptive families. As the author explains, the face of adoption has changed dramatically, even within the last 10 years. This book has something for just about everyone in the adoption world! She provides detailed information about the complicated issues that touch adoptive families and provides creative and practical suggestions that bring a fresh approach for traumatized children learning to love and trust in an adoptive family. As the title suggests, the

focus of the book is on creating resilience with children and families. Packed with strength based suggestions, supported by current research, this is a must read for professionals working with adoptive families in any capacity.

The Invisible String

By Patrice Karst

Devorss & Company, Publishers, 2000

This book is for children of all ages. This book is about to young children who are scared and are awakened by a storm. They run into their mother's room for comfort and she tells them the story of The Invisible String that was told to her by her mother when she was young. The Invisible String is the connection of unconditional love between others that is ever present and that children can rely on when they feel lonely, scared or insecure. All one has to do is "tug" at the string and the tug will be felt in the heart of the other, no matter how near or far. The illustrations are fun and inviting for children. Patrice Karst demonstrates that the power and healing of love is the greatest source of comfort for children and adults. This is an inspirational story that should be shared with all families.

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We're on the web:
www.reachtularecounty.org



Adoption Related Resources on the Web

www.adoptionsupport.org

CASE – Center for Adoption Support and Education is an online adoptive family support resource.

www.childtrauma.org

The Child Trauma Academy, a not-for-profit organization based in Houston, Texas, is a unique collaborative of individuals and organizations working to improve the lives of high-risk children through direct service, research and education.

www.adoptionclubhouse.org

A National Adoption Center site. The Adoption ClubHouse is designed with our child's adoption needs in mind. Through the activities and information on this site your child can experience a sense of belonging to a wider adoption community of peers.

www.openadoptioninsight.org

Insight – open adoption resources and support.

www.tapestrybooks.com

Excellent resource for books and DVDs about adoption, permanency and foster care.