

REACH Tulare County

Resource Education Advocacy Crisis Intervention Hope

Aspiranet and Tulare County Post Adoption Support



November 2007

Post Adoption Service Program

Adoption is a life-long process and as such, the needs of children and families do not end when an adoption is finalized. Tulare County Adoptions is pleased to announce that we are partnering with Aspiranet Adoption Program to provide a new contracted post adoption services program called **REACH Tulare County**. **REACH** stands for Resources, Education, Advocacy, Crisis Intervention and Hope. This program has been developed to provide and enrich support to our adoptive families once their adoption has been completed.

Our goal is to strengthen and empower adoptive families, to respond to information inquiries and to provide information about and access to resources for adoptive families. The services are provided in a variety of ways, as described below. Please contact Angela Rodd-Terry or Marji Peterson at (559) 741-7358 and/or visit their office at: 2436 E. Valley Oaks Drive, Visalia, CA 93292.

Please take note that Tulare County Adoptions will continue to administer the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) funding. Please continue to direct your calls to Margaret Johnston at (559) 733-6180, ext 234 for this service.

Available Currently:

Information and Referral Services

These services include assessing and responding to an adoptive family's individual needs, questions and concerns. Please contact Marji Peterson or Angela Rodd-Terry at (559) 741-7358.

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Monthly Parent Retreat/Educational Groups

The **REACH Tulare County** program hosts a monthly parent support group and simultaneous child play group. The groups are offered in Visalia and will begin in other areas including Porterville, Tulare, and/or Dinuba based on interest. See details on page 5 of this newsletter.

Post Adoption Crisis Counseling & Case Management

All families experience difficulties now and then. Families that are formed through adoption, however, will encounter unique challenges. Participants in the **REACH Tulare County** program are eligible to receive short-term, therapeutic services, free of charge, by Master's Level Social Workers who are familiar with adoption-related issues. Families are eligible to receive in home case management services as needed. To schedule an appointment contact Marji Peterson at (559) 741-7358.

Monthly Newsletter

A monthly newsletter is mailed out to **REACH Tulare County** participants. The newsletters and website are a way to stay connected and include adoption related information and articles, current legislation impacting adoption, upcoming events, and suggested readings and book reviews for both parents and children.

Book Review

Books reviewed in this section will be available to check out at our Adoption lending library shortly. A complete listing of available titles can be requested from our office once the lending library is opened. If you would like to review a book for upcoming Newsletter editions please contact Angela Rodd-Terry or Marji Peterson at 559-741-7358.

A Mother For Choco by Keiko Kasza Puffin Books 1992

This is an excellent book for a young toddler (ages 2-4) as a non-threatening way to begin to introduce the concept of adoption. In this story a motherless little bird named Choco wishes and searches for a mother. Choco initially thinks that his mother has to look just like he does as do the adult animals he approaches. Choco eventually finds a nurturing Mama bear who offers to be his Mommy. He is reluctant to accept this because she does not look like him. He goes home with her for pie and is delighted to meet her children, none of whom look like her (an alligator, hippo, and piglet). He comes to realize that a family doesn't have to look alike and accepts the bear and her children as his new mother and family. The book is written with a lighthearted tone; however, it also depicts feelings quite well, from the sadness of not having a parent to the joy of finding one. Additionally it touches on the issue of trans-racial adoption regarding appearance which is one of the first things that young children tend to notice, i.e. "Why is my skin a different color than Mommies?"

Raising Adopted Children by Lois Ruskai Melina HarperCollins 1997

This book is written by Lois Ruskai Melina, a parent of two adopted children who is also a regular contributor to Adoptive Families magazine and has written books and numerous articles on Adoption. This is a good overview book that details multiple issues regarding varying aspects of adoptive parenting, adoptive families, talking about adoption, and special issues such as serious behavioral problems and ethnic and cultural identity. The book is divided into three sections. The first section "Instant Family" includes chapters on transitioning to adoptive parenthood, family member adjustment, and bonding and attachment issues. The second section "At home with adoption" includes chapters on talking about adoption, how adoption affects the family, risk factors for adopted children (i.e. drug exposure), the importance of family history, and contact with biological relatives. The final section "Special Issues in Adoption" includes chapters on international adoption, special situations in adoption, ethnic and cultural identity, and serious behavioral problems. The book is well organized, thorough, and easy to read. It is a good resource book for parents and professionals working with adoptive families.



Common Misconceptions About Adoption

By Alison Acton, LMFT

- **Its too expensive**
- **The adopted child can be taken away by birth parent at any time**
- **The waiting period for a child is long**
- **My family has to be perfect to adopt**
- **Owning a home is necessary to adopt**

There are many misconceptions about adopting a child, some of which may prevent good people from considering adoption as a viable way to build a family. Some common misconceptions are listed above. Lets examine each one beginning with the cost of adoption.

While adoptions through private agencies and foreign adoptions can end up costing the adoptive parents several thousand dollars, adoption of Tulare County children costs very little (under \$500). Most of the expenditures are reimbursed to the adoptive parents by Tulare county. Additionally all children adopted through Tulare County Adoption Unit are eligible for a small federal monthly stipend and Medi-cal insurance from the time they are placed in the adoptive parents home and can continue post-adoption until the child reaches the age of 18. These funds and medical insurance are to be used in providing for the child's needs. Those children with special medical and/or emotional needs who require more services are eligible for special needs funds as well. Finally for adoptions finalized in 2006, a tax credit for qualifying expenses paid to adopt the child can be taken of up to \$10,960. For more details on this go to www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html

Now lets look at misconception #2: that the adopted child can be taken away by the birth parent at any time. Sensational media stories tend to fuel this myth. While some children will be in the process of attempted family re-unifications with birth parents from the time they are placed out of home,

once parental rights are terminated, the birth parents cannot turn a subsequent adoption around. Stories on the news can be confusing because we see situations depicted where a birth parent comes back and takes a child after they have been with another family; however, what is not usually explained is the legal status, the particulars of the case, that parental rights were not terminated, etc.

Some adoptive parents spend years waiting to adopt their child. In Tulare County there is an ever increasing need for adoptive parents and families, the need is greater than the demand. This is unlike some independent open adoptions in which potential adoptive parents write a "why you would want us to adopt your baby" letter about themselves. Then the birthmother sorts through hundreds of these letters and picks out potential parents for her child. Applicants in the "no" pile end up waiting often a long time. In Tulare County, the longest wait is the time it takes to complete the required classes, application, documentation, home study, home inspection, etc. Once everything that is required is done the wait for a child often is not long. In fact many foster-adopt parents, after having one child placed in their home are asked if they want to take another child.

Finally a family does not have to be perfect or own a home to adopt a child. The single most important ingredient to become an adoptive parent is the capacity to love and care for a child. Parents come in many different packages, single parents, older parents, parents with disabilities, parents of different economical and ethnic backgrounds, from various cultures. All are welcome to apply to adopt a child in Tulare County. All homes of adoptive parents are inspected and must meet licensing requirements for a child to be placed there. Home ownership is not necessary; many adoptive parents rent houses or apartments.



The Attachment Angle

Is your child a whirlwind of hyperactivity? Are behaviors defiant, destructive, loud, violent, or full of rage? Is there a lack of eye contact, a need to be in control of everyone and every situation, and an uncanny ability to “push your buttons?” If so, your child may have a maladaptive attachment.

Children with impaired attachment have a different understanding of the world. They learned in those first few months or years that they could not depend on adults to keep them safe. The caregivers who should have shown them love and comfort were instead uncaring, mean, rejecting, violent, unreliable, unresponsive, or absent. Even though they are in a nurturing adoptive home with wonderful, loving parents they will still perceive you the way they learned to perceive all adults. At the core of their belief system is the need to be in control in order to ensure their own safety. They believe their safety hinges on pushing you away by making you angry and distancing themselves from you emotionally and physically.

You are in a better position to help the child when you understand what is at the core of their behaviors.

BEHAVIOR	REASONS FOR BEHAVIOR
Refuses to follow your instruction	Does not trust that your way is safe based on early trauma
Child attempts to make you angry by any means such as gross/outrageous behaviors	Desire to keep you emotionally at a distance in order to stay safe
Sabotages special moments or family events	A pervasive sense of feeling unworthy
Continued negative responses and actions	Low self-esteem to the point of self-hatred

The first step is realizing that your child has been deeply wounded by not receiving the basics in his or her early life. It allows you to switch your focus from hurt feelings and broken dreams to begin the healing process of helping your child begin to engage in the attachment cycle. You are not alone in this journey. There are many families who have accepted this same challenge to help begin the healing process with an attachment-injured child. REACH Tulare County is developing a lending library and offers a support group for pre and post adoptive parents. Both Synchrony of Visalia and Porterville Youth Services provide a parent support group as well. In addition, there are several valuable resources on the Internet. A good place to start is www.radkid.org. Look for more information about attachment in upcoming issues.

Stephanie Grant, Tulare County Adoptions Social Worker

Celebrate Adoption!

November is National Adoption Month, a month set aside to raise awareness about the adoption of children from foster care. Take the opportunity this month to promote adoption from foster care by telling others your story and/or organizing a local community event during November.

ABOUT NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY – November 17, 2007

National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the 114,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families. For the last eight years, National Adoption Day has made the dreams of thousands of children come true by working with courts, judges, attorneys, adoption professionals, child welfare agencies and advocates to finalize adoptions and find permanent, loving homes for children in foster care.

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REACH Tulare County Evening Parent Retreats & Simultaneous Child Play Group



This group is open to parents in all phases of the adoption process including, pre, middle and post adoption.

The group meets two Tuesday evenings a month from 6:30pm-8pm at the Tulare County Adoptions Office (3500 Mineral King, Suite B, Visalia, CA 93291). To join the group come to a group meeting or contact Marji Peterson at (559) 741-7358.

Upcoming Evening Parent Retreat/ Educational Meetings:

Tuesday, November 13th

Topic: *Lifebooks* (bring photos, photo albums, scrapbooks or lifebooks of your child to share)

Tuesday, November 27th

Topic: *Holiday Family Traditions* (bring your favorite holiday snack to share)

Tuesday, December 11th

Gripping Adoption Reads (bring your favorite adult and or children's book about adoption to share)

If you plan to bring your children, please call ahead of time to reserve space in our child group.

Tulare County Adoptions Support Group for Fost-Adopt Parents of drug exposed infants

This group meets two Wednesday mornings a month from 10 am to noon at the Tulare adoption office located at 3500 West Mineral King Blvd. Suite B, Visalia CA 93291. For further information contact Alison Acton at 733-6180.

Wednesday, November 14

Wednesday, November 28



Meet your REACH Tulare County Support Team

The REACH post adoption support team consists of Master's level Social Workers who will be providing crisis counseling, support groups and referrals to community resources. Please see the contact information below:

Adoption Program Coordinator

Angela Rodd-Terry, M.A.
aroddterry@mossbeachhomes.com
(559) 741-7358

Adoption Social Worker

Marji Peterson, M.A.
mpeterson@mossbeachhomes.com
(559) 741-7358



How to reach us:

REACH Tulare County
2436 E. Valley Oaks Drive
Visalia, CA 93292

Phone: (559) 741-7358

Fax: (559) 741-7368

www.reachtulare.org

National Adoption Month continued from previous page

National Adoption Day is celebrated every year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. For the first time in 2006, National Adoption Day was celebrated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In total, more than 250 events were held throughout the country to finalize the adoptions of more than 3,300 children in foster care, and to celebrate all families who adopt.

This year, Tulare County will be finalizing adoption for 10 families at the Tulare County Superior Courthouse on National Adoption Day.

If you are interested in helping to plan a community event for National Adoption Day in 2008, please contact Angela Rodd-Terry or Marji Peterson at (559) 741-7358.

Aspiranet
151 Canal Drive
Turlock, CA 95380



Local Office
2436 E. Valley Oaks Drive
Visalia, CA 93292

Phone: (559) 741-7358
Fax: (559) 741-7368



We're on the Web
www.reachtulare.org



Continued from front page

In the Works:

Lending Library

A lending library with books for children and adults regarding adoption is in development and will be available shortly. The REACH Tulare County Lending Library will supplement the materials that are already available at the Tulare County Adoptions Office. If you have a book you would like to donate or recommend, please contact Angela or Marji at (559) 741-7358.

Website

Look for the launch of our website: www.REACHTulareCounty.com More information will follow in subsequent newsletter editions. If you have suggestions for information to be available on the website, please contact Angela or Marji at (559) 741-7358.

Suggestions and feedback are welcome. We are committed to meeting the needs of post adoptive families and want this information to user friendly and helpful.