

# REACH

**Tulare  
County**

*Resource Education Advocacy Crisis Intervention Hope*

*Aspiranet and Tulare County Post-Adoption Support*



## REACH Pre & Post Adoption Services Program

Spring 2012

Greetings to individuals, families and professionals touched by adoption. The number of families who've receive REACH services continues to grow by leaps and bounds. Aspiranet partnered with Tulare County in November of 2007 and during that time we've served nearly 200 families. The vast majority adopted through foster care, however we occasionally provide services to families who adopt privately, birth parents and others. Many clients attend support groups, webinars and other events. Others utilize our lending library, referral, and advocacy services. Still others receive crisis counseling or support counseling as needed.

REACH support groups continue to accommodate the needs of our adoption community. Recently we added panel presentations with adopted adults, youth and birth parents. The best way to learn about adoption is to hear the stories of people who've lived it. Each story we heard was unique and deeply moving.

REACH Tulare County will facilitate two support groups this spring in April, May and June, on the first and third Tuesday of the month. Also of note, Aspiranet is now providing adoption REACH services in Kings County. The REACH Kings County support group meets on the second Monday of the month. Check inside this newsletter for more information, dates, times and locations.

In the past, REACH spring newsletters focused on Mother's Day. This year we would like to focus on Father's Day, which falls on June 17th. Celebrating Father's Day can encompass adoptive fathers, foster and birth fathers, uncles, grandfathers, and other men who play major roles in the lives of children and adults. No two families are alike, so we suggest families honor their father figures in a personal way; perhaps a drawing or a letter that recognizes the gifts each father brings to his family.

As Anne Exton said, "It doesn't matter who my father was; it matters who I remember he was."

Father's Day may also be a time for adoptive children to think about their birth fathers. This can bring up painful or pleasant memories and it might be difficult to find a way for children to honor both fathers. In any case, it's good time for families to reflect and encourage children to ask or write questions about their fathers and express their complicated feelings. Then with encouragement, children can recall all the wonderful things fathers do for their children.

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### Your REACH Kings County Support Team

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[www.aspiranet.org/adoption/reach.aspx](http://www.aspiranet.org/adoption/reach.aspx)

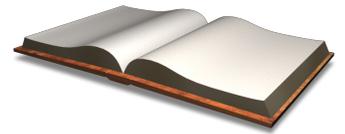
## NEED HELP?

Is your adoptive child exhibiting any of the following behaviors?

- Frequent running away
- Sexualized behavior
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Aggressive/assaultive behavior
- Oppositional/defiant behavior
- Self-injurious behavior
- One or more hospitalizations in a Mental Health facility
- Substance use disorder
- Fire starter
- Minor criminal behavior
- School behavior/truancy problems
- Beyond control of parents and/or primary care adults
- Mild Developmental disorder not recognized by a Regional Center

If so, we can help! The REACH program can connect adoptive families to services that can help. Some of the services available to your family include Therapeutic Behavior Services (TBS) and Tulare County Wraparound. TBS is an intensive one-to-one behavioral mental health service. The service is available to parents/caregivers of children/youth who experience serious emotional challenges. Tulare County Wraparound provides high-risk youth and their families an alternative to group home care. Wraparound is a family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven philosophy promoting the reestablishment of at-risk youth and families into community support systems.

## Book Reviews



### Book Review for Adults:

#### Approaching Fatherhood: A Guide for Adoptive Dads and Others

*by Paul May*

Approaching Fatherhood is a specific exploration of adoptive fatherhood. While the voices of men - adoptive and birth fathers - are rarely heard in adoption stories, this book looks at what it is like being an adoptive dad, how to prepare for a new kind of family life, and how to deal with challenges along the way. This timely and thought provoking book is the first to combine the experiences and perspectives of adoptive fathers as key figures in their children's lives and the crucial role they play in the success or failure of an adoptive placement. Approaching Fatherhood is available through Amazon.com

### Book Review for Children:

#### Daddy, Come & Get Me

*by Gil Michelini*

The author, Gil Michelini and his wife Fran were the biological parents of three daughters when Gil felt a calling to adopt. Gil wrote, Daddy, Come & Get Me, which traces the couple's journey of becoming parents to the Guatemalan girl they named Gemma. Gil describes Daddy, Come & Get Me as, "the first memoir of an American dad's adventure following his calling to adopt a daughter from Guatemala." Daddy, Come & Get Me is available through Amazon.com

### Video Review for Youth:

#### Second Best

*with actors William Hurt, & Nathan Yapp, and director Chris Menges*

William Hurt plays a grown man who still feels his parents, particularly his father, didn't love him as they should have. He stays single and shy. Then he reaches out to a troubled boy, played by Chris Cleary Miles, and proceeds to adopt him. The adoption process is a bit awkward at first. The boy has serious mental issues and proves to be a challenge. This is a drama with funny and touching moments. Second Best is available through Amazon.com

### Father's Day DVDs

Star Wars

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

National Lampoon's Vacation

Mr. Incredible

Father of the Bride

Mr. Mom

Field of Dreams

About A Boy

Fly Away Home

The Secret Garden

Three Men and a Baby

Parenthood

Lion King

Fantastic Mr. Fox

# Support and Resources

## Kings and Tulare REACH Support Groups

### KINGS COUNTY ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUP

2nd Monday of each month

This group is designed for new and experienced adoptive parents.

**April 9, May 14, June 11**

**5:30 to 7:30pm**

Kings County Support Groups are held at Hanford Family Connections 315 Lacey Blvd. Hanford, CA 93230 (Between McDonalds & Burger King) Child care and training hours provided  
Contact:

Kathy Steele

(559)222-4969

ksteele@aspiranet.org

### COS FOSTER & ADOPTION WORKSHOPS

The College of Sequoias Foster & Kinship Care Program offers trainings of interest to foster and adoptive parents at no charge. Register with Linda Paredez at (559)737-4842 or lindap@cos.edu. Topics in April, May and June include: Rebuilding Children's Lives, Transforming the Difficult Child, The Effects of Meth on Children, Learning Disabilities and IEPs, The Sexually Abused Child, and Adolescent Issues in Foster Care and Adoption. Several classes are presented in Spanish.

### TULARE COUNTY REACH SUPPORT GROUPS

--Now Offered Twice A Month

Every 1st & 3rd Tuesday--

#### **WAITING/IN THE MAKING FAMILIES MIXER**

1st Tuesday

This group is designed for adults thinking about adoption, parents awaiting adoptive placement, and parents with children recently placed in their homes. Topics relate to family transitions and adjustments.

**April 3, May 1, June 5, 6:30 - 8:00pm**

Tulare County Support Groups are held at the Visalia YMCA

211 West Tulare Ave. Visalia CA 93277

Child care and training hours provided

Contact Marji Peterson @ (559)741-7358 – mpeterson@aspiranet.org

#### **PARENT RETREAT/SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS**

3rd Tuesday

This group is designed for new and experienced adoptive parents as well as others touched by adoption. Participants are encouraged to share their family's challenges and triumphs. The topics are generated by parents and focus on developing specialized parenting skills.

**April 17, May 15, June 19, 6:30 to 8:00pm**

Tulare County Support Groups are held at the Visalia YMCA

211 West Tulare Ave. Visalia 93277

Child care and training hours provided

Contact Marji Peterson @ (559)741-7358 – mpeterson@aspiranet.org

### ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUPS IN NEARBY COMMUNITIES

Oakhurst

3rd Monday of the Month

5:30 to 7:30pm

Madera

4th Monday of the Month

5:30 to 7:30pm

Contact: Kathy Steele @ (559)222-4969 - ksteele@aspiranet.org

**SAVE THE DATE !!!**

#### **NURTURING ADOPTIONS**

*Adoption Training for  
Professionals & Parents*

Wednesday, June 20, 2012

Visalia Holiday Inn

**MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW**

- *Meth, trauma, neglect and stress: working with long term effects of pre-natal exposure*
- *Transitioning children from foster to adoptive homes, effective attachment and discipline strategies*
- *Impact of trauma on development and the benefits of therapy*
- *Facilitated by Deborah Gray, Adoption Clinical Social Worker & Author of Two Seminal Books: "Nurturing Adoptions" & "Attaching in Adoption"*

# Loving our Children, *An Adoptive Father's Perspective*

By Charles Riley, LMFT



As my wife and I prepared for adoption we were flooded with emotions and feelings. I thought these feelings were normal and there should be a little fear associated with starting a family. Many of these feelings were positive and some were not so positive. Actually some feelings that kept pouring into our thinking were just scary. Since my wife and I are both Family Therapists I thought no problem, we will easily work through these issues. But when the adoption happened, I certainly was not the rational one in our family. Silly me, of course I am a Family Therapist but I was always someone else's Family Therapist.

The worse thought that entered my thinking had to do with bonding, attachment, and the strength of our relationship. In other words, would I love my adopted child as much as I would love a child born by my wife the old fashion way? Another concern was that our adoption could very likely be a child from a different race or a different ethnic background. What would some of our family members or friends think? Of course I know what you are thinking, who cares? Well, our new adopted son or daughter might not like being in a family that had relatives or friends with attitudes unknown to us. Now remember, just because we may have feelings or powerful emotions don't mean they are true.

One other small fear that seemed to be my own private issue had to do with the subject of discrimination. Since I have a significant disability and use a wheelchair for mobility, would my son or daughter accept me as a true parent? Would the fact that I couldn't climb a tree, throw my little girl in the air and gently catch her before hitting 25 or 26 well placed pillows, or the fact that I couldn't play catch with the little boy who would become ours? These were serious thoughts and problems that kept me awake late into the night.

A good friend of ours, who happened to be a very fine Psychiatrist, told us that a baby is a baby, meaning when people look at a baby, they don't see race, boy or girl, an adopted or biological birth, they only see a baby. My brother who is not an educated man, but a very smart and wise man, repeated the same comment... a baby is a baby. This was our experience from the moment we brought our son home. I don't know how we could love a child any more than we love this little gift that we now have. The old saying is true, "if there's a will there's a way." I can't climb the big oak tree with my son in the field behind my house but we can play hide and seek in some of the paved parks, and we can draw together. I taught him how to use the computer and read, we have movie nights, and we make up games, go for rides, and make up stories.

I don't think children remember the details of playtime with their parents, as much as they remember that Mommy and Daddy were their playmates. Our children create memories not so much from the amount of time they spend with parents, or from the type of activity they shared. The key for children's good memories is the quality of time they spend with their parents.

## Articles and Website Links for Adoptive Fathers

[www.adoption.com/topics/adoptive-father-parenting.adoption.com/parents/fathering-adopted-children.html](http://www.adoption.com/topics/adoptive-father-parenting.adoption.com/parents/fathering-adopted-children.html)

[www.adopting.org/adoptions/adoptive-fathers.html](http://www.adopting.org/adoptions/adoptive-fathers.html)

[afth.wordpress.com/2010/07/21/adoption-the-new-country-of-fatherhood/](http://afth.wordpress.com/2010/07/21/adoption-the-new-country-of-fatherhood/)

[www.adoptivefamiliescircle.com/blogs/post/adoption\\_fathers\\_day/](http://www.adoptivefamiliescircle.com/blogs/post/adoption_fathers_day/)

[www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/birth/for/pregnant\\_women/father.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/birth/for/pregnant_women/father.cfm)

[www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/changing-father.aspx](http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/changing-father.aspx)

[www.adoptionfathers.com](http://www.adoptionfathers.com)

# Adoptive Fathering

Historically, a father's role has been to protect, support and accept responsibility for his children. Adoptive fathers tend to be highly motivated parents with a deep emotional committed to their children. This may be the result of adoptive fathers making a deliberate choice to grow their family through adoption, which involves extensive screening and training.

Adoptive fathers increase their effectiveness by fostering a positive relationship with their children's mother, by spending time with and nurturing their children, by disciplining appropriately and serving as a guide to the outside world, and being a positive role model.

The risk for adoption disruption increases when family roles, rules and patterns of interaction are rigid, and when parent's desires or expectations for adopted children are significantly different than expected. Finally, a lack of father involvement in raising children increases the risk of disruption.

One of the most important benefits of a positive relationship between mothers and fathers is the behavior it models for children. Fathers who have good relationships with the mothers of their children are more likely to have children who are psychologically and emotionally healthy.

Also fathers who manage conflict appropriately are more likely to have boys who do the same. And girls with involved, respectful fathers develop the same expectations toward men, and are less likely to become involved in violent or unhealthy relationships. On the other hand, fathers who display anger and show contempt for their children's mother are more likely to have anxious and withdrawn children.

Even from birth, children who have involved fathers are more likely to be emotionally secure, confident and curious about their surroundings. As these children grow older, they tend to have positive social relationships with less trouble at home and school.

Father's tend to play with their children with stimulating activities. Games such as rough-housing can teach children how to regulate feelings, behavior, aggressive impulses and physical contact without losing control of their emotions.

Finally, fathers tend to stress achievement while mothers stress nurturing, both of which are important to healthy development. As a result, children who grow up with involved fathers are more comfortable exploring the world around them and more likely to exhibit self-control and pro-social behavior.

## Attitudes Toward Birth Fathers

Several components come into play when adoptive parents form attitudes toward birth fathers. The adoption social worker and the amount of adoption training, prior to adoption, play a significant role in developing positive attitudes toward birth fathers.



When birthmothers are the only source of information about a child's birthfather, negative attitudes tend to prevail. However, when information comes directly from the birthfather, positive attitudes increase. Also when the birth father signs for relinquishment and/or participates in an adoption plan, positive attitudes increase.

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We're on the Web:  
[www.reachtularecounty.org](http://www.reachtularecounty.org)



ASPIRAnet  
Raising Hope. Empowering Community.



## Aspiranet and Tulare County Post-Adoption Support Services

**Resource:** We provide 1) telephone support & referral to local services 2) referral to local adoption related community trainings 3) linkage to local therapists with experience working with adoptive families 4) lending library and website access 5) quarterly newsletter which includes book reviews, and relevant adoption related information.

**Education:** Educational support groups and meetings are held twice a month and offer a variety of topics pertinent to adoption. In addition, access to the lending library and website offer many opportunities to learn more about adoption and the impact of adoption on all members of the triad (adoptive parents, adoptees and birth family).

**Advocacy:** We are here to help navigate common issues facing adoptive families. We assist adoptive parents with advocating for the assistance needed in working with educational, legislative and community partners to best meet their children's needs.

**Crisis Intervention/Case Management:** Participants are eligible to receive short-term therapeutic services, free of charge, by master's level social workers who are trained and experienced in adoption-related issues. Families are also eligible to receive in-home case management services as needed. Spanish translation services are provided.

**Hope:** We utilize our agency values of Respect, Integrity, Courage & Hope (RICH) to guide our work with adoptive families. Our goal is to promote safe, healthy and stable adoptive families through access to our services.