

REACH

Tulare
County

Resource Education Advocacy Crisis Intervention Hope

Aspiranet and Tulare County Post-Adoption Support



Greetings!

Spring 2013

Tree leaves are budding, flowers are blooming, and REACH continues to grow and thrive. In the first three months of 2013, REACH support groups focused on a trauma workshop based on the work of Jayne Schooler and her book Wounded Children, Healing Homes: How Traumatized Children Impact Adoptive and Foster Families. The workshop was a huge success and REACH will facilitate two workshops through the College of Sequoia Kinship Program in April and May called *Becoming a Trauma Competent Healing Parent*. These workshops are free and registration information is available on page 2.

REACH Support Groups will resume their former schedule the first and third Tuesday of each month from 6:30 to 8:00 PM at the Visalia YMCA. Childcare is provided; please RSVP in advance if you need childcare. Also we sign off on training hours. All adults touched by adoption in Tulare County are welcome. Please see page 5 for more information.

In This Issue:

The REACH Spring 2013 newsletter is focusing on transitioning from foster care to adoption. We have an interview with an adoptive mother who adopted three grandchildren, from a couple that are in the process of adopting a teenager, and some general information to keep in mind when your family is growing or going through significant changes. As always, REACH appreciates your feedback. How can we support your family's adoption journey?

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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.

Your REACH Tulare County Support Team

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Parents Can!!!

Here are some helpful tips for parenting children recently placed in your home

- 1 Parents can recognize adoptive parenting is different than biological parenting. Adopted kids have different needs, so discipline and other strategies need to accommodate this difference.
- 2 It helps when parents develop their own sense of entitlement toward their children and pay attention to integrating them into the family.
- 3 Parents can develop self-satisfaction without relying on their children's behavior.
- 4 Parents can use humor to decrease stress in most situations.
- 5 Parents can develop non-verbal communication skills: eye contact, smiles and hugs to deepen attachments.
- 6 Parents can balance structure and boundaries with flexibility and spontaneity.
- 7 Parents can integrate children's race, culture and heritage into family culture.
- 8 Parents can provide age appropriate and honest information about their child's life story and honor birth parents.
- 9 Parents can validate their children's feelings and create a positive atmosphere to talk about adoption.

For more information about transitioning children from foster care to adoption, see the following link from the Child Welfare Information Gateway:

https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_transition.pdf

This factsheet helps parents talk to their children about changes, helps children understand their histories and losses, helps children cope with trauma and loss, and helps transfer attachments.

SAVE THESE DATES

REACH Tulare County Presents Trauma Focused Workshops for Parents And Caregivers Through the College of Sequoias Kinship Program

BECOMING A TRAUMA COMPETENT HEALING PARENT

Facilitated by Marji Peterson, MFT Intern & Rachel Sievers-Herrera, MFT Intern

Workshop Series 1:
Thursdays, April 11, 18 and 25, 6:00 to 9:00pm
OR
Workshop Series 2:
Friday, May 17, 6:00 to 9:00pm and
Saturday, May 18, 9:00am to 3:00pm

When a child enters a foster/adopt home with a history of drug exposure, abuse, neglect and/or trauma, that child will greatly impact the family. Often times the experience is nothing like what parents expect. This causes confusing emotions and parents may feel ill-equipped for the journey ahead. This workshop will support parents and caregivers of children who come from hard places and incorporates a practical how-to approach with specific tools and skills.

Workshop Goals

- To help parents and caregivers understand the unique needs of the survivor/child
- To help parents and caregivers understand the impact of raising traumatized children on the family
- To help parents and caregivers become "trauma competent healing parents"

Based on Jayne Schooler's books "Wounded Children Healing Homes: How Traumatized Children Impact Adoptive and Foster Families" and "Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child: Making Sense of the Past"

Families in *Transition* by Kathy A. Steele, L.C.S.W.

As Program Coordinator for one of Aspiranet's REACH Post Adoption Programs, I'm privileged in getting to know many families who are in the process of adoption or have finalized. In an attempt to better understand some of the tasks and challenges involved in transitions, I interviewed adoptive parents during a monthly educational support group. (To preserve confidentiality the names of the parents and children were changed).

It should be noted that the adoptive parents who agreed to be interviewed didn't set out with the intention to adopt. Rather, these individuals "fell into" their roles as parents. Not surprisingly, they have experienced some significant challenges along the way. By far, however, their strong devotion and commitment towards the children in their care has helped them successfully address many of these challenges, thus making a smoother transition for all involved.

Marcia and her husband, Bob, along with their small pets, lived an orderly and predictable life style. Susan, a teen, was residing with another family when they first met. Over time Susan's circumstances changed and she was in need of parents who could provide her with individual attention, nurturance and stability. It

seemed natural that Susan, who was a frequent visitor in Bob and Marcia's home, should join the family. According to Marcia, it has been three years since Susan has joined them and despite some unexpected challenges, she and Bob have no regrets with regard to Susan's adoption. On the contrary, both parents have made strong efforts to understand and support Susan as well as issues related to her foster/adoption background. In addition to drawing upon available resources to address these issues, they have set firm boundaries in the home and modeled healthy communication styles. At all times, they create an environment in which Susan is encouraged to discuss her thoughts and concerns. In an effort to draw upon Susan's potential and individual interests, Marcia states that Susan, an excellent student, is encouraged to do well in school and participate in extracurricular activities. Laughingly, Marcia states that this "keeps her busy and out of trouble at the same time."

Though they've gone from having a quiet and somewhat predictable lifestyle, Marcia states that she and Bob have welcomed the somewhat hectic pace and activities that come with having a teenager in their home. At this time, they look forward to become Susan's legal parents via adoption.

One Family's Journey: *Maternal Grandparents to Adoptive Parents*

by Marji Peterson, MFT Intern

(Please note names have been changed to protect confidentiality.)

The Geller family first approached REACH for post adoption services in 2008. The adoptive grandparents, Allen and Rose had already adopted three grandchildren due to their daughter's substance abuse. Rose was worried about protecting the relationships between her daughter Kelly and her children, and keeping the children safe. Looking back, Rose recalls a social worker told her, "You've got to get real. Your daughter may never recover from her drug addiction. You need to be prepared for that."

When the children were small, Rose assumed the three adults could do something unconventional and work together as a team. Rose didn't realize she could limit the contact between the children and their birth mother. Kelly visited and lived with family while she was sober. Rose said, "I was very hopeful in those days." Although she's never lost hope for Kelly, looking back, Rose would do things differently.

When Rose thinks about making the adjustment from grandmother to adoptive mother, she said Kelly had much more influence on the children than she realized. She said this dynamic has been the biggest stressor for the family. Rose said, "It takes a different kind of energy to work with someone with a drug addiction, and it's been a long and hard process."

Rose believes she's gained experience, knowledge, wisdom and maturity, about kinship adoption, and she feels compelled to share what she's learned. Rose said, "The first thing you have to do is identify a support system, its something to work at." In her case, Rose's church provided a rock solid foundation and stronghold because her children were embraced unconditionally. Second, Rose said, "Parents have to reach

out to other adoptive families because talking about concerns makes such a difference... just by talking, you find out what you don't know!"

Rose suggested families also need to build an external support system. This includes teachers, schools, and counselors to meet specific needs. Also mentors, men and women who work with high risk kids are a must.

Rose said it's crucial for parents to talk about their feelings, their children's feelings, marriage and finances. "In my experience, when I started utilizing REACH services, our conversations didn't have to lead to anything. Just by talking, REACH helped me define a path that helped my family. I didn't even know that path existed until I started talking."

"Parents have to reach out to other adoptive families because talking about concerns makes such a difference... just by talking, you find out what you don't know!"

Finally Rose said she's learned to be a positive adoptive parent, "I have to be open to ongoing learning about what I need to do to meet my kids' special needs. What I've learned has salvaged my family. My kids do well in school despite what they've been through, despite the drug exposure, the ADD and ADHD. They feel good about themselves, and they are our joy, our success. They're what make our home a home sweet home.

Five Steps to Help your Child Integrate Into a New Family

By Jennifer Andersen, LCSW

Adapted from: http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_transition.cfm



Gain all the information you can about your child's history. Children need to hear about and understand their own story. Use a lifebook, lifemap or ecomap to help your child make sense of his or her complicated history.



Identify significant people in the child's life and nurture these connections. Be open in talking to your child about important people from previous homes. They may include birth family, siblings, foster parents, other family members, etc. When adoptive parents do not talk about and acknowledge these individuals and their loss, children may have more difficulty coping and transitioning to a new family.



Work together with the important people in the child's life, if possible. If safe and advisable, adoptive parents should work with birth family, birth grandparents or other relatives. Maintaining these connections can make the transition to adoptive placement easier.



Give your child permission to love many. It is important for adoptive children to hear that they can love many people including old and new family members. Repeat this message often.



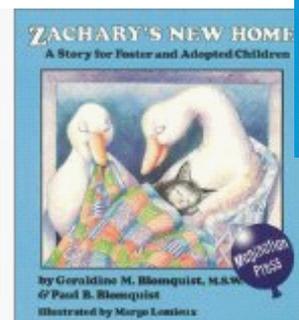
Communicate that permission to the child. Whenever possible, permission to love many should also come from the birth family. This could be by a letter or during a face-to-face visit. It is important that children hear they are not at fault for their placement in foster care and it is all right to love another family.

Book Reviews

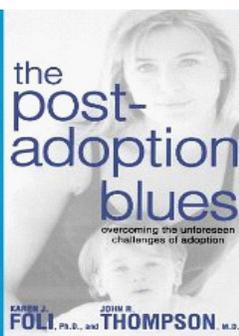
Book Review for Children: Zachary's New Home - A Story for Foster and Adopted Children

This story describes the adventures of Zachary, the kitten, who is taken from his mother's house when she is unable to take care of him. The book follows Zachary as he enters foster care and then is adopted by a family of geese.

Zachary and his adoptive parents experience true-to-life feelings in the beginning, until Zachary finds a place he can call home. Zachary's New Home is available at Amazon.com and the REACH Lending Library.



Book Review for Parents: The Post Adoption Blues



This compassionate, illuminating, and ultimately uplifting book is the first to openly recognize the normal feelings and stress that adoptive families experience as they become a family. The authors, Karen J. Foli and John R. Thompson are a married couple. They draw upon their own experience as adoptive parents as well as interviews with dozens of adoptive families and experts to offer understanding, support, and concrete solutions to promote the joy adoption can bring. Many questions and concerns common to adoptive parents are addressed in this book, which is available at Amazon.com and the REACH Lending Library.

SUPPORT GROUPS

APRIL

- 2** Tulare REACH Waiting / In the Making Family Mixer
6:30 to 8:00pm
Visalia YMCA
- 9** Kings REACH Support Group
5:30 to 7:00pm
Hanford Family Connections
- 10** The Impact Of Domestic Violence On Children
6:00 to 9:00pm
Visalia COS
- 16** Tulare REACH Parent Retreat
6:30 to 8:00pm
Visalia YMCA
- 22nd/** Helping The Socially Challenged Child
29th 6:00 to 9:00pm
Visalia COS

MAY

- 7** Tulare REACH Waiting / In the Making Family Mixer
6:30 To 8 Pm
Visalia YMCA
- 14** Kings REACH Support Group
5:30 to 7:00pm
Hanford Family Connections
- 14** Hording & Other Issues In Foster Care
6:00 to 9:00pm
Kings Human Services Agency
- 21** Tulare REACH Parent Retreat
6:30 to 8:00pm
Visalia YMCA

JUNE

- 3rd/** Nurture Shock
10th 6:00 to 9:00pm
Kings Human Services
- 4** Tulare REACH Waiting / In the Making Family Mixer
6:30 to 8:00pm
Visalia YMCA
- 11** Kings REACH Support Group
5:30 to 7:00pm
Kings Human Services Agency
- 12** Healthy Boundaries
6:00 to 9:00pm
Visalia COS
- 18** Tulare REACH Parent Retreat
6:30 to 8:00pm
Visalia YMCA

TULARE REACH ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUPS

WAITING/IN THE MAKING FAMILIES MIXER

1st Tuesday of each month:

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 changes.

Time: 6:30 to 8:00pm

Location: Visalia YMCA 211 West Tulare Ave. Visalia CA 93277

Child care and training hours provided

Contact: Marji Peterson, MFTI 559-741-7358 ext. 4512.

Email: mpeterson@aspiranet.org

PARENT RETREAT

2nd Tuesday of each month:

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. Topics are generated by parents and focus on developing specialized parenting skills.

Time: 6:30 to 8:00pm

Location: Visalia YMCA 211 West Tulare Ave. Visalia 93277

Child care and training hours provided

Contact: Marji Peterson, MFTI 559-741-7358 ext. 4512

Email: mpeterson@aspiranet.org

KINGS COUNTY ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUP

2nd Tuesday of each month:

This group is designed for new and experienced adoptive parents. Participants are encouraged to share their family's challenges and triumphs. Topics are generated by parents and focus on developing specialized parenting skills.

Time: 5:30 to 7:00pm

Location: Hanford Family Connections, 315 Lacey Blvd. (Between McDonalds & Burger King) Hanford, CA 93230

Child care and training hours provided.

YOU MUST RSVP FOR CHILDCARE

Contact: Toni Brown, M.A. 559-741-7358 ext. 4509

Email: tbrown@aspiranet.org

COLLEGE OF SEQUOIAS FOSTER & KINSHIP CARE EDUCATION

The College of Sequoias Foster & Kinship Care Education Program offers trainings of interest to foster and adoptive parents at no charge in Visalia and Hanford. For a complete list of classes google "COS Visalia Kinship". Register with Linda Paredez at (559)737-4842 or lindap@cos.edu.

Classes are presented in English and Spanish.

Training location information:

College of the Sequoias (COS)
915 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277

Kings Human Services Agency (HSA)
1400 W. Lacey Blvd.
Hanford CA 93230

Boy age 8 at adoption finalization:

"I think our birth family will be happy for us to have a forever home."

Aspiranet
151 Canal Drive
Turlock, CA 95380

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Stockton, CA
PERMIT NO. 451



Local Office
4128 S. Demaree, Ste. B
Visalia, CA 93277

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



We're on the Web:
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.