

# REACH

## Tulare County

*Resource Education Advocacy Crisis Intervention Hope*

*Aspiranet and Tulare County Post-Adoption Support*



### Spring 2014

## Greetings!

Springtime is full of festivals and celebrations - Easter, Passover, Earth Day, St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo and Mother's and Father's Day. These celebrations often include eggs for birth and rebirth, seeds for transformation and new beginnings, and circular shapes for the cycles of life. As the spring sun warms our bones, we shift away from winter/inside, to spring/outside. While we appreciate new shades of green and blooming flowers, we can also appreciate how we've grown and changed as parents, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, aunts and uncles. Spring invites us to reflect, renew and reconnect with family and friends as we move toward new possibilities.

As Isabella Rossellini said, *"Adoption has the dimension of connection — not only to your own tribe, but beyond, widening the scope of what constitutes love, ties and family. It is a larger embrace. By adopting, we stretch past our immediate circles and, by reaching out, find an unexpected sense of belonging with others."*

**In this issue** we will present the story of an adoptive family as it stretched to form new connections and a greater sense of belonging. We also have some quotes in honor of Mother's and Father's Day, a book and DVD review, and a support group/training calendar.

### *Inside This Issue*

1. Welcome, TBS/Wrap Services, REACH Staff
2. Interview with an Adoptive Parent
3. Interview with an Adoptive Parent Cont. and Quotes from Adoptive and Birth Parents
4. Book and Movie Review, Websites
5. Support Groups

## 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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# Interview with An Adoptive Parent

By Toni Brown, M.S.

Phil and Maria have a story that may sound familiar to many adoptive families. Seventeen years ago they received a telephone call that changed their lives forever. Phil and Maria were a couple in their 40's with three children, ages 18, 12, and 9.

The couple heard rumors about a niece who was having problems and Child Protective Services had detained her three children, Laura (age 11), Rick (19 months), and Nathan (8 months). Phil and Maria did not have a close relationship with this distant niece and they had never met her children. Soon they had an unexpected visit from her and she asked Phil and Maria to take placement of her children. She admitted to struggling with substance abuse and homelessness. Maria recalls feeling a mixture of emotions. *"I admit that I didn't want to do it at first. I was kinda stubborn. My husband and I thought we were done raising babies since our youngest child was 9 years old. We both worked full time jobs and so childcare would be an issue. I remember telling our niece that I didn't think we could do it. She left and went on her way. But I couldn't stop thinking about the kids."*

Within a few days, Maria received a telephone call from a social worker asking if she would like to meet the children at a supervised visit. Maria agreed and met the children for the first time. *"I found out the children were living in two separate foster homes. Laura was living in one foster home and her two younger brothers were living in another foster home. When I met the kids, everything changed. I told my husband that we have to take them!"*

But Maria and Phil did not reach this decision without consulting their children. *"We talked it out together as a family before making a decision. We knew it was going to affect every single member of our household and we all needed to agree to work together. Some of my kids had mixed feelings and they needed to talk this through with us. Eventually we all agreed to give it a shot."*

Phil and Maria took placement of all three children in the next few months. Maria continued to work full time at a correctional facility while her husband quit his job to remain at home with the children. Eventually reunification services for the birth mother

were terminated, and the birth father was not able to provide a stable home for the children; he did not have contact with them.

Maria recalls being asked to adopt the children. She laughed and said, *"Not adopting the children would have been like tearing away a piece of our family. We all became attached to the kids."* During the adoption process, Maria recalls the moment the adoption social worker told her that she needed to tell the children they were being adopted. Maria stated, *"At first I was against it because it was hard and I didn't want them to feel different. But then I changed my mind and decided to tell them while they were young and share a little bit more and more as they got older and had more questions. It was hard, but I'm glad I did it. In the long run, it made my relationship with them stronger because they know I will tell the truth."*

Maria recalls going through some adjustment periods as the years progressed. She recalls Laura having a difficult time allowing Maria and Phil to care for her and her younger brothers. Maria states, *"It took time for her to trust us and convince her that we could take care of her and her siblings because that was our job as parents."* Rick was nearly two years old when he was placed in the home. Maria recalls Rick having a variety of health problems and he could not speak. His health condition required regular trips to Children's Hospital and speech therapy. Maria and the family learned basic sign language as a way to communicate with Rick as well as help him communicate his needs. His language progressed as time went on and he was on target by the time he reached school age. The family also learned that Rick was afraid of water and they assumed it was due to an early traumatic event. *"Baths were a real challenge in the beginning because he was so afraid of the water. We had to bathe him in small steps and we had to make it fun and playful and show him that we were not going to leave him and we would be right there with him."*

As the children got older, it became apparent they needed services at school. Maria and her family moved to Tulare and enrolled the children in a school with more special education services and a staff that was willing to work with their individual needs. *"All the kids had difficulty focusing in school."* My husband would go to the school regularly and sometimes sit with them in the classroom.

As the children became teenagers, they asked more questions about their birth parents and wanted to have contact with them. Maria admits that navigating birth family contact was not easy. *"We had to learn to set limits with their birth mother with visits and other contact because she was not always stable. We worked through this because we knew it was important to the kids to have some type of contact with her."* The two younger boys found their birth father through a social media website when they were in high school. They discovered he had relocated out of state. After a lot of careful planning and discussion, Maria and Phil met with him and agreed to allow contact. Maria states, *"Their birth father is in a different place in his life now. He is doing well and he is willing to do whatever he can to be a positive and supportive connection for the kids and to our family."* Maria went on to describe the difference that she noticed in her two sons after they came from a visit with their birth father. *"After the visits, they would come home with positive attitudes and they felt good about themselves."* Maria added that she has learned a lot of valuable lessons when it comes to the role of the birth parents in her children's lives. *"I have learned that we don't have to like each other, but we have to respect each other."*

Phil and Maria are now in their 60's and retired. All of their children are adults and living outside of the home with the exception of Rick (age 18), and Nathan (age 17) who are both graduating from high school this year. Maria states that she is very proud of all of her children and she has five grandchildren to enjoy as well! When asked what advice she would give parents interested in adoption, she replied with these words of wisdom:

*"Love your children and remember that they come from a place of suffering. They may say or do things that are not their fault. It is your duty as a parent to love them and take care of them. Your children are not going to necessarily love and respect you as their parent right away. It may take time and its something you have to earn."*

*"Remember to listen to your children. It's not about having kids follow your rules. Every child is different and they need different things. You have to pay attention and really listen to them."*

In closing she said, *"Tell the children the truth about their adoption, even though it's hard. This was hard for me, but I'm glad I did it."*

## Quotes from Adoptive and Birth Parents

**Adoptive Parent Robert Klose-** I realized at the start that whether a child is biological or adopted, one does not know all the ingredients in the package. That is what growth is all about. A child is the slowest flower in the world, opening petal by petal, revealing the developing personality within. [www.americaadopts.com/25-motivational-adoption-quotations-and--poems-for-adopting-families](http://www.americaadopts.com/25-motivational-adoption-quotations-and--poems-for-adopting-families)

**Adoptive Parent Amanda Bearse-** If a child is born and raised in a home with love and nurturing, where there is complete truth about who we are, you can't give a child any greater place from which to fly. [www.adoptionopen.com/adoptionquotes.html](http://www.adoptionopen.com/adoptionquotes.html)

**Birth Mother Desha Wood-** He is mine in a way that will never be hers, yet he is hers in a way that will never be mine, and so together we are motherhood. [adoptionvoices.com/forum/topics/favorite-adoption-quotes](http://adoptionvoices.com/forum/topics/favorite-adoption-quotes)

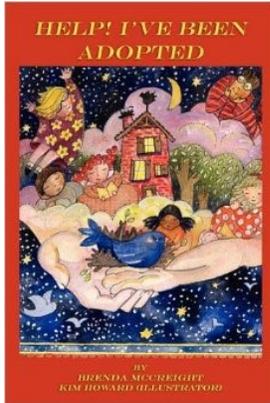
**Birth Father Richard-** As birthfathers, we will experience emotions similar to our partners' (such as grief and fear); however, there are also very distinct feelings and issues that will arise. You should not dismiss them as invalid, merely because you are the male in the situation. You are a parent, and a person, feeling sad and confused. This does not mean you are less of a man; it means you care deeply for your child, as a father should. [www.friendsinadoption.ort/pregnant/real-life-stories](http://www.friendsinadoption.ort/pregnant/real-life-stories)

**Author Sherrie Eldridge, Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew -** I believe one of the most sacrificial acts of love adoptive parents can do is to give up their preconceptions and agendas about what their child's views "should" be and be open to hear the conflicting emotions and thoughts their child often experiences. [www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/adoption](http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/adoption)

# Family Book Review

## Help! I've Been Adopted

by Brenda McCreight



Help! I've been Adopted, by Brenda McCreight, is a book that is meant for older children and teens and it can be used as a tool in helping children to express their feelings and explore some commonly asked questions about adoption. The book is written in a format that is easy to read and addresses common feelings of happiness, confusion, anger, sadness, grief, and eventually acceptance. McCreight writes that it is important for adopted children "to understand that you are not alone with your questions." McCreight brings up questions such as "Why do birth parents give up or lose their children?", "What is attachment and how does it affect my life?" "How do adoptive parents get matched to a child?" "Who makes all the decisions about a child's life?" and more. The book also offers some solutions for children to consider and discuss with their adoptive parents. This book is highly recommended for adopted and foster children.

# Movie Review

## Martian Child

by Marji Peterson, MFTI



Based on a novel, 'Martian Child' is a story about finding security with caring people. David (John Cusack) is a successful science fiction writer who is a widower, still grieving for his wife. Social worker Sophie (Sophie Okonedo) calls David concerning a strange little boy, available for adoption, named Dennis (Bobby Coleman). Dennis believes he is from the planet Mars and hides inside a refrigerator box, covered with sunscreen and dark glasses. After David takes Dennis home, life is not easy; but with time David and Dennis bond. Dennis was deserted as a small child and found security in believing he is a visiting Martian who will be 'taken home' to Mars when his mission to understand human beings is complete. David's persistent parenting (quoting Churchill's 'Never ever, ever, ever, ever give up'), while tested to the extreme, results in a bond with Dennis that is heart wrenchingly beautiful.

# Websites

## WHAT IS TBRI®?



**Trust-Based Relational Interventions (TBRI)** is a treatment and parenting model developed by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross at Texas Christian University. The REACH program is excited about incorporating this model into our work because it's designed to help caretakers parent children who have experienced relationship-based traumas (such as institutionalization, multiple foster placements, abuse, maltreatment, and/or neglect). The interventions are research based and focus on helping families create healing environments for children. If you would like to know more about TBRI, please contact the REACH office or check the websites [child.tcu.edu/default.asp](http://child.tcu.edu/default.asp) or [empoweredtoconnect.org](http://empoweredtoconnect.org)

# SUPPORT GROUPS

## UPCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### April

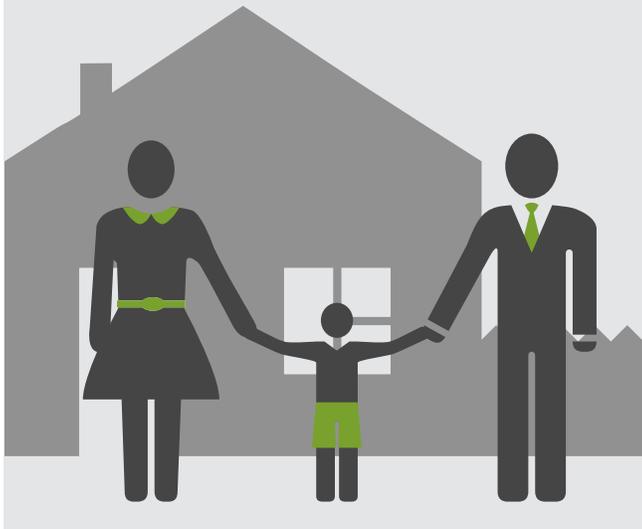
- 1** Tulare REACH Parent Retreat  
Visalia Boys and Girls Club  
6:30 – 8:30 PM
- 8** Kings REACH Support Group  
Hanford Family Connections  
5:30 - 7:00 PM

### May

- 6** Tulare REACH Parent Retreat  
Visalia Boys and Girls Club  
6:30 to 8:30 PM
- 13** Kings REACH Support Group  
Hanford Family Connections  
5:30 - 7:00 PM

### June

- 3** Tulare REACH Parent Retreat  
Visalia Boys And Girls Club  
6:30 - 8:30 PM
- 10** Kings REACH Support Group  
Hanford Family Connections  
5:30 - 7:00 PM



## TULARE COUNTY REACH PARENT RETREAT

This group is designed for new and experienced adoptive parents, adults awaiting adoptive placement, as well as others touched by adoption. Training hours provided. **PARENTS MUST RSVP FOR CHILD CARE** for children comfortable playing in a group setting. Infants are welcome to join parents/caregivers.

**Where:** Visalia Boys and Girls Club (Directly behind the Visalia YMCA)  
215 W. Tulare Ave., Visalia, CA

**When:** 1st Tuesday of the month, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

- April 1st
- May 6th
- June 3rd

**Contact:** Marji Peterson, MFTI at (559) 741-7358 ext. 4512 or email at [mpeterson@aspiranet.org](mailto:mpeterson@aspiranet.org)

## KINGS COUNTY REACH ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUP

This group is designed for adults thinking about adoption, parents awaiting adoptive placement and parents of adopted children. Training hours provided. **PARENTS MUST RSVP FOR CHILD CARE.** Infants and pre-toddlers remain with parents/caregivers.

**Where:** Hanford Family Connections  
(Between McDonalds and Burger King)  
315 Lacey Blvd., Hanford, CA

**When:** 2nd Tuesday of the month from 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

- April 8th
- May 13th
- June 10th

**Contact:** Toni Brown, M.S. at (559) 741-7358 ext. 4509 or email at [tbrown@aspiranet.org](mailto:tbrown@aspiranet.org)

## COLLEGE OF SEQUOIAS FOSTER & KINSHIP PROGRAM

The College of Sequoias Foster and Kinship Program offers training for 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](mailto:lindap@cos.edu).

Classes are presented in English and Spanish.

### TRAINING LOCATION INFORMATION:

**College of the Sequoias**  
915 South Mooney Blvd.  
Visalia, CA 93277

**Kings County Human Services Agency**  
1400 W. Lacy Blvd.  
Hanford, CA 93232

Aspiranet  
151 Canal Drive  
Turlock, CA 95380

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



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*Raising Hope. Empowering Community.*



## Reach and Tulare County 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.