

REACH

Tulare
County

Resource Education Advocacy Crisis Intervention Hope

Aspiranet and Tulare County Post-Adoption Support



Greetings!

The heat is on and it's definitely summer out there. That means changes in family routines and hopefully some time in cool water! This past spring Tulare REACH focused on community trainings called "Becoming a Trauma Competent Healing Parent." More than 50 people who work with children with a history of trauma participated. Our trainings were overwhelmingly successful and REACH encourages you to register for our next training in September. Check inside this newsletter for registration information.

If you aren't already aware, Tulare REACH has an updated satisfaction survey ready for parents to complete on our website at reachtularecounty.org. If you don't have access to the internet, please call our office and to complete a survey over the phone. We can also mail a copy to your home address. REACH needs surveys from all families who received one or more services in the past year. If your family received a REACH newsletter or a packet in the mail, attended an event, training or support group, if you had contact with a REACH worker or borrowed a book from our lending library, WE NEED YOUR SURVEY!

In this Issue: In this newsletter REACH wanted to explore children's understanding of adoption and how it changes over time. We invited three school age children and one young adult to share their advice and stories. Their words are funny, thoughtful and joyful, but most of all they touch the heart. Additionally we included an adoption oriented movie and book review, an attachment focused family activity, and adoption websites. Since schedules are hectic in the summer, we thought you might enjoy these reviews for new insight and awareness about parenting adopted children.

Summer 2013

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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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Children's Perspectives on Adoption

What Adoption Means to Me

by Olivia age 10

"Finally it clicked; being adopted meant I wasn't going to leave."

I didn't understand adoption when I was little. I remember a lot about living with my birth mom before I went into foster care. When I heard people say, "Someone's going to adopt you", I thought it meant I had to go to a different home and I was scared.

I figured out what adoption meant in therapy a little bit, and when I heard other people talk about it. I dreamed about it but I still didn't quite know what it was. I thought it was probably a good thing, but I wasn't sure...

One day I was in my room and I heard my foster parents talking. Finally it clicked; being adopted meant I wasn't going to leave. I used to get scared after I misbehaved and social workers came to my house. But my foster parents told me nobody would ever take me away again. Still sometimes I worry that I'll lose my parents.

One thing I don't like is when other people talk about my adoption; I might be embarrassed. Sometimes strangers ask me questions, and I don't like it when people know things about me when I wasn't the one who told them.

When the day of my adoption happened, it was a dream come true. I was unsure because it was a new experience, but it was something I always wanted. I think adoption is a magical thing. When it happens, dreams come true. There's lots of twists and turns and it's sort of fun. It's a mystery because you don't know what's going to happen next or how life is going to turn out. For me, adoption is what I always wanted.

Treat Me Normal

by Aidan K. Riley, 9 years old, Adopted and Proud of It!

What are your words of advice if a kid at school finds out that another kid is adopted?

1. Play with them.
2. Treat them nice/good like always.
3. If you are curious don't ask the wrong questions.

What would you say are examples of the wrong questions?

1. Who was your birth Dad?
2. Who was your birth family?

I'm Adopted Like A Boss!

by Josh age 11

Josh went home to his adoptive family when he was an infant. He has a framed picture from his adoption day with his mom, dad and the judge who finalized the adoption. Everyone has big smiles. This is Josh's adoption story:

All along I thought I might be adopted because I didn't look anything like my parents. When I was in second grade my parents explained it to me. My mom showed me a book of pictures she took on the day I was adopted with all my relatives. That was cool.

When I found out I was adopted I asked a lot of questions like: who was my birth mother, what did she look like, was my name always Joshua, and could I meet my birth mother now? My mom said she didn't know the answers to a lot of my questions, but she would help me find out when I turned 18. She also said I can ask her anything about being adopted any time.

I remember studying about families in second and third grade. I took my book to school and told my friends about being adopted. They asked a lot of questions at first and then they stopped like it didn't matter so much.

Sometimes my friends don't understand the difference between adoption and divorce. They think my dad had me and married another wife or something. Then I have to explain that's not it; my birth mom was sick because she took drugs and couldn't take care of me, so I got adopted.

When people ask me about being adopted I say, 'I'm adopted like a boss (with his arms flexed over his head like a super hero) and it's awesome!'



What would you say are examples of the right questions?

1. What do you like playing?
2. Do you have an X-Box?
3. Do you like Rap?

Interviewer/Adoptive Mom's Commentary:

From my son's responses I am reminded that it is important for children to talk about adoption on their own timetable and that the desire for normalcy is universal.

My Adoption Story

by Keli, age 18

“Now I feel like adoption is a secure lock. The door can’t open anymore and that’s a form of security for me; knowing I can’t go back.”

Keli has a unique perspective on adoption because she was adopted twice at ages 12 and 18. After she was detained from her birth family, she was placed with relatives who eventually adopted her. That adoption dissolved and she was eventually adopted by another family. This is her story:

I approached my first foster parents about adoption because I wanted to be a normal kid like their biological children. I wanted to be their kid, too. I wanted to be normal so bad! My foster parents let me make the decision. I thought adoption meant I would be equal and I didn’t have a past anymore. I thought I could start life over.

After three years I realized me and my adoptive parents weren’t a good match. Things really fell apart when I was 15 and a half. By that time I saw the true colors of my adoptive family. There was a lot of abuse going on. No more social workers were coming to the house and I had no one to turn to. Behind closed doors I was being physically abused by my adoptive mother, like getting hit with a belt, and molested by my adoptive father. There was emotional and psychological abuse too; like I had to spend 8 days on my bed for discipline with no books or anything else to do. I had to ask to get up to eat or use the bathroom.

So when I couldn’t take it anymore I ran away and was placed back in foster care. I was desperate for a family who would show the love I needed and would treat me like a child that needed someone. At that time I never wanted to be adopted again. I just wanted a family I could trust and feel secure in.

As the months went on, my new foster family and I fell in love with each other. I started calling them mom and dad. We decided on guardianship and later I asked if they would adopt me. This time adoption meant I got as much love as I put into my family, and then my parents put in more. They treated me like I was their own child. This felt like the right fit. We always tell each other we love each other and I knew that whether I was adopted or not, I would always be their daughter. Now I feel like adoption is a secure lock. The door can’t open anymore and that’s a form of security for me, knowing I can’t go back.

When I look back I realize I thought my first adoption would make things different, like a quick fix. I didn’t see the double lives going on until it was too late.

My second adoption was different because we took time to learn and trust each other. My second adoptive family is genuine; my parents are the same people 24/7. We don’t keep secrets and our house is a home. There’s a sense of warmth there. It doesn’t feel like an adoption, it feels like a family and I was always meant to be here.

Keli enjoys sharing her adoption story with individuals and groups so people can gain insight into adoption and what kids need from their parents. If you are interested in contacting Keli for a presentation, please call Marji Peterson at the REACH office, 559-741-7358-ext 4512.



Websites

AdoptiveFamilies.com is the adoptive parents’ answer to community-building websites like BabyCenter.com. It’s complete with forums, touching stories from adoptees, adoption law information,

libraries and hints and tips on parenting adopted children from professionals and parents just like us. I particularly appreciate the interactive nature of this website. Users can vote in the monthly photo contest, comment on their peers’ blogs and participate in informational webinars. There is a real sense of community amongst adoptive parents who use this website.

AdoptionLearningPartners.org is an excellent resource for easy access to learning materials. It offers interactive e-learning courses, papers and articles on the common joys and challenges adoptive parents face. Some of the trainings provide continuing education units. The next live, interactive webinar, titled “Can we talk? When Kids Start Asking About Adoption” will be held on July 18th at 8pm.

AttachTrauma.org is an all-in-one tool for parenting a child with a trauma history that interferes with his ability to attach (let’s face it; all adoptive parents are parenting a child with a trauma history.) This website is full of good, easy-to-read information on trauma and its affects on attachment. What I appreciate most about this website is its support buddy system—volunteer mentors stay in regular contact with members to offer encouragement, education and accountability. An online support group is also available. Attachment and Trauma Network, Inc. strongly encourages parental self-care. This is an excellent resource for parents who have undertaken the enormous task of parenting a child with a trauma history.

“This time adoption meant I got as much love as I put into my family, and then my parents put in more.”

Parent/Child Bonding Activity: "Who Am I?"

by Rachel Sievers-Herrera, MFT Intern,

This family activity helps develop a child's sense of self and talk about their history. Doing this activity shows children you appreciate them as individuals and their birth parents' life-long impact, along with your own.

Supplies:

Three crayons, different colors

Paper bag

1 sheet of paper for a large drawing of your child

Place 8-12 small pieces of paper (placed in the bag) with your child's characteristics written on them; for example hair color, favorite games, movies, food, funny stories, hobbies, activities, and who he likes and loves.

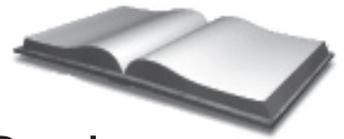


Activity

Ask your child to make a simple large drawing of him or her self on a sheet of paper. Explain that you are filling in a picture of him or her with the pieces of paper. Assign one crayon to your child's birth parents, one crayon to you, and one crayon to your child. Ask your child to pull one piece of paper out of the bag at a time. When your child reads the characteristic, ask him if he believes he got that characteristic from his birth mom or dad, adoptive mom or dad, or from himself. Ask your child to draw or place that characteristic on the drawing with the appropriate colored crayon.

When your child has completed the drawing, ask what he or she thinks about all the colors he sees in himself.

Reviews



Family Book Review

Curious George

reviewed by Toni Brown, MFT Intern

Many generations are familiar with Curious George. He first appeared in 1941 in a series of books written and illustrated by Hans Augusto and Margret Rey. George is a small, naturally inquisitive monkey taken from his home in Africa and placed in a zoo by "The Man in The Yellow Hat". After George escapes and embarks on several misadventures, the Man in The Yellow Hat decides the zoo is not the right place for George. He adopts George and takes him home to live in the "big city". George often manages to sneak away from home to explore his new environment and needs help navigating various obstacles that are beyond his developmental skills. The Man in The Yellow Hat becomes a father figure and primary parent to George. He uses positive parenting strategies including modeling and problem solving. George is never afraid to approach the Man in The Yellow Hat because he feels safe and protected. For more on the dynamics between George and his parent, you can refer to an article written by Kelly Bartlett entitled, "The Man in The Yellow Hat Exemplifies Positive Discipline". This article can be found at <http://attachmentparenting.org/blog/2011/12/12/the-man-in-the-yellow-hat-exemplifies-positive-discipline/>.

Curious George stories are great for adoptive parents and children and are available through a series of animated TV shows, movies, e-books, toys and games. For information on more Curious George products, visit www.curiousgeorge.com.

Movie Review

The Odd Life of Timothy Green

reviewed by Toni Brown, MFT Intern



The Odd Life of Timothy Green is a film released in 2012 by Walt Disney Pictures, co written and directed by Peter Hedges. The film is told from the perspective of two prospective adoptive parents, Cindy Green (Jennifer Garner) and Jim Green (Joel Edgerton) as they explain their story to an adoption agency. The couple shares they have infertility issues and worked through their grief and loss by dreaming up their ideal fantasy child. They wrote the child's characteristics on slips of paper, placed them in a box and buried them in the backyard. There is a thunderstorm and suddenly a ten-year old boy named Timothy (CJ Adams) arrives at the Green's home covered in mud with leaves growing on his legs, and states that he is their son. Timothy's leaves fall off each time he fulfills one of the qualities listed on the original slips of paper written by his parents. Timothy tells the Greens his time with them is short and eventually disappears, leaving the Greens a letter explaining the significance of each leaf that fell off of his legs. This film portrays the vulnerabilities, joys, and complications involved in adoption, and challenges our ideas about "perfection", the "perfect parent", and the "perfect child", all the while celebrating adoption. It portrays how adoptive families are made differently, not better or worse, just different.

SUPPORT GROUPS

July

- 2** Tulare REACH Waiting In
The Making Family Mixer
6:30 - 8:00pm Visalia YMCA
- 9** Kings REACH Support Group
5:30 - 7:00pm Hanford Family Connections
- 23** Tulare REACH Parent Retreat
6:30 - 8:00pm Visalia YMCA

August

- 6** Tulare REACH Waiting In
The Making Family Mixer
6:30 - 8:00pm Visalia YMCA
- 13** Kings REACH Support Group
5:30 - 7:00pm Hanford Family Connections
- 20** Tulare REACH Parent Retreat
6:30 - 8:00pm Visalia YMCA

September

- 3** Tulare REACH Waiting In
Making Family Mixer
6:30 - 8:00pm Visalia YMCA
- 9** Becoming A Trauma Competent
Healing Parent 6:00 - 9:00pm
COS, Room Pending
- 10** Kings REACH Support Group
5:30 - 7:00pm Kings Human Services
- 16** Becoming A Trauma Competent
Healing Parent 6:00 - 9:00pm
COS, Room Pending
- 17** Tulare REACH Parent Retreat
6:30 - 8:00pm Visalia YMCA
- 23** Becoming A Trauma Competent
Healing Parent 6:00 - 9:00pm
COS, Room Pending

REACH TRAINING THROUGH THE COS FOSTER/KINSHIP PROGRAM

BECOMING A TRAUMA COMPETENT HEALING PARENT

Based on the work of Jayne Schooler

Workshop Series September 9, 16 and 23, 6 to 9 PM

When a child enters a foster/adoption 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 foster/adoption professionals and parents of children who come from hard places. It incorporates a practical how-to approach with specific tasks and skills.

Email lparadez@cos.edu to register.

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

3rd Tuesday of each month:

This group is designed for new and experienced adoptive parents as well as other adults 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 foster and adoptive parents. Participants are encouraged to share their family's challenges and triumphs, questions and concerns. 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. Infants and pre-toddlers will remain with their caregivers during the support group.

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

Email: tbrown@aspiranet.org

COLLEGE OF SEQUIOIAS 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

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.