

Adoption Matters

Summer 2009



What does going back-to-school mean to an adopted or foster care child?

When the adopted child goes to school

Entering school for the first time is daunting for most children but an adopted child can also be confronted with adoption issues. An adopted or foster child may feel different from other kids because he is part of his family through adoption. Any questions asked about a child's "real family" or birth parent may be confusing. Below, you will find a guide that describes some common behaviors to expect from adopted or foster care children based upon their age.

The preschool years

Meeting other children for the first time often occurs in preschool. Curiosity and information exchange about moms and dads is a natural occurrence. For children that have been adopted, being prepared in advance to answer these questions can be key to their confidence level and their ability to share stories and handle classroom situations.

Rhys, AES #96364



Photo by CvB Photography

The elementary school years

Questions for both parents and teachers may occur when children enter grade school. Between the ages of 6-11, children are capable of more sophisticated thought processes, which can result in new questions and insecurities.

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Discussing distinctions among many types of families rather than emphasizing the differences between adoptive and birth families will help children to appreciate the diversity that exists among family units. They will then be able to identify the type of family they live in and the wide range of differences that exist. At about age six, children are able to get an idea of having two families, a birth family and a forever family. If they have recently been adopted and have tangible memories of former families, they may feel confused.

During times of increased sensitivity, the child may become very “matter-of-fact” about adoption issues. Some children may want to talk excessively about the adoption, while others may not mention it for a few years. Remember that changes in the child may not be a reflection of the situation or events that occur; rather, developmental changes may alter a child’s perception of their life story.

Dalton, AES # 101673



Photo by Shafoto

The middle school student

Children entering adolescence are able to think in adult-like concepts. Pre-occupied with defining who they are, it is a time for self-examination, reflection and, for some, a time for strong peer pressure.

Researchers studying adoption issues find that those youth that can identify assets in themselves are less likely to become involved in delinquent behavior. All youth have assets, but in order to identify assets in themselves, they need to have the background and knowledge about their past circumstances, where they have been and what has impacted their lives so far.

Middle-school children try to be just like their peers, providing a sense of safety while working on their individuality. In the meantime, they can be quite a challenge, at home and at school.

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Reflect on this...

“The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.”

-Sydney J. Harris

...and this...

“They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

-Carl W. Buechner

Cool treat for summer

Here’s a delicious, super-easy no-bake recipe perfect for a summer dessert! It’s so easy that kids can make it themselves!

- 2 pkgs. *Instant* pistachio pudding mix
- 1 large can crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 bag of mini marshmallows
- 1 bag shredded coconut
- 2 eight ounce tubs of non-dairy whipped cream

Empty contents of *dry* pudding into large bowl. Add remaining ingredients. Stir until thoroughly blended. Cover and chill about two hours, or overnight. Enjoy!



A bit of trivia

Did you know that the very first Labor Day was celebrated on Tuesday, September 15, 1882 in New York City? In 1884, the first Monday in September was chosen as the permanent day to celebrate the American worker.

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The high school student

This developmental stage often finds teens gravitating toward individuals like themselves. They want to affirm their interests, physical characteristics and personality traits while forming groups and cliques. Clubs and teams are often important now in a teen's social life and is the center for their social structure.

An emphasis on career decisions and college choices can often prompt an adopted teenager to wonder again what the birth parents' vocations are and what special aptitudes and skills they will draw from throughout life.

Tevin, AES # 98510



Photo by k Gallery

Focusing on skills and abilities will help in achieving more self-awareness – what he knows about himself and his tangible memories, rather than on following in footsteps he has never seen. A wise choice for school professionals may be to focus on grades, interests and affiliations in clubs rather than on the teen's uncertainties.

Conversely, the teen may, in reality, be much more like his family of origin than his adoptive family. Parents with high expectations for their children may have difficulty if their adopted children show different aptitudes than parents have modeled. Recognize that the teenager is entering adulthood with strengths he can draw upon from his biological make-up, his adoptive family, and the realm of experiences in his life. Each of these sources has provided building blocks to build a healthy, strong adult. It is important for teachers, parents and other significant adults to remind the teen that he can shape his own identity.

As adopted children grow into adults; they will carry with them their adoption stories. Many will have heightened sensitivity toward various "issues" that others are sorting through. Often, they are more accepting of individual diversity and place great value on the family structure. Some adoption professionals claim "adoption is a lifelong process." Others say that adoption gives them lifelong opportunities for new insight and strength. In either case, as teens become adults they become independent of the families who adopted and raised them. The move to a college dormitory is the next step in becoming the person they were meant to be.

What parents can do to help:

- Talk to teachers about adoption
- Teachers may appreciate articles about adoption and learn adoption terminology
- Prepare your child for comments they may encounter
- Give them information about their adoption stories, as they are able to handle it
- Help your child to meet other children who are adopted
- Be prepared to answer questions your child may have, but do not force any information on your child
- Be aware that as the child matures the questions may change. Things you were sure your child knew all about may come up again in new and different ways

Tiffany, AES #105329

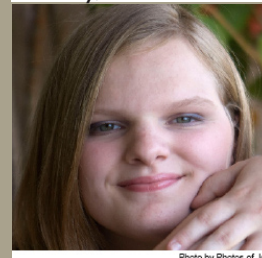


Photo by Photos of Joy

Excerpted from Adoption Resources of Wisconsin.
For additional articles on adoption, log on to
<http://www.wiadopt.org>



Adoption Champions

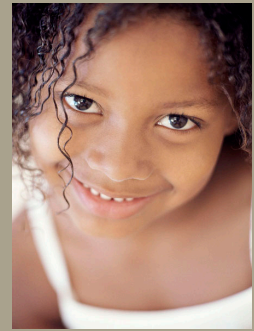
Consider becoming an Adoption Champion! Adoption Champions commit to advocating on behalf of a child available for adoption for a three-month period. After three months, the Adoption Champion may choose to continue championing for this child or choose another child.

Due to the urgency for adoptive homes for our children, there may be multiple Champions for a child.

What do you do as an Adoption Champion? Raise public awareness of special needs adoption; discuss the sponsored child within the community (business, church or synagogue and among family and friends) and refer people interested in adoption to Children's Home Society of Florida; partner with Children's Home Society of Florida to locate an adoptive home for the sponsored child.

The Adoption Champion may decide that they want to do more for their sponsored child. They may decide to: become a mentor; help the child celebrate his birthday or other holiday; or even adopt!

For more information about becoming an Adoption Champion, contact Vanessa Ward at 352-843-8887.



Did you know?

In 1959, the United Nations Assembly adopted *The Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. In 1960, the White House Conference on Children and Youth endorsed it.

We are delighted to announce. . .

Children's Home Society of Florida is launching a new program: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. This new program is the result of a grant awarded by Elder Options of Florida.

The grant will enable Children's Home Society of Florida to provide assistance to the ever-growing population of grandparents who have found themselves in the role of parenting their grandchildren. The program's onset will include counseling related to the aging process, caregiver training and support, sitter service, Gerontological counseling and legal services. These service opportunities will provide a wide range of beneficial resources and service opportunities and will serve the following northern areas of the Mid-Florida division: Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Suwannee and Union counties.

Kids Central, Inc. was also awarded a grant that provides the same service opportunities but encompasses services in Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion and Sumter counties.

Look for more information in the weeks ahead.



Please let us know!

If you have an area of interest or concern that you would like to see addressed in an upcoming issue, please email Linda Franc at Linda.Franc@chsfl.org

Scholarship opportunity

Step Up For Students offers free K-12 scholarships for foster children currently placed in the state of Florida. To qualify, a foster child's annual income (including state board rate, Social Security income, and any other income) must be at or below \$20,036. A foster parent's income does not factor into eligibility. For qualifying students, the program grants annual private school tuition scholarships of up to \$3,950 or transportation scholarships of up to \$500 to out-of-district public schools. For more information and to file an application, log on to: <http://www.stepupforstudents.com>.

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Do the lazy days of summer mean boredom?

If the youngsters in your household are looking for some great summer fun, log on to <http://www.mysummercamps.com>. This website is an extensive directory of summer camps for all interests, age groups, locations, and budgets.

Family bound

The buzz of Family Bound can be heard in your area, and our Bridge Families are so excited! Family Bound, a program developed by John Lewis and Communities for People, Inc., seeks to provide teens with the opportunity to identify and to address their own personal issues concerning living in a family setting and ultimately, hopes to ensure significant and lifelong connections between teens and adults. Children's Home Society of Florida uses Bridge Families to host a teenager or pre-teen in their home for five consecutive weekends and help them practice the basic family living skills that they are learning in their ten-week group therapy experience.

The ten weeks include nine group sessions for the teens, during which they are encouraged to think about their expectations for a family by exploring many aspects of family life. For more information, contact Vanessa Ward at 352-843-8887.

Looking ahead!

Our fall 2009 issue of *Adoption Matters* will mark our first year in publication! As many of you are new to our mailing list, we'll be re-printing some very valuable tips, and of course, will continue to provide lots of important adoption information every quarter.

Our next issue will also include information about the annual *Celebrate Adoption* events that take place in your community each November. This year, National Adoption Day is Saturday, November 21!

How can I get involved?

There are many exciting opportunities for you to help abused, neglected, and foster care children in your area! Children's Home Society of Florida is involved in numerous initiatives to help those children still in the state's care, including Family Bound, Adoption Champions and our Heart Gallery. For more information, contact Vanessa Ward at 352-843-8887.

Did you notice?

All of the children featured with an AES number are available for adoption! For more information on Rhys, Dalton, Tevin, or Tiffany, please visit: www.chsfl.org/midflorida or call 866.427.5451.



Heart Gallery of Mid-Florida

Public and private businesses owners, churches, and even community event coordinators can request the roaming Heart Gallery to be displayed at their location! The goal of the Heart Gallery is to create community awareness about adoption and children in foster care and to recruit adoptive homes for these children. Viewers can not only see the children's beautiful pictures, but also read their stories and take a card home with them about any children that they might be interested in adopting.

For more information about the Heart Gallery contact Lauren Brown at 386-758-5757.

Kinship care conference

Kids Central, Inc. announces the 2009 Annual Kinship Care Conference. This year's theme is "One Childhood-One Chance" Kids Central has many activities planned throughout conference including a Wellness Fair, Kinship Panel on both days during the Luncheon and many informative speakers. The conference is on September 18-19, 2009 at the Central Florida Community College campus in Ocala, FL. Please call Sue Callaham at Kids Central (352-873-6332) for questions and registration.

New support group

A new peer-led adoption support group is starting in Marion County at the Public Library on State Road 40 in Ocala. Beginning in July, the support group will meet on the 4th Thursday of each month from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in Room A. Adoptive parents are invited to attend and be encouraged by the support that other adoptive parents can offer through their personal experiences and their genuine caring. A portion of the meeting time will be educational and will have guest speakers from the school system, local mental health agencies and other inspirational guests. Aside from being informative, this group is also a lot of fun. We hope to see you there!

Make your own bean bag balls!

CRAFT MATERIALS:

- 9 (11-inch) balloons (for 3 balls)
- Funnel
- 2 1/4 cups of dried lentils
- Scissors

Time needed: Under 1 Hour

Craft from FamilyFun.com

1. Stretch the first balloon by inflating it halfway, holding it closed for about 30 seconds, and deflating it.

2. Place a funnel in the balloon's neck and gradually pour in 3/4 cup of lentils, pushing them in as you go. The balloon should be firm but squeezable.

3. Snip off the balloon's thick rubber lip. Cut the neck off a second balloon and gently stretch the opening.

4. Ease the second balloon over the filled balloon, tucking in the neck as you go.

5. Cut the neck off the third balloon, stretch the opening, and ease it over the other two. Repeat this process to make a set of three balls, or however many you'd like.

