Florida foster child pleas for permanent family tacted her, wanting to offer the teen a

by Sarah Padbury

(WNS)--Fifteen-year-old Davion Navar Henry Only made national headlines in October when he stepped up to the podium at St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church in St. Petersburg, Fla., and pleaded for someone in the 300-member

congregation to adopt him. "I'll take anyone," Only said. "Old or young, dad or mom, black, white, purple. I don't care. And I would be really appreciative. The best I could be."

His story ran in the Tampa Bay Times on Oct. 7 and went viral. Within days he was featured on ABC News as Diane Sawyer's "Person of the Week." Only and his & Foster Guide Eckerd adoption specialist, Going,

MetroVoiceNews.com

then appeared on The View where Going announced more than 10,000 families from around the world had con-

Sitting in the front row of

The View audience was

home.

Richard Prince, 23, Only's mentor for the last year and a half. Prince could hardly believe the teenager in front of him, the one who prayed before going on stage for God to give him the right words to say, was

Please see ORPHAN page 7



Davion Only at 8. He's spent his entire 15 years in foster care.

Topeka Metro Voice -

Why I Foster

Jacque Bretton of Phillipsburg, Kan. always knows to expect a few phone calls on Mother's Day...and not just from her biological children. As a TFI Family Services, Inc. (TFI) foster parent, Jacque receives a "Happy Mother's Day" call from several children who were once placed in her home. After years of being a foster parent, Jacque has provided respite and foster care for many children in and around her

community. My girls and I love children and feel that we have a lot to offer as a family," TFI foster parent Jacque Bretton said. "We have been very blessed as a family to have brought children into our home and made a difference in their lives."

Initially Jacque considered fostering because she was interested in adoption. Like all foster families, Jacque took the PS-MAPP class (Partnering for Safety and Permanence Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting), a 10-week foster parent training course designed to educate prospective families about the children they may have placed in their home. After she finished the course and completed her licensing requirements, TFI paired her with a resource family worker and entered her home into TFI's child placement matching database. Now, years later, she recalls an especially inspiring moment where she was asked to foster a little girl, who soon became a third addition to her family.

"The most amazing moment is when they brought us a 17-month-old little girl who just fit in with our family," Jacque said. "A few months later she came up for adoption and a few months later our adoption was final. She has been such a blessing to our For families who are considering

fostering, Jacque says it is challenging, but the end result is very rewarding. "There are always challenges in fos-

tering but you also face challenges no matter what you do in life," Jacque said. "There are so many children out there needing a family - if you are willing to do that for them then you will love being a foster family. I love fostering and feel it is very rewarding." There is a great need for foster families in every community in Kansas.

provider of foster care homes in the state of Kansas to bring safety and permanency to a child's life. "I started my fostering with TFI and later moved to another licensing organization," Jacque said. "I just recently came back to TFI because I feel they really look out for the chil-

Consider partnering with the leading

dren and keep things much more confidential. My girls and I love all the staff at TFI. They really look out for the children and do what is in the best interest of the child." Thousands of Kansas children are in need of a home and a family that will give them a nurturing environment in which can grow. Call 800-279-9914 or

go to www.tfifamilyservices.org to learn more about becoming a TFI licensed foster home in your commu-

www.metrovoicenews.com

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November editions to Adoption and Foster Care

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ORPHAN

push people away.

continued from page 1 the same one who used to use profanity, kick holes in walls, and do all he could to

'You're the first news person to ask what God is doing in all this," Prince said when asked to do this interview. "God put Davion in my life for a reason."

Two years ago, Prince was a college student at the University of South Florida, working in a medical office, and serving as caregiver for his grandparents. He regularly attended St. Mark, where his uncle is the pastor. One Sunday, St. Mark's One Church One Child representative, Michelle Pearson, asked him to consider mentoring a foster child. She told him that

while many young men who need a good

male role model are in the system, most

people they interact with are women. Prince agreed to learn more and One Church One Child referred him to 4Kids of West Central Florida, a Christian foster care and adoption agency that also offers mentoring for foster children. After Prince learned he'd have to meet with a child for an hour a week for a year, he said he was too busy to commit. But in the end, he agreed to a compromise of meeting every other week with his mentee. When asked what kind of child he'd like to be paired with, he said, "I'll take anyone."

Pattie Cleberg, 4Kids' mentoring coordinator, met Only in May 2012 when his caseworker referred him to the program. In a recent letter to supporters, Cleberg recalled Only as angry and depressed, desperately wanting her to find someone to spend time with him: "Anyone," he said. Cleberg matched the two people who

said they'd take "anyone" and before long, seeing Only twice a month wasn't enough for Prince. As their relationship deepened during the next 18 months, the pair spent as many as 3 hours a week together.

"I felt like God wanted me to do it. ... My week isn't complete if I don't see him," Prince said. "I had to take a leap of faith with my schedule—and I'm glad that I As they spent time together, Prince

found it natural to bring up God when

Only discussed his struggles, offering him

a different way to look at his circumstances. Early on, Only said he didn't know how to pray, so Prince told him to "just talk to Him like we do and tell Him what you're angry about [and] happy about." Over the months, Prince continued to tell the troubled teen he cared about him and his future. Last June, Only did an online search for his birth mother for the first time and was shocked to find her obituary dated just weeks earlier—no one even bothered to tell him she'd died. With the fantasy of

tered, Only decided it was time to straighten up: He dropped 40 pounds, worked on controlling his rage and now earns mostly A's in school, according to the Tampa Bay Prince noticed the change in him immediately and began working to help Only set goals for himself. Meanwhile, adoption specialist Connie Going became concerned that Only had just three years before he "aged out" of the foster care system. With time running out, God put it on Going's heart to go directly to the

his mother returning to rescue him shat-

a family, Prince said. Going discussed the idea with Only, who agreed to speak in churches if it meant he might find a family, as well as

African-American church to find the teen

Facebook/MetroVoiceNews bring awareness about other boys in the

same situation. St. Mark was the second church to let Only speak. The morning they arrived, brought surprises all around: Going didn't know Only had already attended St. Mark several times with his mentor; Only didn't know he was going to his mentor's church that morning; and Prince didn't know they were coming.

When he saw them, Prince exclaimed, 'Why are you here?" "You'll see," Only replied.

As they sat together during the service, Prince helped Only locate the Scripture verses in the Bible and urgently prayed for With the comfort of his

mentor nearby, the familiarity of St. Mark, and the hope of God flowing through him, Only went off script and gave his now-famous address.

whatever was about to happen. He whispered to Only: "God has called you to do this. Just be who you are. ... Everything you have been through is a testament to how strong you are. This is nothing. Pray before you go up and God will give you the words."

With the comfort of his mentor nearby, the familiarity of St. Mark, and the hope of God flowing through him, Only went off script and gave his now-famous address.

Prince was as shocked as everyone else when Only passionately disclosed he was an orphan looking for a family. "Waithe feels that way?' I thought. I'd never looked at him as an orphan before," Prince recalled. After his talk, Prince shook the teen's hand and for the first time ever, told Only that he loved him.

Like many of the reporters who interviewed Only, Prince was shocked to learn that there are thousands of foster children in America who are truly orphans—chil-

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dren with no legal parents, living in limbo as "wards of the state," and needing new parents to commit to them. Almost 102,000 foster children currently are waiting to be adopted, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau. Godly Daniel, executive director for

4Kids West Central Florida, worries about

what the press has dubbed the "Davion

Effect"—the thousands of people who have heard his story and now want to take in an American orphan. "I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of it was an emotional response," he said, pointing to the response people had to the hundreds of children orphaned during the 2010 Haiti earthquake. At first, families seemed desperate to adopt a Haitian child. "After awhile, they start really thinking, 'Can I do this?' Their heartstrings are

pulled, but then when that child kicks a wall in, they will ask themselves, 'Did I do the right thing?' Yes, they did, but the [real question] is will they commit to that child even if he does that?" Only might even have a difficult time adjusting to living in a family, and he could test their commitment by acting out, Daniel said. Families who adopt older children need ongoing therapeutic support, a "Christian therapist [who can help

children] deal with past rejection and come to a place of forgiveness," he said. Prince hopes Only's new family, whomever they are, will not only love him, but challenge his character and further his ability to grow as a Christian: "He knows it's going to happen. His faith is unbreakable. He behaves like God has already selected him a family. He behaves like he's already adopted."

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Jonathan and Allison Schumm of Topeka, Kansas, are vocal advocates for adoption, who strongly believe in the value of family and keeping

families together. Including their

four biological children, Jonathan

and Allison are the proud parents of

fourteen after adopting two sibling-

sets of five each from the foster care

system. The family finalized their

most recent adoption earlier this

Topeka Metro Voice

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FAMILY EXPLOSION

Siedlecki. That day we were also able to

connect with Brandon and Missy

Hoffman of Project Belong. They had

adopted 12 children and had heard God

calling them to speak to churches across

Kansas. With James 1:27 as their theme

verse, and the knowledge that Kansas has

more churches than children waiting to be adopted - Project Belong's goal is to

encourage churches to address the orphan

God so loved us that Jesus died for us. Because of this love, Christians are to reflect His love. James 1:27 tells us that God finds pure religion to be caring for widows and orphans in their distress, and keeping oneself unstained by the world.

We were married in May 2004, and

knew at some point we wanted to adopt.

Allison had been adopted as an infant, and her family had also adopted two other children from foster care. One of her sisters was adopted after being separated from her other siblings. God used this to give Allison a desire to keep sibling groups together. After two miscarriages, we decided to start the adoption process. During PS-MAPP training we were asked how many children we wanted. Our response: "As many as God would provide for." We learned quickly if our desires match God's, He will provide for them.

crisis. We felt God calling us to share how important adoption is to Him. About the same time, Allison and Nicole, our oldest, were online at Adoptkskids.org and came across a sibling group of five. Allison contacted their agency shortly after to ask if our children could reach out and encourage these children as they awaited adoption. We were interested in adopting them, but knew the time was not right. We were told they



also pregnant - catching it early enough for Allison to start supplements that prevented another miscarriage. Our next to last foster group consisted of 3 boys all under the age of 6. Although we loved them and hoped for adoption - they were suddenly returned to their biological family. At this point we were heartbroken! Allison was 7 months pregnant, and we were questioning if we should continue down this path. God had other plans for us! A week later we received a call asking us to take a sibling group of 4 that had come into foster care upon the birth of their younger sibling (placed in a separate foster home).

We prayed about it and decided we would foster one more time, but once these kids went home we would be done because we weren't sure we could handle the loss again, especially with a newborn. July 26th 2006 Nicole (10), Alisa (7), Emmanuel (6), and Jaquale (10 months) moved in with us. Our daughter Mercy was born in October and in December we were asked to take Angel, the children's baby sister who was now 5 months old.

Folks began to think we were crazy! We now had three children under 18 months (2, 5 and 16 months). April 2008 we gave birth to Isaiah and on July 23rd, 2008, we were able to adopt our 5 foster children. Shortly after this God began working on our hearts again and making obvious the gap of 6 years between Jaquale and Emmanuel. December 2009 Kyrsten was born, God had given us 8 children in 5 years - we had to fully rely on

MetroVoiceNews.com sibility. Obviously, not every family is

called to adopt. But there are still ways

that everyone can help support and

advocate for adoption. As a congregation

you can support families that are pursing

adoption. You can offer prayers and sup-

port. You can provide meals and babysit-

ting services so they still have time to

nurture their marriages and just catch

When Governor Brownback rolled out

a 300,000 SRS grant in November of 2011,

Jonathan was asked to speak at the

In April of 2012, Lighthouse Bible Church in Topeka hosted a Project Belong Adoption Sunday. Allison shared our story, and then Brandon spoke, providing examples of children still waiting for a home. On the projector screen behind him flashed a picture of 5 children as Brandon related that they'd just gone through a failed out of state adoption. Allison left the service crying - they were the same children she and Nicole had identified and loved. We had just found out 3 weeks earlier that we were expecting again, we knew we

weren't "the ideal family," but we felt God's

call and asked to be considered to adopt Tykia (12), Ana (11), Ta'Dya (10), Tyrone (9) and Jeremiah (1). You might remember the gap was between Emmanuel (now 13) and Jaquale (now 7). God has a wonderful sense of humor, and we don't have enough space in this article to tell you all the obstacles He removed as our already large family asked the state of Kansas to allow us to adopt 5 more. We had heroes He used -Angela McDaniel at KCSL, Rachel Whitten, and Youthville's Brenda Stewart among many others. Our church family at Topeka Gospel Chapel advocated for us. We cannot emphasize how much our

summer, five years to the day of the finalization of their first sibling-set adoption. The Schumm family is also active in Project Belong, a faithbased adoption advocacy organization that works in partnership with churches, families, and communities to "recruit, train, and support" adoptive families for Kansas children

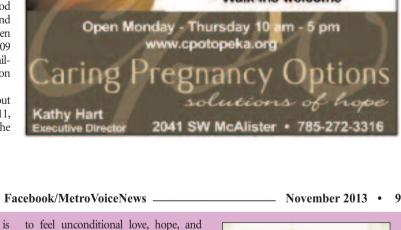
in need. They are also involved in the work of the Kansas Children's Service League, an adoption and children's advocacy organization supporting some of Kansas' most vulnerable kids. The Schumm family regularly speaks to others about the joys of providing a supportive, loving and permanent home to children in need through adoption. - Excerpted from U.S. Senator Jerry

Moran's nomination of the Schumm family as Angels in Adoption for 2013.

community of support meant. Adoption does not happen alone, our story exists because of God and our support systems. Josiah was born in November 2012. We met our new children in January 2013 and on July 23rd our 2nd adoption was finalized, 5 years to the day from our first adop-In September of this year, our family

was nominated by Senator Jerry Moran as his 2013 Angels in Adoption. We were blessed to attend the ceremonies in Washington D.C. and meet many others advancing the cause of adoption. Our family is working with Project Belong to help further the message that adoption is important. Allison and Nicole

are PS-MAPP instructors and we encourage others as much as we can to actively find ways to care for orphans. If our story has inspired you please don't be complacent, do something with your stirred emotions. Provide, protect, foster, adopt, love... Confidential Counseling Free Pregnancy Tests Walk-ins welcome



Month. A month dedicated to celebrating adoption. In Kansas, Sunday, November 3rd, is known as Orphan Sunday. This particular Sunday church-

Topeka Metro Voice

You Can Adopt....or....

by **Jessie Voiers**

November is National Adoption

es across Kansas will hear about the more

than 250,000 children in the United

States that are in foster care and available

for adoption. Kansas DCF is hopeful

that in reaching out to Kansas churches

more children will be adopted and find

the forever families that they deserve.

Sunday! James 1: 27 says; "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and wid-

As an advocate for adoption I fully

support Orphan Sunday and hope that it

is a successful event. As a Christian

advocate for adoption I challenge

churches to make every Sunday Orphan

ows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." God commands us to look after orphans. No child should be without a family. And our church families are in a perfect posi-

lead singer shows his adopted daughter surviving abortion and went on to produce well-known

choose life through options such as adop-

The song's lyrics are based on the true

story of what Sami's 13-year-old birth

mother might have experienced as "she sat

cold in a waiting room, frightened and all

alone ... knowing that her baby would

As the video unfolds, we see the dreams

she had of a little girl celebrating her third

birthday and growing into a woman

through the years, and we hear the voice

she heard telling her to "run away ... you're

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not taking her ... this time."

tion, then we couldn't be happier."

soon be gone."

tion to provide help and support to those

I know that adoption is a huge respon-

their breath. If each congregation supported one family as they pursued the adoption process the change we could create in lives would be monumental. Adoption is a process of restoration. It allows a child to have a second chance at a family. It offers them the opportunity **KC Area Author Uses Stories of Nine Adopted** Cats to Share God's Word

information please visit www.adoptk-Jessie Voiers is an adoptee herself and has adopted one of her six children. Jessie is passionate about adoption, supporting parents, and laughing. Jessie regularly blogs at www.ThenILaughed.com.

security. Many of the same things we feel

as we develop a relationship with Christ.

Every child deserves a safe place to call

home and people to call family. You can

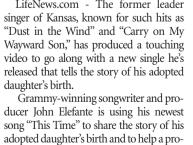
make a difference in the life of a child. I encourage you and all Christians to

prayerfully consider adoption. For more

Specializing

Chrisitan music artists. "I can't imagine life without my daughter, Sami, and it breaks my heart that pregnant young women much like her birth mother, instead of choosing life for their babies, are denying them the chance to be born," Elefante says. "If our song can in any way bring attention to this issue or encourage those who are considering abortion to LifeNews.com - The former leader

Music video from KANSAS



ering abortion. Elefante is well-known in the music business and, after singing for Kansas, he fronted the Christian rock band Mastedon Alpha Christian Children's Home & School

life group that uses the power of the

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Adopt Kansas Kids www.adoptKSkids.org
877-457-5430 Adopt Kansas Kids works to connect foster and approved adoptive families with children throughout Kansas who need adoption. This service is provided by the Kansas Children's Service League through a contract with the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF).

According to the Humane Society, there are more than 86 million cats living as pets in the United States. Author Teresa

life and tells the wonderful and unique stories of nine of her favorites. Through each of their individual adventures, parents can teach their children about various Biblical teachings. In her new book Cat Tales (Ambassador International; July 2013; \$9.99, paperback), Herbic will have you turning the pages to see all nine stories of adventure. Herbic calls the book "a special thank you to the nine cats featured throughout the book that my family adopted over the past 45 years. They remind us about God's and patience through simple warmth

Herbic has owned many throughout her

and kindness." The adventures of Prince, Dakota, Lolli, and the rest of the family of cats teach readers the lessons of the Fruit of the Spirit highlighted in Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The book also encourages adoption as a common thread throughout Cat Tales. The author is Director of Families for Adoption, Pleasant Valley Baptist Church. She and its leaders are considering including the adoption of pets as part of

orphan children. Visitation and **Exchange Centers** Provide a Safe Haven

The Farm, Inc.'s Visitation and Exchange

their support services, along with the domestic and international adoption of

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