



Adoption and Foster Care

Metro Voice and National Adoption Month

This is National Adoption Month. In Kansas and Missouri there are more than 1,000 15–18 year olds in foster care. Many of these youth are seeking adoption and permanent, lifelong connections, which are critical to helping them prepare and succeed as they enter adulthood.

National Adoption Month is an initiative sponsored by the Children's Bureau, in partnership with AdoptUSKids and Child Welfare Information Gateway. Each November, National Adoption Month brings awareness to the needs of children and youth seeking and waiting a "forever family." This year, specific attention is being paid to the needs of the thousands of these older youth, ages 15–18, who face the challenges of aging out of foster care and beginning their independent, young adult lives.

The National Adoption Month website, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/>, contains an entire section dedicated to providing adoption and permanency-related resources and tips for families, including families considering adoption and families that have adopted. It also supports child welfare professionals in preparing families for adoption and talking with older youth, who may feel they are too old to be adopted.

Metro Voice is proud to partner in this effort as we bring the issue to the public's attention. This partnership would not be possible without the many sponsors of our special October, November and January editions of the paper.

Mother uses adoption experience to help others

Stephanie Boothe | Metro Voice

For Galen and Teresa Herbic, adoption was the only way to build their family.

"We determined to start our family differently than most. As far as we know we can have children biologically, but we decided we'd rather adopt instead," Teresa said.

One evening while watching television, the couple started casually discussing adding children to their home. At that moment, an image came across their screen – it was a picture of babies everywhere to accompany a story about babies abandoned in China. After watching a bit, the couple agreed they wouldn't mind doing an international adoption.

"We knew that was God's call on our lives. So, we put in our application to adopt via referral from



China," Teresa said.

Their daughter, Meyana, was a year old when they adopted her from China. "It was a dream come true," Teresa said.

Their son, Braxten, joined their family in very similar fashion. Teresa,

ous aspects of adoption and foster care.

Some of the areas include domestic adoption and foster care, international adoption as well and general adoption and orphan care.

Teresa first got involved with the organization when her friends were talking about starting an adoption support group. Their dream was to start a region-wide support group.

"We agreed to work with them on the founding of the group from the ground up. We first surveyed the church and found there were over 100 families who had been touched by adoption in some way," Teresa said. "We knew it was a mission from God."

For Herbic, the most important thing Families for Adoption does is serve God and his orphans.

"Jesus says in John 14:18, 'I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you,'" Herbic said. "To me, that is our calling, to reach out and help orphans however we can and to help families, too, in the process, while serving our awesome Savior most of all."

a writer, was researching a story about adoption when she saw his picture and knew God was intervening.

"I saw my son (Braxten) and fell in love with him instantly. He was in Kazakhstan and we didn't even know where that was, but we were all in," Teresa said. "He was about 16 months old when we first visited him. We were in Kazakhstan for a month in the dead of winter (19 below zero), but we were happy and content just to be with our son."

Teresa is the co-founder and advisor of Families For Adoption, a community-wide support group at the Pleasant Valley Baptist Church in Liberty. Founded in 2005, the group helps anyone interested in adoption, foster or orphan care.

The group organizes various activities and meetings through out the year and has leaders to help in vari-

Every child deserves a loving, caring home. A family they can call their own. A place where they belong. With people who will be there for them always.



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).



The answer is a parent

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Once in crisis, former group home resident grows up to change lives

In 1985, Jon's family faced a crisis. When his father walked out on the family, his mother and two siblings were left in chaos. Through a church in Columbia, Mo., she found out about a place that could care for her children while she got back on her feet. Jon's mother made the toughest decision of her life: to place her young children at Show-Me Christian Youth Home.



A boy forced to be an adult

After a year at Show-Me, Jon's mother reunited the family. Jon reflects, "Honestly, my childhood would have probably been better if I had stayed here longer." The family continued to struggle back in Columbia. As the oldest, Jon was thrown into an adult role to help. While in middle and high school, he worked part time to pay bills and watched his siblings when his Mom was gone. He recounted days the power was shut off, opening the fridge to find no food, and knowing the family was continually on the verge of homelessness. "Somedays, I wish that I had a better childhood, but I'm grateful for going through those struggles because they prepared me for the challenges I would face later in life." Although this time of his life was unstructured and chaotic, Jon credits Show-Me with laying a foundation of confidence for him to overcome any challenge.



him the reputation as the "git'er done" guy. He earned a Master's Degree in Business Management and started his own construction company in Columbia, Mo.

Jon's impact reaches far beyond his job. With a family of his own, he and his wife, Robyn, a dermatologist, strive to raise their three children with the structure, responsibilities, and fun he remembers made such a difference in his life. He contributes greatly to his community and to the Kingdom. He is active in his church, leading a weekly small group. In 2014, Jon accepted a position on the Board of Directors at Show-Me Christian Youth Home. "I never dreamed I would be on the Show-Me Board, able to help kids in the same shoes I was in." In 2015, he received Show-Me's first-ever Overcomers Award, presented to a former Show-Me child who has reached beyond childhood challenges to become a successful adult. He stands as a testimony of what a place and family like Show-Me can do for a young life. He is an inspiration to the young people who currently call Show-Me "home." In his acceptance speech, Jon concluded, "Show-Me is an arm of God's grace. It was a big influence that helped steer me to the successful life I have now. I am merely one instance of how your efforts have helped change lives."

An Overcomer finds a way

"My guiding compass is that I've got to be seeking God," Jon says. "Through trials and tribulations, sometimes it was a matter of just putting my head down and keep moving forward. I learned resiliency going through challenges as a child." With that attitude of determination and fortitude, Jon worked construction jobs while going through college. He learned new skills on the job and his attitude to always find a way gained

The chance to be just a child

At Show-Me, Jon came alive. For the first time ever, he didn't have to worry about the burdens of life – he could be a boy. "I remember having the freedom to just run across a field and kick a ball and just be free," Jon recalls. His first and happiest childhood memories revolve around his time at Show-Me.

Jon found a good mix of responsibility and the freedom to enjoy childhood. Show-Me provided him with the foundation for good life principles: a strong work ethic, good stewardship, appreciation for what you have, and a personal faith to draw strength.

At Show-Me, Jon made the most important decision of his life: to follow Christ. He remembers standing in the house discussing with his houseparents what Christ meant to him, and receiving Christ in baptism soon after. Although he grew up in church, he never had a faith before Show-Me. A variety of activities and experiences nurtured his young faith. "This is where I made the decision that this is what I am going to live for...grounded in Christ...follow Christ – that is my hope."

TFI Family Services Achieves National Accreditation

TFI Family Services has achieved national accreditation through the New York-based Council on Accreditation (COA). TFI Family Services is a child welfare organization that provides family foster care services not only in Kansas, but also in Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas along with three visitation and exchange centers, a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility and two Teens Reaching Independent Living programs. Organizations pursue accreditation to demonstrate the implementation of best practice standards in the field of human services. COA evaluated all aspects of TFI's programs, services, management, and administration.

COA accreditation is an objective, independent, and reliable validation of an agency's performance. The COA accreditation process involves a detailed review and analysis of an organization's administration, management, and service delivery functions against international standards of best practice. The standards driving accreditation

ensure that services are well-coordinated, culturally competent, evidence-based, outcomes-oriented, and provided by a skilled and supported workforce. COA accreditation demonstrates accountability in the management of resources, sets standardized best practice thresholds for service and administration, and increases organizational capacity and accountability by creating a framework for ongoing quality improvement.

To achieve COA accreditation, TFI Family Services Inc. first provided written evidence of compliance with the COA standards. Thereafter, a group of specially trained volunteer Peer Reviewers confirmed adherence to these standards during a series of on-site interviews with trustees, staff and clients.

For further information please contact: Dianne Ensminger, Vice President of Marketing and Fund Development, TFI Family Services, densminger@tfifamily.org ; 785-608-3944.

How will adoption impact my other children?

Contributed by Lifeline Children's Services

How will adoption impact my other children? That's a question that all parents ask and must anticipate before bringing a child home. Preparing siblings for adoption can be exciting, but they will be asked to make sacrifices and could be part of new challenges as everyone adapts to having a new child in the home. Lifeline can tell you what we've witnessed as adoption has positively impacted brothers and sisters time and time again. But, you don't have to take our word for it.

Listen to what one teenager wrote for a school essay about adopting her brother with cerebral palsy from Hong Kong:

"Ever since my family made the decision to adopt my little brother Nolan, who has cerebral palsy and

cannot walk or talk, tons of friends, acquaintances, and even family members have been asking me the same questions.

"Why did your parents choose a child with special needs?" Or "Did you guys know that he had problems when you picked him out?" Or even "No offense, but why wouldn't you guys pick a normal kid?"

I know that nobody was trying to be offensive when they asked these questions because, to be completely honest, I kind of wondered too. Wouldn't it be so much easier on my parents and my whole family to have a "normal" kid? Why would we choose a special needs kid when there are completely fully functioning, healthy

■ Please see ADOPTION page 15

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