



Adoption and Foster Care

National Adoption Month raises awareness for 100,000 kids

by Robbi Haynes | MBCH

November is celebrated nationwide as National Adoption Month in a collective effort to raise awareness of the more than 100,000 U.S. children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families.

The majority of these children have been removed from their biological family because of abuse or neglect. When the family does not take the appropriate steps to correct the problems, the child becomes available to adopt. Many of them are adopted by their foster family.

Adoption is defined as “the permanent, legal transfer of parental right and responsibilities from a child’s birth parents to the adoptive parents.” The best candidates for adoption aren’t “perfect people”, but everyday people with real lives full of ups and downs. Adoptive parents don’t have to be of



the same race or have the same ethnic background as the child they adopt.

They don’t have to have a fancy home or lots of money. If you have lots of love to give and want to provide a safe, stable and nurturing environment for a child, you are probably the kind of person who adopts.

The cost for private and international adoptions can range from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands. However, adopting a child who is in the custody of the state can have little or no cost to the adoptive family. Subsidies are even available to provide medical coverage and a financial stipend to the adoptive family until the child is eighteen years of age.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there are 415,000 children in the U.S. foster care system. Of those, 107,000 are available for adoption. In Missouri there are approximately 1,800 children available for adoption through foster care. The average age of a child being adopted from the foster care system is eight years old. There are equal numbers of boys and girls awaiting adoption. While the majority of children awaiting adoption are Caucasian, there are children of every ethnicity who need a family.

There are children of every age, from infants to teens who need an adoptive family, but a particular need is for families who are willing adopt older children. Each year many of the children in state custody exit foster care without an adoptive family. For those young adults, it means no family

to visit on holidays, no grandparents to introduce their children to and no extended support system. Many of them have not learned the skills needed to become productive adults such as holding a job, balancing a checkbook, preparing meals and doing laundry. An adoptive family cannot only teach them these skills, but can provide love and support as they transition to adulthood.

Some people are reluctant to adopt an older child because of the portions of the child’s life that have already passed.

The changes in a child who has come from a life of abuse or neglect who gets to experience the security and nurturing provided by an adoptive family can be miraculous.

During the training and licensing process, you will be taught about the children in care, the importance of structure and discipline and how to work with the foster care system. All foster parents are able to indicate what age and gender they feel would best fit their family. For more information you may call MBCH Children and Family Ministries (800) 264-6224.

Three reasons why Christians should consider fostering children

As Christians we should be committed to taking the love of Christ to some of the most broken areas of our community. One of those areas is orphan care, and we should want to see a culture that cares for the fatherless.

An enormous—but often forgotten—step in caring for orphans is foster care. I asked a local Christian social worker why Christians should care about fostering. This was her response:

I’ve been a foster-care worker for some time. This has given me the incredible opportunity to be a witness of what it looks like when families step out of their comfort zone and step into a child and their family’s lives. I’ve seen foster parents who lose sleep for weeks to wake children up and take them to the rest room because trauma sometimes makes children wet the bed every night. I’ve seen foster parents worry, cry, and fight for help for these children only to lose battle after battle with schools, DSS, or that child’s parents. I’ve seen foster parents break down in tears and tell me they don’t know how to help and they don’t know if they can take any more.

And when that happens I don’t know what to tell them. Because there is no earthly reason why someone would want to be a foster parent.

In fact, I think it takes an incredible measure of God’s love, grace, and wisdom being poured into you and out of you to be a foster parent, which is the very reason Christians are called to do it.

1 By choosing to be foster parents, Christians are choosing to live a life that demonstrates the love and humility of the Gospel.

Since I started my job, I’ve been challenged to face head-on some of the things I would like to most ignore, such as the presence of sexual abuse, violence, death, and fear. And in the midst of that, God has taught me some incredible lessons about what it means to be forgiven and to accept his grace and mercy. Instead of painting those who abuse or neglect their children as monsters, I’ve learned to look at them and see the effects of a fallen world and sin from which I’ve only been removed because of some mixture of privilege and God’s grace.

It’s really easy for me to look at the families I work with and to say they are there because they deserve to be there, because they’ve made bad choices and are reaping what they sowed.

There’s a measure of truth to that, of course. But only a measure. Because what the Gospel teaches us is that their sin is no worse than ours. Most of us don’t act like we believe that. We don’t really think that we deserve no better than the worst of their consequences. And when we do that, we are cheapening God’s grace.

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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).

Christian Family Adoption

Austin K. Vincent
ATTORNEY AT LAW

2222 SE Pennsylvania
Topeka, KS 66605

785-234-0022
akvlaw@cox.net

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These Kansas Kids need forever homes

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Most of the people that I live my life with have food. We have safety. We have the ability to seek friendships. We have family to call on when we need them. Who are we to keep this grace to ourselves? Jesus didn't. He came down to us and sacrificed himself entirely for our flourishing, despite the ugliness and the neediness of our sin. And that's what foster care requires. It requires reaching out and making yourself available for sacrifice despite what you might think about the families you are serving.

In return, we learn an even greater depth of the love that Jesus has for us. And we get the privilege to show that love to the world.

2 By choosing to be foster parents, Christians are choosing to live a life of faith.

Foster care is a voluntary act of service to a government organization that retains control over every major decision affecting that child's life. You are the caretakers of a child that is very literally not yours. That means you get some (but not all) of the say in where they go to the doctor, where they get therapy, if they are on medication, who they have contact with, and most importantly, where they spend their future. In fact, you may have very little say about their haircut, the clothes they wear, or the language they use.

One of the hardest parts of my job is giving foster parents bad news. I once had a foster child who needed to be moved to a different state. Every week the foster father called me, weeping and begging for a different decision. It broke my heart when I had to answer, "My hands are tied. This has to happen."

After watching this foster father attend therapy twice a week with that child, work on discipline every day to establish a routine with them, teach an almost-teenager about teeth-brushing, and advocate at school to get the help the child needed to learn, he was forced to say goodbye. That child had grown, healed, and learned

to love at this home. But the child left, and now all this man can do is pray.

He can pray that this child remembers the lessons learned, that the love poured out would take root and keep growing, and that this kid would be safe and supported in the new home.

Like the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, this foster parent may never see the results of his faith. That can be painful. But it can also be incredibly rewarding. The rewards that I have seen in the lives of foster parents have been a deep prayer life and an incredible outpouring of wisdom.

3 By choosing to be foster parents, Christians are choosing to take a stand against injustice and to care for the poor.

James 1:27 says, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: To visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world." Christ's heart is for the vulnerable, and we who call ourselves by his name share in his heart. It's our duty as Christians to stand up for the citizens in our community who lack the power to do so for themselves. It is hard to think of a population that is more vulnerable than foster children—young, poor, from minority populations, from broken families.

There is no earthly reason why someone would want to be a foster parent. But there is every heavenly reason why they would. Those of us who have been touched by the gospel become like the gospel—full of grace. And as we love those the world finds unlovely, we join with a God who will one day "wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore."

—J.D. Greear is the pastor of The Summit Church, in Raleigh-Durham, NC and author of *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send* (2015), *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary* (2011), and others.

—www.jdgreear.com

These kids in Kansas need forever homes through adoption! They are full of life and love and so desperately want families to love them in return. For more information and to learn about hundreds of other kids, visit adoptkansaskids.org.

JACOB

Jacob is 15 years old without any siblings. He loves watching cartoons, playing with items that light up or have sounds and listening to music! Jacob is a happy young man who usually has a big smile on his face. Jacob has greatly improved his upper body strength; he is now able to army crawl around the house, get up and down stairs, and get in and out of the van with monitoring. Jacob's teachers state that he has matured greatly and is very cooperative. Jacob needs a family that is willing to be a voice for him and make sure that all of his



daily needs are being met. He will need assistance for all his need throughout the day. Jacob needs a family that is very patient, fully committed to him and will be there for him long term. His case number is 101424.

ALEXUS

Alexus is a friendly and affection-



ate 14 year old girl who very much wants to be a part of a family! Her hobbies include sports and crafts. She states that she would like to become a lawyer someday. Her favorite class in school is cooking; she really enjoys making guacamole and orange Julius type drinks. Alexis will need additional supports in place at school in order to be successful academically and behaviorally. She needs a family who is committed, loving and very structured. Alexis has siblings that were adopted by other families so needs a family that will support and facilitate positive interactions between Alexis and her siblings. Her case number is 101533.

CHEYENNE

Cheyenne is 13 and likes being around pets and taking them for walks! She states that she would like to be a veterinarian when she grows up! Cheyenne's hobbies are drawing, coloring and going swimming. Cheyenne does well when she is a positive classroom setting. Her

favorite classes in school are math and art. She likes the crafty projects that they get to do. Cheyenne has some challenges controlling her behaviors and maintaining appropriate boundaries. She does better when around adults and requires a lot of supervision. Cheyenne continues to work on using the coping skills that she has learned to calm down when she is upset. She would do best in a family where she is the only or



youngest child in the home; she enjoys plenty of one-on-one time with the adults in her life. Cheyenne would benefit from a family that is very structured, consistent and loving. She needs parents who are comfortable dealing with her past abuse and special educational needs. Cheyenne doesn't have any siblings. Her case number is CH-5125.

Look for more Kansas kids and their stories on our website.

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