



# DCFS

## Connections

### Fall 2015

Care \* Commit \* Connect



DCFS Connections  
Fall 2015

Danielle House-Barlow - Editor

## *Director's Note...from Cecile Blucker*

Fall is upon us. The weather is beginning to get a little cooler, the leaves are changing color, we are thinking about the holidays and sports are alive! November is National Adoption Month and November 21 is National Adoption Day.

This year, National Adoption Month focuses on the adoption of older youth currently in foster care—because “We Never Outgrow the Need for Family.” This theme calls attention to our nation's population of older youth in foster care who need loving, permanent families. Youth ages 15 to 18 make up 5 percent of the foster care population – 84,778 youth. Creating lifelong connections for these young people is critical in helping them prepare for successful adulthood. In AR the number of children 14 and up is 23% of our population.

Compared to their peers, many youth in foster care face higher rates of poor outcomes, such as dropping out of high school, unemployment, and homelessness. Despite these challenges, research on positive youth development confirms that children and youth have the ability to overcome traumatic experiences and thrive in adulthood when they are connected to a strong, permanent support system. All youth need a sense of belonging; through adoption, youth are connected to a family who not only provide a sense of stability, but also help them navigate the complicated landscape of their emerging independence. These lasting connections can help youth with important life tasks such as enrolling in higher education, finding stable housing, securing employment, and establishing healthy relationships.

National Adoption Day events are planned over the state. The day an adoption is finalized is one the family never forgets nor one the child will forget! As we focus on the theme for National Adoption Month may we all remember our own family and remember we never outgrow the need for family and we should be Thankful for the many blessings we have.

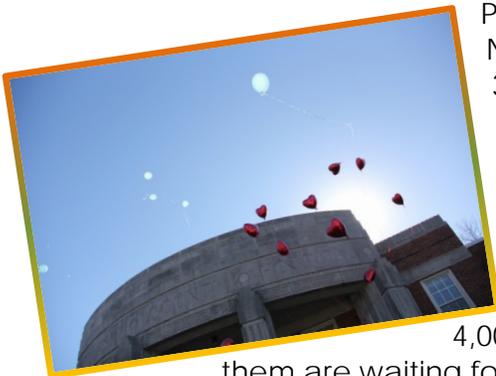
Thank you for all you do and a special thanks to your families for allowing you to share your time helping the children and families in our great state.



# NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

BY MARILYN COUNTS

National Adoption Day is a collective effort to raise awareness of the more than 100,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families. A coalition of national partners – Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, The Alliance for Children’s Rights, and Children’s Action Network sponsor National Adoption Day. More than 100,000 children in foster care in the United States are waiting for an adoptive family. The average wait for a child is four years. More than 23,000 children age out of the foster care system every year with no family or permanent home. 4,500 children were adopted during the 15th Annual National Adoption Day in 2014. The day an adoption is finalized is one the family never forgets. National Adoption Day events are planned over the state.



Pulaski County had its Adoption Day Celebration on Thursday, November 19th at the Pulaski County Juvenile Court located at 3001 West Roosevelt Road. Balloons were released celebrating those adoptions that were finalized this past year and for those children still waiting for their permanent family. Many come by and showed their support for our waiting children and helped celebrate finalized adoptions. In the last fiscal year, the Department of Human Services Division of Children and Family Services finalized 711 adoptions. There are currently about 4,000 children in foster care in Arkansas and more than 700 of them are waiting for their own forever families. We need African-American families for children of all ages, and adoptive families who will take sibling groups, and older youth. Children who are ages 10-13 represent the largest group of children waiting for an adoptive placement. They make up about 28 percent of our waiting children.

Area 1 - Our families enjoyed an afternoon and evening of fun filled activities at Farmland Adventures in Springdale, Ar. We had about 100 parents and children in Attendance. It stopped raining and everyone had a great time

Area 2 – Had a meet and greet for National Adoption Month on Nov. 10th. Waiting families as well as families that have adopted were on attendance.

Area 3 – Celebrated their National Adoption Day event on Nov. 20th at the Garland County Juvenile Court.

Area 4 – Will finalize four adoptions this month. Three of the adoptions will finalize on Monday 11-23-15 so they will have a brief celebration in conjunction with the court hearing.

Area 5 – On 11-10-2015 at the Boone County Court House Yard, Area 5 had a balloon release for children adopted in 2015 and children still waiting. There was art work displayed completed by waiting children from Boone, Newton, Marion and Baxter County. They also had a display booth at local church that will be there for the entire month of Nov. Also, the Project Zero Heart Gallery display will be at the church Nov. 20-23, in raising adoption awareness.

Area 6 – The Pulaski County Adoption Day Celebration was held on the Juvenile Court front lawn on Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>. There was a balloon release recognizing all those adoptions that have taken place this past year and for those children still waiting. There were two adoptions finalized that day!

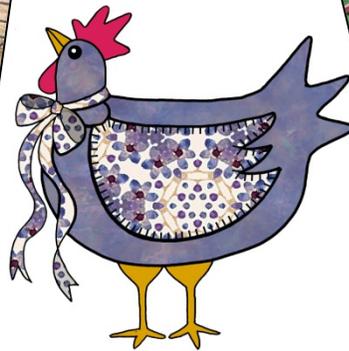
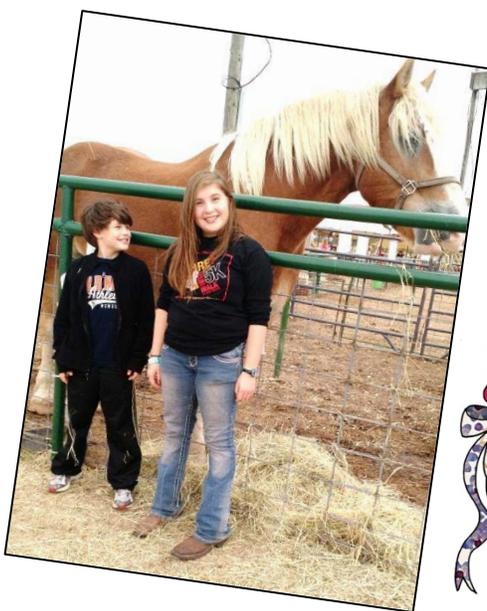
Area 7 – A local ladies group will host an event in Jefferson County for waiting children and families on Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>. At the event there will be hamburgers, hot dogs and gifts for the waiting children.

Area 8 – Honored their foster and adopts parents at the Parent conference in October. They will finalize two adoptions this month.

Area 9 – Held a celebration on Nov. 20<sup>th</sup> for all families who have finalized this year and waiting families and children.

Area 10 – Participated in a city wide fall festival which we brought awareness to the community to educate on adoption awareness and recruited on Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>. They are also doing a balloon release on Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> in Stuttgart. Drew Co. is doing journey bags to give to the foster kids with the C.A.L.L. (date to be announced).

## AREA II FARMLAND ADVENTURES



**STATE OF ARKANSAS**  
**EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT**

**PROCLAMATION**

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME – GREETINGS:

WHEREAS: Every child deserves to grow up in a loving, stable family; yet sadly, many children are born to parents who are unwilling or unable to care for them; and

WHEREAS: More than 100,000 children in the United States and approximately 140 million children worldwide are currently in foster care awaiting adoption. For children who have lost their birth families, adoption can provide the home life, parental love, nurturing, and security that they would otherwise miss; and

WHEREAS: Currently in Arkansas, there are more than 4,000 children in foster care and more than 700 are eligible for adoption, most waiting more than three years to be adopted. Also, some Arkansas children were never adopted and aged out of foster care; and

WHEREAS: National Adoption Day occurs on Saturday, November 21, 2015, during National Adoption Month, and in order to help children find permanent “forever” homes, local courts in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico will open their doors to finalize the adoptions of children and join other organizations to celebrate these adoptions; and

WHEREAS: Arkansas’s future depends on today’s children, and it is important to involve the media, private and public agencies, adoptive parents, advocacy groups, civic and church groups, and businesses in providing publicity and information to heighten community awareness of the crucial needs of these children and of all those who work tirelessly to place them in loving families;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ASA HUTCHINSON, Governor of the State of Arkansas, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of the State of Arkansas, do hereby proclaim November 21, 2015, as

**NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY IN ARKANSAS**

across the State, and I encourage my fellow citizens to recognize this opportunity to celebrate adoptive families in Arkansas and to commit ourselves to finding each of our children a loving, “forever” family home.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Arkansas to be affixed this 10<sup>th</sup> day of September, in the year of our Lord 2015.



  
Asa Hutchinson, Governor

  
Mark Martin, Secretary Of State

# PERMANENCY ROUNDTABLE CORNER

BY SALETHIA WEATHERSPOON



October was a great month for the Permanency Team. Our Casey Family Program Consultant Cindy Hamilton was on-site 3 days for Values training. The trainings focused on the importance of finding a life-long family or life connections for our youth in Foster Care. The participants included a foster family who are in the process of adopting 3 years old twins, an attorney, case workers, supervisors, adoption specialists, and investigators. The participants had the opportunity to share stories of finding permanent homes for youth. One worker told the story of how he found an application of a family who wanted to adopt a sibling group of 4. He then found out that a worker had a sibling group of 8 up for adoption so he called the family. The family told him that they would think about it. With a few modifications to their home and a local car dealership donation of a 15 passenger van, they adopted all 8 children. This story is an example of how we can all make a difference in other's lives when we take the extra step to think beyond the now. Keep up the good work and let's find homes for our youth.

# QUILTS AND BAGS FOR SEVIER COUNTY FOSTER KIDS

BY SHERRY JOHNSON

Dr. Walker, and his wife, Angie Walker, have worked closely with their church, Dequeen Church of Christ, to make foster care bags for their local foster children. Dequeen Church of Christ has stuffed over 50 bags. Children entering care in Sevier County will receive a bag stuffed specifically for their age group. Pat Janes and her community ladies in Dierks, Arkansas are also helping out by making quilts for foster children entering into foster care. Thank you to everyone for the foster care bags and the beautiful quilts for Sevier County foster children.



## MEET A FEW OF OUR WAITING CHILDREN!

**Stephany – Age:16**



Stephany is happy and chatty old teenager. Stephany plays the French horn and loves to play in the band. Stephany likes to write poems, draw, listen to music, shop and be with her friends. Stephany likes to attend church as well. Stephany has lots of energy and can keep and family busy. Stephany is good with all ages of children. Stephany has very strong adapting skills but needs help with staying organized with home and school work. Stephany would like a family to call her own.

Stephany's adoption specialist is Kim Hobbs  
[Kimberly.hobbs@dhs.arkansas.gov](mailto:Kimberly.hobbs@dhs.arkansas.gov)

**Blake – Age: 15**



Blake is an awesome young man he has a great personality and good attitude. He would love to have a family that would allow him to participate in sports. Blake is interested in all sports, but would love the opportunity to play basketball. Blake's other interests are hip-hop music and drawing. Blake would like to learn to play the drums. Blake would like a family that would allow him to try new things and support him in his hobbies.

Blake's adoption specialist is Haley Casey  
[Haley.casey@dhs.arkansas.gov](mailto:Haley.casey@dhs.arkansas.gov)

# TRAUMA ACROSS THE AGES: TRAUMA AND YOUNG CHILDREN

BY NICOLA BURROW



In fiscal year 2013, children age five and under made up almost half (48%) of children entering foster care nationally. Many people think that young children will not be affected by abuse or neglect, and that they will naturally be resilient. There is a widespread belief that if parents or other adults don't talk about it, the child won't remember. But whether or not a child can recall a traumatic incident, he or she can be affected on multiple levels.

## How Can Young Children Be Impacted by Trauma?

Infants and very young children who have experienced abuse or neglect are at high risk for poor outcomes. They may experience problems in their relationships with caregivers and with friends. Abuse and neglect places them at risk for developing mental health problems, such as depression, disruptive behavior disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other anxiety disorders.

Trauma can also impact the young child's developing brain in ways that make it more difficult to be "school-ready." Early childhood trauma has been associated with brain changes that affect memory, focus and attention, and planning. Not only do these changes make it harder to do well in school, they can also affect children's ability to learn to manage their emotions. They may be overwhelmed by strong emotions such as fear and hopelessness. While very young children may not be able to tell us how they are feeling, their behaviors provide us with important clues about how they are affected.

## What Are Some Behaviors You Might See in Young Children?

Some babies will respond to trauma by being fussy and hard to soothe – they are difficult to settle down. Some babies may be on the other extreme – rarely fussing or crying, with little eye contact and little response to their caregiver or environment. Sometimes trauma will disrupt normal sleeping and eating patterns.

Sometimes children will have behaviors that are difficult to manage. They may have tantrums, seem defiant, or be aggressive with others. Other children will be withdrawn and anxious. Some children may have problems with attention. They may seem disorganized, inattentive, or "zoned out." Others may act out traumatic events in their play, art, or through stories.

## How Can You Help Young Children?

The most important thing you can do to help young children is to provide them with a consistent, stable, and nurturing caregiving relationship. Most interventions for young children who have experienced trauma are designed to support children's relationships with the key adults in their lives. Positive relationships with caring adults support young children's emotional, social, and cognitive development.

Sometimes young children and their families need more support. Perhaps the parent needs support in learning to nurture his or her child and repair a relationship that has been damaged. Sometimes a parent needs support managing challenging behavior in children. Many people are unaware that there are evidence-based mental health treatments for young traumatized children and their caregivers. Two well-known examples are Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). In addition, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) can be successful with children as young as age three.

CPP is an evidence-based treatment for children from birth through age five who have experienced a trauma and are having difficulties in their relationship with their caregiver or early signs of mental health problems. The main goal of CPP is to strengthen the relationship between a child and his or her parent as a way to rebuild the child's sense of safety and attachment, reduce the effects of trauma, and improve the child's outcomes. The components of CPP include psycho-education of trauma and child development, behavioral management, enhancing safety, affective regulation, enhancing the child-parent relationship, and processing of the trauma. CPP is typically delivered in weekly sessions over the course of one year and has shown to significantly reduce children's PTSD and behavioral difficulties, improve children's attachment security and improve *maternal* PTSD symptoms and other mental health problems.

PCIT is another evidence-based approach to therapy for parents with their young children. PCIT was originally developed to reduce child behavior problems and parenting stress, but studies have also shown that it is effective in improving outcomes of child physical abuse and neglect. PCIT involves a therapist who "coaches" a parent in using new skills while the parent is playing with the child. The first phase of treatment focuses on teaching the parent positive attention skills to strengthen the parent-child attachment. When the parent masters these skills, the family moves on to the second phase, which addresses appropriate limit-setting and consistent discipline. PCIT has been used successfully with both maltreating families and foster families. It has the potential to strengthen the foster parent/child relationship, reduce risk for placement disruptions, and increase reunification rates.

## What Else Do You Need to Know About These Therapies?

With any of these therapies, it is important to remember that the child cannot participate in therapy alone. Consistent caregiver involvement is necessary to provide these therapies. Also, the caregiver participating in the therapy must have time with the child outside of therapy to practice the skills they are learning. These therapies are not appropriate for a parent that rarely gets to see their child. Either foster parents or biological parents can participate in these therapies.

In Arkansas, a small but growing number of mental health professionals are trained in CPP and PCIT. To identify a trained provider, contact Arkansas Network for Early Stress and Trauma (AR NEST) at 501-400-5865. Providers of TF-CBT are available statewide, and a searchable map is available on the ARBEST website (<http://arbest.uams.edu/cliniciansmap/>).

## ARKANSAS FOSTER CHILDREN CHRISTMAS FUND

BY KEITH METZ

Thanks to the generosity of our fellow DHS employees in the Little Rock Central Office Complex, to date, they have helped us raise over \$3,500 for the Foster Children Christmas Fund. They have supported us by making donations and purchasing items at the various fund raising events we've held throughout the year. In a time when we are seeing record numbers of children and youth in foster care across the state, the help could not come at a better time. We have a few great

events still to come... Pastries (sponsored by Westrock Coffee and Brown Sugar Bake Shop) for sale on Dec 1<sup>st</sup> and the big blowout Holiday Bazaar on Dec 4<sup>th</sup> with a silent auction, gift sale, ornament sale and the ever-popular chili dogs/Frito pies sale (sponsored by Wendy's and Petit Jean Meats). A special thanks goes out to those who have worked hard and volunteered to make this year a success!



# PRAYER VIGIL FOR ADOPTION AWARENESS

A newly formed adoption coalition in Conway is making progress in regards to community awareness and recruitment of homes in their area. In October the coalition held a prayer vigil in Conway County for adoption awareness and approximately 150 people were in attendance.



“There are no unwanted children. Just unfound families.”  
—NATIONAL ADOPTION CENTER

♥ I WILL NOT  
Leave YOU AS  
ORPHANS  
WILL COME  
to YOU John 14:18 ♥



# Christmas FOR THE Kids



**A CHRISTMAS  
DONATION DRIVE  
FOR THE KIDS OF  
CONWAY COUNTY**

**DONATIONS ACCEPTED  
until 12.10.15  
DONATION BOXES  
CAN BE FOUND THROUGHOUT  
CONWAY COUNTY**



**SPONSORED  
BY**

**THE CONWAY  
COUNTY  
FOSTER CARE  
COALITION**



## HELPFUL LINKS

[www.fosterparentcollege.com/info/connections](http://www.fosterparentcollege.com/info/connections)  
[www.midsouth.ualr.edu](http://www.midsouth.ualr.edu)  
[www.americanhumane.org/protecting-children](http://www.americanhumane.org/protecting-children)  
[www.arkansas.gov/reportARchildabuse](http://www.arkansas.gov/reportARchildabuse)  
[www.fosterarkansas.org](http://www.fosterarkansas.org)  
[www.dhsshare.arkansas.gov/pages/default.aspx](http://www.dhsshare.arkansas.gov/pages/default.aspx)  
[www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly](http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly)  
[www.nctsnet.org](http://www.nctsnet.org)  
[www.fema.gov/kids](http://www.fema.gov/kids)  
[www.childrendefense.org](http://www.childrendefense.org)  
[www.fosterclub.com](http://www.fosterclub.com)  
[www.ppcwg.org/communications-overview.html](http://www.ppcwg.org/communications-overview.html)  
[www.fosteringconnections.org](http://www.fosteringconnections.org)  
<http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com/index.html>  
[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)



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## THE BEST GARLIC ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Serves 4

Prep Time: 5 min | Cook Time: 20 min | Total Time: 25 min

### Ingredients

1. 1 pounds Brussels sprouts
2. 2 garlic cloves, minced
3. ½ tsp cayenne pepper (optional)
4. 4 tbsp olive oil
5. 2 tsp lemon juice
6. salt to taste



### Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil, add the Brussels sprouts and cook for two minutes. Drain well and place the Brussels sprouts in a large bowl.
3. Add the minced garlic, cayenne pepper and olive oil and gently toss to coat. Transfer the Brussels sprouts to a baking pan and sprinkle with salt. Bake for 15-20 minutes, shaking pan occasionally, until sprouts are quite brown and crisp on the outside and tender on the inside.
4. Adjust the taste with more salt if necessary, drizzle with lemon juice, toss to combine and serve.

By Harper

<http://paleogrubs.com/garlic-roasted-brussels-sprouts>