



CHILDREN FIRST QUARTERLY

Children First FFA Newsletter NO. 3

December 2015

The year of 2015 is coming to an end and Children First has been honored to serve and touch the lives of our foster youth and their foster families. It is really the children and the foster parents who have touched the lives of each individual here at the agency, and for that we are ever so grateful.

By now you may have noticed that there a lot of new members that have joined our Children First family. During the year of 2015, the agency was able to increase its number of foster homes by over 40 percent, with a retention rate of over 95 percent. This means that we have been able to provide a variety of loving homes, each with its own unique gift set in helping children feel safe and secure. It also means that we have been able to identify more specialty homes such as ITFC homes, respite homes, and homes willing to mentor teenagers in the THP program. Most importantly, it means that we have been able to change the lives of more children than ever before!

This growth really could not have been possible without the work and support of the entire Children First family. It was each and every one of you that provided the awareness, resources, and structure that our children need in order to trust again and to heal, and also for our foster families to grow.

Children First was able to participate in several community events in each county that we serve throughout the year. In doing so we engaged with the public to provide awareness and educate on the need to help our youth. We never imagined that many of these individuals that we interacted with at these events would come back to bless us in a such a huge way, by donating gift baskets for our families, offering their time and support, or opening up their homes and their hearts to children in need; a gift during the holidays that we are so thankful for.

Over the last year, Children First has been able to add to its firm foundation and strong family culture. The agency has been blessed to see many children find their "forever families". We have been able to build, guide and grow our frontline support to over 100 foster families, and our reputation for having one of the highest quality programs is because of our foster parents.

It has been a great year for Children First and it is our hope to continue to consistently provide education and support to each and every member of the Children First family in the years to come.

Thank you for all that you have done!

Robin Freisheim
Recruitment Coordinator

*"Bikes For Our Kids"
One person's vision
and the hard work
of local businesses
made it possible for
60 of our kids to
receive bikes for
Christmas.*

**See back page for
the whole story.**

In This Issue

- **Stories of Adoptions:**
Read the testimonials of some of our families who have adopted children in the past year.
- **Helpful Holiday Hints:**
An article written by our ITFC Support Counselor, Janey Huffman, with information about helping our foster children heal painful memories from the past and how to create new ones along the way.



"ITFC is an incredible program and I am so grateful that this child was given a fair shot. He desperately needed to be placed in a family that didn't take his trauma reactive behaviors personally, and who loved and accepted him no matter what. His ITFC family was his SIXTH and final placement. I've been working with him since March of 2014 and he is truly a different child. ITFC changed the course of this kid's life!"

*Abigail M. Vickery, ACSW
Mental Health Clinician I
Shasta County HHSA
Children's Mental Health*



Helpful Hints During the Holidays

The holidays are for celebrating with our family and loved ones, but for our foster children it could mean dealing with painful memories and then creating new ones along the way. For some children, this process may be a difficult one to go through. With the help of Janey Huffman, support counselor for our ITFC children, we were able to come up with some helpful hints to help make this year's Christmas an enjoyable time for every member of the Children First family.

- Helping children deal with seasonal changes, such as weather changes, daylight shortening and busy days can make the holiday season more enjoyable and easier to deal with for all. It's important to remember that we all have holiday memories that are both positive and negative. Be aware that the traditions you have may be quite different than others, or they may not have any traditions developed at all.
- First, start simple, don't set children up for disappointments and try not to set expectations that are unreasonable. Don't over book or over commit. Sometimes it's okay to say no thank you. Stick to your structure and plan fun activities without forgetting the need for quality relaxing time together.
- Ask children what their favorite holiday memories are? Use the holidays and seasonal changes to start a memory book, or add to one. Create new memories with photos and drawings with a focus on seasons and new traditions. Listen to past, present and future concerns of children. Many of the memories children have of the holidays are often the most difficult or painful to recall. Keep in mind that that many of our triggers occur from our senses and watch for any signs. A simple example of a common trigger is the smell of alcohol or tobacco that triggers a painful or traumatic memory. Be aware that children may not understand even the simplest of traditions and may become afraid due to what has happened in the past or a fear of the unknown.
- One simple idea to create new memories could include looking at Christmas lights. Take a drive, turn off the radio, bring along some hot chocolate and singing voices. Unless you're using MapQuest or the camera app, leave the phone at home! Involve children in selecting and decorating the Christmas tree, teach them to make ornaments that they can save for their own memories. Play in the fall leaves and be sure to take some snap shots for the memory book. Holiday baking and cooking can also be a positive lifelong tradition. Take a trip to the snow, make a snow angel or a snowman. Slow down, experience and enjoy the seasons and the holidays, you may just create a new tradition of your own along the way.



Janey Huffman

NEEDED: Intensive Treatment Foster Care Homes

Intensive Treatment Foster Care serves children and youth who have complex needs that require more support than standard foster care. ITFC homes blend carefully matched ITFC foster parents with the normalizing features of foster care, a variety of services, and an individualized treatment plan, all of which focus on the unique situation and needs of the individual child or youth. ITFC uses a team approach to treatment with the ITFC foster parent(s) being vital members of the treatment team, all of whom are dedicated to positively impacting the life of the child.

*There are currently children and youth who need the support of a home environment that we are unable to help due to a lack of ITFC homes. **Have you considered ITFC?** We provide additional training and resources to ITFC foster homes to help you and the child succeed. If you have any questions or feel you may be interested in looking into ITFC, please contact Delrae Hansen at our Redding office.*

Adoption Successes in 2015

Adopting a child is a special time for all. Children that have been in care are often times left to wonder if they will have a "forever home" of their own. There are several foster parents within our organization that have given children the gift of a family to call their own. The lives of these children have been forever changed and the families have been blessed as well. For some families, it means completion and a sense of unity. For other families and children that are still waiting with open arms, it means hope. Hope that one day they too will be able to fulfill their dreams just like the families that you see in this article.



"We always wanted a bigger family, and with only one son our only option was adoption. We applied to be foster parents wishing to follow up with adoption. We waited for about 3 years. After having a several foster placements we received the phone call to go to the hospital to pick up a baby boy who was only 2 days old. That was the most exciting moment for us! He was to be in foster care but the chances to be adopted were really good. The adoption process took a long time but it was well worth it!"
The Furbee family

"Terry and I went into foster care knowing that we wanted to help and teach children. The best part of our 12 years of fostering is that the children taught us so much more than we taught them. Eight adopted children later (and 6 biological) we feel we are most blessed and fortunate to have chosen this path in our lives and had the opportunity to make an impact in the growth of so many awesome children." Terry and Rhonda Glenn



"Adopting Layton has been a dream come true for me. I've always wanted to be a mom and he and I are a perfect fit. He's been a blessing from the very beginning and I can't imagine loving anyone or anything more. Adopting has had its ups and downs. There are difficult moments and lots of unknowns but the love and support from Children First helped me make it through. Our worker Janice has become a dear friend and I am a better mom because of her." MaryAnn Heiser



"Adopting my four boys made my family complete. To know that I could give them a chance to live a real life meant the world to me. They have made a huge impact in my life."
Leia Blue



A Word From One of Our Social Workers...

The holidays are a special time to reflect back and look forward to the New Year. This is also why the holidays can be a difficult and challenging time for foster youth as they deal with their thoughts and feelings about the family they used to have or have lost. It may be difficult for children to understand how this all relates to or has affected their current family living situation, whether that's living with relatives, in a foster home, etc. The foster parents, staff and social workers with Children First are a vital piece and support network to assisting the foster children process how they see themselves in their family network. Developing a sense of belonging and helping the foster children frame how they view their futures is a top priority within our agency. It has been amazing to see how many of our foster children have gone into guardianship and adoption with our Children First foster parents. To be able to give a foster child a permanent home and to accept them for who they are is truly a special gift. It's always a special time each year to see these foster families and children together at the numerous functions that Children First offers such as date/respite night, the agency Christmas party, Water Works Park, family bowling night, etc. I feel very fortunate and blessed to have worked with or got to know a lot of the foster children & foster families with Children First. It has been amazing to see how much Children First has grown in just the five years that I have been a social worker with the Agency. I appreciate how hard the foster parents work with the foster children and their dedication they put forth towards improving foster children's lives. Have a great holiday season & Happy New Year!

Vincent Sanchez, BSW

Bikes For Our Kids

At our agency, it is the children that are our true blessings, but we have had the opportunity to receive blessings from individuals in the community of many different kinds. You may have thought of helping foster children, or you may have driven by our office locations and have noticed our signs and thought "I would love to give to a child in need." It is true when they say that "not everybody can be a foster parent, but anybody can help a foster child," and that is exactly what many individuals have done during the year of 2015.

Chris Ferguson, Marketing Development Manager from Coca-Cola, has done what many individuals only think about doing. Chris drove by our office in Redding on her delivery route and noticed our sign in 2014. She wanted to give to our agency, and she did in a huge way. She put together an idea to give bikes to the foster children in our agency. The inspiration that Chris had led to many other members of the Coca-Cola Company, and also other local businesses, to become inspired as well.

There were members of Bikes Etc., and Rolling Hills Casino that either donated financially or had given their time to help with the assembling and cleanup of the bikes.

After many hours of planning and hard work, the inspiration led to us receiving over 100 bikes in 2014 that were either brand new or refurbished. Each of these bikes were given to our foster children in both Shasta and Tehama Counties. What a treat for our foster children, and what a wonderful thing it was for Chris to be inspired by these children!

This year, Chris was able to make it all happen again! She partnered with her supervisor and some of her co-workers, along with other agencies, and was able to give over 60 bikes to our children on December 18, 2015. The Coca-Cola



Company has also donated a case of the "Coca-Cola Bears" to be put in the baskets of our children.

Coca-Cola has honored our agency by placing collection bins in stores from

About Our Agency

Children First Foster Family Agency has been serving the North state for sixteen years. Our agency is proud of the strong family culture that is present among our foster families, staff, and all of the children we serve. With a dedicated team of social workers, our agency is able to service our families with a variety of programs and services. Visit our website at www.childrenfirstffa.com to learn more.

Contact Us

Please call us for more information about our programs and services.

Children First Foster Family Agency

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www.childrenfirstffa.com



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