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www.cafsnj.org

***A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS* BROADCAST IS A HUGE SUCCESS!** 79 NJ Families Contacted Dave Thomas Foundation

The Dave Thomas Foundation "***A Home for the Holidays***" CBS special aired on December 22nd at 8:00 pm. The goal of this broadcast was to increase public awareness about waiting children and to recruit families to adopt them.

As the NJ Statewide contact for the project for a second year in a row, NJ•ARCH spent the weeks leading up to the program creating a publicity blitz using our extensive

mailing lists. On the day of the program, Children's Aid and Family Services Adoption Department and NJ ARCH hosted a table at the Willowbrook Mall in Wayne, NJ. Last year's ***A Home for the Holidays*** program was shown on a portable television and promotional post cards as well as information about older child adoption were made available. In spite of the busy season, numerous people stopped by to chat with the staff and



take the available handouts.

This year's broadcast brought in over 2,100 calls to the Dave Thomas Foundation- almost double the number of inquiries from last year! Almost 80 were from NJ- more than triple

(Continued on page 4)

ADOPTEE'S ACCESS-TO-BIRTH-CERTIFICATES BILL **ADVANCES IN NJ LEGISLATURE** *by Pam Hasegawa*



Senate Bill 1093, ***The Adoptees' Access-To-Original-Birth-Certificates Bill***, passed in the NJ State

Senate on December 6, 2004 and has now been assigned to the Assembly Committee on Family, Women and Children's Services.

The bill would allow parents of minor adopted persons, the adult son or daughter of an adoptee who died before obtaining a copy of her/his original birth certificate, as well as adopted adults born in NJ, access to a copy of the adopted person's long-form

original birth certificate. Birth parents who have relinquished parental rights before the bill's enactment will have one year from that date to ask the Registrar of Vital Statistics to remove their names and addresses from the copy of the original birth record sent to the adopted adult (or other persons named above) upon request.

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ASK OUR EXPERT

E-MAIL US YOUR QUESTIONS AT WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG



Barbara A. Rall, LCSW

Have a question that needs expert advice? E-mail or call the warmline; we would be happy to assist you! Frequently asked questions and responses from the staff will be published in future newsletters.



Question: I have an adopted daughter, Jane, who is now 16 years old. She joined our family when she was five after having been removed from her home by protective services. She lived with us as a foster child for two years and when her birth parents' rights were terminated, the state child welfare agency asked if we wanted to adopt her. She was considerably younger than my other children, but we considered her a member of the family and of course, we loved her very much, so we finalized the adoption. Everything seemed to be fine until she turned 13. By then my birth children were grown with children of their own, so it was just Jane and me at home. She started getting moody and began to skip school and stay out past her curfew. I tried being firm with her and I tried counseling, but she wouldn't talk during the sessions. Recently, she has been leaving the house for days and I don't know where she is. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there anything I can do to help her? I'm feeling angry and as if I failed as a mother. I want her out of the house.*

Answer: This must be very hard for you. You successfully raised your other children and are now struggling to

raise this very challenging teenager. And, you are at an age where you would like to be enjoying your grandchildren. I can see that you would feel frightened, angry and frustrated.

I am hoping you can hang in there for Jane, even though the task seems daunting. We will never fully know what she went through those first five years of her life. Often children who have suffered abuse and neglect have emotional losses. Jane sounds as if she was pretty resilient until she reached puberty. Adolescence is always a difficult time for kids and adoption issues often complicate life as they try to establish their identities. It may be she has unresolved issues from her early childhood she is unable to talk about. Obviously Jane is struggling and her behavior is an indication of that struggle.

The most important thing at this point is to ensure that Jane is safe at all times. That means if she stays out overnight without letting you know where she is, you must call the police and declare her missing. She is still a minor. It may be she needs to be in a more restrictive setting for a while. By this I mean a residential

program where she can be monitored at all times. But, there is something I suggest you try first.

New Jersey now has a program called **Mobile Response and Stabilization Services** or **MRSS**.

1.877.652.7624. This crisis intervention service provides in-home counseling and behavioral support to children and families in crisis. It is designed to help children such as Jane, whose emotional or behavioral issues require immediate attention to prevent out of home placement. In other words, MRSS will send a trained counselor to your home to help you and Jane begin talking to each other, to establish ground rules and to allow Jane to talk about the painful feelings she has been experiencing (and acting out on). This service is intensive, daily if necessary, for a time limited period. It includes referrals to community based providers when the crisis has passed.

I believe you owe it to yourself and Jane to try **MRSS** to see if you and she can continue to live together until she is able to go out on her own.

* Name has been changed for confidentiality purposes.

NATALIE'S BOOK CORNER

Hello, Readers!

Welcome to Natalie's Book Corner.

The two books described contain much needed information for people considering the adoption of older children. They also provide help to those who have adopted children beyond the infancy and toddler stages of life.

Chapters in ADOPTING THE OLDER CHILD include:

1. Who Are the Children Who Wait?
2. Making the Decision to Adopt an Older Child
3. The Home Study
4. Pre-Adoption Preliminaries for Parents and Workers
5. Preparing Children for Placement
6. Matching Families and Children

Five case studies are explained in such descriptive detail that I feel as though I know these children personally and am rooting for them all the way. Their sorrows and disappointments become mine and I own their small successes.

Claudia Jewett knows whereof she speaks. Her credentials are those of a biological parent, an adoptive parent of older children, and a social worker trained in family counseling. Jewett has worked with placement agencies and social workers as they help to build families through older child adoption.

In her book, OLDER CHILD ADOPTION, Grace Robinson discusses parenting a hurting child, creating a healing family, transcending even your own expectations and securing services for children with special needs.

Part I – Living With The Older Adopted Child describes, through the use of individual case studies, the experiences of parents and their children. Chapter headings are:

1. The Traumatized Child
2. The Grieving Child
3. The Child with More Than One Mother
4. The Attachment Disordered Child
5. The Sexually Abused Child
6. The Child with Provocative Behavior

Part II – Living In An Adoptive Family again uses examples to explain the subject matter in detail. Chapter headings are:

7. A Family that Is Different
8. A Family that Needs Services
9. A Family that Transcends Expectations

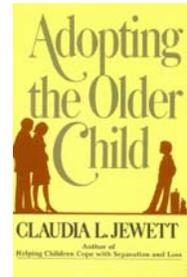
If you are considering older child adoption, this book will assist you in preparing for your journey. It covers the really important "stuff." I would go so far as to say that this is a MUST READ.

Grace Robinson brings to the table her 20 years of experience as a Middle School teacher. She adopted a twelve-year-old, a thirteen-year-old and a nine-year-old. As a teacher, Robinson wanted children that she would not have to give up at the end of the school year.

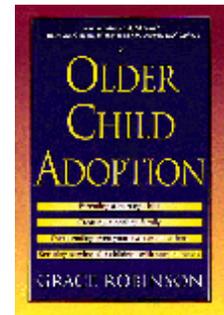
NATALIE HAMILTON
WARMLINE WORKER
NJ•ARCH

DID YOU KNOW?

The NJ• ARCH Lending Library has a variety of books on adopting older children.



Adopting the Older Child,
by Claudia L Jewett



Older Child Adoption,
by Grace Robinson

Check out a complete listing at www.njarch.org or contact the warmline.



DID YOU KNOW?

THERE ARE CURRENTLY **532,000** CHILDREN IN THE PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM.

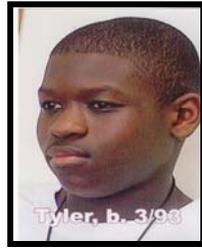
ALMOST **130,000** ARE WAITING FOR AN ADOPTIVE FAMILY. EACH YEAR **9,000** CHILDREN "AGE OUT" OF THE SYSTEM WITHOUT EVER BEING ADOPTED.

THE MAJORITY OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE TEND TO BE MINORITIES, WITH OLDER AFRICAN AMERICAN BOYS WAITING THE LONGEST FOR ADOPTION.



Comments or Questions about NJ•ARCH or this newsletter? Contact us at warmline@njarch.org or call us at 973-763-2041

DYFS FEATURED CHILD: TYLER



About Tyler, Born March 6, 1993

Whether riding his bike or playing basketball with friends, Tyler loves being outside. Inquisitive and

friendly, this youngster relates well to both his peers and adults. Eager to please and also helpful around the house, Tyler does not allow expressive language delays to keep him from being a conversationalist. His learning disability can be the cause of frustration at times, but Tyler's special education placement allows him to do

well in school. He is close to his younger brother and sister and clearly enjoys the role of "big brother." Tyler needs a loving family who will support his continued need for speech therapy and special education services, while allowing him to maintain contact with his siblings.

BUDDY MENTORS WANTED!

- ◆ Are you an experienced Adoptive Parent?
- ◆ Do you like helping others?
- ◆ Are you empathic and willing to share your experiences with another family that may be facing challenges?



Consider becoming a Volunteer Buddy Family Mentor!

Spend an hour or so a week in your own home helping another family succeed in adoption by being in regular

contact by phone or e-mail. Telephone expense reimbursements are available. Our NJ•ARCH staff will provide initial training and ongoing support to all mentors.

For more information on how to become a volunteer Buddy Mentor, contact Barbara A. Rall at NJ•ARCH.

A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS BROADCAST... (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)

last year's inquires! Each family received an information packet, which included the Dave Thomas Foundation *Beginners Guide to Adoption*.

As the NJ State Contact, NJ•ARCH is in the process of following up with each NJ family that contacted the Foundation to find out how our program can assist those families interested in adopting. Each family will receive a copy of NJ•ARCH's

handbook, *How to Adopt in New Jersey: A Guide to Family Building*, as well as a list of licensed agencies that specialize in older child adoption. If you or someone you know would like information about adopting a waiting child, give us a call or drop us an e-mail.

**IN THE SPOTLIGHT:
MORRISTOWN POST-ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUP**

The Morristown Post-Adoption Support Group, which meets monthly at the Presbyterian Parish House, has been helping those in and out of adoption for over 20 years.

Led by Jane Nast and currently co-chaired by Judy Foster, Ginny Bayard and Nancy Jeffery, this Morristown group has been extremely active.

This group is unique, as it supports all three members of the adoption triad; birth parents, adoptees and adoptive parents; significant others have also been known to attend (spouses, children of adoptees, social workers, etc.).

On average, meetings attract 20 or more participants per month. Those who attend find comfort in sharing, discussing and offering support with others who are experiencing similar adoption journeys. The most impressive part of this group is that there are no special guests; participants who attend come for and give

support by talking and sharing their thoughts, experiences and ideas. Search



and reunion discussions are big.

Meetings are held at 65 South Street in Morristown (Church Parish House) the first Saturday of each month beginning at 1:00 pm until those attending want it to end; usually about 5:00 pm.

Although there are no formal dues, a \$3.00 donation per meeting is requested to cover refreshments and any other miscellaneous expenses.

Based on the good works of Mrs. Nast's organization and her active leadership, other

organizations have been served and supported. One such group is the NJ Coalition for Adoption Reform and Education (NJ CARE). NJ CARE meets weekly at the same location to discuss and act upon adoption-related legislation and reform (see "Adoptees Access-to-Birth-Certificates Bill Advances in NJ Legislature" story). Most members of NJ CARE either started with and/or belong to the Morristown Post Adoption Support Group. This group has also supported other community outreach activities such as food drives, holiday baskets and the like.

For more information about the Morristown Post Adoption Support Group please contact Jane Nast at jane-nast@compuserve.com or call 973-267-8698. For more information about NJ CARE, check out its website at www.nj-care.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

NJ•ARCH has developed a number of presentations on adoption issues.

Contact us to discuss and schedule one for your group.

A SNAPSHOT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY

Is your child experiencing academic difficulties in school? Are you receiving an increasing number of calls from your child's guidance counselor and/or teacher regarding your child's behavior? Perhaps your

child needs some extra help. There are Federal and State Laws which govern and protect children and families to assure that children receive the services they need to per-

form to their potential.

NJ Special Education is governed under the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as well as

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DID YOU KNOW?

⇒ IN 2004 STATE-WIDE (DYFS) ADOPTIONS INCREASED 36% OVER 2003 TO 1,383.

⇒ 81% OR 1127 WERE FOSTER PARENTED ADOPTIONS.

⇒ 19% OR 256 WERE SELECT HOME ADOPTIONS (WHERE DYFS ACTUALLY RECRUITED AN ADOPTIVE HOME FOR A CHILD).

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



REMEMBER, FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH!

A SNAPSHOT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 5)

the NJ Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

“It is the purpose of this act to assure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free, appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and to assure that the rights of the children with disabilities and their parents or guardians are protected. (P.L. 94-142 sec.3, 89).”

The Federal and NJ Law requires that *“all students ages 3-21 with disabilities have available to them a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).”*

The definition of disability includes: *“...physical, emotional, learning and cognitive disabilities who because of their condition, need special education and related services.”*

For more information on Section 504 and schools, contact the Statewide Parents Advocacy Network (SPAN) at

http://spannj.org/BasicRights/federal_laws.htm#intro

or contact its office at 1-800-654-SPAN to request the Section 504 fact sheet and information packet.

There are different Special Educational services available for children that qualify for special education. They include:

- *Early Intervention Services (ages 0-3)*
- *Speech and Language Services*
- *Pre-School Special Education (ages 3-5)*
- *Special Education (ages 5-16) Post High School Transition Services (ages 14 – 21)*

The pamphlet *“A Basic Guide to Special Education”* gives an overview to the special education system, how to request services, and more. You can download this guide by linking to

<http://www.kidlaw.org/main.asp?uri=1005&ci=2>

(and selecting this guide), contacting the NJ ARCH Warm Line, or contacting

the Children’s Legal Resource Center directly at 973-643-3876 to request a copy.

To find out more about your parental rights, check out the *Parental Rights in Special Education* pamphlet at

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/parights/prise.pdf>

or call the NJ Department of Education directly at 609-292-0147.

These and other types of Special Education support services can make all the difference in a young person’s life. We wish you and your child the best of what New Jersey education has to offer!



ADOPTION TAX CREDIT



Now that tax time is almost upon us,

it's a good time to review some of the Federal Tax Credit allowances:

Many parents may be able to take a tax credit up to **\$10,390** for qualifying ex-

penses paid to adopt an eligible child. The adoption credit is an amount that you subtract from your tax liability.

Also, up to \$10,390 paid or reimbursed by *your employer* for qualifying adoption expenses under an adoption assistance program may also

be excludable from your gross income.

To download the IRS Publication 968 – Tax Benefits for Adoption Tax Return booklet, log onto <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p968.pdf> or call 1-800-829-3676 to order a guide.

FAQS ON FOSTER FAMILY TAXES

Are my foster-care payments exempt from taxes? Can I take the dependent exemption?

According to the Casey Family Programs (<http://www.casey.org>), on any given day there are more than 500,000 children living in foster care nationwide. There are a lot of Americans serving as foster parents.

If you are a foster family, you face all of the tax issues that face other families, but you also have to grapple with some issues that are unique to foster families.*

Log onto <http://www.turbotax.com/articles/FAQonFosterFamilyTaxes.html#charitable> and find out answers to any foster-

care related tax questions.

To download the IRS Publication 501: Exemptions, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information, log onto <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p501.pdf> or call 1-800-829-1040 if you have questions.

(* Excerpt from the TurboTax Website, www.turbotax.com)

ADOPTEES' ACCESS-TO-BIRTH CERTIFICATES BILL...

(CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)

Past, present and future birth parents will be able to file a contact preference form with the Registrar indicating whether they would rather be contacted directly, through an intermediary (whom they may name) or not at all. This information will be shared with the adopted person requesting a copy of the

original birth record at the time of fulfilling that request.

Birth parents requesting nondisclosure or filing a contact preference form will be *required* to submit a medical history form initially and then *requested* to update the form every 10 years until turning 40 and every 5 years thereafter.

If you would like to be on an email list to keep you informed of the bill's progress, please email:

jerseyAd-vocates-subscribe@yahogroups.com or call Jane Nast 973.267.8698, Judy Foster 973.455.1268, Pam Hasegawa 973.292.2440 or Susan Perry 856.795.4014 and/or check out their website at www.NJ-CARE.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ◆ OVER 2% OF ALL U.S. CHILDREN ARE ADOPTED: THAT IS MORE THAN 1.5 MILLION CHILDREN!
- ◆ SURVEYS HAVE FOUND THAT ABOUT 60% OF AMERICANS KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN ADOPTED, HAS ADOPTED OR HAS RELINQUISHED A CHILD FOR ADOPTION.*
- ◆ 45% OF THE CHILDREN ADOPTED FROM FOSTER CARE WERE FROM 1-5 YEARS OLD.**

* Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, Survey 1997 www.adoptioninstitute.org

** www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/afcars/june2001.htm



NJ-ARCH WISHES EVERYONE A HAPPY PRESIDENTS' DAY!

NEW JERSEY ADOPTION RESOURCE CLEARING HOUSE

76 SOUTH ORANGE AVENUE
SOUTH ORANGE, NJ 07079

VISIT US AT WWW.NJARCH.ORG

EDITOR:
DANA WOODS FRIED
973.763.2041

WARMLINE
877.4.ARCHNJ
OR
877.427.2465

FAX
973.378.9575

EMAIL
WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG
LALINEACALUROSA@NJARCH.ORG

WWW.NJARCH.ORG



*The one-stop
resource
for those
touched
by adoption.*

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COME CHAT WITH US

Ever had the urge to speak to someone about adoption-related issues or ideas but weren't sure where to start or who to call? NJ-ARCH's chat room may be a perfect place to start...

NJ-ARCH hosts numerous on-line, live chats. Simply log onto www.njarch.org and select "Chat Room" on the left column, select "agree" at the bottom of the "Rules of the Chat Room" screen, and join our chat! It's that easy. NJ-ARCH moderates various topics including general

adoption, birth parent, search and reunion, young teen, and older teen chats.

Check our schedule below and join us; it's a great place

to ask questions and chat with someone who may have the same concerns or ideas you have. You will be glad you did!

General Adoption Chat:

Tuesdays 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Young Teen Chat:

Wednesdays 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Search and Reunion Chat:

2nd and 4th Wednesday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Older Teen Chat:

Wednesdays 7:00 pm-8:00 pm

General Adoption Chat:

Saturdays 11:00 am - 12:00 pm



If you have any questions, please contact NJ-ARCH.