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NJ•ARCH Features:

- Chat Rooms
- Lending Library
- Warm Line
- Resource Directory
- Buddy Mentors
- Support Group Advocacy
- Upcoming Events



CHILDREN'S AID
AND FAMILY SERVICES, INC.

www.cafsnj.org



WHO MENTORED YOU?™

Thank them...and pass it on. Mentor a child.

January 25, 2007, marked the fourth annual "Thank Your Mentor Day," as a day to recognize volunteer mentors throughout the US. The event was an outreach of the Harvard Mentoring Project www.WhoMentoredYou.org where its message is:

- Too many young people do not have a caring adult mentor to provide encouragement and support
- Mentoring programs can provide the link to this support
- But programs need volunteers to close the gap.

The theme for Thank Your Mentor Day is *"Who mentored you? Thank them... and pass it on!"*

The idea behind this campaign is to help people connect to the importance of mentoring by encouraging them to think about individuals in their lives during their formative years — family members, teachers, coaches, neighbors, employers, friends — who encouraged them, showed them the ropes, and helped them become who they are today.

It's not too late to honor your mentor; here are some ideas: you can contact your mentor directly to express your appreciation; "Pass it on" by becoming a mentor to a young person in your community, and/or write a tribute to your mentor for

posting on the campaign's web site.

The organization, www.WhoMentoredYou.org presents video clips and written essays contributed by prominent individuals such as Tom Brokaw (NBC News), the late Ray Charles, Bill Clinton, Deepak Chopra, Oprah Winfrey and more. The web site also provides access to on-line greeting cards, enabling people to reach out via e-mail to thank mentors who made significant contributions to their lives.

Think about making a difference in a child, teen or adult's life; consider becoming a mentor. You and your community will be glad you did.



Supporting Youth in Foster Care through Mentoring*
National Mentoring Month (NMM) in January 2007 spotlighted the needs of young people in foster care. Spearheaded by the Harvard

Mentoring Project, MENTOR and the Corporation for National and Community Service, NMM serves to spread the message that introducing a mentor into the life of a child in provides consistency, support, and

encouragement, engendering trust and confidence in the future.

On any given day in America over 518,000 children and youth are in foster care.
(Continue on page 2)

DID YOU KNOW?

MENTOR: THE WORD ORIGINATES IN THE ODYSSEY BY HOMER, WHO DESCRIBES THE CHARACTER MENTOR AS A "WISE AND TRUSTED FRIEND."

A RESEARCH STUDY BY PUBLIC PRIVATE VENTURES FOUND THAT YOUTH WHO REGULARLY MEET WITH THEIR MENTORS ARE:

- 46% LESS LIKELY TO BEGIN USING ILLEGAL DRUGS
- 27% LESS LIKELY TO BEGIN DRINKING ALCOHOL
- 52% LESS LIKELY TO SKIP SCHOOL
- 33% LESS LIKELY TO HIT SOMEONE



The large omega wrapping around a smaller omega represents the mentoring relationship between a caring adult and a child seeking to unlock and fulfill his or her potential.

SUPPORTING YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE THROUGH MENTORING

(Continued from page 1)

About 20,000 youth "age out" or transition from the foster care system. Many are only 18 years old, yet state systems provide few services to help them through this difficult transition.

National statistics help tell the story. Of those children who age out of foster care, only 54% obtained a high school diploma, only 2% ob-

tained a Bachelors degree or higher, 51% were unemployed, 30% had no health insurance, 30% were receiving public assistance, and 84% became parents.

How you can help: Young people need supportive adults in their lives. Programs have been established throughout the U.S. to link youth in care with volunteers from the community who

want to become a mentor and make a difference in a young person's life.

Log onto <http://www.mentoring.org/index.php> to see where you can become a mentor and change a child or teen's life forever.

*http://www.mentoring.org/mentoring_month/about/foster_care.php

ON-LINE MENTORING:



Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) serves youth as they age out of the foster care system. One of their programs is Virtual Mentoring or vMentor. Screened and trained volunteer adult mentors are matched with youth between the ages of 16 and 23. Mentors make a two year commitment to send a weekly e-mail message to their mentee.

Many children in the child welfare system will never be adopted. For these kids, turning 18 can mean the end of their relationship with their foster family and the financial support provided by the state. Less than half of youth in foster care finish high school and only 38% are

employed one year after leaving foster care. Each one of these young people can benefit from a trusted adult who can provide friendship and support as well as gentle guidance.

The vMentor program operates through a secure portal. All e-mails are screened before they are transmitted to the mentees. Mentors and mentees do not know each others addresses and do not communicate outside the portal. The program has a professional staff which provides ongoing teleconference training to the mentors and social work case management support to the mentees.

This is valuable volunteer work that can be done from your home at a time that is convenient for you. It's an opportunity to have real communication and to make a difference in a young person's life. OFA's research shows that youth who participate in the program have a much higher graduation rate because of the ongoing support of their mentors.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor or would like additional information, you can visit the web site at http://www.vmentor.com/learn_about_vmentor.shtml or telephone 605.342.9030.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

The beginning of the year is a great time to start thinking about adoption or foster care related conferences for 2007. The following are conferences that may be of interest:

March 7-10: American Adoption Congress: *Taking the Freedom Trail to Truth in Adoption*; Wakefield MA. www.americanadoptioncongress.org.

March 11: Ametz Adoption Conference. *Infertility, Adoption and the Family*, NYC. www.jccany.org; select Events.

July 26-28: North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC): *One Child, Every Child*; Tampa, Florida. www.nacac.org. Select Conference.

September 24-26: Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) Mid-Atlantic Region: *Strengthening Public Policy and Practice*. Baltimore, MD; www.cwla.org. Select Conferences.

November 3: Concerned Persons for Adoption (CPFA): *Let's Talk Adoption Annual Conference*; Piscataway, NJ. www.cpfanjanj.org.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SUMMER CAMP

Even though it's still freezing outside, many families are beginning to think and plan out their children's summer activities. Don't wait until the last minute to figure out what your kids will be doing during those hot July and August months!

Many summer camps begin to fill up in February and March. What kind of summer camp experience do you wish to give your child this year?

If he/she is adopted, you may want to consider a "culture camp". Whether your child was born domestically or in another country, sending your child to a camp that specializes in adoption or "culture" could be a life changing experience for them.

So, how do you start? Check out the NJ ARCH website for a list of summer camps that

may be of interest to your family. If you cannot find a camp that is appropriate for your child, or you want more information on how to select a camp, check out the American Camping Association at <http://www.acacamps.org/>



Not quite ready to send your child to a sleep away "culture camp"? Many support groups offer one day cultural events for adoptive families.

Concerned Persons for Adoption (www.cpfanjanj.org), in Whippany, offers a Heritage Party in March that celebrates various heritages with music, food and activi-

ties. This type of event is a wonderful way for you and your children to meet others with similar backgrounds or experiences.

The message: You are not alone. Whether you choose a camp, social groups or other avenues, it's important for you and your child to connect with those "touched by adoption."

For more information and ideas on possible summer camps please check out the following websites:

<http://camps.adoption.com/>

<http://www.babyzone.com/features/content/display.asp?contentid=1735>

<http://my.summer.camps.com>.

DID YOU KNOW?

NJ ARCH OFFERS THE FOLLOWING WORKSHOPS:

HOW TO ADOPT IN NEW JERSEY

ADOPTION: A LIFE LONG LOSS

TELLING YOUR CHILD DIFFICULT HISTORY

TRANS-RACIAL ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE

BASICS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY

ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE IN THE SCHOOLS

FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE CARE SITUATIONS: WORKSHOP TO HELP FOSTER PARENTS DEAL WITH DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS

GROUP FACILITATION FOR SUPPORT GROUP LEADERS

LEAVING HOME IS HARD TO DO: WORKSHOP ON THE "EMPTY NEST SYNDROME"

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP PLEASE GIVE US A CALL OR E-MAIL BRALL@NJARCH.ORG

DID YOU KNOW?



AFTER THE "A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS" BROADCAST, ON DECEMBER 22ND, THE DAVE THOMAS FOUNDATION HAD OVER 2,500 INQUIRIES, NATION WIDE.

OVER 120 WERE FROM NEW JERSEY.

THE FOUNDATION CONTINUES TO RECEIVE CALLS AND WEB SITE INQUIRIES.

ALL FAMILIES WHO WISH TO ADOPT MUST COMPLETE A HOME STUDY. TO LEARN MORE, CALL 1-800-TO-ADOPT OR VISIT THE ON-LINE LEARNING CENTER AT WWW.ADOPT.ORG OR CALL NJ ARCH AT 877-4ARCHNJ

A TAX CREDIT TIP FOR ADOPTIVE PARENTS

According to the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), many families who received an adoption subsidy the same year as they finalized their adoption were not aware that they also could apply for the Federal Adoption Tax Credit.

Families who finalized their adoptions in 2003, 2004 and 2005 may apply for this Tax Credit by submitting Form 1040X for amendment.

Form 1040X must be filed within three years after the original return file date or within two years after the taxes were paid, whichever is later. A return filed early is con-

sidered filed on the due date. If you plan to amend your 2003 taxes, you will most likely need to amend your 2004 and 2005 as well. Therefore, it is recommended that a family file an



amended return by the date when they filed the 2003 tax return. Example: A tax form filed on March 16, 2004 will need to be amended by March 16, 2007. NACAC encourages any family that has paid a

preparer or company to complete their taxes to ask that preparer or company to amend them for free.

For more information and details on how to amend your previously filed taxes, log onto:

<http://www.irs.gov/instructions/i1040x/cho1.html#doe57>

For more information on Adoption Tax Credit, please visit the NACAC website at http://www.nacac.org/pub_taxcredit.html.

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February marks the beginning of Black History Month - an annual celebration that has existed since 1926.

Much of the credit can go to Harvard Scholar, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who was determined to bring Black History into the public arena. Woodson devoted his life to making "the world see the Negro as a participant rather than a lay figure in history."

Woodson organized the first "Negro History Week", which took place during the second week of February. He chose this date to coincide with the birthdays of

Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln- two men who had a great impact on the black population. Over time, this celebration evolved into the Black History Month we know today.

If you have a child of color in your adoptive or foster family, consider taking time to celebrate this event with your family. Something as easy as visiting the library, renting a movie, or visiting educational websites can go a long way in helping your child understand more of their heritage, and possibly shape their future.

For more information and to view video clips on Black History Month, log onto <http://www.biography.com> and/or <http://www.history.com/minisites/blackhistory/> and/or contact the NJ ARCH Warm Line for a list of appropriate movies.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: POST ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUP OF NORTH JERSEY

Are you looking for a friendly environment within the adoption community where you can share your feelings and experiences with others who “get it”?

Are you an adult adoptee considering searching for your birth parents/siblings? Are you in reunion, but need a place to share the emotions that come along with it? Perhaps you are a birth parent who would like to talk with others who have had similar experiences.

You may be an adoptive parent who would like to understand more about the feelings your adoptive children may be having as well as find ways to provide emotional support for your children. Then the *Post Adoption Support Group of North Jersey*, may be just the group for you.

Formed over 30 years ago, this group has changed names and locations before settling into their current form. Formerly known as “*Adoption Crossroads of New Jersey*”, they have served the needs of adult adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents alike.

“We are a warm, supportive, comfortable group; we are there to give support to those who need it,” states Cindi Adesso, the group’s current leader. Some come to listen, some need real support, while others may be looking for advice or tips on searching. Although this group will not perform the search, they are willing to share suggestions and advice about what worked for their group members.

The group has an ever growing “lending library” of adopt-

ion-related books that members are encouraged to borrow. For those in need of additional support or encouragement in between meetings, there are always members willing to “jump in” and assist.

Meetings are held the second Monday evening of each month (except July and August) starting at 7:30 pm in Midland Park, New Jersey. There is no charge for joining or attending the meetings. Reminder e-mails are sent out before each meeting, and you may request to be added to the meeting reminder list by contacting Cindi. For more information, contact Cindi Adesso at 973.427.4521 or e-mail her at cindilouwho@mindspring.com

DID YOU KNOW?



POST ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUP OF NORTH JERSEY:

THE TRIANGLE REPRESENTS EACH MEMBER OF THE TRIAD; ADOPTEE, BIRTH PARENTS AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS.

THE HEART REPRESENTS THE SHARED BOND THAT LINKS THEM ALL.

THE PUZZLE PIECE REPRESENTS THE “MISSING PART OF THE PUZZLE” THAT EXISTS IN MANY ADOPTIONS.

DYFS WAITING CHILD: NATHAN



DYFS Waiting Child: Nathan

Nathan, age sixteen, likes watching cartoons and playing with video games. He is also interested in swimming, cycling and sports. He has a good sense of humor, and enjoys helping others.

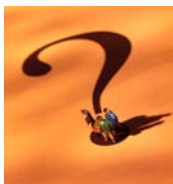
Nathan is classified as multiply handicapped with developmental delays. He receives both speech and occupational therapy in school. He is generally independent with self-care skills.

Although easily frustrated, Nathan is easygoing and cooperative most of the time. Nathan is working on improving his social interactions with peers. This teen needs a loving patient family who can provide the needed structure, as well as allow him to have continued contact with his sister, who has been adopted. For more information about Nathan call 1-800-99-ADOPT.



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.



ASK OUR EXPERT

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

I am now 25 and I have known I was adopted for as long as I can remember. Recently my adoptive mother told me that the DYFS caseworker who handled my placement stated my birth mother left a letter for me in my file. How can I go about getting a copy of this letter?

Once people whose adoption was handled by DYFS turn 18, they can contact the DYFS Search Registry in Trenton. Upon request, DYFS will provide a summary of non-identifying information describing the circumstances that led the birth parents to make an adoption plan. DYFS will also pass along any letters or messages in the file.

And, upon request, they will contact registered birth parents. For those adoptees whose birth parents have not registered, DYFS pro-

vides search services. The staff there reports that most people wait until they read the non-identifying summary before initiating a search.

While DYFS has always placed infants, in the past 25 years, more DYFS adoptions have involved protective service issues and older children. Many of those adoptees remember the names of birth family members, making the search easier. If the birth family has registered, the DYFS worker pulls the form, calls the birth parent to ascertain that contact is still desired and then provides facilitation and coordination of the reunion. Some adoptees want only to exchange letters and pictures. Others are interested in telephone contact or in face to face meetings. Many adoptees want to be reunited with siblings. If the birth parent has not registered with DYFS, the agency will provide

search services. This is time consuming and due to staff constraints the waiting list is about six months long. DYFS policy limits search services to adoptees. This prevents adoptees from being surprised by a meeting request, which is particularly important for those who were removed from their original homes due to abuse and neglect.

You can obtain an application form from DYFS by calling 609.292.8816 or 609.984.6800. I would urge all members of the triad, whose adoptions were handled by DYFS and who are interested in search and reunion to avail themselves of this free service. While birth parents cannot search, they can post a request to be contacted in their file. Cases where the birth parent has done this receive priority.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST:

Division of Youth and Family Services: www.Adopt.org

Foster and Adoptive Family Services: www.fafsonline.org

National Adoption Center: www.adopt.org

Child Welfare League of America: www.cwla.org

Adopt US Kids: www.adoptuskids.org

Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov

State wide Advocacy Network Group: www.spannj.org

Parenting Support: www.comeunity.com

Dave Thomas Foundation: www.davethomasfoundation.org

Adoptive Families Magazine: Adoptivefamilies.com

NATALIE'S LIBRARY CORNER

Hello, Readers!

Welcome to Natalie's Library Corner.

I hope all of you have enjoyed happy and healthy holidays. Perhaps, as I did, you received a gift certificate to one of your favorite book stores.

While I was considering a topic for this issue of *Under the Arch*, I decided to look back at all the subjects that I have discussed in this column from its inception. I was astonished to realize that the feelings of adoptees during the adolescent stage of their lives had never been addressed.

Adopted Teens Only, A Survival Guide to Adolescence, by Danae Gorbett was published in 2004. It is a short book chock full of invaluable information written in an easy, direct, right to the point format.

Danae Gorbett brings to her writing the personal feelings and experiences of growing up adopted. I share this bond with her.

As an adult adoptee reading *Adopted Teens Only*, I can only wish that books such as this one had been available when I was going through my own teenage angst. It would have been so helpful to my adoptive parents and to me.

"Why was everything such a big deal?"

"Why was there so much unexplained raw emotion?"

"Why was I not more grateful for the privileged life I was given?"

"Why did I daydream about my birth family?"

This book brings into focus with amazing clarity the answers to these "whys." I suppose it goes back to the fact that the obvious is not so obvious when you are personally involved. Speaking from my own perspective, my parents had no clue that the hidden secrets of adopted teens were any different from those of non-adopted teens. Conversely, I was not aware that, for them, parenting an adopted teenager was any different from parenting a non-adopted teenager. We, as a family, did not know how to effectively communicate our feelings to each other.

The author draws from personal stories of adoptive parents, birth parents and adoptees and combines these accounts with her background in psychology and education. The final result is a very readable book. All who read this will discover the following:

- What feelings and thoughts are common to the adoptive experience.

- What adoptive parents feel.

- What birth parents feel.
- What emotional issues are connected with search and reunion.
- How to talk to parents about adoption questions.

The Secret of Me, A Novel in Verse, by Meg Kearney was published in 2005. Elizabeth McLane is a fourteen-year-old adopted girl. That is a fact of her life. She longs to confide in someone, especially her friend Peter, about how it feels to be adopted.

Lizzie wonders if telling Peter that her birthmother gave her away would make her seem "less" to him. She also worries about the act of "telling" as being disloyal to her adoptive parents. This teenager discovers a way to tell the world that she is adopted and her feelings surrounding that subject.

"There are just some things you're not supposed to say to your parents. But I can write them down. I won't stop writing them." Lizzie gives voice to her emotions through her poetry.

I truly loved this book. It was a rare treat to read an adoption novel written in verse. It validated my own feelings and afforded me the opportunity to view them as pages of poetry and prose.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE NJ•ARCH LENDING LIBRARY HAS A VARIETY OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS, ARTICLES AND VIDEOS.



Other insightful books that teenagers might enjoy include:

How It Feels to be Adopted by Jill Krementz 1982

Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew by Sherrie Eldridge 1999

Ithaka: A Daughter's Memoir of Being Found by Sarah Saffian 1999



Comments or Questions about NJ•ARCH or this newsletter? Contact us at warm-line@njarch.org

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
LALINEACALUOSA@NJARCH.ORG

RG



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