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NJ•ARCH Features:

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



My life is *busy*. My older brother *lives with me*.
I like *to play guitar*.

Make his story a good one.



May is National Foster Care Month... You Can Change a Lifetime

A hip-hop fashion designer. An award-winning blues singer. An All-Pro NFL linebacker. An actress. A self-help guru. A music producer. An author. A filmmaker. What do they have in common?

They are all foster care alumni who credit their relationships with caring adults as making an important difference in their lives. These alumni include Keith Bulluck, All-Pro NFL Linebacker; Chris Eyre, filmmaker; Kashif, R&B Producer/musician and recording industry entrepreneur; and Victoria Rowell, actress, author and advocate.

In fact, there are an estimated 12 million foster care alumni in the U.S. representing all walks of life. Behind this star-

ling statistic are countless stories of children who grew up to be successful adults while others struggled with life's challenges all alone. The difference between triumph and tragedy will become very clear as you read about these foster care alumni. Visit www.fostercaremonth.org/SuccessStories/FosterCareAlumni/Pages/default.aspx.

Success stories come about when someone takes the time to offer comfort, provide support, give advice, or simply share a milestone moment with a youngster enduring a difficult family situation.

Celebrated in May, National Foster Care Month provides an opportunity for people

nationwide to get involved as foster parents, volunteers, mentors, employers, or in other ways. It's also an opportunity to show our appreciation for the dedication of the foster families who care for these children and youth, and the social workers who support them.

Now is the time to get involved. No matter how much time you have to give, you have the power to do something positive that will change the lifetime for a young person in foster care.

<http://www.cwla.org/programs/fostercare/fostercaremonth.htm>
<http://www.fostercaremonth.org/GetInvolved/Pages/default.aspx>

DID YOU KNOW?

NJ ARCH OFFERS THE FOLLOWING FREE WORKSHOPS FOR SUPPORT GROUPS?

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 DWRIED@NJARCH.ORG

ADOPTION TAX CREDIT BENEFIT INCREASED

Now that tax time is almost upon us, it's a good time to review some of the Federal Tax Credit allowances:

For tax year 2008, many parents may be able to take tax credit up to **\$11,650** for qualifying expenses paid to adopt an eligible child (including a child with special needs). This amount will be increased to \$12,150 per eligible child for adoptions that take place in 2009.

You qualify for the adoption tax credit if you adopted a child and paid out-of-pocket expenses related to the adoption. The adoption credit is calculated on form [Form 8839 Qualified Adoption Expenses](#)

(PDF) found at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8839.pdf>.

The exact year you can claim your expenses depends on several factors, including when the expenses were paid, when the adoption was finalized, and even whether your son or daughter is a U.S. citizen or resident.

The tax credit applies to domestic and international adoptions, but the procedure is not the same. Credit for expenses for international adoptions can be claimed only after finalization; for domestic adoptions, the credit can be applied even if the adoption does not go through.

For more information about the Adoption Tax Credit, log onto <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html> and/or www.adoptioninformation.com/Adoption_tax_credit.



To request tax forms and/or publications, log onto <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html> or call 1-800-829-3676 to order the correct guide.

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS TO SUCCESS ACT AND INCREASING ADOPTIONS ACT OF 2008

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (H.R. 6893) was introduced in the House of Representatives on September 15, 2008, and passed into Law by President Bush on October 7, 2008.

This Act will help hundreds of thousands of children and youth in foster care by promoting permanent families for them through relative guardianship and adoption

and improving education and health care. Additionally, it will extend federal support for youth to age 21. The act will also offer for the first time many Native American children important federal protections



and support. This Act has bipartisan support.

For more information on this Act, log onto:

<http://www.clasp.org/publications/fctaiaact2008resources.htm> and or <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/adoptionhr6893.htm>.

ASK OUR EXPERTS

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

Question:

Our daughter was in the NJ foster care system for several years before we adopted her and wants to attend college next fall. What scholarship opportunities are available to her?

This is a wonderful question, especially considering these economic times. Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) offers two scholarship programs for foster and adoptive youth in New Jersey.

The first is the [New Jersey Foster Care \(NJFC\) Scholars Program](#). This is a program that receives Federal and State funding, which FAFS is contracted to Administer.

The second is the [FAFS Private Scholarships and Grants program](#).

Eligibility for the NJFC program changes from year to year, so it is best to contact the FAFS scholarship representative at 800.222.0047 to find out the details.

This NJFC Scholars Program is Federal and State funded. Federal funding is limited to \$5,000 per academic year and covers tuition, fees, room and board (on or off campus), books and supplies, public transportation, special equipment, computers and child care costs. Other supports can only be granted if there is funding re-

maining after tuition is covered.

State Funding covers only tuition and fees when a student attends full time at a New Jersey public school; there is no dollar amount limit for this funding.

An individual may be eligible for the Federal Program, the State Program, or both. Eligibility is based on placement history. Individuals are notified of their eligibility after their completed application has been collected by the FAFS staff and reviewed by the State of New Jersey's Adolescent Service Unit at DYFS.

The NJFC scholars program works with any school that is accredited to receive Federal financial aid. It is important to remember, though, that if you are only eligible for the state program, you will be limited to attending an NJ public school.

In addition, each year FAFS offers Academic Scholarships and Opportunity Grants. These scholarships and grants are funded by individual donors who wish to sponsor a young person who is or was in foster care in NJ, or who was adopted from the NJ DYFS system.

Unlike the NJFC Scholars Program, the private scholarships and grants do not have age restrictions on the placements or adoption dates. To receive a

copy of the application brochure, or to get on the mailing list, call a FAFS scholarship representative.

If you do not believe you qualify for any of the above scholarships, there are other resources available as well.

They are:

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Filing out the FAFSA form can be complicated, so we recommend you download the following link: www.collegegoalsundayusa.org/support/FosterYouthFAFSATipSheet.PDF. This worksheet is helpful if you were in foster care and/or adopted.

New legislation was passed in 2008 that changed the definition of an "independent" student for financial aid purposes. As of the fall of 2009, anyone who was a ward of the state/court after the age of 13, even if they were later adopted, is defined as an "independent." This will enable these young people to qualify for more financial aid than they would have in the past.

Another great resource is the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. For more information on scholarships, log onto www.davethomasfoundation.org. Best of luck with your child's future endeavors.

DO YOU KNOW?



**OUR GUEST EXPERT,
LESLIE BARDA, PROJECT
SUPERVISOR, FAFS
SCHOLARSHIPS**

For more information on Post High School/ College Scholarship Programs, contact FAFS at 1.800.222.0047 Or [Scholarships @fafsonline.org](mailto:fafsonline.org) Other scholarship opportunities may be found at:

www.finaid.com
www.fastweb.com
www.financialaid4you.com
www.blackstudents.com

For additional details, log onto www.njarch.org select "What's New " select "Scholarships" or call 877-4ARCHNJ and we can mail or fax you the details from this article.

DID YOU KNOW?

Want to Chat About Adoption Issues? Visit our Live Chat Rooms :

General :

Sat. 11 am-12 pm

Tues. 7 pm -8 pm

Spanish:

1st Thursday of the month:

4- 5 pm

Teen / Open Chat:

2nd- 4th Thursdays 4-5 pm

Search and Reunion

2nd and 4th Sat. of the

month 12pm-1pm



To find out more about the 100 Longest Waiting Children, log onto:

www.heartgallerynj.org

IT'S TIME FOR SUMMER CAMP!

It's that time of year again where thoughts turn to warmer weather, beach runs and the ever occurring question: What will we do with the kids this summer? Summer camp can be a great option for most kids. Now is the time to research and register.



Going away to camp and/or going to a good day camp can be one of the most memorable experiences for your child. There are a variety of camps on our website that may be a

great fit for both your child's and your needs.

Check out the "Resources" page on the NJ ARCH Website and select "Camps." You can also log onto <http://camps.adoption.com/> to view a list of culture camps around the country. Children who go through the experience of spending time at culture camp, benefit from learning how to increase self esteem, and foster positive relationships between children, adults and families. It also provides an opportunity to discuss adoption issues and build positive feelings about each family's international heritage; not to mention all the friends and amazing memories they make along the way.

Whether you choose a culture camp or day camp in your area, the experience of doing different things and meeting new people can make a real difference in a child's life.

Cannot find a camp on our website? Log onto American Camp Association at www.acacamps.org or check out www.mysummercamps.com/.

Happy camping!



DYFS WAITING CHILD: DEJON: 11 YEARS OLD



DeJon is an adorable 11-year old boy enjoys skateboarding, video games, the superheroes Batman and Robin, and toy cars. Initially, he can be shy,

but will open up when he feels comfortable. DeJon works hard to improve his reading skills, and receives individual assistance in his classroom. Therapy, medication, and a therapeutic after-school program are helping DeJon to develop skills to control impulsivity.

DeJon undoubtedly will continue to improve within a stable, loving family who will maintain contact between

DeJon and his twin sister.

A financial subsidy and assistance with medical expenses are available to the family who can open their hearts and home to DeJon. DeJon is waiting.

For more information on DeJon, please call 1-800-99-ADOPT.

NATALIE'S LIBRARY CORNER

Hello, Readers!

Welcome to Natalie's Library Corner. It has been a cold and stormy winter here in New Jersey. This is the time of year when I enjoy reading under an afghan rather than taking a walk outdoors.

These past few weeks I have acquainted myself with some books about "blended families." I was actually looking for information about families comprised of both adopted and biological children. A trip to the supermarket at a time when mothers and children are there in substantial numbers indicates there are almost as many blends of families as there are families. My quest was more for information about "invisibly" blended families.

Keys to Parenting an Adopted Child, by Kathy Lancaster, is an excellent resource. Chapter 12 of this book is titled "Blending Families." Topics addressed are:

1. Blending Biological and Adopted Children
2. Myths About Blended Families
3. Sense of Fairness
4. Sibling Relationships

Following is an excerpt:

"The addition of children to any family results in a shift in family dynamics. Whether the new

family members join the family through birth, adoption, or step-relationships, the security of each child is threatened. A former only child has a sibling. The only girl suddenly has to share her status—and possibly her bedroom and toys—with a new sister. The former youngest child becomes a middle child. Family dynamics become further complicated when the new additions upset the birth order of the children previously in the family. In the case of an older child adoption, for example, the former oldest child could suddenly become a middle child."

Blending Biological and Adopted Children

Adoption happens to families, not just to children. The addition of new children can result in abrupt changes in family harmony. Everyone in the family needs to be prepared for changes in his or her own role in the family that new children bring. Successful harmonizing of biological and adopted children becomes a matter of blending all of the individual identities into a bonded family unit.

Myths about Blended Families

"One mistake that parents of blended families make, for example, is to try to minimize the birthing experience so that adopted children do not feel as

though they have lost out on something."

"Families do not need to shield their adopted children from insensitive remarks as much as they need to reaffirm the children's place in the family through their responses to such remarks."

Sense of Fairness

"Parents often struggle a great deal with trying to equalize life between their biological and adopted children. Children's circumstances are never equal and never need to be equalized regardless of the method in which they entered the family."

"Parents need to give to each child based on what that child needs. A healthy blended family is one that can celebrate each individual's unique situation."

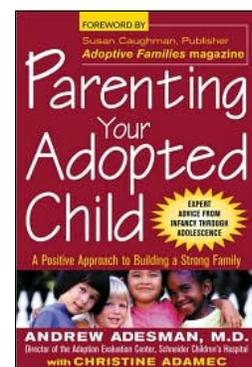
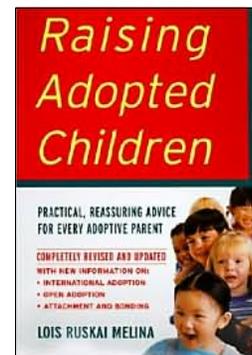
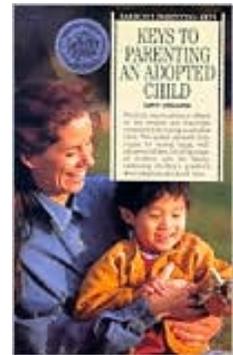
Sibling Relationships

Children who share the experience of growing up together are siblings. It does not matter how they came into the family. Forming strong sibling relationships is the same for children raised in families be they biological or adopted.

There are many books that discuss these topics as well. Let us know if you would like to borrow some of these books.

DID YOU KNOW?

The NJ ARCH Lending Library has a variety of books to borrow



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



CHILDREN'S AID
AND FAMILY SERVICES

www.cafsnj.org



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

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April 22nd is Earth Day. Celebrate by gifting this newsletter to a friend, recycling it and/or requesting that you receive this newsletter by e-mail.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Attending an adoption conference is a great way to learn more about adoption, foster care and/or kinship care. It's also a wonderful way to network and meet other adoptive parents who may have the same questions or issues you do.

Here are some upcoming conferences:

April 22-25:
30th Annual American Adoption Conference, Cleveland, Ohio. For more information log onto:
www.americanadoptioncongress.org/national_conferences.php

May 7 – 9: NY State Citizen's Coalition for Children "Commitment Counts"
Albany NY. For more information, log onto:

<http://nysccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/conference2009.pdf>

August 12-15: 35th Annual North American Council for Adoptable Children (NACAC)
Columbus, Ohio. For more information log onto:
<http://www.nacac.org/conference/proposals.html>

November 7th: Concerned Persons for Adoption (CPFA) 28th Annual "Let's Talk Adoption" Conference, Rutgers

University, Piscataway, NJ. For more information, log onto www.cpfanjanj.org; select "Conference"..

Don't have a PC? Call us, and we can send you information on these or other conferences, events, or anything you see in this newsletter.

Happy learning!

