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## CHILDREN OF HAITI

When the earthquake in Haiti took place in January, we saw images of families and children surrounded by destruction; our heartstrings were pulled by reports from Anderson Cooper, your local news station and the internet. It seemed that the faces of Haiti's children were everywhere and we wanted to help.

Since the earthquake, calls to our NJ ARCH warm line and, from what we understand, NJ adoption agencies have increased. Families who have been thinking about adopting began to consider it more seriously.

Since there are so many orphans in Haiti, why can't adoption agencies just start making adoption plans for them?

According to the Joint Council of International Children's Services ([www.jcics.org](http://www.jcics.org)), the respected authority on international adoptions, "Haiti is currently closed to NEW adoptions by U.S. citizens... govern-

mental and legal procedures to process an adoption in Haiti have been impossible to carry out. Until further notice the best way to support the needs of the children in Haiti is to donate money to international aid organizations dealing with the disaster. Adoptions in Haiti cannot be processed according to Haitian or US law during the current emergency..."

...“Joint Council is working with the U.S. government to determine the impact of the devastation on the adoption process. The coming days will be rightly focused on rescue efforts, it will take weeks, if not months to fully assess the impact on adoptions and develop a plan to move forward with specific cases...”

If you personally have experienced an international adoption, you know the paperwork between the United States and the country of the child's birth is massive. It takes two governments to make an adoption legal. "Any hasty new adoptions

would risk permanently breaking up families, causing long-term damage to already vulnerable children, and could distract from aid efforts in Haiti," stated the aid groups Save the Children, World Vision, and the British Red Cross in a joint statement.

So what's the best thing to do? Consider donating to the Red Cross, UNICEF and/or organizations that support adoption and/or an in-country orphanage. We all want to help; the best way for us to help right now may be helping from a distance. Until the country gets a better idea of the children who are indeed "orphans," let's support them in their home country until the time is right to offer loving adoptive homes through a viable Haitian government and credible adoption agencies that can serve everyone's best interests, especially those of the children.

[www.csmonitor.com/USA/2010/0121/Haitian-orphans-Americans-fight-red-tape-to-hasten-adoptions](http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2010/0121/Haitian-orphans-Americans-fight-red-tape-to-hasten-adoptions)

Photo: [www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/17/haiti.orphans/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/17/haiti.orphans/index.html)

## Do You Know?



**GUEST EXPERT  
GLORIA SMITH, LCSW,  
COORDINATOR,  
BACKGROUND,  
SEARCH AND REUNION  
CHILDREN'S AID AND  
FAMILY SERVICES**

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UPCOMING FREE ADOPTION  
WORKSHOPS IN  
RIDGEWOOD NJ:

APRIL 15: SAME SEX PARTNER  
AND SINGLE PARENT GLBT  
PARENT ADOPTION: HELPING  
CHILDREN SUCCESSFULLY  
INTEGRATE INTO THEIR  
COMMUNITY

MAY 20: LEAVING HOME IS  
HARD TO DO: PREPARING TO  
LAUNCH YOUR ADOPTED CHILD  
FOR COLLEGE OR WORK

FOR INFORMATION AND TO  
REGISTER, CALL CHILDREN'S AID  
AND FAMILY SERVICES AT  
201-445-7015 EXT. 212

## ASK OUR EXPERTS

E-MAIL US YOUR QUESTIONS AT [WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG](mailto:WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG)

*Question:* A birthmother called stating that she and her son were both contacted by a daughter that she placed for adoption over 30 years ago. The birthmother seemed upset, as she was unsure how she was found, especially since she never shared this secret with her husband or children. Do you have any advice for this birthmother about how to process her feelings?

*Answer:* Getting a phone call out of the blue from a birth son or daughter can be emotionally overwhelming. This can be especially difficult if the birthmother has kept the birth a secret from her family. Fearing that her secret will become known can be especially frightening if she believes they will judge her. The birthmother may feel violated and might express anger at being found. Hearing from a birth child also brings up many painful memories from the past. Many birthparents may not have had the opportunity to mourn the loss of their baby because there were few or no supportive people in their lives at the time of the adoption.

The phone call often triggers many uncomfortable feelings and the birthmother may not want to upset her life by being forced to deal with them. Giving voice to the birthparent's feelings and offering support may be helpful in creating

some trust between the birthparent and the birth (now adult) child. Also, explaining how the birthparent was found could be very helpful in alleviating any concerns.

The birthparent may need proof that the person calling is indeed her birth son or birth daughter. I would suggest that the birthparent contact the agency that handled the adoption to verify that the caller was his or her birth child. Also, it would be helpful if the adoptee checked with the agency to see what kind of support services are available to them, (birth parent support group or counseling). If the agency is unknown, it would be helpful to look on the internet for support services to birthparents. The birthparent might need some guidance in telling his or her spouse and children about the child that was adopted.

Since a birthparent is usually taken by surprise when he or she receives a phone call from a child placed for adoption, it is important to give the birthparent some time to deal with the situation and suggest talking again in another week or two. The birthparent may need time to examine and process feelings before she/he can make a rational decision about having contact. More than 80% of birthparents,

especially birthmothers, do eventually agree to have a reunion. They often resolve their ambivalence about contact when they understand the motivation for the search and feel relieved to know that their birth child may have no ill will toward them for making an adoption plan. In fact, the reunion process can be **very healing** to the birthparent who may have feelings of guilt and shame; for some it may provide an opportunity to finally forgive oneself. Concerns about the well being of the birth child can be relieved by learning that he or she grew up in a good family and is productive and leading a fulfilling life. Since living with a secret can be emotionally taxing, the opportunity to no longer keep a part of one's life hidden can be very freeing to the birthparent.

If you are looking for support group or other services, please contact NJ ARCH at 1-877-4ARCHNJ or log onto [www.njarch.org](http://www.njarch.org) and select "Resources" on the left hand side of the Home page.

If you are a birthparent or an adult adoptee who is interested in doing a NJ search, and you are not sure where to begin, consider contacting Ms. Smith at [gsmith@cafsnj.org](mailto:gsmith@cafsnj.org) or call her at (973) 762-5887. She may be able to point you in the right direction.

## MAY IS NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH... "YOU CAN CHANGE A LIFETIME"

All children deserve a safe, happy life, including the 473,000 American children and teenagers in foster care. Young people in foster care need nurturing stable adults on their side because their own families are in crisis and unable to care for them.

Each May, we thank the compassionate people who make a difference in a child's life by serving as foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers and volunteers. Thanks to these unsung heroes, many formerly abused or neglected children and teens either safely reunite with their

birthparents, are cared for by relatives or are adopted by loving families. But some children in foster care are less fortunate. Most communities across the country are seeking more people to help



these young people overcome their troubled childhoods and realize their full potential.

If you are interested in becoming a NJ foster parent,

call 877-NJFOSTER or log onto <http://www.state.nj.us/njfoosteradopt/foster/>.

To download statistics on foster care by state, log onto the below link:

[www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info\\_services/factsheets.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/factsheets.html)

[www.fostercaremonth.org/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fostercaremonth.org/Pages/default.aspx)



## DO YOU KNOW?

NJ RESIDENTS CAN HELP PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT JUST BY CHECKING THE BOX ON **LINE 58** OF THEIR STATE INCOME TAX RETURN?



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO DONATE ONLINE ANYTIME OF THE YEAR, LOG ONTO [WWW.NJ.GOV/DCF/HOME/SPONSOR.HTML](http://WWW.NJ.GOV/DCF/HOME/SPONSOR.HTML)

## SSI BENEFITS FOR DISABLED YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

A new Supplemental Security Income (SSI) rule benefits disabled youth aging out of foster care. Effective immediately, disabled youth who are eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) may now apply for SSI benefits ninety (90) days before foster care board payments are scheduled to stop (when the youth's case is closed). This new policy will assist disabled youth in their transition to adulthood by helping to ensure that income and health benefits will be in place when they age out of foster care.

Previously, applications were not accepted by the Social Security Administration until the month before board payments would stop, possibly leaving the youth without income and health benefits while the application was being processed. Click the link below to view the policy or call our warm line for information at 877-4ARCHNJ.

<https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/public/reference-ence.nsf/8b709aba3e20aodd852574da00547b45/4e6c5c380cf7ee5f852576a900606add!OpenDocument>.

For information and links to many foster care sites, please visit the Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) site at [www.fafsonline.org/RelatedSites.html](http://www.fafsonline.org/RelatedSites.html)

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Have a foster child who is college bound? Be sure to contact the NJ Foster Care Scholars Program. For information, log onto: [www.fafsonline.org/scholarship/html](http://www.fafsonline.org/scholarship/html) or call 800-222-0047.

### Would you like to "chat" about Adoption?

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

## DID YOU KNOW?



You may qualify for an **Adoption Tax Credit** if you adopted a child and paid out-of-pocket expenses relating to the adoption. The adoption credit is calculated on the Form 8839 Qualified Adoption Expenses form. **For tax year 2009, up to \$12,150 per eligible child may be claimed.**

For more information, log onto <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/article/0,,id=177982,00.html>



To find out about the 100 Longest Waiting Children, log onto: [www.heartgallerynj.org](http://www.heartgallerynj.org)

## HELP SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

One of the largest benefit programs for working families is also one of the most overlooked tax credits. It's called the Earned Income Tax Credit and, as the name implies, it's for people who work but don't make a lot of money.

Rural residents, self-employed people such as farmers, childless workers and grandparents raising grandchildren are among those who may be eligible but fail to claim EITC.

The EITC can make life a little easier in these economic

hard times. A married couple with three children and an income ranging from \$12,570 to \$21,420 could be eligible for the maximum tax credit of \$5,657. Taxpayers making as much as \$48,279 could qualify for EITC and can get tax returns prepared for no charge at a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site in their local community. In New Jersey the 2-1-1 Hotline can help families locate VITA sites and other vital services. For Newark area VITA site locations, go to the Newark Asset Building Coalition (NABC) website at [www.newarkassetbuild.org](http://www.newarkassetbuild.org).

The Association for Children of New Jersey ([www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org)) released the *Newark Kids Count*, which shows that the number of Newark residents claiming the federal Earned Income Tax Credit rose 5 percent from 2003 – 2007 and the number claiming the state EITC rose 2 percent from 2004-2008. In these difficult economic times, most likely there are families that could benefit from this tax credit.

For more information or to help spread the word about EITC and VITA, e-mail [nabc@acnj.org](mailto:nabc@acnj.org).

## DYFS WAITING CHILD: KUAME 16 YEARS OLD



Meet Kuame, an inquisitive, fun-loving youngster who is a joy to be around. His warm and engaging smile truly sets him apart. Kuame is friendly and loves to socialize. Those

who interact with him notice his gentle spirit and positive response to attention and affection. Kuame is an excellent artist, who enjoys spending leisure time drawing Spiderman and playing video games. Kuame also likes to spend time at the mall and has a healthy appetite for french fries and cheese burgers.

Kuame has been diagnosed with Autism and classified as Multiply Disabled. Kuame enjoys attending school and receives supports focused on his social and developmental

delays. He gets along well with his peers and teachers. Kuame reads and comprehends well. Math is his favorite subject. Although, Kuame is non-verbal, he eagerly communicates by writing and using his computer.

Kuame would like a family with other children and would love to have a pet. He needs a loving family who will be able to provide structure, patience, support and the nurturance he needs beyond childhood to reach his full potential. To find out more about Kuame, please call 800-99-ADOPT.

## NATALIE'S LIBRARY CORNER

Hello Readers. Welcome to Natalie's Library Corner.

For a long time I have been thinking about doing a book review on the topic of parents who are in prison and their children's reactions to their absence from home. Although it is a part of life that is stressful and unhappy for families, it is a reality that some families must face.

There are some excellent books that have been written especially for children that explain, with sensitivity and compassion, the subject of parental incarceration.

**What Is Jail, Mommy?** by Jackie A. Stanglin, was inspired by a much-loved, five-year-old girl, whose father has been incarcerated for most of her life. One day after visiting with friends who have both their parents, this little girl blurted out to her mother in frustration, "What is jail anyway, and why can't Daddy be home with us?" She needed answers.

**What Is Jail, Mommy?** not only explains why the parent is incarcerated but what his/her life is like as an inmate.

**Visiting Day** by Jacqueline Woodson, is another excellent book for children that will gently and lovingly help them to understand the situation of

a parent being in prison.

On visiting day, a little girl and her grandmother take the long bus ride upstate to visit her father. On the ride, they share food and hope and give comfort to others who make the trip with them. The waiting is hard, and it all takes time. Grandma and the little girl count their blessings, and "love each other up," and wait for the time when Daddy will come back home.

"Love knows no boundaries. Here is a strong family that understands the meaning of unconditional love."

This beautifully worded text is the result of the author's personal recollections of a time long ago.

The magnificent illustrations are the renderings of the artist's visions of a time long ago.

**When Can Daddy Come Home?** by Martha Whitman Hickman, tells the story of Andy whose father is incarcerated.

Dad is in prison. His family has moved so they can visit him more often. What will his son, Anderson, say when the children in the new school ask about him? Anderson soon discovers it is not easy when your father is in prison. With insight and sensitivity, Martha

Whitmore Hickman explores what happens to a child whose father or mother is in prison. She effectively dramatizes how a child in this situation relates to other children and to adults.

**When Can Daddy Come Home?** is a book that will touch anyone who cares for children. This book will also help other children to better understand someone experiencing Anderson's problems.

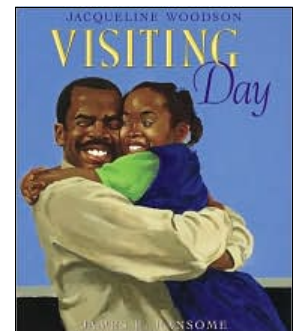
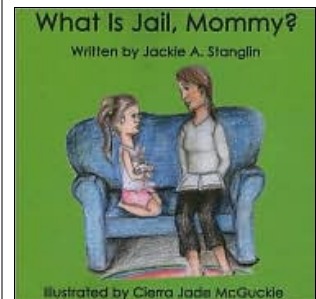
**My Daddy Is in Jail** by Janet M. Bender, is a resource for helping children with the incarceration of a loved one. It includes a read-aloud story, discussion guide, caregiver suggestions and optional small group counseling activities. With this book, helping professionals and other caring adults, will find themselves better equipped to provide information and support to those vulnerable children and their families.

Janet M. Bender, M. Ed. is a retired elementary school counselor, author and consultant.

I think all of the books I reviewed are appropriate and helpful resources for families touched by incarceration.

## DID YOU KNOW?

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



Like to borrow a book?  
Contact us at  
warmline@njarch.org  
or call 877-4ARCHNJ

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# NEW JERSEY ADOPTION RESOURCE CLEARING HOUSE

76 SOUTH ORANGE AVENUE  
SOUTH ORANGE, NJ 07079

VISIT US AT [WWW.NJARCH.ORG](http://WWW.NJARCH.ORG)

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EDITOR:  
DANA WOODS FRIED  
973.763.2041

WARMLINE  
877.4.ARCHNJ  
OR  
877.427.2465

FAX  
973.378.9575

EMAIL  
[WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG](mailto:WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG)  
[LALINEACALUROSA@NJARCH.ORG](mailto:LALINEACALUROSA@NJARCH.ORG)

[WWW.NJARCH.ORG](http://WWW.NJARCH.ORG)



CHILDREN'S AID  
AND FAMILY SERVICES

[www.cafsnj.org](http://www.cafsnj.org)



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

## DISCLAIMER

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April 22nd is the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day.  
Celebrate by gifting this newsletter to a friend, recycling it  
and/or requesting that you receive this newsletter by e-mail.

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## SUMMERTIME IS NEAR

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It's time to plan something fun and unforgettable for your children such as summer camp. For many children this will be a new experience and they may be hesitate to go, but the opportunity to have fun, learn new skills and make lots of friends can beat those fears.

Now is the perfect time to search for summer camps. Chances are, your child will enjoy the fun activities and reap important benefits such as self-esteem, improved social skills, and the opportunity to learn other children's cultures.

To find a list of heritage and/or adoption-related camps, log onto our website at



[www.njarch.org](http://www.njarch.org) and select "Resources" on the left hand side; select "Camps" to view our updated list. Can't find a camp that fits? Log onto the American Camping Association at [www.acacamp.org](http://www.acacamp.org) for a more complete list of all sorts of camps. For a list of NJ

camps, log onto Kids Camps at [www.kidscamps.com/summer-camps/new-jersey-summer-camps.html](http://www.kidscamps.com/summer-camps/new-jersey-summer-camps.html)

Whether you chose a heritage camp, a sports camp, a special needs camp, your child goes for the whole summer or just a week, it may be a life changing experience for your child. Learning to appreciate and cultivate cultural differences and similarities could help them build a better sense of community and individual identity. That alone could be well worth the investment.