

## A FAMILY FOR EVERY CHILD: DECONSTRUCTING ADOPTION MYTHS, RECONSTRUCTING LIVES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Oregon Non-Profit Aims to Dispel Five Biggest Myths About Adoption To Create More "Forever Families"



**Eugene, OR** - Christy Obie-Barrett has heard every myth about adoption out there in her fifteen years of working with foster children, adoption consultants and the foster care system itself.

Initially it was as an adoptive parent - nine of her twelve children are adopted - but, since 2006, it's been as the founder and executive director of the Eugene, OR-based non-profit "**A Family For Every Child.**"

Over the last six years the Pacific Northwest organization has developed ten different-but-symbiotic programs that benefit foster children - from locating scattered relatives and assigning adult mentors to life skill classes and actual adoption placement - and, says Barrett, everyday she and the consultants who work with families around the country hear people say "I really want to adopt, but..."

"More often than not," says Barrett, "they're quite serious about wanting to adopt and while we sometimes hear a concern that's really valid and they're making the right choice we, the vast majority of the time, hear one of the five big myths that they think would keep an adoption agency or state welfare agency from allowing them to adopt."

There are more than 500,000 American children in foster care on any given day - *including some forty thousand of them in the Pacific Northwest* - with typically one third of them available for adoption and waiting for a family. The time to put those myths to bed, says Barrett, is now.

What are the biggest myths? Typically, says, Barrett, it's either about **age, income, marital status, inexperience as a parent or lifestyle choice.**

"We often have people say 'I'm 62 so nobody would let me adopt' or 'I'm single and agencies only want married couples.' That's just not the case," says Barrett, "and we have tons of single people adopting, many of whom have never been a parent before, but who have available to them lots of support on what to expect and how to become a responsible, caring parent to a child who needs just that. And, frankly, many of our older adoptive parents are exceptionally skilled at how to care for children since either they've already raised a few or at least been exposed to nieces and nephews and other children over a long period of time. For some of our older children and teens, they're an ideal parent because they're got that extra measure of experience."

Another huge myth, says Barrett, is that gay and lesbian parents wouldn't receive full consideration as adoptive parents from either a child welfare agency or an adoption agency such as the one A Family For Every Child operates.

"I can't speak for all agencies or for those that are non-secular," says Barrett, "but I think most agencies like ours see potential parents and families for who they are as people and what they bring to the table in terms of being exactly what our children waiting for families need; we're looking for caring, loving, supportive and actively engaged parents for children desperately looking for stability and love."

A Family For Every Child is one of the only child welfare non-profits in the country that offers approved adoptive families not only access to photos, video and biographies on thousands of foster children but also online "webinar" - real-time conferencing - between approved families, adoption consultants and social workers of waiting children.

"Our mission is basically the name of our organization," says Barrett. "Our goal is to find a family for every child that wakes up every morning in foster care wondering if they're ever going to have a family to call their own."

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More information about A Family For Every Child can be found online at <http://www.afamilyforeverychild.org/>. Interviews and requests for more information can be arranged with **Christy Obie-Barrett, [christy@afamilyforeverychild.org](mailto:christy@afamilyforeverychild.org), 541-343-2856**