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Sent: Wednesday, November 23, 2011 2:07 AM
To: pogyssoft@pogyssoft.com
Subject: AFFEC Adoption Agency November 2011



AFFEC Adoption Agency

<http://www.afamilyforeverychild.org> (541-343-2856)
880 Beltline Rd. Springfield, OR 97477

A Family For Every Child

November 2011

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As Easy as a Hug 'Goodnight'

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Would you like to contribute to A Family For Every Child's cause for helping children? Any amount can have a lasting impact on a child. Click below!



Imagine never celebrating a birthday or being kissed goodnight.

Foster children wonder what these experiences are like and can only hope that someday they'll be able to have a story of their own to share. "Forever families" signify hope for foster children. Blood family means nothing when you fully employ the power of the heart. Foster kids can experience more trauma in their childhood than anyone should in their lifetime. With their history and background in foster care, these kids typically have an over-appreciation for simple things: a hug "goodnight", a birthday party, or an amusement park ride.

The success lies in your hands, but begins with appreciation for each other, as well as simple activities that one might typically take advantage of. Five unique "forever families" share their personal stories with adoption and the process of transforming new relationships into life-long bonds. There is no perfect model family for adoption. Whether you're a single parent with biological children, a dual parent without biological children, a first-time parent, an older pair, a same sex couple, adopting siblings or a single child, separate adoptions, biracial adoptions, or whatever your case might be, all families have the capability to adopt.

These five "forever families" want to inspire and encourage foster adoption through telling their genuine, honest stories. Not everyone is fit to be a foster parent, but making the first small step by mentoring and getting involved can be crucial in figuring that out. With the proper training and dedication, anyone can become a "forever family".

A Family For Every Child focuses on finding permanent and loving adoptive homes for every waiting foster child. With 10,000 foster children in Oregon and forty-three times as many in the United States, the need grows greater every day. It takes a small step, like adopting a foster child, to make a big change in a child's life, and a large impact in the world of foster care.

Thayer Family:

When Liz and Justin Thayer became aware of the thousands of kids in the foster care system, they didn't feel the necessity of getting pregnant to become a family. "Some people feel that if the child doesn't come from them, that they might not be bonded," Liz said. The Thayers felt there was a dire need in the foster care system and wanted to give someone the opportunity that they wouldn't have had otherwise.

After the adoption placement, the "forever family" bonding process didn't begin right away. In fact, Liz was nervous because she didn't immediately feel bonded to Brandon, 6; and Gary, 12 like she thought she would. The transition of going from a couple without biological children to a family of four shocked Liz as she asked herself, "Who are these kids? How did they get in my house? And did I do the right thing?"

The Thayers persevered and shortly realized they loved the boys as much as if they had been biological, and can't imagine them not being in their lives. As time went on, Liz answered her initial hesitance with, "When were they not here?" She realized that taking extra time and not continuing with a normal routine is essential. "You have to make sure that you're able to take the time," Liz said. "Take extra time to really spend with the kids and try and find connections."

Being a first-time mom, Liz heard about a "mom instinct" that supposedly kicks in after becoming a mother, but she knew many women who felt just as mystified after giving birth. This reassurance persisted her time spent with the boys in search for that special bond.

One of the most challenging parts for the Thayers about raising children from foster care is dealing with their past-in the foster care system and prior to foster care. "I don't think there is any kid in the foster care system that isn't special needs," Liz said.

The Thayers provide Brandon and Gary with opportunities they would have never had in the foster care system, "they know what's going to happen here and they're not going to go anywhere," Liz said. Constancy is one of the many attributes Liz feels she's providing for the siblings, "this is their forever home. They're allowed to be just normal kids."

Although Liz and Justin Thayer feel their family is complete with the two boys, they suggested the idea of adoption to their friends. Their advocating recently inspired one pair to begin the adoption process.

If you're certain that adoption isn't right for you, then spread the word to help spread the love. Be an advocate and suggest the idea to friends, because there's a child out there waiting to be noticed and loved.

Platt Family:

"It's only been a year and half but it's felt like forever, just because of the bond and the structure, and just the fact that they seem to be different kids than when they first moved in," Gretchen said of her two adopted sons. Gretchen and Doug Platt adopted siblings Kollen and Kayden, 6 and 5 respectively, both with reactive attachment disorder. Although they were warned about Kollen's behavior problems, they haven't had many issues since he moved in with them a year and a half ago.

The adoption finalization was a huge weight lifted off the Platts' shoulders, while it also helped Kollen settle into his new permanent home and provided him with, "this guarantee that he wasn't going anywhere," Gretchen said. Before the finalization, Gretchen felt like they "were under a

In downtown Eugene, Oregon, The Fifth Street Public Market will flip the switch on the holiday season with the return of the spectacular Night of a Thousand Stars on Friday, Nov. 25.

Snow will fall and bulbs will burn brightly from the rooftops and balconies of the Market, providing the perfect backdrop to an evening of singing, dancing, music and other seasonal entertainment.

The event is free and open to the public. It runs from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the historic market.

A Free Celebration (and Fundraiser) for A Family For Every Child

New to this year's festival is the opportunity to make a child's wish come true, by giving a gift or making a donation to A Family For Every Child.

The nonprofit organization is focused on finding permanent and loving adoptive homes for all waiting children. Those who wish to help the charity fulfill a child's holiday wish list

can purchase specific gift.

2012 Princess for a Day Event



March 4, 2012, we will be hosting our 4th annual Princess For A Day Event. An opportunity for girls, ages 2-18 dress up in gowns, tiaras, and have a tea party with their friends. This event is sponsored by A Family For Every Child, along with other community media & business partners. It is designed to be a gift for foster children in the community as well as raise awareness of foster children in Lane County.

Our first planning meeting for this event if you would like to volunteer will be Dec. 6th, at 880 Beltline, Springfield, OR, from 6 p.m to 8 p.m. For more information contact:

esther@afamilyforeverychild.org

Thank You to Our Sponsors



Adoption Orientation

AFFEC is having an Adoption Orientation meeting on Tuesday, October 4th from 5:30-7:30 pm @ the Midland Library 805 S.E. 122nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97233

This is free and open to the public. You will meet AFFEC staff, be given information about our programs, cost, financing possibilities, time frames, and information about how we can help you on your journey to adoption. All our programs are focused on children in the foster care system. Along with our adoption agency we also have mentoring, family finding, and matching assistance programs. Come join us!
RSVP to:
lisa@afamilyforeverychild.org

microscope as the state and adoption workers spent time evaluating their home to finalize Kollen and Kayden's forever family.

The Platts provide support, love and attention for the boys. "Their needs are getting met," Gretchen said. She has become, "the parent they've never had". With two boys, the family is satisfied with the unconditional love in their home. They are advocates for foster care adoptions and constantly encourage friends, while providing them with the truth of adoption: that it's not for everybody. With a few sets of friends currently going through the adoption process, Gretchen and her husband provide support and answers to any questions they might have. "In the long run, it's a very fulfilling thing," Gretchen said.

Looking back a year and a half later, Gretchen realized she "never once thought about adopting." Growing up, her sister had always talked about wanting to adopt, but Gretchen never felt that way. After trying to have children, she saw Kollen and Kayden in the "Heart Gallery" at A Family For Every Child, and so it began. Gretchen's sister picked up her daughter from Korea on the same day the Platts picked up the boys.

"My parents were always foster parents, and my husband's parents as well, so I've always looked at foster parenting more than adopting," Gretchen said. She would have never predicted the domino effect that began with spotting her future children in the "Heart Gallery", leading to the boys living and thriving in her home just a year later.

The supportive financial aid from the state took the Platts by surprise. Financial support was something they weren't aware of, "we were going into the adoption of two children, so when we found out about receiving healthcare until they're eighteen and money for therapy, that was the most surprising thing," Gretchen said. Although the Platts were prepared to pay for everything, financial support gave them a cushion to fall back on.

Just a few months after adopting Kollen and Kayden, the Platts moved into a new house, "that's our house," Gretchen said. The communal move helped act as the first major step together as a new "forever family". Although the first family holidays weren't particularly positive, with a death in the family, Gretchen noticed that the emotional experience actually brought the recent "forever family" closer together. Holiday-oriented traditions, such as making new ornaments each year and doing crafts help instill positive tradition for the boys.

The Platts hope to make their second holiday season more optimistic, and feel that they're finally at the stage where they can do more with the boys. "That first year is adjusting to each other and learning how to be parents and more focused on their needs, and since it's settled, we've been able to do a little more with them," Gretchen said.

"Amazing. Just because we have been told this from so many outside sources about how well adjusted they are, and how much bonding there is," Gretchen responded when asked to describe the relationship between her family and foster children.

Build the bridge between a foster child and his or her first permanent home, like what the Platts did for their sons. Just like any child, kids in the foster care system have dreams for a stable home and future; what's missing is the bridge of opportunity. Every child deserves to have that dream come true.

Hancock Family:

"Some days are good, some are really bad, but then the next day could be like the day before never happened," Jennifer said. Michael left the foster care system over three years ago and just now commenced a life-long bond with his adoptive mother, Jennifer. His initial struggle to bond with his adoptive mother originates in his reactive attachment disorder and oppositional defiant disorder, which make it difficult for a child to create a healthy bond with caregivers or parents.

Jennifer, who initiated the adoption process, found herself uneasy after the adoption placement. Her husband spotted a foster child in the Register-Guard. This created a ripple effect leading to intrigue in the "Heart Gallery", talking to Christy, going to training classes, "and the rest is history," Jennifer said.

Once the placement happened, she felt apprehensive as a first-time adoptive parent who didn't know what to expect. Not initially the adoption advocate, her husband reassured her that she wouldn't feel that way later and eased her anxiety into the life-long journey of adoption. "Being able to communicate is very important," Jennifer said.

Jennifer and her husband continually provide Michael with stability and opportunities that he wouldn't otherwise have, such as, "the feeling of being secure and knowing that we're not going to give up," she said. One new opportunity was a day spent at the amusement park-an experience Michael had never known.

The Hancocks established new traditions, such as giving Michael a gift on Christmas Eve-similar to what many traditional families do. "He has a golden birthday and a double-digit birthday coming up next month, so it's kind of a special thing for that," Jennifer noted. "He's turning ten, so he'll get ten of something. It's the first year he's into double digits and he's pretty excited about that."

Jennifer and her husband cope with Michael's reactive attachment disorder and oppositional defiant disorder. They reassure him that he's in a secure environment by opening up their home and their arms, "every night we hug him goodnight," she said.

Although the adoption process dawns on most as a frightening jump, Jennifer would adopt a single child all over again. She always wanted to adopt, but didn't necessarily consider the foster care system as her first choice.

More than three years after the adoption placement and she is just now beginning to bond with Michael. Through personal reflection, she figured out why she wasn't able to let her guard down. "It's almost like therapy being here," at A Family For Every Child, Jennifer feels like she can talk to anyone and ask questions. She finds it easy to talk to someone who has experience with what she's going through.

Initially, The Hancocks preferred to do a closed adoption, with no contact with the bio family. After finding out Michael's siblings live with his bio mom and learning how to go about an open adoption, they realized it was something they had to contemplate. After much consideration, they modified their decision and felt that, "it was important that he had that connection," Jennifer said. "We've been pretty open as long as it's appropriate. She's been very supportive of him so it's been really good for him."

Jennifer responded when asked for one word to describe the relationship between her family and Michael. The word 'chaotic' when merging an existing family, can be a practical word to describe the reality of a life-long relationship.

There's a foster child with a unique personality for every family considering adoption. Instill a simple tradition, such as hugging him or her "goodnight" every night. A small change with positive reassurance, such as an embrace, can make the difference of a lifetime for a foster child.

Longo Family:

Bob Longo has the knowledge and experience of seven separate adoptions-and each was a teenager at the time of adoption. "I have been down this path seven times over thirty years and am looking to adopt one more teen boy," he said. His initial inspiration to adopt began as a teen; he developed a keen awareness from directly seeing the numerous children in hopeless and helpless life situations.

After the multiple and unique adoptions that Bob experienced, he noticed that each foster child was quite eager to bond with him, even if their history of emotional, physical or learning disabilities suggested otherwise. "If anything, they are often overly affectionate," he said. When he adopted each of his seven boys, they were all "special needs" because they were older than six-years-old in foster care. Bob's struggle lies in trying to differentiate between normal teen behavior and behavior that is the result of certain past living conditions.

Bob provides stability for Matt, 15; Tony, 17; Kyle & James, 26; Curtis, 31; George, 39; and Dan, 44. "My goal is to get them through high school and keep them out of jail and off the streets. For most of these kids, that's huge," he said.

Thirty years after adopting his oldest boys, he succeeded in getting them through high school and is now in the process of doing the same with his youngest. The difference he has made and is making for the boys is imperative in giving them the stable lives they deserve.

Although Bob seems like an experienced adoptive parent now, he began at square one over thirty years ago. The pre-adoption trainings helped him get a better idea of what to expect when adopting a foster child with a history of emotional, physical and/or learning disabilities. "The trainings tampered down expectations-i.e., all I have to do is love this child, provide a good home, and everything will be lovely," he said.

A tradition Bob created, and recognizes with each finalized adoption, is standing in front of the Judge to, "highlight the significance of the day", rather than having the Judge sign the paperwork in his or her office, he said. With seven boys and one more in the near future, Bob refers to his relationship with his adopted children as "family".

Provide a home filled with love and support for a single child or siblings. There is no child out there who deserves to spend their childhood in the foster care system, constantly waiting and losing hope for a future with a "forever family".

Thomas Family:

At times, when the ten-year-old accidentally hurt himself, "he would just scream and cry and would not allow us to console him," Tim said of his recently adopted son. Tim and his partner, Troy have begun the adjustment of having their adopted son live with them. Only 10-years-old and everyday he lives with: Type 1 diabetes, ADHD, Bipolar, and RAD. He requires, "insulin and medication and lots of redirection," Tim said. They find this tough because he resists soothing when he needs it the most.

Although he has lived with them for almost three months, Tim believes, "the name change might help [him] feel more like he belongs." There isn't a specific procedure to help a recently adopted foster child feel like a part of the family because each child adjusts in his or her own way.

Tim would adopt again, "he needs siblings to play with and I think it would be good for him to have someone his age in the home to interact with." His neediness sometimes becomes difficult for the pair, "he is clingy with us so he is rarely alone, but he can be quiet and seems to hold back from attachment at times," Tim said. It's crucial to constantly give him the attention he desires and deserves, which would make it easier with another ten-year-old in the home.

Throughout the adoption process, Tim discovered new facts, "I learned many things about myself; I am patient, I am stronger than I thought and I am still learning things about me I never knew existed." These characteristics can reveal themselves when one goes through an adoption.

In addition to learning about himself, Tim also found interesting information about the adoption process; "[it] was very informative. My agency helped me with suggesting many books that helped prepare me for the world of a hurt child," he said. In addition to the help of a local agency, Tim and Troy felt the close support of Christy, of A Family for Every Child, "[she] went out of her way to support me even though I live on the opposite coast," Tim said.

Tim and Troy are reminded daily of their son's unique personality, "as he is a whiz with numbers," Tim thinks he would make a great accountant. At only ten-years-old, Tim and Troy can visualize their son doing great things in the future, while they constantly provide him with commitment and support. "He is extremely smart and can do anything he wants. I think he would make a great educator for diabetes," Tim said.

Anyone has the capability to adopt, no matter his or her orientation or background. Tim and Troy have wanted to be loving parents from day one, but felt that it couldn't happen because of their orientation. "We always wanted children but never thought it would be possible because of some negative views on our orientation. I felt spiritually led to adopt and that he is meant to be with us," Tim said. With support from A Family For Every Child, Tim and Troy are on their way to finalizing the adoption of their son.

Anyone can help a foster child experience his or her "first time", whether it's seeing the ocean; squishing sand between his or her toes; tasting snow; petting zoo animals; or riding a bike. It's the simple things in life that bring joy to a foster child.

Create a new tradition for your child. It's the basics: a hug 'goodnight' every night; the first time on an amusement park ride; moving into a new house as a family; celebrating a golden or double-digit birthday; recognizing the adoption finalization by standing in front of the judge; making holiday crafts & Christmas ornaments; throwing an adoption party with friends and gifts; or having your child open a gift on Christmas eve.

Although adopting a foster child isn't an easy task, a child's appreciation for simple things such as a hug "goodnight" becomes enough to reason for the difficulties. Learn to appreciate the rewards that come with the challenge of being a "forever family".

You don't have to be someone special to be special to a foster child.

How can you make a difference? Become an adoptive parent, mentor, volunteer or donate. Foster children are waiting for your help.

With November being National Adoption Awareness month. now is the time to make a difference for a waiting child!

About Our Adoption Agency

A Family For Every Child (AFFEC) is an umbrella organization with many programs. A Family for Every Child Adoption Agency (AFFEC AA) is one of those programs. While AFFEC serves families from all over the country in many of our programs, our Adoption Agency serves only Oregon families.

A Family for Every Child Adoption Agency was started in November of 2008. The Adoption Agency was created to meet the needs of older and harder to place children. When these children believe that the system has given up on them, in turn, they give up on themselves. Through our recruitment efforts we have found that there are many families who would welcome these children. By offering support we aim to find Forever Families for children previously labeled as "unadoptable".

How we differ from other Oregon adoption agencies:

- We solely focus on families that are looking to adopt from the foster care system. 100% of our families are looking to adopt children that are considered hard-to-place. We do not work with families interested in domestic private adoptions (infant adoptions) or international adoptions.
- An open door to all families - We honor family diversity
- We help Oregon families look nationwide for children. Oregon has very few children on the adoption track and therefore has become very competitive for families in the last few years and we feel that it is to the advantage of some families to look outside the Oregon system for children that would be a good match for their family.
- Everyone of our Adoption Agency families are included in our Matching Assistance Program, this is a free membership in our Matching Assistance Program that includes a private child listing website of 1,500+ children from all over the country
- Support and information are vital for success. We at A Family for Every Child Adoption Agency are committed to providing the information and

support necessary to help our families succeed at Special Needs adoptions. A team of folks available to answer your questions throughout the entire process.

How to Get Started

The process begins when you as prospective parents inquire about adoption in general or a specific child. You can do this by completing an online Adoption Inquiry Form on our website http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?llr=hq4lu8bab&et=1108721704044&s=16894&e=00162VWDVifTetGZACW8U51iXlBvewg7ZTpdWdHhX_ScW6KBqaLCiJuQZAmCm7TW9oi1oLDgNqL1GDs_-JOdkZdrB-KczFuPTIoJBGgXH6vCNGrMZxeBK8DGOBvVfjm81mre2GEh28bebO1FxXt_18F-g== or by contacting our agency directly in-person or via telephone. We are here to answer all of your questions about the adoption process and are more than happy to meet with you in person or over the phone for a consultation.

· We encourage all families to investigate your options and make sure that you work with the agency that is best for your family. There are two ways that you get a Home Study: You can either work with a "public" agency, such as DHS or a "private" SNAC agency. Working with DHS to complete your Home Study is free, however with recent budget constraints your wait may be up to 6-12 months to get started depending on what county you live in. There is generally a fee to work with a SNAC agency, however you will generally have a Home Study in around 3-6 months depending on a few variables.

· One of the first steps in the process, regardless of the type of agency you choose, is to attend an Adoption Orientation or get signed up for the Foundations Training. All prospective adoptive parents will need to take Foundation training before their Home Study can be finalized and depending on your area or where you choose to take this training there may be a wait, so it is best to get enrolled as soon as you know that you are interested in beginning the process to adopt. Here is a [link](#) to some of the trainings offered in Oregon. These trainings can be completed over 4 weeks, 10 weeks or in a weekend depending on where you choose to sign up for these trainings.

· The next step, once you have decided on your agency, is to begin filling out the agency's Parent Packet or Application forms, schedule a physical exam with your health professional, and begin gathering all the necessary documents (birth certificates, marriage licenses, income verification items, etc.). This can take some time and be a little overwhelming. You will also be required to complete a background check which can sometimes take time to get the results back. Make sure you go at a pace that is right for you and feel free to call our office to get any questions you may have answered.

· Once your Application packet is returned that is when you will be assigned your adoption worker who will start the Home Study process. She/he will meet with you in your home to talk about your personal history, family relationships, what brought you to the decision of adoption, and the supports/resources available to you. They will determine if your home is safe and has sufficient space for adopted child/children. This step will help you and the agency make the best possible decisions about whether placement of child/children will work out and to determine the characteristics of the children whom you will be most successful parenting.

· A Home Study is a report that is required to determine the eligibility of adoptive parents. A Home Study can only be used for only one adoption (sibling groups are considered one if done at the same time.)

· Matching/Selection: This is where you and the agency you have chosen work together to find the best match. Some say the matching process is the hardest and most frustrating part, we say be patient and don't lose hope. Understand who will be submitting your home study on children and how often. In some cases you will be given a copy of your home study to submit on children, and some agencies prefer that they submit your home study. Some agencies will submit on children out of state and other agencies will only submit on children in your state. We pride ourselves on having a very current and reliable web listing of children waiting for their adoptive family.

· Placement: This is when you have been selected as the "Forever Family" for a child/children.

· We are here for you at every stage of the process!

Our Next Adoption Orientation

November 29th, 2011 - 5:30 to 7:30 @ The Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue Station 67, Central Beaverton at 13810 SW Farmington Road, Beaverton, OR 97005

Orientation: Find out how to get involved in the lives of foster children

Do you want to learn more about how to make a difference in the life of a foster child in your community? Maybe as a mentor, volunteer, donor, or as a foster or adoptive parent? There are many roles and many ways you can make a difference in the life of foster children in your community, please come and learn more.

We welcome all and anything you have to offer. This is free and open to the public. You will meet AFFEC staff, be given information about our programs, cost, financing possibilities, time frames, and information about how we can help you on your journey toward adoption. All of our programs are focused on children in the foster care system.

Along with our adoption agency we also have mentoring, family finding, and matching assistance programs. Come join us! We have the dates of a few upcoming orientations:

- November 29th, 2011 - 5:30-7:30- The Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue Station 67, Central Beaverton at 13810 SW Farmington Rd. Beaverton, OR 97005
- December 6th, 2011 - 5:30 - 7:30 Eugene - Springfield. Here in our office - 880 Beltline Rd., Springfield OR 97477
- January 24th, 2011 - Portland Area 5:30 - 7:30 - TBA

If you want to sign up, you can email: lisa@afamilyforeverychild.org or try out our new online signup [form](#).

It Takes a Village and We Need You!

We want and need your help to spread the word! Here are ways you can help us recruit for kids:

- Link us on your website. Contact: Dennis@afamilyforeverychild.org
 - Email us any supports, training's, activities, blogs, anything that could help. Contact: Christy@afamilyforeverychild.org
 - Become a [volunteer](#)
 - Donate, attend, or become a sponsor at our [event](#)
 - Host a Heart Gallery. Contact: Heather@afamilyforeverychild.org
 - Become a mentor. Heather@afamilyforeverychild.org
- Questions? Ideas? Christy@afamilyforeverychild.org

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How can you contact A Family For Every Child?

Call, email, or visit us online or in person!

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