

fostering perspectives

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How I am not only surviving after sexual abuse, but *thriving*!

by Angelina Giampocaro Spencer

My story is not unlike the stories of many of the children with whom you work. It may even be something you experienced yourself. I share it to help you understand a bit more about working

with sexually abused children. It is my desire that it will give you hope. I have broken the cycle of abuse by not abusing my own children or any other children with whom I've worked over the years. I have become not just an incest "survivor," but a "thrivor."

I believe the children with whom you work can do the same!

Once upon a time, a little girl is having her birthday party at home. She has fun childhood party games, though she can't quite recollect what those games were. She does remember climbing the stairs after her party. She had on her pretty party dress. Her daddy held her hand as they climbed the stairs, and he would once again molest her.

She doesn't remember the details. She has learned to dissociate when this happens. Dissociating means that she is, so to speak, "hovering" somewhere else in the room, watching this scene. To actually be going through something like this is just too much to bear.

This is not the first time this has happened. It won't be the last. She has learned how to cope. It will be over soon...until the next time.

She waits at night in her bed. She imagines a huge human-like fox dressed in a fancy suit. He's wearing a golden brocade vest and ruffled shirt and he looks quite important and self-assured. He comes into her room at night and wants to get into her bed and do bad things to her.

She thinks if she is absolutely still, if she holds her breath, perhaps the fox will pass on through her room and leave her alone tonight. She lays terrified in her bed trying not to breathe or make any noise.

I have broken the cycle of abuse. It is my desire to give you hope.

This little girl is me. Now, at 50 years old, I am still barely able to write these words. My pulse is racing and my tears are just at the brink. I find it much easier to write as if I **were** someone else.

I still ask how and why this could have happened to me. The children you know who have been sexually abused probably wonder the same things. They may also struggle with the following difficulties.

Feeling Unclean. Feeling "dirty" is something I have dealt with over the years. As a child my hair was often dirty and stringy. I kept it hanging over my face in an effort to "hide." Due to baths taken with my dad, I did not want to take a bath. To this day I still feel dirty if I take a bath. I want to shower off the "dirt."

Please, if you care for a child who has been sexually abused, tell this child he is not dirty. Let him know over and over that the sexual abuse was not his fault and he does not have to feel dirty.

Feeling Unattractive.

I believe that when a person has been sexually abused, one way of combating the abuse is to make sure you are not attractive. You want your appearance to say, "Leave me alone!"

I never felt good enough or thin enough or pretty enough. I walked with a definite slump. However, with healing and time and the wisdom that accompanies age, today I mostly feel kind of cute!

cont. p. 2



Angelina Spencer

Child Sexual Abuse in the U.S.

The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect recognizes that the statistics we have for child maltreatment are **vast underestimates**, since most abuse and neglect never comes to the attention of state agencies. Nevertheless, the following can help us understand the scope and nature of child sexual abuse:



Incidence

- In 2003, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System reported 78,188 victims of sexual abuse in the U.S. (USDHHS, 2005). This is a rate of 1.2 per 1,000 American children (Douglas & Finklehor, 2005).
- In 2003 sexual abuse accounted for 10% of all confirmed child maltreatment cases in the U.S. (USDHHS, 2005). In North Carolina that year, sexual abuse accounted for 3.46% of all maltreatment substantiations (NCDSS, 2006). Although we do not know the percentage, the number of children in foster care in North Carolina who have been sexually abused is likely much higher than 10%.
- Between 1992 and 2000 the annual number of substantiated sexual abuse cases dropped from 149,800 to 89,355, a 40% decline. Researchers believe a real decline, as opposed to changes in reporting trends or data collection, is responsible for this drop (Finklehor & Jones, 2004).

Victims

- Girls are sexually abused three times more often than boys (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996).
- Children of all ages are at risk, though teens may be at higher risk (Douglas & Finklehor, 2005).
- Sexual abuse is commonly associated with other family problems, such as parental alcoholism, parental rejection, and parental marital conflict (Douglas & Finklehor, 2005).

Perpetrators

More than 90% are men (Douglas & Finklehor, 2005). However, some believe sexual abuse by women is underreported. Offenders are most often acquaintances (approximately 50%) followed by family members (approximately 25% to 33%) and strangers (7% to 25%) (Douglas & Finklehor, 2005).

See the online version of this issue for all references cited in this issue.

Thriving

continued from page 1

Difficulty with Love and Trust.

Because of the sexual abuse, for most of my life I felt that if someone did love me or pretended to love me it was in order to get something from me. I felt a great deal of mistrust. As a result, I learned to either push people away or to choose unhealthy relationships. I still have a difficult time believing that I deserve to be loved. However, now I know without a doubt that I am loveable!

Children who have been sexually abused need to know they are loved for who they are. They should not be made to "perform" to get the love they need. They need to know that they deserve to be loved and to be in healthy relationships.

Help children see that the abuse was not their fault.

Trouble with Emotions. For years I could not allow myself to feel. I had great compassion and warmth for others, but I could not allow those feelings to touch me. Later I went to therapy so I could allow myself to feel the anger, fear, sadness,

and other feelings associated with the loss of my childhood. I needed therapy to help me understand that I would not fall apart if I allowed myself to feel my feelings. This was one of the most difficult, depressing times of my life. However, because I had a good therapist, a loving husband, and because I knew I was in God's hands, I am once again free to feel.

Please know that when your sexually abused children come out of therapy each week, they

need to feel. They need to know that with you they are safe to feel. They may manifest their feelings in anger or depression or other emotions. Stand by them, love them through this. They had their childhood robbed from them. They have a right to be angry about that. Please know this will be healing to them.

Low Self-Esteem. There is a tremendous amount of guilt and shame associated with sexual abuse. You tend to believe you deserved the abuse, that you brought it upon yourself. Because of low self-esteem, often I have been reluctant to share my opinion about anything.

To help build your children's self-esteem, praise them for what they do well. When your child offers to do the smallest thing for you, such as cooking a meal, hitting a **cont. p. 3**

Partnering with Birth Families of Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused

Child sexual abuse stirs up strong responses in all of us. When a child has been sexually abused we may experience a variety of emotions, including fear, helplessness, and sympathy.

Often, we also feel anger. Anger toward the abusing parent or family member, for what he or she has done. Anger at the nonoffending parent, for failing to prevent the abuse or for failing to acknowledge that the abuse has occurred. This anger is natural and we should not blame ourselves for feeling it.

Yet anger towards the birth parents can also prevent foster and adoptive parents from being supportive of connections between the child and the birth family.

This can have a devastating impact on children. Regardless of what their parents have done, children have a compelling need to be connected to their families of origin. Without this link, children often continue to have many unanswered questions and unresolved feelings that can make it difficult to develop their own healthy, independent identities.

Judgments can also be a problem. Kids usually know it when their foster or adoptive parents judge their birth parents. The divided loyalties and sense of personal injury or attack that children often feel when their parents are condemned can make it difficult for them to be "OK" in foster care, which can impact their behavior in the home and at school. Over time, conflict between the different parents in their lives may even damage children's ability to attach to adoptive parents, foster parents, and others.

Positive connections between foster and birth parents mean a lot to kids. As veteran foster parent and foster parent trainer Debbie Gallimore explains it, "What I didn't realize for many years is that the more I accepted and honored the birth families of my foster children, the more the children connected with and loved me. It seemed such a paradox. Yet I came to realize that by honoring and loving their families, I was honoring and loving them, too."

When there is partnership between birth and foster parents, foster parents are in a better position to help

"Birth parents are more than what they have done. They are the people who gave life to the children we love. They created the color of their eyes, the texture of their hair, and parts of their souls we can never touch."

— Debbie Gallimore, foster parent trainer with the NC Division of Social Services and former foster parent



meet children's deep needs for connection, which promotes their healthy emotional development. Through partnerships with birth parents, foster parents can also help birth parents learn new ways to support and nurture the child. For example, foster parents can model parenting skills that ensure the safety of children who have been sexually abused.

Of course, as long as you care about children, you will react emotionally when they are hurt. Fortunately, there are things you can do to manage your emotions before you have contact with birth parents. Some of these include:

- Talk with your licensing worker or the child's social worker before meeting with the birth parents.
- Make a list of the birth parents' strengths; this will help you remember that they are more than what they have done to their children.
- Remind yourself how birth family connections benefit children, especially the development of their identities.
- Have a plan for what to do if your own emotions about the birth parents begin to interfere with your efforts to develop a partnership (e.g., you might count to 10, or simply take a break).

If you are a North Carolina foster parent and would like to learn more about partnering with the parents of children who have been sexually abused, contact your licensing social worker. The NC Division of Social Services regularly teaches MAPP-GPS trainers to teach foster and adoptive parents about this topic.

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Mission. *Fostering Perspectives* exists to promote the professional development of North Carolina's child welfare workers and foster parents and to provide a forum where the people involved in the child welfare system can exchange ideas about foster care and adoption in our state.

Disclaimer. The opinions and beliefs expressed herein are not necessarily those of the NC Division of Social Services or the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

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Thriving continued from page 2

baseball, or singing a song, realize that it is not a small thing. Seize the moment. Allow them to share whatever they offer and praise them for a job well done.

Self-Soothing Behaviors. People who have been sexually abused sometimes feel the need to engage in self-soothing behaviors. In my case, when I was a child I would get up on my hands and knees in bed and rock myself to sleep. I know now those self-soothing behaviors came in anticipation of my dad's nighttime visits.

Some self-soothing behaviors may be alarming to you. However, if the behavior does not hurt the child and the child's therapist agrees it is necessary and not detrimental, then the children should be allowed to engage in the behavior.

Guilt and Shame. One of the strongest sources of the guilt and shame for me and for other survivors of sexual abuse is the fact that our bodies responded reflexively to the abusive sexual stimulation. We ask ourselves, "How could my body have betrayed me like this?" The fact that our bodies reacted naturally to the abuse is one of the most difficult things for us to face.

Know that this is true of the sexually abused children for whom you care. They may not be able to face this fact for years. Yet there is anger attached to the fact that one's body betrayed one's mind. You can help by continually reminding children that the abuse is not their fault. Reassure them that guilt and shame are unnecessary.

Other Suggestions

Be calm. Sexually abused children need to know you won't "freak out" if they need to talk about their sexual abuse.

Be aware that children who have been sexually abused may have a distorted sense of what is "normal." Children sometimes come into foster care not knowing there was anything "wrong" in their home. This has been the only life and family they have known.

Appreciate Small Successes. One tiny turn in a healthy direction may make a huge impact on a child's life. Sometimes we look at children expecting, hoping, and longing to see healthy change. I feel we sometimes may miss the bigger picture. That tiny turn, that small change in that child's life just may be staring us in the face! It may not feel profound to us. But it is. It is part of the bigger picture of change. There is hope in the smallest of packages!

Take Heart. Know there is help and there is hope. Much of that is in you!

How Did I Survive? How Do I Thrive?

Here are some of the things that helped me most during my long and difficult journey to my current perspective as a sexual abuse thriver:

My Spiritual Life. My faith in God sustains me. I believe that in everyone there is a "soul-hole" that must be filled. We must be cautious about what we decide fills that hole. We must be cautious about our guidance and nurturance of these precious souls that have been entrusted to our care.

Other Strong, Positive Adults. As I was growing up there were other adults in my life with whom I could be safe. There were adults that I knew loved me. Their love was strong and warm and safe. Nothing was expected of me in return. I could trust their touch. If I didn't want to be touched, I could tell them and they would honor that request and still love me. You must be this kind of adult for the children in your lives.

Building on Strengths. I am a firm believer that everyone has a gift or talent in which they can excel. When you allow that child to cook as he offered or to dance for you as she offered, you are giving this child the opportunity to succeed. You are encouraging self-esteem. The gifts I've worked on over the years are singing and acting. I think sexually abused thrivers are good at acting because they are used to being someone else. Hovering somewhere in the room is a useful skill on stage.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for allowing me to share my story. And thank you for sharing yourselves with our children.

Angelina Spencer (angelina.spencer@ncmail.net) is a foster care licensing consultant with the NC Division of Social Services. Write to her at DHHS/DSS, Regulatory and Licensing, 952 Old US 70W Hwy, Black Mountain, NC 28711.

Resources for Learning More

Fostering the Child Who Has Been Sexually

Abused, by Donna Foster

<http://ssw.unc.edu/fcrp/fp/fp_vol5no1/fostering_sexually_abused.htm>

Child Sexual Abuse: Intervention and Treatment

Issues, by K.C. Faller, published by the USDHHS (1993). <<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/usermanuals/sexabuse/sexabusef.cfm>>

Children's Services Practice Notes, vol. 5, no. 2

(June 2004) and vol. 7, no. 2 (May 2002) by the UNC-CH School of Social Work
<www.practicenotes.org>

The Future of Children, vol. 4, no. 2 (Fall 1994).

<http://www.futureofchildren.org/pubs-info2825/pubs-info_show.htm?doc_id=74215>

Parenting the Sexually Abused Child, from the

National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (1990). <http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/f_abused>

Preparing a Safe Place for Healing for Sexually Abused Children



1. Have boundaries and rules that are clear and safe.
2. Emphasize that people can choose to experience their feelings without acting on them.
3. Supervise in ways that allow you to keep track of your kids at all times and know who they are with; careful supervision gives parents a chance to redirect "trigger" behaviors (aggressive horseplay or teasing, lack of boundaries).
4. Present opportunities to develop social and communication and problem solving abilities, to understand cause and effect, and to develop goal-oriented behavior.
5. Increase self-control by helping kids learn to identify "trigger" feelings (fear, frustration, anxiety, and stress are possible triggers which may stimulate sexual feelings and trigger behaviors); teach children how to manage their stress through slow breathing, word hugs, prayers, imaging, etc.
6. Make the "rule of three" a new family rule: avoid just one adult alone with a child, or two kids without an adult. Teach kids the "No/Go/Tell" defense.
7. Talk respectfully about sexuality, using correct terms for body parts. Suggestive and ambiguous words, slang, and obscenities can be "triggers" that create feelings of stimulation and shame.
8. Communicate actions and intentions clearly. Touching and cuddling between children and adults may be threatening and/or may trigger sexualized feelings/ behaviors.
9. Discuss how secrets, surprises, and privacy differ. Emphasize that there are to be no secret games, stories, clubs, or presents, especially between children and adults or older kids.
10. Discuss openly as a family the boundaries and rules for bedrooms, bathroom, bedtimes, and dressing and undressing. All members need to understand that for kids who have been hurt and compromised by sexual abuse these may carry sexual and/or aggressive messages and that all adults (regardless of sex) may be perceived as potentially threatening.
11. Provide separate beds for children and separate bedrooms for boys and for girls to help set safe boundaries and encourage privacy.
12. Use logical consequences and behavioral contracts for misbehavior.

Adapted from an article originally published under the title "Tips for Preparing A Safe, Secure Place for Healing" in the June 1999 newsletter, The WARE Abouts, from the Washington Adoption Resource Exchange. WARE is a project of the Northwest Adoption Exchange, Seattle, WA <www.nwae.org>



NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association

Visit the Association's Web Site at <<http://www.ncfapa.org>>

From the association's president by Stacey Darbee

Greetings! The NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association sponsored a fabulous training institute again this past April. What a success it was! This year's theme, "You Make The Difference," really resonated with the foster, adoptive, and kinship parents and agency personnel attending the event.

Although the conference has ended, the lessons we learned and the memories we made have not. New friends and renewed relationships, laughter, great meals, time for self care and respite, superlative workshops: we believe the memories and knowledge you gained at the conference will sustain you when the going gets tough. We at the NCFAPA hope this conference really did make a difference in your lives, enabling you in turn to make a difference in the life of a child.

I would like to personally thank the board of directors for their tireless work: you helped make this event a success. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Jeanne Preisler of Omni Visions for her invaluable help. We also sincerely thank the North Carolina Division of Social Services for the funding it gives the Association: this gift enables us to serve foster and adoptive parents across the state.

Celebrating Two Special Members

We would like to celebrate Wanda and Tony Douglas' contributions to the NCFAPA. When members elected Wanda as treasurer of our board we really got a "2 for 1" deal: her husband Tony has attended every board meeting and has helped the

The Association serves foster, adoptive, and kin parents in North Carolina by promoting quality services and providing advocacy, education, and other resources.

association in countless ways. The Douglases truly understand and embrace the meaning of partnership. This is evident in their marriage of 18 years, in their commitment to family, in their agency relationships, and in their commitment to the association.

We are proud to announce that Wanda and Tony Douglas will be

keynote speakers at the Daniel Memorial Institute's 13th Annual National Foster Care Conference, May 17-19, 2006 in Daytona Beach, Florida. Their address, "Say 'Yes' to Your Dreams," will deliver the message that you already have what it takes to put your feet on the "yes path" and walk toward the fulfillment of your dreams. Congratulations Wanda and Tony!

May 16 Rally in Raleigh

On May 16, 2006 a coalition of groups and agencies will sponsor a Foster Care/Adoption Day at the General Assembly in Raleigh. This day has been developed to thank the legislature for its past actions in support of foster care and adoption in North Carolina, and to raise awareness in the General Assembly of the continuing needs of foster and adopted children, their parents, and our state's child welfare system.

On May 16 we will send a clear message that permanence has many different faces and that every one of them needs to be supported by the community at large. There will be exhibits during the entire day. At 3 p.m. we will convene for a panel presentation to the General Assembly. This panel

will be made up of foster parents, adoptive parents, birth parents, kinship parents, former foster children who have "aged out" of the system, and adopted children.

We hope you will join us on May 16. This is a wonderful opportunity to have an impact on the future of foster care in North Carolina! This special day will also highlight the blue ribbon campaign of National Foster Care Month <www.fostercaremonth.org>. For more information please visit <www.NCFAPA.org>.

How We Serve You

The mission of NCFAPA is to promote quality foster and adoptive services through collaborative advocacy, education, resources, reunification, and networking. We continue to partner and advocate with others in the field of child welfare. Our partners include NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network, the Covenant for NC Children, SaySo, the Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, the Collaboration to Adopt USKids, and the National Foster Parent Association. We also have a seat on many advisory groups and stakeholder teams.

These are benefits of the association that one can't feel or touch, but we are "out there" being the voice of foster, adoptive, and kinship parents in North Carolina.

There are over 12,000 potential members for this association. We need your support to make sure your voice is heard.

Please become a member today.



Stacey Darbee

Join the Association!

Membership is open to anyone interested in strengthening foster and adoptive services in North Carolina. Send this form, with payment (DO NOT send cash), to: NCFAPA at UNCG, PO Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402-6170. Make checks payable to the NC FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATION.

Regular Membership is open to any foster or adoptive parent and is \$15 for an individual and \$25 for a couple. **Associate Membership** (\$50 for an individual and \$100 for an organization) is available to those who do not qualify for Regular Membership.

First name #1: _____ First name #2: _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

County: _____ Licensing Agency: _____

Home phone: () _____ E-mail: _____

Membership Amt. included: _____ Donation Amt.: _____

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- Does your child have special needs?
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Reading about the hard stuff: Child sex abuse

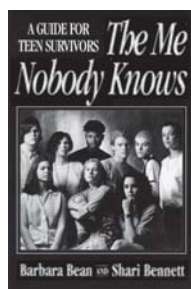
Sometimes I like to think that there isn't anything left to learn about kids and their mistreatment. After 22 years as a foster parent and nine years as a Guardian ad Litem, surely I should have heard about it all! But, just as raising one or more children to successful adulthood holds no guarantee of further parenting success, knowing something is not knowing or understanding everything.

I am going to recommend a small but powerful book for survivors of sexual abuse. The book is *The Me Nobody Knows: A Guide for Teen Survivors* by Barbara Bean and Shari Bennett. (Caution: there are currently at least three books in print whose titles begin with "The Me Nobody Knows." Don't drop into your favorite bookstore without the title and the authors' names.)

The statistics for sexual abuse are unbelievable: one in four females and one in seven males are sexually abused before they turn 18.* The impact on foster parents is huge. Many (if not most) teens entering our homes are reacting to some kind of trauma. This brief book (155 pages) contains a powerful message of hope coupled with a strong dose of reality.

While the book is designed as a workbook for teens to use in conjunction with therapy, I learned much from reading it. I know teens that have been sexually abused, but have not yet begun to effectively process that experience. I also know teens that I only suspect have been sexually abused. This book helped me understand some of the "off the wall" responses/reactions that some of my teens have exhibited. Perhaps the most important thing I re-learned is that when teens have a WWII-level reaction to something, parents should try to reframe the situation so teens can tell us what they are reacting to, and why.

* Note the discrepancy between these figures and those on page 1. Studies vary widely when reporting the incidence of sexual abuse because of the different methods used to count and to estimate the number of cases. For an explanation of the difficulty estimating the incidence of child sex abuse, go to <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/factsheet/pdf/CSA-FS20.pdf>.



I am a first-page-to-last-page reader and probably always will be. However, the final section of *The Me Nobody Knows* is designed to be cut out of the book and shared with parents if the victim thinks they would be helpful. I think that for foster parents the end of this book would be an excellent starting point.



This book is carefully written to establish in the young person's mind that although they were the victim of sexual abuse, they now have power. They are survivors. The behaviors they used to survive worked. Now they need to learn to thrive. The authors are very clear that recovery is a journey. Shari Bennett frequently quotes young survivors, which helps make the therapy process real. I am glad to have this book on my bookshelf.

I also highly recommend *Represent: The Voices of Youth in Care*, a periodical written by youth who are or have been in care. *Represent* is a real conversation starter at our house. All I do is leave the newest issue open to an article and set it on the kitchen counter—the counter where all snacks originate! Without fail the teens sharing our home ask me, "You reading this?" When I say, "Yes, why?" They have all responded with something to the effect that the article has gotten it right and captured their own experience with the system. Check out *Represent* at www.youthcomm.org. Perhaps your licensing agency would order a subscription (\$18 a year for 6 issues). It would be money well spent for anyone working with teens.

Give me a call or send me an e-mail (919/870-9968; becky.burmester@mindspring.com) to let me know what you think I should be reading and writing about. Don't forget: each day you have the opportunity to make a difference!

Foster parent training: "Helping Youth Reach Self-Sufficiency"

Here's an opportunity for foster parents to learn how to teach a course for foster parents AND help foster teens prepare to live on their own. Independent Living Resources, based in Durham, is recruiting foster parents interested in spending the weekend of October 27–29, 2006 in Burlington to learn what it takes to be a foster parent trainer on topics related to foster teens.

The course, "Helping Youth Reach Self-Sufficiency," covers the basics of independent living, including assessing youth, making decisions, and building assets, as well as how to use education, employment, and the community in the process. Foster parent participants will also learn to organize and practice a two-hour training for other foster parents. Upon returning home, foster parent trainers will conduct trainings locally. A follow-up class will be offered where participants share their experiences and learn new training techniques.

The course is sponsored by the NC LINKS program and is offered FREE to foster parents. The LINKS program will pay lodging and meals for foster parents to attend. Prior to registering for the course, attendees must ask their licensing worker to support them in this effort to train foster parents.

The seminar begins at 3 P.M. on Fri., October 27 and ends at 1 P.M. on Sun., October 29, 2006. To register, go to http://www.fosteringperspectives.org/fp_v10n2/ilr_registerform.htm and download/print the course registration form. Once it is complete, return it to ILR, Inc., 411 Andrews Road, Suite 230, Durham, NC 27705 or fax to (919) 384-0338. **Registration Deadline: September 15, 2006.** For more information, contact Melinda Medina (800/820-0001; melinda.medina@ilrinc.com).

A reader asks ...

If you have a question about foster care or adoption in North Carolina, please write, e-mail, or fax your question to us using the contact information found on page 2. We'll do our best to respond to your question either in a direct reply or in a future issue of this newsletter.

Question:

I have a foster child who will graduate from high school this spring. Do you know of any resources that can financially assist her in going to college?



One resource that you may consider for your foster youth is the North Carolina Education and Training Voucher Program. This program offers funds to foster youth and former foster youth to enable them to attend a college, university, and vocational training institution. A student may receive up to \$5,000 a year for four years as they pursue a post-secondary education. These funds may be used to cover tuition, books, or qualified living expenses. In order to qualify for this program, the youth must fall into one of these three categories:

- They were in foster care when they turned 18 and aged out at this time
- Their foster care case will be closed between the ages of 18 and 21
- They were adopted from foster care with adoption finalization after their sixteenth birthday.

Other qualifications for this fund include the following: the youth must be a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen, the youth's assets cannot exceed \$10,000, the youth must be between the ages of 18-20 when first applying for the funds, and the youth must have been accepted or enrolled in a degree, certificate, or other accredited program at a college, university, or vocational school. To remain qualified for this assistance the youth must show progress towards their degree on a yearly basis. These funds are available on a first-come, first-serve basis to youth out of the North Carolina foster care system. Students receiving funds prior to their 21st birthday may continue to receive support until age 23. For more information on this program please visit www.statevoucher.org

Response by Beverley Smith, Director, NC Kids Adoption & Foster Care Network

In one quick moment

by Shelly, age 19

I went in for my normal court date ritual. Every time I got picked up by probation I had to sit and wait in court for two hours, the judge would speak, and then I'd be released. This time, two seconds after my name was called I was released all right—into the custody of the bailiff. He escorted me to a side room where I waited to be put behind bars. I found out later that morning that my grandma wouldn't allow me in her home any longer. I was assigned to juvenile jail until the system figured out what to do with me.

How had I gotten myself into this situation? I was 16 when I got sent to juvy, but the problems started much earlier.

Who would have known that in one quick moment a person's life could change so drastically? The moment my dad spoke the words, "Your mom died," my childhood was shattered into a million pieces; from that instant I was never the same.

My dad told me, "Your mother was found dead last night; they found her body in a hotel room. She overdosed on alcohol." All I could think was this had to be one his evil lies, but why would you tell this to a nine-year-old?

From that point on I was no longer a nine-year-old little girl, I was a nine-year-old who kept to herself, hated the world, and shut herself off from everyone and everything.

Shortly after my mother's death my father started to drink more heavily. Every night he would stumble into the house and break and drop things, cursing. When this happened my brother and sister and I knew to hide. It didn't matter. He always found us. There would be times when we had to hide our bruises by wearing beanies and gloves, even when it was hot. He would smack our hands so hard that it would create bruises. We had bruises on our ears from him picking us up by them and slamming us against walls. We couldn't let our bodies be revealed.

We were all too scared to confess to anyone how we really lived each day. Who would believe us?

We weren't normal kids: we were punching bags for his frustration. The thing I hated most was that he said he loved us.

Eventually I never wanted to be home. But I had nowhere to go and I couldn't leave my brother and sister to take the anger he would take out on

them for my running away. I would take a million whippings for my brother and sister. His belt hurt, but it didn't compare with the pain I felt when I saw my siblings hurt, watching and knowing I couldn't do anything about it. The sight will stick in my mind for eternity.

Police were constantly at our home over the disputes that carried on over two and a half years. No matter how many times he said, "It won't happen, again," we all knew this nightmare was never going to end.

Then one day he went too far and shackled my brother. My sister, Gina, could take no more. She had the guts I never had and revealed the secret. She went to my grandma, whom we were forbidden to talk to but discretely visited from time to time. Gina reported what was going on and grandma called the police immediately. They rushed over to release my brother from captivity. After my brother was free, they read my father his rights and arrested him.

We were then shipped off to a receiving home, not knowing what was going to happen to us. Court date after court date with each of us slowly drifting away not only from each other, but also from ourselves. We forgot how to feel; we couldn't feel happy because we felt as if there was nothing joyful in our lives. We couldn't talk to anyone because no one would understand the pain we felt. We just held everything in and felt the only way to express ourselves was to act out.

My brother and I constantly got in trouble. We no longer cared for our education. We thought smoking and hanging out with our friends was more important than showing up for class. My sister was different, though. All through it she acted out also, but she always showed up for school and put a lot of effort into it. She was even on the middle school cheerleading squad. Although I would never admit it, I was jealous of her.

Month after month we waited for the day to get released from the receiving home. Court date followed court date. Each time, nothing changed. Until one day our prayers were answered and we were given permission to live with our grandma, the mother of our now-deceased mother.

She was the only family we had left, but we couldn't even keep things going well there. She did everything for us; we just wouldn't listen.

For so many years we were like caged animals, never really getting to express ourselves in any way. When we finally did, we went wild and didn't know how to stop. I even broke a promise to myself and to my mom's memory the day I had learned of her death, which was that I was never going to drink. Not only was I scared, but I wanted to be better than that. But now, I thought that if I drank long enough or too much, then one day I would be able to die and that's what I wanted to do at one point . . . at many points. But, thank-



Jail turned out to be my second chance.

fully, I never had the guts to drink myself to the point of death.

I was 15 when I first got drunk. I was with my old so-called best friend and there was a guy there I didn't really know. I passed out. All I remember was being in a car and then waking up with blood surrounding me, not remembering what had happened but knowing that something was taken away from me that I could not get back, ever.

You would think that would have made me turn around but it did the exact opposite. I stayed out late, never showed up for school, smoked weed, got into doing lines of coke every now and then. That's when probation came in. I got caught shoplifting and that was it. I was no longer just in the system because of someone else—I was there because I put myself there.

But even probation didn't stop me. I would show up for school a little more often, but other than that I was doing the same stuff. Until one day, I got caught and I was sent to the crushing, dragging slow routine of jail.

Getting sent to jail turned out to be my second chance. I feared I couldn't change but knew I had to learn how or I would just remain there and lose more and more of myself as each day passed until one day I would feel no more.

Finally, I was given the chance to live with my court-appointed special advocate. Everyone was expecting the worst and acted as if there would never be any change, given the fact that I never had changed, no matter how many times I said I would. I guess I got that from my father, but it wasn't a characteristic I was planning on keeping.

I wanted to change for me; I no longer wanted to feel like a nobody. I wanted to do something with my life, be somebody, and have the gratification of looking at everyone's faces after proving them wrong.

I have succeeded so far. I've been on probation for seven and a half months and I haven't returned to juvy. I haven't gotten a dirty pee test and my curfew has gotten raised three times. I'm expected to get off probation in April 2004. I've proved to people that I can achieve the goals I set. I will keep on succeeding even after I'm off probation because I didn't do it for them; I did it for me. I'm going to keep setting goals and reaching them.

Although I might not have much, I have enough. I still have a life to live, food to eat, and a family. It is not as big and functional as most, but it's one I love and wouldn't change for the world. We're not together right now, but that just makes me realize how much I really care for them. Nothing will ever take that way from me again.

Shelly left the foster care system when she graduated from high school in June 2005. Now 19, she lives in her own apartment and is still very close with her foster mother. She is taking Early Childhood Development courses through the Regional Occupational Program, and plans to become a social worker so she can be part of the solution.

My Own Pair of Wings

By Crystal, age 13

I fly through the clouds
As my wings flap up and down
On the corner of a false neighborhood
I thought
Oh how I wish this was true
To fly with my mom
With my own pair of wings



SaySo Saturday celebrates eight years by Melinda Medina

Some people thought our organization would never become a reality, much less prosper. However, on Saturday, March 4, 2006 over 100 young people and their adult supporters came together at Guilford Technical Community College to celebrate youth leadership, discuss issues relevant to foster teens, and celebrate the eighth birthday of SaySo (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out). As a SaySo alumni, I coordinated this year's conference. SaySo hopes that this annual event will begin to attract even more foster alumni, creating a reunion-like atmosphere.

On SaySo Saturday youths and adults attended workshops that addressed hot topics for girls and guys, how to become an advocate, and a session to talk about ways to improve the lives of foster teens.

At this event SaySo also acknowledged two new local chapters: Orange County and a Surry County/Stokes County chapter. The Surry-Stokes chapter provided a session on how to start a new chapter. Financial awards were presented to the chapters at the celebration: Moore County, Cumberland County, Wake County, Onslow County, and Catawba County. SaySo currently has 10 active chapters overall.

We would like to wish all our local chapters a happy birthday. We are eager to see more chapters get started. If you are interested in starting your own local chapter please e-mail us at <sayso@ilrinc.com>.

New Board Members

SaySo elected 16 new members to its 2006-2007 board. They will be commissioned during an orientation weekend June 20-22, 2006. The following members will join Britney M. from Region 1, who will complete her term as Treasurer, and Curtina K. from Region 4, who will complete her term as Co-Chair:

Region 1: Asia J., Cherish C., Jackie S.

Region 2: Melissa R., Vanessa P., Megan D.

Region 3: Shelby E., Demetrice W., Dennis S.

Region 4: Muhammad A., Britney C., Peaches S.

Region 5: Lakisha T., Antwan B., Piffanie L.

Region 6: Kandus S.

SaySo is also promoting several events and celebrating the achievements of various SaySo members:

SaySo Survivor

SaySo will sponsor a leadership retreat on May 5-7, 2006 at Camp Chestnut Ridge to kick off Foster Care Month. The purpose of this retreat is to help foster youth identify their personal resiliencies and learn how they can use their strengths to help other youths survive and thrive in the system.

SaySo Page Week

Beginning May 15, 2006, 18 SaySo members will spend a week in Raleigh working side-by-side state lawmakers. They will stay with local host families and work in the Senate, House, and Governor's page programs. Although foster youths are able to participate in the page programs whenever the legislative sessions are active, this concentrated week connects our policy makers directly with foster youths.

Alumni Mentoring Program

We are seeking youths preparing to age out and foster alumni who are on their own to participate in the SaySo Alumni Mentoring Program. This is a program to bolster support for foster youths as they move out on their own with the support of someone "who's been there." Please encourage appropriate youths to contact Melinda

Today SaySo
has 287
members in
10 active
chapters.

Medina (800/820-0001; melinda.medina@ilrinc.com) for more information.

Nat'l Independent Living Association

We are pleased to announce that for the fifth consecutive year a SaySo youth has been named to the NILA Advisory Board. This year it is Antwan Bynum, who is serving his third

term on the SaySo board and is also a freshman at NC Wesleyan College. The NILA board is comprised of adults and youths from around the country who are invested in improving the lives of foster youths. Congratulations Antwan. We are so proud of you!

Young Woman of Achievement Award

Julia Charles, a 22-year-old SaySo member and Guilford College student, recently won the 2006 Young Woman of Achievement Award. At a banquet sponsored by Greensboro's Commission on the Status of Women and attended by businesswomen, entrepreneurs, and even a congresswoman, Julia was recognized for her work with SaySo and the Guilford County DSS LINKS program.

When asked what it was like to receive this award Julia said, "I was more excited about the attention that LINKS and SAYSO received than I was about receiving the actual award. That's not to say I was not honored. I was taken aback at the nomination, so to win—WOW! I hope it will result in some great things for young people in care, at least in North Carolina."

For More Information

Visit SaySo's website (www.saysoinc.org) for an update on its Make a Difference Day/Give a Child a Smile project.

Become a Member

SaySo is moving and growing. We currently have 287 members. Be a part of our organization! Joining SaySo is free and easy! You'll be sent a membership card, six annual newsletters, and current information on programs and resources for foster teens. You must be between 14 and 24 years old and be/have been in foster care. If you are interested, e-mail your name, date of birth, address, city, zip code, phone, and email address to <sayso@ilrinc.com>.



Melinda Medina

Friend

by Crystal, age 13

**We stick side by side,
We cared when one cried,**

**We tell them our secrets,
After we just told one,
We laugh and giggle,
At something not that fun.**

**We invite them to our houses,
We play some games,
We hang our friend's pictures in the blackish frames.**

**We will look at those pictures 10 years from now,
We'll squeal in excitement . . . wow!**

**That was the year my best friend was here,
I stared at the picture and there fell a tear.**



Who has had the most influence on your life?

The writing contest in the last issue of *Fostering Perspectives* posed the following question to current and former foster kids: "Who has influenced your life most?"



We expected to get a variety of answers to this question, since the list of those who shape people's lives includes parents, sisters and brothers, relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, preachers, TV personalities . . .

Instead, all but one of the children who responded wrote about their foster or adoptive parents. That's right, you read that correctly: most children named their foster or adoptive parents as the most influential, important people in their lives.

Let that sink in for a minute. These kids are saying that they know they can count on their foster and adoptive parents. That they see value in the lessons they are learning from them. That they have a special place in their hearts.

Now take it one step further. Perhaps, even if they don't say it out loud, the children in your home feel about you the way Rebecca feels about her parents: "I hope some day I'll be just like them." —*John McMahon, Editor*

Star, age 11

The person who has had the most influence on my life is my mom who has adopted me. She gave me a great home and family. She also helps me with all the problems that I have. . . . She's taught me how to make friends. She's taught me how to be polite and understand others. She's taught me how to take care of myself. . . . She's showed me the difference between good and bad things. She's helped me with my homework. She also helps me get better when I am sick. She comforts me when I am scared or sad. . . . That's why she's the person that had the most influence on my life.

My mom who adopted me gave me a great home and family.

Star received \$15 for having her letter published.

Sammantha, age 14



The person who has had the most influence on me is the foster mother I have now. I say that because when I first came to her, she invited me with open arms. She let me know she cares for me and is going to do the best she can.

She has taught me things about life, how to cook, and how to clean.

I had never been out of the house until I came to her. Since I have been with her, I have been to the beach, all over the state. We've planned to go to New York for the holidays.

She has let me know I can succeed in anything I put my mind to, and gave me hope for a better future.

Sammantha received \$100 for winning the writing contest.

My foster mother has let me know I can succeed in anything I put my mind to.

Rebecca, age 13



My parents who adopted me have influenced my life most.

When I was just a baby my birth mom abandoned me in a trailer, in a laundry basket. Days later, I was brought to a children's home where I met my foster parents, Dale and Flo.

Seven months later, I was adopted and never regretted it since.

I am 13 and I want to share with you my experience now that we're fostering two children in our home. . . .

Whether these children are at school, home, church, or a friend's, we must try to help them, nurture them, love them, and show them that we care about what's best for them. My parents have shown me through our foster kids. They have been great examples. They show love, they care, and they help these children in many ways. I hope some day I'll be just like them.

Rebecca received \$50 for taking second place in the writing contest.

My parents who adopted me . . . I hope some day I'll be just like them.

Gary, age 13

The two people I think that have made the most influence on my life are Mr. Paul and Mrs. Cathy. They have always been there for me and will always be there for me. They are loving, caring, nice people that should not have some foster children be mean to them. They are just some people that are willing to take a risk in taking kids in. They just have the biggest hearts I know (besides some other people I know). They can be very nice, but then if you are bad they can be very strict. They put a lot of love in taking care of their foster children. They treat everyone equal. And that's who I think made the most influence on me.

Gary received \$15 for having his letter published.

Mr. Paul and Mrs. Cathy have always been there for me.

Alyssa, age 12

3

The most important person in my life is Jesus Christ. He has helped me through everything.

Last year my 14-year-old brother died of heart disease. When he was born the doctors had said that he wouldn't live to see his first birthday. But by God's grace and miracles I enjoyed 12 years of love and laughter with him.

The day he died my family and I were in shock. I remember balling up in a little chair at school and crying my eyes out. My teachers were surrounding me, trying to comfort me.

After this my mother went into severe depression and my brother and I went into foster care. Again, it was very devastating and tragic for all of us.

We were so grateful to go to a Christian foster home. I am now learning about the bible and how to live my life properly according to God. We have been here six months already.

I will be happy to one day go home and be with my family once again. Thank you. With love, Alyssa

Alyssa's letter won third prize, for which she was awarded \$25.

Brittany, age 13

The person that influences me most? My foster mom! She always knows when something is going to happen to me or when I am let down . . . ALWAYS!

. . . If I fail a test in school she is always so happy to sit down with me and go over the ones that I missed and then I feel like I understand it more. When I am let down or something is getting to me she always helps. She always tells me something positive that I have done in the past couple of days like, "You did great on this or that!"

. . . She always comes up to my room to tuck me in and asks me if I have any prayer requests. Even if I don't, she still prays for me and then when she is gone I always thank her for doing that for me. Then the next morning I feel like a different person.

Brittany received \$15 for having her letter published.

David

The one that has had the most influence in my life is my foster mom.

She taught me all the stuff I need to know. Like my manners, how to respect people, how to say, "Yes, Ma'am," "No, Ma'am," "Yes, Sir," "No, Sir."

She is the best person in my life. She can be mean once in a while, but I still love her. Even when I get older and go to college I will still keep in touch with her. She is the best—I mean BEST—person in my life. There is no one else like her.

David received \$15 for having his letter published.

There is no one like my foster mom.

Fostering Perspectives Artists

We are proud to present the artwork below. These artists each received \$15 for having their drawing published in *FP*.



Brenton, age 10

Brenton's mom says his picture "represents our family (and their nicknames) a few months after Brenton came to live with us for foster care (respite care). The adoption was final a month ago!! A few days after his arrival our dog had puppies and he even included them!"



Rebecca, age 13

Austin, age 11

The person who has made a big difference in my life is my foster mom. This is why: because she is there when I'm feeling upset. When I have to cry she is there to comfort me so I can tell her why I'm crying. Sometimes, when she cries, I'm there to comfort her, too. She is there for me and I'm there for her, through hard times and in bad times. The main thing is that we love each other. *Austin received \$15 for having his letter published.*

When I have to cry my foster mom is there to comfort me.

Protecting the health of children and teens in foster care

Sometimes the child welfare system is so focused on child safety that we forget to talk about—and address—the physical health needs of children in foster care. This, despite the fact that as a group, foster children are sicker than other children, sicker even than homeless children and children living in the poorest sections of inner cities (GAO, 1995).

Research findings on this subject are alarming. For example, Dicker, Gordon, and Knitzer (2001) report that among children in foster care aged birth to three:

- Nearly 40% are born low birthweight and/or premature, two factors which increase the likelihood of medical problems and developmental delays.
- More than half suffer from serious physical health problems, including chronic health conditions, elevated lead blood-levels, and diseases such as asthma.
- Dental problems are widespread: one-third to one-half of young children in foster care are reported to have dental decay.
- Over half experience developmental delays, which is four to five times the rate among children in the general population. A study of over 200 children in foster care under the age of 31 months found that more than half had language delays. By comparison, only 2-3% of preschoolers in the general population experience language disorders, and only 10% to 12% have speech disorders.

Dicker and colleagues also note that nearly 80% of very young foster children are at risk for a wide range of medical and developmental health problems related to prenatal exposure to maternal substance abuse.

Older kids in foster care don't fare much better. McCarthy (2000) found that 80% of children in foster care have at least one chronic medical con-

What can foster parents do to safeguard children's health?

dition, and that 25% have three or more chronic problems. Children in foster care are also more likely than kids in the general population to suffer from acute health problems such as tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases (Grayson, 2003). These problems are often worsened by lack of continuity of intervention and recordkeeping and declining emphasis on preventive measures as they enter adolescence (Nixon, 2002).

Despite the fact that we know their health is vulnerable, too many children in foster care fail to receive services to address and reduce the risks they face. As the U.S. General Accounting Office learned in a large-scale study in 1995, a significant percentage do not even receive basic health care, such as immunizations, dental services, hearing and vision screening, and testing for exposure to lead and communicable diseases (see box at left). Specialized needs such as developmental delays and emotional and behavioral conditions are even less likely to be addressed (Dicker et al., 2001).

Disruption plays a role, too: moves often lead to changes in physicians, social workers, schools, and other providers, which can produce health care that is inconsistent and without focus (Grayson, 2003).

The Child and Family Services Review

To address this situation and to comply with the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, the federal government recently assessed states' efforts to safeguard the health of children involved with child welfare. During the first round of its Child and Family Services Reviews the federal government concluded that only 20 of the 50 states did an adequate job of meeting the physical health needs of children involved with child welfare (USDHHS, 2006).

North Carolina was one of these 20 states. Reviewers approved of North Carolina's health-related child welfare policies, especially those that require children to be referred for a physical examination within one week of an initial placement and that require children identified with a need for dental, developmental, or psychological assessment to be referred within one week from the identification of the need.

Federal reviewers also found that in the vast majority of cases, North Carolina's social workers comply with these policies. Reviews of case records from 16 counties indicated 92% compliance with the referral for a physical examination and 100% compliance for referral for appropriate assessments when a need is identified.

During site visits federal reviewers found that social workers often go to medical appointments with children and are seen by stakeholders as diligent, particularly in foster care cases. Reviewers also observed that, "Foster parents are in-



As a group, foster children are sicker than homeless children and children living in the poorest sections of inner cities.

involved in and informed of children's medical care and are seen as very competent and dedicated to helping the children in their care maintain health."

This is not to suggest that North Carolina is in a state of perfection when it comes to the well-being of children involved with child welfare. Overall, federal reviewers concluded that our state, like virtually every other state in the country, needs to improve its ability to meet children's physical and mental health needs. Reviewers identified mental health services as a special area of concern in North Carolina.

Our state will probably participate in another federal review within the next year as part of the ongoing national Child and Family Services Review process.

The Link to Early Intervention

When it comes to improving the health of very young children in foster care, one of the most effective things child welfare systems can do is strengthen the connection between child welfare and early intervention (Dicker & Gordon, 2004). Early intervention programs entitle eligible children aged birth to three to a multidisciplinary evaluation and an Individualized Family Service Plan that can include hearing and vision screening and treatment, occupational, speech, and physical therapy, and family support services such as parent training, counseling, and respite care to enable parents and caregivers to enhance the infant's development.

In response to a 2003 federal law, North Carolina now requires child welfare agencies to refer families of children aged zero to three to early intervention services whenever child protective services substantiates child maltreatment or requires a family to accept child welfare services. The referral must be made within 48 hours of the case decision.

Early intervention services are voluntary, so birth families can decline these services if they wish. However, if that child later enters foster care, the child welfare agency has another opportunity to request (and accept) early intervention services on that child's behalf.

If you are the foster parent of a child between the ages of zero and three, you can help protect the child's health and development by *cont. p. 11*

The Health of Young Children in Foster Care

In 1995 the General Accounting Office studied the health of young children in foster care in New York City, Los Angeles Co., and Philadelphia Co. (*These areas are responsible for 50% of the foster children in the U.S.*) It found that among young children in care:

- 12% received no routine health care
- 34% received no immunizations
- 32% continued to have at least one unmet health need after placement
- 78% of the children were at high risk for HIV, but only 9% had been tested for the virus
- Less than 10% received services for developmental delays
- Children placed with relatives received fewer health-related services of all kinds than children placed with nonrelative foster parents

asking the child's social worker if that child has been referred to and screened by an early intervention program. These services can make a big difference in a child's life.

What Can You Do

As we have discussed, in many ways North Carolina seems to be "on the ball" when it comes to attending to foster children's physical health needs: we have appropriate policies in place, and in most cases they are being implemented.

Of course, foster parents play a central role when it comes to protecting children's health and promoting their development. Examples of their contributions include taking children to medical appointments, staying in touch with various medical providers, and providing the hands-on care that keeps children in good health.

What else can foster parents do?

Foster parents should be aware of North Carolina's child welfare policies and practices related to health. In particular, they should be familiar with and be on the lookout for the Child Health Status component (DSS form 5243) of the Family Services Case Plan, which documents current critical health information about the child, and for the Child Physical Examination form (DSS form 5244). State policy requires the placing agency provide foster parents with these forms as soon as they are available. You can find a sample of these forms below. If for some reason they do not receive this information, foster parents should request them from the child's social worker.

The Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (1999) believes that child welfare systems should consistently ask the following questions for each child in foster care:

- ☐ Has the child received a comprehensive health assessment since entering foster care?
- ☐ Are the child's immunizations up-to-date and complete for his or her age?
- ☐ Has the child received hearing and vision screening?
- ☐ Has the child received screening for lead exposure?
- ☐ Has the child received regular dental services?
- ☐ Has the child received screening for communicable diseases?
- ☐ Has the child received a developmental screening by a provider with experience in child development?
- ☐ Has the child received mental health screening?
- ☐ Is the child enrolled in an early childhood program?
- ☐ Has the adolescent child received information about healthy development?

The ultimate responsibility for asking these questions—and for carrying out many of the actions

that the questions inquire about—almost always falls on the agency that has custody of the child.

However, as advocates concerned with child well-being, it is appropriate for foster parents to ask these questions as well. Many of them can be answered by reviewing a child's Child Health Status Component and Child Physical Examination forms. If you still have questions after reviewing these forms—for example, about whether the child should be receiving early intervention services—ask the child's social worker.

Although some of the information we have related in this article is sobering, we hope that it will help you as you nurture and advocate for the children you care about so much.

See the online version of this article for references.

Resources for Learning More

Children in Foster Homes: How Are They Faring?

A research brief from Child Trends <<http://www.childtrends.org/files/FosterHomesRB.pdf>>

Health Care of Young Children in Foster Care.

A policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics that gives specific suggestions concerning of health services for young children in care. <<http://www.aap.org/policy/re0054.html>>

Children Discharged from Foster Care: Strategies to Prevent the Loss of Health Coverage at a Critical Transition. <<http://www.kff.org/medicaid/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=14317>>

For additional resources about the health and mental health of children in foster care, visit the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/info_services/child-and-adolescent-health-care.html>

Tips for Parents

Upon Placement

- If the child is between the ages of zero and three, ask the child's social worker if the child has been referred to and/or is receiving early intervention services.
- Be on the lookout for DSS forms 5243 (Child Health Status component) and 5244 (Child Physical Examination form). If you do not receive these important documents, follow up with the child's social worker.



Photo Illustration

Ongoing

- Use the questions developed by the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (see article) to help ensure the child's health needs are addressed.
- Notify the agency whenever there is a significant change or development in a child's health status.
- Let the agency know if you need help understanding or implementing instructions related to the child's physical care.
- Maintain open communication with the agency. The agency may be able to provide you with additional support (e.g., respite) to help alleviate the stress of caring for the child, thereby preventing disruption of the placement.

Child Health Component (NCDSS-5243)

Copy given to _____, caregiver on ____/____/____ by _____

Copy given to _____, physician on ____/____/____ by _____

CHILD HEALTH STATUS COMPONENT

Child's Name _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____ Sex ____ Race/Eth ____
 Completed by _____ Assessment Date ____/____/____ Update ____/____/____
 County _____

INSURANCE INFORMATION

Medicaid _____ Health Choice _____ Other Insurance Company _____
 Policy/ID Number _____

Current Primary Physician Name _____ Address _____
 Telephone () _____ Date of last physical exam _____

Current Dentist Name _____ Address _____
 Telephone () _____ Date of last dental exam _____

Previous medical/dental providers
 Name _____ Specialty _____ Telephone () _____
 Name _____ Specialty _____ Telephone () _____
 Name _____ Specialty _____ Telephone () _____

CHILD'S MEDICAL HISTORY

Allergies/Drug Sensitivities _____
 Surgery/hospitalizations _____
 Injuries _____
 Communicable Diseases _____
 Current medical problems _____
 Developmental/learning problems _____
 Significant behavioral problems _____
 Has DEC evaluation been done? Yes _____ No _____ Date of evaluation _____
 Diagnosed mental disorder/emotional illness _____
 Glasses/contacts required? Yes _____ No _____ Hearing aid required? Yes _____ No _____
 Current dental problems _____
 Special dietary needs _____

Current medications Dosage Why prescribed
 1) _____
 2) _____
 3) _____
 4) _____

Child Physical Examination (NCDSS-5244)

Copy given to _____, caregiver on ____/____/____ by _____

CHILD PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

(Please print all information)

Child's Name _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____ Sex ____ Race/Eth ____
 County DSS _____ Name of Social Worker _____
 Person Accompanying Child _____
 Name of Examining Physician _____
 Address _____ Telephone () _____

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION FINDINGS

Temp _____ Pulse _____ Respirations _____ Blood Pressure ____/____/____
 Height _____ (Percentile) _____ Weight _____ (Percentile) _____ Head Circum _____ (Percentile) _____

Screening

Vision (Circle One) HOTV SNELLEN PICTURE Hearing (Circle One) Belltone Hear Kit
 R _____ L _____ OU _____ R _____ L _____ OU _____
 With glasses? Yes _____ No _____

Development (Circle One): SCREEN DDST II PQQ NOT TESTED
 Results: Unstable _____ Normal _____ Questionable _____ Abnormal _____
 Comments: _____

Lab: Hgb/Hct (If indicated): Normal _____ Abnormal _____ TB Skin Test (If indicated): Normal _____ Abnormal _____

Physical exam (0=normal, X=abnormal)

Head _____ Eyes _____ Ears _____ Nose _____ Mouth _____ Throat _____
 Breasts _____ Lungs _____ Heart _____ Abdomen _____ Genitalia _____ Extremities _____
 Neurological _____ Skin/Nodes _____
 Positive findings of any medical/dental conditions needing attention: _____

Communicable Diseases: Tests (As Indicated)

☐ VDRL Results: _____
☐ HIV/AIDS Results: _____
☐ HEPATITIS B Results: _____
☐ OTHER Results: _____

Does child have signs or symptoms of any communicable disease(s) that would pose a significant risk of transmission in a household setting? Yes _____ No _____ Unknown _____
 If yes, specify disease: _____

Recommendations

Additional tests: _____
 Followup treatment: _____
 Medications: _____
 Immunizations provided: _____
 Limitations on physical activity: _____
 Other: _____

Examining physician (Signature) _____ Date _____

What you should know about youth gangs in North Carolina

by James M. Frabutt and Anne P. Buford

Throughout North Carolina, families, law enforcement officials, and educators are confronting a dangerous and multifaceted problem: youth gangs.

In February 2006, Winston-Salem police broke up a fight between 30 to 40 potential gang members. In Hickory, law enforcement personnel are talking with city leaders about creating a specialized unit to prevent gang expansion. In Dunn (pop. 9,196) police, citizens, and administrators recently gathered to discuss a new program they hope will reduce the impact of Harnett County's 30 gangs and 200 gang members.

Youth Gangs in North Carolina?

The reality is that youth gangs are here, they are dispersed widely throughout the state, and they represent a growing difficulty for everyone.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) says that in 2002 and 2003, the largest cities in the country (i.e., with populations over 250,000) had the greatest number of gangs, gang members, and gang-based murders, while rural areas and smaller cities had generally lower numbers of each.

But gang activity is not just a "big city" problem. Indeed, in 2004, North Carolina police officials shared with the *Juvenile Justice Digest* that Hispanic gangs were infiltrating the state's rural areas. Moreover, between 1999 and 2004, the Governor's Crime Commission reported a 16% increase in the number of gangs in NC and a 68% jump in the number of gang members. This growth occurred in both urban and rural areas.

What Are Youth Gangs?

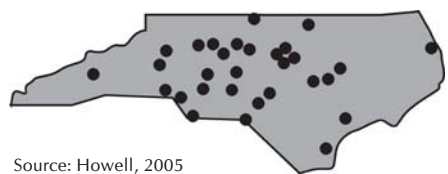
A gang is a group or association of three or more persons who may have a name and who individually or collectively engage in, or have engaged in, criminal activity which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Criminal activity includes juvenile acts that if committed by an adult would be a crime. Gang members usually range in age from 12 to 24, share common symbols and clothing, and may be linked to specific neighborhoods or locations. Some experts also believe youth gangs demonstrate organizational durability over time despite changing memberships.

Who Joins Gangs?

Some evidence indicates that racial minority male youth from single-parent, city-based homes are at increased risk of joining gangs. However, we also know that a community's racial and ethnic makeup significantly influences the racial and ethnic makeup of its gangs.

In truth there is no single, immutable profile of gang members. They can come from any racial or ethnic background. They are male and female, and they live in single-parent, two-parent, and blended families. They come from households of every socioeconomic and educational status.

Jurisdictions in North Carolina Reporting Youth Gang Problems in One or More Years, 1999-2001



Source: Howell, 2005

Why Do Kids Join Gangs?

There are several answers to this question. According to the OJJDP, youth may be at-risk for associating with gangs if they have few socioeconomic opportunities or pathways to achievement, if they receive insufficient supervision and guidance from parents and teachers, or if they spend time with youth who are gang members.

The NC Gang Investigator's Association further explains that gangs may provide youth with organization, discipline, and safety that may be absent in other life areas. Gangs may foster a sense of character, and they may be places where youth "fit in." Additionally, gangs may prove dedicated and faithful to individual members when other persons or groups are not. Moreover, gangs may appear to youths to be dangerously thrilling, they may provide income, and they may seem enticing for the apparent respect they command.

Taking all of these possibilities into account, most youth join gangs voluntarily, although they do not usually remain members forever.

Warning Signs

How might parents, family members, or other concerned persons know that children or teenagers are in gangs? Each person is different, and experts maintain that the only way to be certain is to talk with youth directly. However, according to authorities some general warning signs include:

- Decreased interest in school, hobbies, family, and non-gang friendships
- Socializing with gang-affiliated peers
- Changes in daily routines, such as being out late at night
- Possession or use of large amounts of money
- Wearing certain colors, bandanas, and tilted hats
- Using a new name or nickname
- Signs of fighting, such as bruises and cuts
- Tattoos (for example teardrops, three dots, pitchforks, crosses, the numbers 13 and 14)
- Presence of gang graffiti on notebooks, backpacks, or other personal items
- Increased police involvement

What You Can Do

Families, teachers, and community leaders sometimes feel powerless in the face of youth gangs. However, there are steps caring adults can take to prevent or lessen the impact of gang membership.

First and foremost, supportive communication with youth is vital. If children and teenagers know that people in their lives care about them, accept them, and listen to them, they may be less inclined to seek security and belonging in a gang.

Second, spending quality time with youth can let them know that they are loved and valued, keeping them from turning to gangs for a sense of worth. Third, establishing suitable, healthy discipline and continually emphasizing the inappropriateness of gang affiliation may help protect youth and preclude their interest in gangs.

Parents can also prevent gang involvement by participating actively in their children's education, for example by making contact with teachers and keeping abreast of learning progress or special needs. It can also be helpful to enroll children in beneficial activities – such as sports and music – that provide supervision and structure. Furthermore, it is important to get to know youth peers and other parents, to comprehend the social influences that may be at work in children's and teenager's lives.

Parents, teachers, and other community members must educate themselves on gang problems in their neighborhoods, towns, counties, and cities. Youth gangs are everywhere, and their threats to children and teenagers deserve our attention.

Perhaps most significantly, compassionate and considerate adults serve as role models for younger generations. If youth see and understand that fulfilling, successful, and satisfying lives can be achieved without gang involvement, they may not only avoid gangs, but they may commit themselves to positive self-growth.

James M. Frabutt, Ph.D. (336/217-9736; jmfrabutt@uncg.edu) and Anne P. Buford, MPA work for the Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

See the online version of this article for references and more information on gang activity, prevention, and intervention.

Tips for Parents

- Don't let your child hang around gang members. Meet your child's friends and get to know their parents.
- Develop good communication with your children. Talk to them openly and often. Do not put them down.
- Set limits. Remember: Unacceptable Behavior that is allowed becomes Acceptable Behavior.
- Don't allow your children to dress in gang-style clothing; be concerned if he wears the same color every day.
- Don't allow your child to write graffiti on books, etc. Graffiti demonstrates gang affiliation. It is NOT artwork.
- Take an active role in building your children's self-esteem. Teach them to be leaders, not followers.
- Become an informed parent. Learn about gang activity in your community. Participate your child's education. Be a good example for your child.

Source: NC Gang Investigator's Association
<<http://www.ncgangcops.org/articles/tips.htm>>

Don't forget the birth kids: It takes the entire family to love a child wholly

by Carroll Sue Priddy

Brandy and Sherri were 9 and 7 years old, respectively, when their parents began talking about foster care. Both of the girls liked the idea of having other kids around to play with, go to school with, and even to share chores with. Brandy thought it would be great to have a baby brother or sister, while Sherri wanted someone closer to her own age.

Their family's first experience fostering brought them three brothers, ages 3, 8 and 13. The overnight change in the family was much more drastic than they anticipated. They had a big brother who was loud and bossy, but creative in thinking up games they could all play together. They had a brother right in between their own ages who was gentle and tender hearted and a great friend. They had a little brother who let them gel his hair and dress him in the coolest clothes a pre-schooler ever wore. For 6 months and 11 days these five children learned to trust, laugh with and love each other. These three boys, who had never had sisters before, learned that girls aren't gross or scary, but rather are just kids who like to run and jump on the trampoline and have fun.

But this is foster care, and foster care is temporary. So eventually five heavy hearts said good-bye to each other. Five sets of eyes cried bitter tears as hugs were given and the van was loaded. Brandy and Sherri refer to the three boys as their "first brothers." Sometimes the boys' mother will let them call the foster family, but those calls have gotten rarer in the last couple of months as the boys moved with their mom to another state. Brandy and Sherri have had six more brothers and sisters since then.

Alice is two and a half years old and has had baby RJ living in her home for 4 months. He is a tiny little baby with special medical needs. Alice is gentle with RJ and pats his hand when he cries. She knows all of the nurses who come to her home to help take care of her baby brother. She can get his pacifier and rinse it for him when it falls on the floor. Last month the team decided that it was time for RJ to go home, and last week

Alice watched her mommy and daddy cry as they packed RJ's things into a suitcase and put the bags and RJ's car seat into the social worker's car. She kissed his little hands over and over as she said good-bye. Every morning now she asks her mom, "Can we go get Jar-Jay today?"

Being a foster parent is a tough job. Foster parents take hurting, scared, abused children and try to reconstruct a childhood for them. Being a birth child in a foster home is a tough job, too. These children are asked to share their toys, bedrooms, friends and community with strangers who come into their homes. They are also expected to share their parents' time, energy, patience, and resources.

I grew up as a birth child in a foster home. I saw my parents disrespected, yelled at, and cursed at. I saw them give their time to help a kid who was three years behind in school; give their energy to a girl who threatened to hurt herself every night for the first three weeks she was in our home; give their patience to a teenager who refused to follow the house rules.

But I also saw a 7-year-old who was scarred all over his face finally give in and let my mom kiss his cheeks; a 9-year-old, who had raised her four younger siblings, learn how to climb a tree; and a rebellious 16-year-old apologize for her behavior and make an effort to be a part of the family. I have grieved in the lobby of a mental hospital as a foster sister shut her heart off to the love that was being given to her freely. I have held another sister as she recounted her childhood of abuse and hatred. I have played baseball with a foster brother and cheered when he got his first hit. We got dogs at the pound together, built forts together, and stayed up to watch the sunrise together. And in the end, we all said good-bye.

My family was blessed to have parents who were strong and commit-



Foster care is a calling that the entire family has to agree to answer.

ted to loving people who hurt, and this included my brother and me. We hurt when the kids we loved left, yes, but our parents were there to help us and there is nothing that makes me want to change that experience.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' sermon on the mount lists a progression of blessings for those who choose to suffer through service. I find comfort in several of these as I remember my childhood.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Birth children mourn when foster children leave their home.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. The birth children in our foster homes are showing mercy to the children who come into their homes. They are accepting, patient and giving.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. The birth children are loving, accepting, and sharing out of a pure heart that is promised nothing in return.

Foster care is a calling that the entire family has to agree to answer. We work with our families throughout the training process to make sure the children in the home are informed and know what to expect. We also make sure that the children placed in our homes are not going to be met with coldness or resistance from the birth children or previously

adopted children living there. We want the children coming into our foster homes to be loved unconditionally by all members of the family.



Carroll Sue Priddy

Collis, 6, and Wesley, 9, had 18 foster brothers and sisters come and go in three years. When 10-month-old Jamie and 2-year-old Dawn came to live with them, the two boys gathered these little ones under their wings and began anew. At the 6-month hearing, the Judge ruled that the children should be released for adoption.

Collis and Wesley's parents came home and talked with the boys about adopting Jamie and Dawn. Collis thought about the idea for a few minutes in silence, then asked, "Does adoption mean forever?"

"Yes," his mom answered.

Collis responded, "As long as it's forever, we can adopt them. Just don't make me say good-bye again. I hate that word."

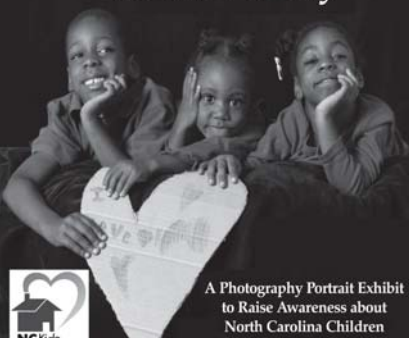
As you think about the needs and trials of foster families, don't forget the birth kids. Pray for them. Offer to help in some way. Give them a word of thanks and encouragement.

It takes the whole family to love a child wholly.

Carroll Sue Priddy is a foster family recruiter for Grandfather Home for Children, a private child-placing agency in North Carolina.

2006 North Carolina

Traveling Heart Gallery



Traveling Heart Gallery
Spring 2006 Schedule

Winston-Salem
Sawtooth Center
May 1 - May 12, 2006

Raleigh
Lobby, Legislative Building
May 15 - May 19, 2006

Greenville
East Carolina University
May 24 - June 1, 2006

For more information visit
ncheartgallery.org
or call 877/625-4371



A Photography Portrait Exhibit
to Raise Awareness about
North Carolina Children
Available for Adoption

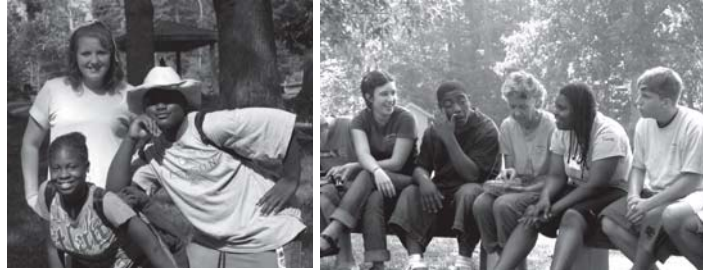
New program gives kids choice, voice in adoption promotion

Under One Sky, an Asheville-based nonprofit, has developed a new program to help North Carolina's children find adoptive families. What makes its approach unique is the extent to which it is driven by the kids themselves.

This agency's overall goal is to help young people in foster care who are free for adoption overcome limiting beliefs and develop healthy, sustainable life paths.

At the core of Under One Sky's efforts is Passages, a two-year, co-educational, camp-based mentoring village for youths aged 12 to 18 who are in foster care and free for adoption. Each year, during 10 days in the summer and then once in the spring, fall, and winter (for a total of 20 days and 16 overnights), youths get to know each other and learn about themselves through rap, dance, music, art, film making, acting, building, and cooking.

For some of the teens participating in Passages the thought of adop-



Campers and instructor-mentors at Under One Sky's 2005 Passages camp.

tion stirs up many feelings. Even teens whose plan is adoption may express resistance to the idea. This camp provides a supportive, honest, respectful place to explore these issues.

Youths who choose to pursue adoption create their own promotional materials. Working with experienced professionals and their instructor-mentors, youths develop recruitment plans that may include a video, written profile, and radio public service announcement. The youth themselves act as creative directors of these projects and decide

how the materials will be used.

The written profiles developed at Passages are 12-page booklets called 'Zines. Youths control each development stage. After pictures are taken they choose which shots to use. After the interview is transcribed, they select excerpts to appear in the 'Zine. They also do the final layout. As you can see in the example below, the result gives prospective adoptive parents a vivid impression of the child's interests and spirit.

Youths participating in Passages also get to say where their promo-

tional materials will be used. For example, one girl requested that her photograph not be shown in her community's newspaper.

Under One Sky is not itself a child placing agency. Instead, it works with public and private agencies to provide a community of support for youth. This support extends beyond the youths' time at camp. For example, with permission from the camper's social worker, mentors correspond with campers throughout the year and help guide them to make wise choices in their lives. Under One Sky staff members also work with the child's agency and other partners to support children and to identify adoptive families.

For more information about Passages, including eligibility guidelines, costs, and registration information, contact Under One Sky (828/251-9703; info@under1sky.org).

The Teen-Directed Adoption Profile: Select Pages from Brandon's 'Zine



At camp, Brandon got to choose all the words and images that would go into the 'Zine that would serve as his profile.

Awaiting adoption in North Carolina

Right now there are hundreds of children in foster care in North Carolina who are free for adoption. These children long for parents who can give them a forever family. Here's a chance to learn about a few of them.



Ashley



Leytrell



Brandon



Portia



Cassie



Quanesha



David



Ronnie



Jennifer



Timmy

Ashley (born 6/11/92)

Ashley can be very affectionate, but she prefers to be the initiator of any physical contact. She can be kind and very helpful. Ashley loves to read and likes to cook. She generally prefers non-athletic, indoor activities, although she has enjoyed camping. Ashley attends regular classes and is frequently on the honor roll. Ashley is learning to take responsibility for her actions. An adoptive family for Ashley should have parenting experience and the maturity to guide a teenager. (NC #059-2522)

Brandon (born 5/12/94)

Brandon is a lovable boy with a playful, bouncy personality. He has been taking drum lessons and would like to continue. He enjoys Sunday school class and children's choir. Brandon attends regular classes and loves school. He is working on improving his social skills and expressing his feelings appropriately. Brandon will do best with parents who are firm but caring, with an older brother as a positive role model. (NC #032-349)

Cassie (born 3/31/90)

Cassie is intelligent and outspoken in a positive way. Her many interests include writing poetry, playing tennis, church, and youth group activities. She attends regular classes and gets very good grades. Cassie is working on making her relationships more genuine. She wants a loving family that is structured yet supportive. Like all teens, Cassie will benefit from a family that will be actively involved in her life, yet allow her the independence to grow in a positive manner. A strong, positive female role model who can guide Cassie into adulthood will be ideal. (NC #092-2214)

David (born 9/09/92)

David is polite, outgoing, and "never meets a stranger." He can be quite humorous and expresses himself well. David is proud of having learned to play chess at school. He also enjoys attending church. At school David is in a program with smaller classes where professionals and other non-teachers are directly involved. A personal aide picks him up after school to help him with homework and afternoon activities. David needs parents who are willing and able to monitor his activities. He will do best with a strong male figure and a family that provides a high degree of stability. (NC #077-1887)

Jennifer (born 3/30/89)

Jennifer is engaging, has a good sense of humor, and is a strong advocate for herself. She attends regular classes and earns average grades in an Independent Living program. She needs encouragement and support to set goals. Jennifer wants a loving, nurturing family with experience parenting teens. They will need to be flexible and have a good sense of humor. (NC #041-2513)

Leytrell (born 6/11/00)

Leytrell is energetic, curious, and extremely artistic. He enjoys playing with cars and trucks, football, writing, and drawing. He attends a special kindergarten program that provides more support for his specific issues. He is learning behavior management techniques to help him with social skills and to cope with new experiences. Leytrell needs an adoptive home with parents who have plenty of patience and energy. (NC #026-2538)

Portia (born 9/29/89)

Portia is a sweet, friendly girl who is proud of the ribbon she won for walking at Special Olympics. Portia is nonverbal and hopes to learn sign language. She also loves helping others and being a positive role model. A family that will love and care for Portia should be trained and able to assist her with her special needs. Portia needs an adoptive family that will challenge her and encourage her to strive for more as she accomplishes new tasks. Most of all Portia needs a wonderful environment with lots of one-on-one attention. (NC #026-2040)

Quanesha (born 1/12/91)

Friendly and eager to please, Quanesha has a super sense of humor and amusing imagination. She is a happy girl who is learning to respect herself and others. She would like to try out for the basketball and track teams at school. Quanesha attends regular classes at school and earns average grades. She has the potential to be an above average student. An adoptive family for Quanesha needs to have reasonable expectations, be patient, supportive, and willing to allow time to build a trusting relationship. (NC #080-2311)

Ronnie (born 2/13/96)

Ronnie is an adorable boy with a terrific imagination and a perpetual smile. He loves to dance to old rock songs. He likes the water and enjoys going to the lake. Ronnie attends special classes in an alternative school. An adoptive family for Ronnie will need to be loving, nurturing, very structured, and familiar with behavior challenges. (NC #003-2520)

Timmy (born 3/18/91)

Timmy is an engaging boy with striking hazel eyes. He loves to be a helper and enjoys listening to music. He belongs to the YMCA and is learning to shoot pool. Timmy attends special education classes; a personal aide helps him stay on track. He enjoys special summer camp and after school activities. Timmy needs a strong male role model to spend time with him. An adoptive family for Timmy should understand that he may never be able to live independently, but that services are available to assist him and them as he matures. (NC #080-2427)



For more information on these children or adoption in general, call the NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 <www.adoptnckids.org>

Writing Contest

This contest is a little different. This time we would like to hear from the birth children of foster parents. Please send us a letter or short essay in response to the following:

**What is it like to be a birth child in a foster home?
What have you learned?**

Deadline: August 7, 2006

Mail your submission to: Fostering Perspectives, NC Division of Social Services, 1459 Sand Hill Rd., No. 6, Candler, NC 28715

Include your name, age, address, social security number (used to process awards only, confidentiality will be protected) and phone number. In addition to receiving the awards specified above, winners will have their work published in the next issue. Runners-up may also have their work published in *Fostering Perspectives*, for which they will also receive a cash award.

We're Also Seeking Artwork and Other Writing Submissions from Children and Teens in Foster Care

Submissions can be on any theme. The submission requirements described above apply. Artwork should be mailed flat (unfolded) on white, unlined paper.



FIRST PRIZE: \$100

SECOND PRIZE: \$50

THIRD PRIZE: \$25

Get in-service training credit for reading this newsletter!

Enjoy reading *Fostering Perspectives* and earn credit toward your relicensure. Just write down the answers to the questions below and present them to your social worker. If your answers are satisfactory, you'll receive 30 minutes of credit toward your training requirement. Questions about this method of gaining in-service credit? Contact the NC Division of Social Services at 919/733-7672.

In-Service Quiz, FP v10#2

1. Name four things you can do to help you manage your emotions before you have contact with the birth parents of children who have been sexually abused.
2. Name three things you can do to safeguard the health and development of children and teens in foster care.
3. Give four reasons that kids join youth gangs and name four things you can do to prevent their involvement with gangs.
4. Even if you can't attend the rally in Raleigh on May 16, what would you like the NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association to say to legislators on your behalf? What do you want them to know about the status and needs of children and families affected by adoption and foster care?
5. How did Shelly turn her life around? What is she doing now?
6. When the U.S. General Accounting Office examined the health status of young children in foster care in New York City, Los Angeles County, and Philadelphia County, what did it learn?
7. What is different about the adoption promotion materials developed through Under One Sky's camp-based program?
8. What is the Traveling Heart Gallery and when and where will it be when it is closest to where you live?
9. How old is North Carolina's SaySo (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out)? How many members and chapters does SaySo have today?
10. What are three things that helped Angelina Spencer move from being a sexual abuse survivor to someone who is really thriving?

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We Want to Hear from the Experts!

The NC Division of Social Services will soon develop a handbook for foster family home licensing workers from North Carolina's public and private agencies. The guide will describe policy and best practice around licensing, foster parent training and support, and more.

If you are a "regular" or therapeutic foster parent you have already been through the licensing process, and probably the relicensing process as well.

As a result, you may have insights into the licensing process or opinions about what should be included in a guide for licensing workers. We hope you will take a few minutes to share your ideas with us by completing a brief online survey. To find the survey, just point your Internet browser to http://www.fosteringperspectives.org/fp_v10n2/survey.htm. Thanks in advance for your help!

