

# fostering perspectives

Sponsored by the NC Division of Social Services and the Family and Children's Resource Program

## Permanence for older youth in foster care

**Permanence.** We talk about it all the time in the foster care system. It's in our laws. It's in our policy. It's discussed in court and in case planning.

At the same time, foster care's relationship with permanence is a little strange. In a way, they're opposites. If you're in foster care, you do not have permanence, at least not from a legal standpoint.

Yet foster care is a road to permanence for many children, whether that means returning home to their families, adoption, or something else.

Permanence has a huge influence on a young person's sense of self, well-being, and the trajectory their lives.

Permanence is something we all need to survive and thrive.

This is true even for older youth in foster care. Like all teens, these young people are on the cusp of independence. Many yearn to live on their own. But they need enduring connections to people who will always be there for them just as much as younger children. The need for belonging and support is lifelong.

That's why, in this issue of *Fostering Perspectives*, we focus on finding permanence for older youth in foster care.

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## We can all take steps to promote permanence

First, let's be clear: if you are a foster parent or kinship care provider, you are already doing a lot to promote permanence for youth in foster care.

Yes, foster care is temporary. But it is not a limbo where nothing happens. Foster care can be a place that gives kids a chance to get their feet under them—developmentally, emotionally, cognitively, physically—while their families work to resolve their challenges.

The care and support you provide, the teaching and nurturing you do, the way that you understand and respond to children's behaviors—these things make a profound difference in children's lives, especially because they can make permanence easier to achieve.

### Permanence

"Permanence" can have different meanings. When people use the word about children and youth in foster care, usually they are talking about **legal permanence**, which North Carolina child welfare policy defines as a lasting, nurturing, legally secure relationship with at least one adult that is characterized by mutual commitment.

"Legally secure" in this case means a placement in which the direct caregiver has the legal authority to make parental decisions on behalf of the child or youth (NCDSS, 2014a). Legal permanence is about reunification, adoption, guardianship, or assignment of legal custody. These are the types of arrangements the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act seeks to achieve by requiring states to conduct permanency hearings within a year after a child enters foster care.

There are two other important kinds of permanence we should keep in mind, however.

*continued next page*

### Achieving Legal Permanence for Children and Youth in Foster Care: How Is North Carolina Doing?

As Figure 1 shows, most children in foster care in our state attain legal permanence through reunification with their families, adoption, or guardianship.

But, as Figure 2 shows, when children are older than age 12 when they enter foster care, things are different. These young people are as likely as other kids in care to achieve reunification. But when that doesn't happen, chances are poor they will be adopted or find a guardian.

Instead, they often leave foster care through some "other" means, a category that includes emancipation ("aging out" at age 18), transfer to another agency, and runaway. Emancipations account for most exits in the "other" category.

In other words, our system often fails to achieve legal permanence for children who are older than age 12 when they enter foster care.

#### EXITS FROM FOSTER CARE IN NC IN 2012

FIGURE 1

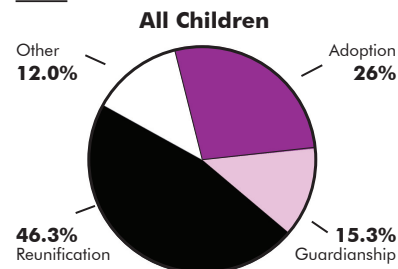
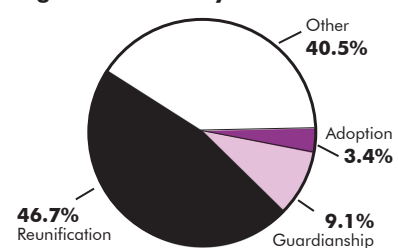


FIGURE 2

#### Children Who Were Older than Age 12 When They Entered Care



Source: USDHHS, 2014

# Permanence continued from previous page

**Relational permanency** is the term for an emotional attachment between the youth and caregivers and other family members and kin (Univ. of Iowa School of Social Work, 2009, cited in NRCPPFC, 2013). More and more, we are coming to realize that even when legal permanence isn't possible, relational permanence is.

North Carolina has made relational permanence one of the primary outcomes focused on by NC LINKS, our state's independent living program. For each teen in foster care we seek to build a personal support system of at least five caring adults in addition to the youth's relationships with professionals.

There's also **cultural permanency**, which is about maintaining a continuous connection to family, tradition, race, ethnicity, culture, language and religion (Univ. of Iowa School of Social Work, 2009, cited in NRCPPFC, 2013). The importance of maintaining cultural ties is emphasized in the pre-service training foster parents receive and is supported by proactive, respectful communication with birth families and practices such as shared parenting.

## Why Permanence Matters

These three forms of permanence—legal, relational, and cultural—have a big influence on young people's sense of self, their well-being, and the trajectory their lives. Though all are important, the effects of legal permanence have been studied most. Consider the findings of Courtney and colleagues (2011), who followed youth who had aged out of foster care and were 26 years old at the time of the study.

Compared to their peers who did not spend time in foster care, these youth were:

- 10.5 times more likely to be incarcerated.
- 3 times less likely to have completed high school.
- 9 times less likely to have completed a 4-year degree.
- Nearly twice as likely to have a health condition or disability that limits their daily activity.
- Nearly twice as likely to be unemployed.

These and other negative outcomes experienced by young people who have aged out of foster care dramatically illustrate why legal permanence matters.

## A Concerning Trend

As the statistics on the previous page show, our system does not always do so well when it comes to achieving permanence for children—especially for those who are teens or tweens when they enter foster care.

As Figure 3 shows, the number of youth aging out of care in NC without legal permanence has increased over the past decade.

Fortunately, there are things you can do to promote legal, relational, and cultural permanence for children and youth in care.

In 2013, 500 youth aged out of foster care in our state (Duncan, et al., 2014). In North Carolina a 12-year-old in foster care is 2.5 times less likely to be adopted, and a 17-year-old 9 times less likely to be adopted, than a 2-year-old (USDHHS, 2014).

Although adoption is not the only path, too many older youth are aging out without legal permanence of any kind.

## What You Can Do

Many of the most significant barriers to achieving permanence for children in foster care are beyond the direct control of foster parents and kin caregivers. When it comes to overcoming these hurdles, most of the power lies in the hands of child welfare professionals, the court system, and children's families.

However, there are things you can do to help. Following are some suggestions for steps you can take to promote permanence for older children in foster care.

**1. Be open to fostering or adopting teens.** Older youth in foster care are much more likely to live in group homes. While residential settings are the right place for some youth, many others live in group homes simply because there aren't enough foster families for teens. Consider opening your home to teens.

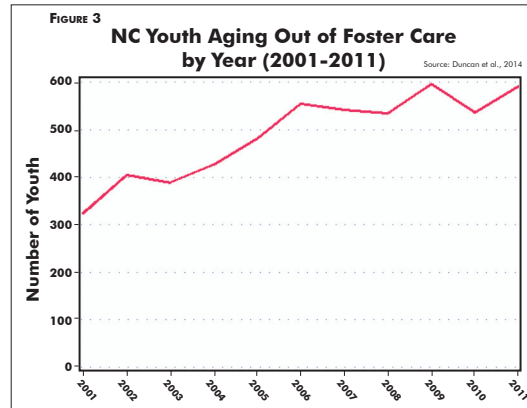
**2. Offer to help recruit families for kids.** Foster and adoptive parents are the most effective recruiters. Tell your agency you are willing to help spread the word!

**3. Be willing to talk about permanence with young people in your home.** Do this even if you can't be the forever family for the young person. It isn't easy, but kids need multiple opportunities to discuss their future and what permanence might look like for them. Social workers should lead these talks, but caregivers can also play a part.

**4. Promote cultural and relational permanence.** Do all you can to maintain strong connections to children's traditions, culture, language, and faith while they're in your care.

The same is true for connections to caring adults, even if these adults aren't in a position to adopt or be a guardian. If you know of adults who may be an ongoing support for the child, make sure the child's social worker knows so these connections can be kept maintained and encouraged.

**5. Be an active part of the team serving the child.** Know what the child's permanency plan is. Ask what you can do to help achieve this goal. Advocate for the youth.



**6. Facilitate contact with parents, siblings, extended family, and other people important to the child.** Visits are important, but so are other forms of contact—e.g., phone calls, letters, conversations via Skype or FaceTime, etc.

**7. Practice Shared Parenting.** Shared parenting creates a bridge between the two families. When the child returns home, lines of communication can sometimes remain open. In this way, you may still be able to be "family" for the child and the child's parents.

**8. Use life books.** Developing a coherent narrative of their lives and who has been important to them helps young people know and remember—on a deep level—important truths that make future success possible: that they are loved, capable, and connected.

**9. Know about and, if appropriate, support other strategies described in this issue.** These include:

- **CARS agreements.** Talk with your child about the option of CARS if there is even a slight chance they may not find permanence before age 18. If your county doesn't offer the CARS, advocate for a change.
- **Permanency-related strategies,** especially Family Finding and Child-Specific Recruitment, which are part of NC's Permanency Innovation Initiative.
- **CFTs.** These can be an ideal place to help youth explore lasting, nurturing relationships with adults who are committed to them and their success.
- **Adult adoption.** Formalizing a child-parent relationship, even between adults, is a powerful way to ensure that the family members truly feel they belong together.

## Conclusion

Whether it is legal, relational, or cultural, permanence can have a huge influence on a person's sense of self, well-being, and the trajectory their lives. Fortunately, we can all take steps to promote permanency for teens and other young people in foster care.

# NC permanency efforts you should know about

by Lauren Zingraff and John McMahon

If you're a foster parent or child welfare social worker in North Carolina, you're already committed to ensuring that every child has a safe, loving, permanent family. You have shown that permanence is something close to your heart. For this reason, we know you'll be excited to learn about two strategies our state is using right now to ensure every child has a forever family.

## Family Finding

Family Finding is an innovative model developed in the 1990s by youth permanency expert Kevin Campbell. It offers methods social workers use to help children in foster care find and connect with family members. This can include biological family members as well as family of choice. Many children are either estranged from or do not even know the family members located through Family Finding.

Family Finding uses an extensive search and discovery process to find and engage family members. Social workers use Internet-based search tools to locate family members unknown to the child welfare system. Strong efforts are made to connect youth with family members, no matter where they live.

Once they're found, family members help create a plan to ensure they remain engaged and can potentially provide lifelong support for the young person. The support offered by family members may include inviting the child to spend the holidays with them or, in some cases, providing a permanent home for the child (CFFYC, 2008). Family Finding's goal is relational (emotional) and legal permanency for the youth.

While not every family member can foster or adopt, many offer support in other ways.

**Family Finders discovered, on average, 41 additional relatives for each child.**

This includes weekly phone calls to the child, attending extracurricular activities such as basketball games or choral performances, and sending birthday and holiday cards and gifts.

This type of connection and unconditional relationship with adults can be a protective factor that helps children through the feelings of loneliness that are common in foster care.

We like Family Finding because it often gets results. For example, between July 2011 and June 2013, the Children's Home Society of NC did Family Finding for 300 North Carolina children. When they were first referred to CHS, on average there were eight known relatives for these children. After approximately five months of work, Family Finders had discovered, on average, an additional 41 (forty-one!) relatives for each child.

Even better, for 89% of these children Family Finders identified five or more family members who said they were willing to commit to a lifelong connection. For 79% of these children, one or more relatives committed to helping the child achieve legal permanence (CHS-NC, 2014).

## Permanency Innovation Initiative

There's also the Permanency Innovation Initiative. Under this effort, the Children's Home Society of NC, in partnership with the NC Division of Social Services, is providing three kinds of services to improve permanency outcomes for children in foster care:

**1. Child-Specific Adoption Recruitment Services.** Based on the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Model developed by The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, this

program works with children to develop and execute adoption recruitment plans tailored to the needs of the individual child. For children ages 9-17 in participating counties.

**2. Family Finding Services.** As described above, this program uses intensive services to discover and engage relatives of children living in foster care to provide relational (emotional) and legal permanence. For children ages 9-17 in participating counties.

**3. Training.** CHS is assessing county DSS agencies' readiness to implement Family Finding and Child-Specific Recruitment and providing training to support the effectiveness of these services.

The Division of Social Services anticipates that approximately 228 children in 89 NC counties will receive services through the Permanency Innovation Initiative between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015 (NCDSS, 2014c).

Why is there excitement about this initiative? We have already talked about the promising results produced by Family Finding. When we look at Child-Specific Recruitment we see the same promise.

So far, Children's Home Society's results with Child-Specific Recruitment in North Carolina have been impressive. In our state 70% of the 275 children served through the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Model were matched with an adoptive family. Fifty-two percent achieved a decree of adoption. For those who were adopted, the median length of time it took between referral to Child-Specific Recruitment and decree of adoption was 519 days, or just over a year and a half (CHS-NC, 2014).

To put this in perspective, 60% of the NC children adopted in 2012 had been waiting two years or more to be adopted; 13% waited four or more years (USDHHS, 2014).

## Conclusion

"Permanency" is the same no matter who you are. We all want to feel permanently connected to people who love us and who know us. We all want to feel safe and secure and special within those relationships. Foster parents can help children feel a sense of permanency by ensuring they know they are always welcome and should feel "at home" with their foster families.

To learn more about Family Finding or the Permanency Innovation Initiative, contact the Children's Home Society of NC's Matt Anderson (336/369-3814; [MVAnderson@chsnc.org](mailto:MVAnderson@chsnc.org)) or the NC Division of Social Services' Teresa Strom (919/527-6344; [teresa.strom@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:teresa.strom@dhhs.nc.gov)).

## From Place to Place

"From Place to Place" is a documentary that follows three young people as they turn 18 and age out of the foster care system. It reveals the emotional, financial, and physical challenges they face as they transition on their own without supports or resources. This is a firsthand account of what really happens to young people when they age out of care.

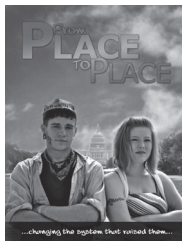
I have seen this award-winning film on several occasions, including screenings at the UNC-CH School of Social Work and the NC General Assembly. SaySo alumni have said they relate and can see their own aging-out journeys in the film.

You can access the website with several video clips and resources, as well as order the DVD, at <http://fromplacetoplacemovie.com/>.

— Lauren Zingraff, Executive Director of SaySo

## Plot Summary

Having recently aged out of foster care, FROM PLACE TO PLACE follows Micah, Mandy, and Raif as they face life with little support beyond their social worker, Matt. Raif falls in and out of love as many times as he jumps trains, Mandy tries to succeed at her education and Micah just can't stay out of jail. Mustering courage into action, Mandy and Raif travel to Capitol Hill to tell their stories and try to change the system that raised them for generations to come.



# Reinstatement of parental rights in NC: Myths and facts

by David F. Hord IV, JD

In 2011, legislation was passed in North Carolina that allows a juvenile court to reinstate the parental rights of a parent whose rights have been terminated (N.C.G.S. § 7B-1114). Reinstatement of parental rights is a permanency planning option for primarily older youth in very limited circumstances.

When they first learn about reinstatement of parental rights, foster and adoptive parents often have questions, and some feel an initial concern that reinstatement isn't in children's best interests, or that it puts planned or finalized adoptions at risk.

Following is an attempt to sort the myths from the facts when it comes to reinstatement of parental rights in North Carolina.

**Myth: It makes no difference whether a child is in a pre-adoptive home.**

Fact: A motion to reinstate parental rights can be filed **ONLY** if the child is not in an adoptive placement and is not likely to be adopted within a reasonable period of time. Therefore, if the child has an identified caregiver who is willing to adopt the child, reinstatement of parental rights cannot be considered.

**Myth: A parent can file a motion to reinstate his or her parental rights.**

Fact: Only the juvenile, the juvenile's guardian ad litem attorney advocate (GAL), or the county department of social services (DSS) agency with custody of the juvenile can file a motion to reinstate parental rights.

**Myth: Any child whose parents' rights have been terminated may be subject to a motion for reinstatement of parental rights.**

Fact: Except in extraordinary circumstances, the juvenile must be at least 12 years old.

**Myth: Reinstatement of parental rights is an alternative to appealing a decision to TPR.**

Fact: Three years must pass between a TPR hearing and a motion to reinstate parental rights unless the court has changed the child's permanent plan or the juvenile's GAL attorney advocate and county DSS agree that the child's permanent plan is no longer adoption.

**Myth: DSS, the GAL, and the juvenile can agree to change the permanent plan to reinstatement of parental rights.**

Fact: One or more of these parties may file a motion to change the permanent plan, but it is up to the district court judge to decide whether reinstatement of parental rights should be granted. The standard the judge uses to make this decision is the best interest of the juvenile.

A motion to reinstate parental rights in no way affects an already-finalized adoption

**Myth: Reinstatement of parental rights can be granted even if the parent's circumstances haven't changed.**

Fact: The court must determine whether the parent has remedied the conditions that led to the juvenile's removal and the termination of the parent's parental rights. The court must also determine whether the juvenile would receive proper care and supervision in a safe home if placed with the parent.

**Myth: If the parent's situation has changed, the court must reinstate their parental rights.**

Fact: The court's decision must always be based on the child's best interests. The court must determine the needs of the juvenile. The court should also assess what services would need to be in place if the parent's rights were reinstated.

**Myth: The child doesn't have a say.**

Fact: If the juvenile is not the party motioning for reinstatement, the juvenile must be properly served with the motion. ("Serving" is an official handing over of documents, to ensure the child is aware the motion has been filed.)

If a motion is filed and the juvenile does not have a GAL, the court must appoint one. The GAL represents the best interests of the juvenile at every stage of the reinstatement of parental rights proceeding. The GAL also must provide reports to the court. In addition, the court must consider the juvenile's willingness to resume contact with the parent and to have the parental rights reinstated. The juvenile is also required to receive notice of the hearings on the motion for reinstatement of parental rights.

**Myth: The juvenile's foster parents don't have a say.**

Fact: While they are not parties to the reinstatement proceedings, placement providers do have the right to attend hearings and provide information to the court.

**Myth: A reinstatement of parental rights case will drag out for years.**

Fact: The court must either dismiss or grant the motion for reinstatement of parental rights within 12 months of the motion being filed, unless the court makes specific findings as to why the decision cannot be made and specifies a time frame for when the final decision will be made.



David Hord

**Myth: The granting of a motion to reinstate parental rights is the same as overturning the termination of parental rights proceeding.**

Fact: If a judge reinstates a parent's parental rights, the original order terminating parental rights is not vacated, deemed invalid, or overturned. Therefore, if two or more children are subject to the original termination of parental rights proceeding, but only one child is the subject of a reinstatement of parental rights proceeding, the other child is still legally free for adoption if he or she has not been adopted already. A motion to reinstate parental rights in no way affects an already-finalized adoption.

## Conclusion

Reinstatement of parental rights is a fairly new permanent plan for children. It may not be a realistic plan for most children and may be emotionally charged from all sides. It is important for DSS, the GAL, the caregivers, the parent, and especially the child to fully understand what it means. As with all permanency options, considering reinstatement of parental rights must be done with the child's best interest as the central concern.

David F. Hord, IV, is a Staff Attorney Advocate for Wake County's Guardian ad Litem program.

## Educational and Training Vouchers for Current and Former Foster Care Youth

As we all know, youth aging out of foster care may face many challenges enrolling in college, including accessing accurate information about scholarships, financial aid, and other grants.

The U.S. Department of Education has created a useful website to assist young people when they are thinking about attending college, located here: <http://studentaid.ed.gov>.

Also, a one-page resource is available to inform people about the **Education and Training Voucher**

**Program** (located here: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/sites/default/files/foster-youth-vouchers.pdf>). Please promote this resource to ensure all young people, foster parents, adoptive parents, and others have the information they need to support youth in attending college and other postsecondary institutions.





# Life books: Sources of healing and strength long past age 18

by Donna Foster

Recently my 38-year-old daughter, Shannon, and her 8-year-old, Cheyenne, sat with me to look through Shannon's baby book. Then I grabbed albums crammed with photos, school report cards, birth certificates, and other mementos. With each photo, floods of memories surfaced. We laughed and cried. Cheyenne would say things like, "I like to do that too, mom!" and "We're a lot alike."

It was wonderful. Not only did I share what I remembered from those earlier days, but I learned more about my daughter and the memories she held close to her heart. Cheyenne learned about her mom and her grandmother. In just a few hours, our bond grew stronger.

## Life Books: Tools for Survival

This experience deepened my belief that life books are critically important for young people who are in foster care or who have been adopted. Life books are more than photo albums. They provide physical evidence for things many of us take for granted. They help prove the child was and is loved. By including the people who were and are in their lives, life books help young people make sense of why they are living in their present family.

Many children in foster care have been traumatized. Their self-concept is low. They don't feel lovable, capable, or safe. Yes, they need food, shelter, clothing, education, and safety. But to survive, grow, and build a future they need more than that.

I loved every child who came to live with us for the 17 years we fostered. I still love them. One youth challenged me by asking, "How can you love me if you don't know me?"

His question made me realize that helping a child reconnect to his past and understand his value in his present life is as important to his survival as food and shelter. Without this, we can't prepare a child for his future.

## Laying a Foundation

Years ago I was a counselor in a residential center (group home) for kids in foster care. As we were doing life books, some of the older youth resisted the idea of telling their life stories for their life books. They were comfortable talking about what they liked to do and who their present best friends were, but they didn't want to talk about the past.

I didn't push them. Instead, I started taking photos of them with the other youth and adults around them. We logged pages and pages with trips to the mountains, camping, and squirting water on each other while washing cars. This felt safe for them.

Eventually I learned that as soon as a

### Jared's Story

Jared (not his real name) was abandoned as an 18-month-old. He had no photos of his past. He didn't have his birth certificate or any information about his birth family. He and his birth sister were adopted, but he was sent away at age seven and never saw her again. I met Jared after his second adoption ended.

In situations like this, when there are many gaps in the child's story, you can build a life book by asking the young person to use their imagination to fill in the gaps by answering the question "What would you like this part of your life (the part with the gap) to look like?" Later, if new information emerges, it can replace the imagined version.

So, at age twelve, Jared and I recreated his past. He made up his first words, when he crawled and walked. He picked out of a magazine what he would have liked to be his first toy. It was a stuffed bear. Then I went out and bought his first toy bear.

Using magazines, I helped him find a photo of a baby that looked like him. This became his baby picture. We guessed his birth weight and length.

He picked out magazine pictures of girls that looked like his sister. He found magazine pictures of a woman that had his color eyes and hair. She became his mother. He did the same for his father. Around those pictures in his life book, he wrote what he knew and what his case worker and I told him.

Never did we speak negatively about his birth parents. Instead we said, "Some adults have a lot of troubles. Some can't take care of their children. They love their children, but are not able to take care of them." The one message we kept giving



Jared was that children don't cause placement in foster care or disruptions. Adults do. It is never the child's fault. This took years of guilt off his shoulders.

As Jared's life book continued I learned why he didn't know how to ride a bicycle. He never rode a child's big wheel, bicycle with training wheels, or a two wheeler bicycle. He was interested in younger children's big wheels, so I bought him big wheels and let him be four years old again. His memories started coming back.

Step by step Jared made up for all of the times he missed being a child. He soon proudly started riding his own bicycle.

Jared is in his 40s now, and has two daughters—one grown, the other a high school sophomore. His wife of 20 years recently passed away. His eldest daughter keeps her daddy's first toy bear in her bedroom. Jared remembers those years we worked to find out who he was and why he felt the way he did.

Many times, Jared used his life books to help new people in his life understand who he was. He used his life books as maps of his life. He took them to the children's home he lived in for two years and shared stories. He showed them his schools, where he played, his churches, his neighbors, and our home. He kept in touch with some of his past friends and became a permanent part of our family.

Today he is looking for his birth family again. I am taking that journey with him.

youth came to live at the residential home or with my family, I needed to connect with their parents and siblings. I listened as their birth family shared life experiences. Some were happy. Many were painful.

But it was so helpful. Connecting with families helped me to know the youth better. My compassion and understanding for the youth's parents made life easier for the youth.

We must let the youth know their parents are more than what happened that led to foster care. The older the child becomes, the more they see the needs of their parents.

Whenever possible, I wanted them to feel their parents parenting them, even if it was in a simple way. Photos of them cooking together or talking on a park bench can give the youth a lifetime of fond memories. Photos like these—and the memories that go with them—can help them through tough times as an adult.

## Making Meaningful Connections

As trust developed between me and a youth, they started telling me about people they missed in their lives. I felt my job was to talk to the youth's case worker and search out these people who meant a lot to the youth.

With the agency's approval, I found teach-

ers, old neighbors, school bus drivers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and many more people excited to be in the youth's life again. A youth can become more whole if people from his past reenter his life.

## Conclusion

I think the box above, which shares the story of one of the young men I fostered, vividly illustrates the way life books can be a source of healing and strength for children long past age 18.

How we engage youth has a huge bearing on who they will become as adults. What we say or do, and the connections we try to make or continue, affect them deeply. It is our job as foster parents, adoptive parents, and social workers to help children and youth feel lovable, capable, worthwhile, and responsible. This is love in action.

*Donna Foster is an author, national trainer, and consultant. She lives in Marshville, NC.*

**Read More about Life Books from Donna Foster**  
 Check out Donna's article "Life Books: Keeping it Together" in the May 2013 issue of *Fostering Perspectives*. <http://www.fosteringperspectives.org/fpv17n2/lifebooks.html>

# Not what I imagined by Caleb Stout

## **What I learned when my parents started providing therapeutic foster care**

Little more than a year ago, my life changed seemingly overnight when my normal family became something much more: a therapeutic foster family.

Since then we've had quite a number of foster kids in our house. Some did well and some did not. However, I did what I could to help each of them get a little something back in their life: control.

### **My Assumptions**

I spent most of my life—like most people—thinking little of foster children. If I did, it was only when they were mentioned on TV. Soon, however, I learned a lot more about this needy community. These children bounce from home to home with their few belongings, often using garbage bags for suitcases. At first, I thought these downtrodden kids needed a friend, but quickly I realized that most of these kids did not want me to be their friend and that my family, although a good one, was not the Nirvana I thought they needed.

Once again, like most people, I thought Disney had it right: that through kindness and love alone, one could remedy another person's anger and problems. Yet again, I was wrong.

Those ideas changed with one of the first foster kids that came to our house. We were providing respite for another family and I figured it would seem like a weekend away for the kid, like a fun sleep over. I knew we had the beautiful mountains where we would take the new kid hiking and show him an ancient apple orchard, cool bear and wolf tracks, and

a mountain stream that kind of sprung up from nowhere. Who wouldn't think that was awesome? I thought this young man would probably never want to leave our house.

### **Not What I Imagined**

He did want to leave—and not in a good way. By the end of the weekend, he attempted to jump off our third story porch. My dad and I had to hold him down on the ground to restrain him from jumping off while we waited for the police to come. I've never waited for five minutes as long as I did that day. I know my younger brother was shocked and probably a little freaked out.

The anger that was spewing out of this boy's mouth was almost enough to knock you over. I don't mean his physical strength, my father and I were stronger than he was and restrained him easily enough. What I mean is the pure anger and hatred coming from him. What had happened to this kid? Who made him this angry? Was it fear? Was it his past?

Eventually the police and his family came and he left. I never learned what happened to him, but this experience did make me realize that foster care at my house was not going to be the Disney story I thought.

### **Finding a Way to Help**

A few days later, I went hiking in the mountains behind our house. I think clearer there and it was not until I reached the top of the mountain that I had an epiphany. The answer seemed so clear: I had to mentor, teach, and help these kids find a way to overcome their fears, starting with the fear of not being in control of themselves.

The fear of not being in control affects almost everybody at one point or another. But for foster kids this fear takes on a whole other level. This fear asks, *Will I eat today? Will these people hurt me? When will I go home? Another new school?*

I never had to face any of these harsh realities, so I had to fall back on what has worked in my past to make me feel in control of my life and confident in who I am. I thought a great way to help the kids gain confidence was through exercise, because how a person perceives their own appearance weighs heavily on their level of self-confidence.

I made up a schedule with the foster kids to hike the mountain almost every day. Each week it seemed they could do more or go farther. It also seemed their ability to control their emotions grew stronger. Hiking in our mountains can be quite strenuous and even a little dangerous if bad weather rolls in fast. Giving some of the kids a leadership role while we hiked was a big part in helping them improve their self-confidence. Asking them about their thoughts and opinions, I could see a light go on in their eyes.

*Caleb Stout is from Buncombe County, NC. This essay was originally written in 2011 as part of his application to the college he now attends.*



*I thought Disney had it right: That through kindness and love alone, one could remedy another person's anger and problems.*

## **Preparing Your Children for the Changes that Come with Fostering**

*Adapted from The Coalition for Children, Youth and Families, 2013*

Here are some suggestions from foster parents for preparing family members—especially your children—for the changes that are coming.

**Discuss what you learn in foster care pre-service training** and discuss the decision to foster as soon as you can.

**Talk to your kids.** When a mom is pregnant, the parents tell their children to expect a sibling. People talk to them for months to prepare them. Do the same when preparing to foster.

**Anticipate how you'll answer tough questions,** such as, "Why can't she live with her real mom?" Or "Why does he do that?"

When answering tough questions, it helps to use generalities by talking about why "some kids" are in care or why "some kids" might act out because of past trauma.

**Teach your kids about confidentiality** and remind them frequently to honor it. Tell them what they can

and can't talk about and how to answer questions. Teach them to tell others, "That's not something I can share, but feel free to ask him directly."

**Show your kids how to be empathetic.** Children entering foster care have just been through a huge change and are probably having a hard time with a lot of things. Talk about how your new household member needs some time to adjust.

Ask your children to put themselves in the child's shoes. Most kids can understand how challenging it would be to adjust to a whole new family, school, foods, friends, teachers, and neighbors all at once.

**Remind your children they can be good teachers** for the kids in their home. Remind them that their behavior can influence the new children.

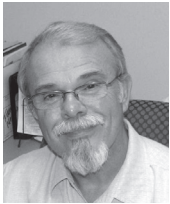
**Consider making life books** for the children who come into your care. Enlist the help of your whole family. For more on life books, Donna Foster's articles in this issue and in our May 2013 issue: [www.fosteringperspectives.org/fpv17n2/lifebooks.html](http://www.fosteringperspectives.org/fpv17n2/lifebooks.html).

[www.fosteringperspectives.org/fpv17n2/lifebooks.html](http://www.fosteringperspectives.org/fpv17n2/lifebooks.html).

**Be realistic with your children** about sharing your time and energy with other children. Acknowledge that this new child may require more than might seem to be his or her fair share of attention. Remind them how much you love them, and let them know how special they are for being part of a family that cares about people.

**Teach your kids about children whose parents have not been able to care for them.** Books and movies that can help you do this include: *The Orphan Trains, Evelyn, The Martian Child, Antwone Fisher, Annie, Lilo & Stitch, The Blind Side, Meet the Robinsons,* and many more.

**Prepare your family for the inevitability of children leaving your home.** Talk about it and let them grieve in their own ways. Some may not seem touched by the change; others may feel the separation and loss deeply.



# CFTs: A place to talk about tomorrow

by William Poindexter

My grandson just left for university. This reminded me of some discussions we had throughout his growing up.

As a young teen, I would ask him, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" A few years later, as he began thinking of where he was going to college, I said very clearly to him, "Remember, you can always call me—I'll be there for you."

My grandson left for college knowing he still belonged and could call on family at any moment. For all my grandchildren, throughout their growing up, these and many other discussions about their "tomorrows" occurred in natural, informal settings with members of family all around.

For youth growing up in foster care these important discussions are often very different. For too many youth, "when you grow up" means *when you "age out" of foster care*. For too many, "stay in touch" means *when our house isn't your home anymore*.

Who can I call? Where do I go? Who is my family? These are questions many kids have the day they enter foster care. Unfortunately, some youth leave the system at age 18 without any answers.

## Permanence & Emancipation

Achieving timely "permanence" for children is one of the main goals of our child welfare system. Officially, North Carolina policy defines **permanence** as a lasting, nurturing, legally secure relationship with at least one adult that is characterized by mutual commitment (NCDSS, 2014a). As a system, we want to achieve permanence for children and youth as soon as possible.

If we fail to achieve legal permanence, young people often exit foster care through **emancipation**. This means the youth is age 18 or older—legally an adult—and no longer subject to DSS supervision (NCDSS, 2014a). Youth who "age out" of foster care are on their own.

## Our Goals vs. Our Performance

Even for youth who age out, the official goal of our system is to make sure that they leave care with a nurturing relationship with at least one adult.

We don't always reach this goal. According to the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, since 1999 more than 230,000 young people in the United States left foster care without permanent family connections. Each year, 26,000 exit care without the typical growing-up experiences that teach self-sufficiency and without the family supports and community networks that facilitate successful transitions to adulthood (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2014).

Given all this, the question for foster parents, social workers, and everyone who is part of the foster care system becomes **how do we help youth prepare for familial relationships after emancipation from foster care?**

## CFTs Can Be Key

The Child and Family Team (CFT) process is a great tool for helping youth talk about what "tomorrow" will look like.

Used effectively, the CFT process creates a place for a youth on track to age out of the system to explore ways to have a lasting, nurturing relationship with at least one adult that is characterized by mutual commitment.

CFTs are a good place for youth to talk about relational permanence because in CFTs:

- **Partners Share Power.** CFTs aren't just about court orders, the therapeutic plan, or school issues. CFTs create an environment where the thinking, wishes, and ideas of the young person are invited and listened to.
- **Everyone Needs to be Heard.** It is all too easy to become case-work-focused and lose the fact that children need relationships,

not just services. Their voice needs to be included, encouraged, and respected. Youth need others to hear their views as they explore their options.

- **Judgments Can Wait.** Done right, CFTs are a place where a young person's options can be identified, explored, and weighed without the opinions of professionals and foster parents becoming the "rule." Providing a forum for the young person to talk freely about tomorrow and who they want to face it with is essential.
- **Everyone Desires Respect.** A critical element of the CFT process is that everyone trusts they will be respected. Achieving this level of trust requires focused preparation. Everyone must know their role and understand CFTs are a process driven by the **family**. In this case, the "family" is the young man or woman and the people with whom they are planning a relationship when foster care is over. Communicating respect to meeting participants allows them to be open in the meetings.
- **Everyone Has Strengths.** When they exit foster care at age 18 or 21, most young people try to reestablish contact with their birth family, even if there has been termination of parental rights. The CFT process can provide a chance for young people to consider this option thoughtfully and with open-minded support, and to prepare for the potential benefits and possible downsides of this reconnection.
- **Partnership Is a Process.** Helping youth in foster care build and sustain healthy, meaningful, sustainable relationships is a process. The respectful, partnership approach used in CFTs can help to nurture those ongoing relationships.

**Children need more than services. They also need relationships.**

## Conclusion

CFTs are a place and a process that allow young people in the foster care system to share their hopes and dreams related to legal and relational permanence. Used effectively, they are an ideal place to help youth at risk of aging out of care explore lasting, nurturing relationships with adults who are committed to them and their success.

*William Poindexter is a CFT trainer for the Center for Family & Community Engagement at NC State University.*

## When Are CFT Meetings Held for Kids in Foster Care?

For children and youth who are coming into care in NC after having been served in In-Home services, a team should already have been formed, though there will be new members who join the team to support them. A CFT meeting must be held at the following times after children enter foster care:



- Within 30 days of coming into care
- Within 60 days of coming into care
- Within 90 days after the 60-day meeting, not more than 150 days after coming into care
- Every 6 months thereafter
- When there is a change in the plan or family and it is necessary to reconvene the team.

These timeframes are the same as the requirements for the Permanency Planning Action Team (PPAT) meeting. As the case progresses, the team may change, especially if the primary goal changes.

If reunification is no longer the goal, CFT meetings must still be held. A broad definition of family should be used in these cases and children/youth should always be consulted as to whom they would like to have on their team. This is especially important if birth parents no longer attend meetings.

Source: NC Division of Social Services, 2014d

# What is Fostering Health NC?

by Adam Svolto

Fostering Health NC is a statewide initiative focused on improving health outcomes for children and youth in foster care. This effort, which is led by the NC Pediatric Society, is working to ensure every child in foster care has a medical home and that their healthcare aligns with standards recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

## What is a medical home?

A medical home is a doctor's office—typically a pediatric or family medicine practice—that serves as a central place where all of a child's medical records can be maintained and periodically reviewed. The idea is to have as many health care decisions as possible made by one office to ensure children get coordinated care.

There are many benefits to this approach. By taking children to the same doctor for check-ups, vaccinations, and sick visits, you help the doctor build a complete picture of the child's health, which can help detect changes that need attention. Repeat visits strengthen the relationship you and your child have with the doctor, leading to greater trust and comfort.

## How often should visits occur?

Children should be seen by a doctor early and often upon entering foster care. The purpose of these visits is to assess their physical, emotional, and behavioral health needs.

The American Academy of Pediatrics standards recommend children have an *Initial Visit* within 72 hours of entering care to quickly assess their condition, make referrals, and fill needed prescriptions.

The Academy's standards also call for a *Comprehensive Visit* within 30 days of the child's entry into care. This visit should include a full physical health evaluation along with the following:

- A mental health evaluation
- A developmental health evaluation (for children under age 6)
- An educational evaluation (for children over age 5)
- A dental evaluation

After these early visits, children in foster care need check-ups (or *Well Visits*) twice as often as other children. Here is a summary of the AAP-recommended check-up schedule:

- 0-6 months of age: every month
- 6-24 months of age: every 3 months
- 2-21 years and times of significant change: every 6 months

## Why is the medical home model important for children in foster care?

Social workers and health care provid-

ers often have a hard time finding health records for children in care. This sometimes leads to poorly coordinated care.

For example, the NC Pediatric Society Board President, Dr. John Rusher, tells of a child in foster care who received seven Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, & acellular pertussis) shots because previous caregivers had no record of the child's immunizations. That's six too many shots.

Frequent check-ups also help children cope better with trauma. On top of the maltreatment they have suffered, research shows that children experience significant stress when they are removed from their homes or switch foster homes. By closely monitoring the child's health and assessing the relationship between the foster parent and child, a doctor can identify early signs of problems and provide prescriptions, referrals to other services, and take action to prevent crises.

## What does this mean for foster parents?

As Fostering Health NC expands, foster parents will likely be asked to attend more doctor visits than in the past. In addition, you may be asked to take children to specialty visits, such as mental health providers.

Though time-consuming, these visits will do much to protect and promote children's well-being. What's more, frequent doctor visits have been shown to reduce health crises requiring hospitalization.

The medical home model is an effective way to protect and promote the health of children in foster care.

## How can you help?

There are a number of ways you can support good care coordination for the children you foster. For those already in your care, confirm with the case worker that the child is assigned to a medical home. For children who have recently entered care, ensure they have completed the *Initial Visit* and *Comprehensive*

*Visit* described above. Ask the child's medical home provider for a copy of the treatment plan and any notes for foster parents and school personnel.

Once the child has a medical home, work with providers there to meet the AAP-recommended check-up schedule. If you need to seek urgent care or emergency room care for the child, make sure a copy of the records for that visit are sent to the child's medical home.

## Where can you learn more?

You may find more information about trauma, social-emotional and mental health evaluation, and symptoms to watch for in the NC Pediatric Society's *Best Practices for Parents* document, which can be found in the Fostering Health NC online library: [www.ncped.org/\\_literature\\_211914/Best\\_Practices\\_for\\_Parents](http://www.ncped.org/_literature_211914/Best_Practices_for_Parents)

Adam Svolto ([adam@ncped.org](mailto:adam@ncped.org); 919/673-2768) is Program Director for Fostering Health North Carolina.

## Youth Aging Out of Foster Care and Former Foster Youth Are Eligible for Free Health Care until Age 26

The Affordable Care Act requires states to provide youth under 26 with continued health insurance coverage under Medicaid if they were in foster care at age 18. This ensures former foster youth can access the health care services they need—just like non-foster youth who can stay on their parents' insurance plans until 26.

### Who is eligible?

You are eligible for full Medicaid coverage to age 26 in North Carolina if you:

- Are age 18 to 26; and
- Were in foster care at age 18 and enrolled in NC Medicaid; and
- Are a North Carolina resident; and
- Aren't receiving Medicaid from another state, and
- Aren't an inmate of a public institution.

### What about youth in care now who are about to age out?

Youth should set up an appointment with their county's Medicaid Eligibility worker to begin the paperwork. Your LINKS Coordinator can help set this appointment up if necessary. The paperwork can be completed in advance and ready to process on your 18th birthday.

### What about former foster youth under age 26 without health insurance?

If you know a young person who was in foster care on their 18th birthday, is not yet 26, and who does not have health insurance, encourage them to contact their local county department of social services. You can find a directory of NC county DSS agencies here: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local/>

Sources: NCDMA, 2014; Children Now, 2014





# Kids' Pages

Words and Pictures by and for Children in Foster Care

Vol. 19, No. 1 • Nov. 2014



## Writing Contest

### The special adult in my life . . .

They say having at least one adult that you feel close to, trust, and can really depend on can make a big difference when you are in foster care. In the last issue of *Fostering Perspectives* we asked young people in foster care if they have a person like that in their life, and to tell us what makes them so special. Here's what they had to say.

## Adults I Can Trust and Depend On

*The young people below received \$15 for having their work published in Fostering Perspectives.*

When I first came into foster care. . . I couldn't understand why my foster parents cared so much about me. . .

Now this is what I call my home. . . They are helping me seek my future career and giving me love and support to help me flourish into a successful young adult.

Without them, I would have given up my dream to go college and make something of myself. —Sierra, age 17

I entered foster care when I was one year old. My foster parents adopted me in 2010. My parents are special to me because they cook for me and take care of me.

—Caroline, age 7

My adoptive parents give me stuff like food, take me out to eat at McDonalds, and to Wal-Mart to look at book bags. [My adoptive mother] is too sweet—I love her. I trust [her] the best. She helps me. She gives me kisses before I go to bed. —Byanca, age 8

I can trust and depend on Grannie Annie, my foster mom. . . I can tell her anything. She takes us to church every Sunday. . . She supports me in everything, like school and sports. I have learned lots of new things since I've been here. I love this family. I do not think my life could be better. —Dakota, age 9

The people I trusted while I was in foster care and am now adopted by are Mr. & Mrs. William and Ann A-. . . Without them I don't know where I would be or go in this world. . . These are the two people I trust the most and the people that have impacted my life. —Anayah, age 13

I went back to my mom but we visit my foster family often because we love them so much. . . The things they have given me and the places they have taken me are unbeatable. . . But the thing that they have given me the most of is love and compassion.

Nothing can beat that, not even a trip across the world.—Austin, age 13



### Maria, age 15

Being in foster care it is really hard to trust people, depend on them, and feel close to them . . . I've been in foster care for three years. I have been moved to four different foster homes.

[But] in the foster home I'm in now I have those three things: I can trust them, depend on them, and I feel really close to them. I feel close to them like they are my birth parents. I choose them as my special people because they treat me the way any kid wants to be treated. They pay attention to me, they make good decisions for me, and we spend time like a normal family. They don't treat me like I'm in foster care. They treat me as if I was their own child. I love that about them. *Maria will receive \$100 for winning first prize in the writing contest.*

**My foster parents: They treat me the way any kid wants to be treated.**



### Megan, age 11

I can really trust my mom because she is very loyal to me. I can definitely depend on her because one day she saved my life. My brother and me were running out of Wal-Mart and a car was coming and only my brother saw it. So my mom ran to come and grab me and she saved my life. The car didn't even see me running. [My mom] almost got hit. Because of that I have a scar that reminds me my mom is my hero. Even though I'm in foster care I will never forget her. My mom means the world to me. *Megan will receive \$50 for winning second prize in the writing contest.*

**My mom: She is loyal to me. She's my hero.**



### Elizabeth, age 14

In my life I have had five people that been there for me. The first was Mrs. Velma. She is one of the first foster homes I been through and she was awesome. She would always be there for me when I needed someone. We still keep in contact and I promised her I am totally going to visit her again because she gave me a home and food and, most importantly, LOVE.

Many people won't do that, and she did.

My foster home right now is Mr. Larry and Mrs. Margaret. They are so nice to me and want the best for me. I told them that they can be my "grandparents" because they don't want to lose contact with me when I move. They make sure I stay positive and they just love me. Of course, I love them back.

The last two people are Mr. Steven and Mrs. Cielo, my soon-to-be parents. I am so happy I met them because now I have the family I always wanted. *Elizabeth will receive \$25 for winning third prize in the writing contest.*

**My adoptive parents: Now I have the family I always wanted.**

### Ericka, age 16

The special person in my life is my foster parent. . . She is pretty stern, but loving. People think she's mean, but you have to get the story before you get the picture. She's special to me because I can count on her. . . She loves me. . . Even though we go through bumpy roads [from] time to time, she is the person I can come to for anything. . . Since she entered that door and became my foster parent—part of my family—my life changed. My future changed. For the better.

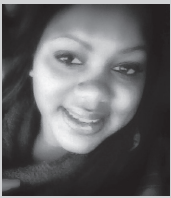
*Ericka and Preston will each receive \$15 for having their work published in Fostering Perspectives.*

### Preston, age 11

My brother, sister, and I were in foster care for about two years. Then we went back home to our birth family. Since we went home we [still] go to Mr. Kelly and Ms. Carol's house a lot. Mr. Kelly is a race engineer. He takes us to the NASCAR races. He is calm. He is also a great cook. He is amazing.

Ms. Carol is the most greatest girl I have met. She is playful and funny. She is caring and polite. She is a loving person.

Mr. Kelly and Ms. Carol are very strict but love us a lot. We are very glad we have them in our lives.



# My Transition to Adulthood

by La'Sharron Davidson

From age 3 months to age 15 I was raised by family members. At 16 I entered foster care. I "aged out" two years later, when I turned 18. Today I'm 22. Here's what aging out of care has been like for me.

## No CARS for Me

I didn't sign a CARS Agreement (Contractual Agreement for Continuing Residential Support), even though this would have allowed me to remain in a foster or group home while I went to school (or until I turned 21).

Why not? Because I was fed up with social workers, my guardian ad litem (GAL), and not having freedom. I was just done with the system.

## Turning 18

Transitioning out of care wasn't as fun as I thought it would be. What do I mean? When you're getting close to your 18th birthday you're thinking, "This is going to be the best day *ever*. I'm GROWN!"

I was so ready for the day to come. Finally it arrived. I was RELEASED! I was free from being in a tiny hole that kept me away from family, friends, employment, and my freedom. You see, during my time in care I was never hugged, never kissed or tickled. I never did fun things a kid would do like going roller skating or going to the park with family and friends.

## Grandmother's House

When I left foster care my social worker placed me into my grandmother's home. I

had lived with her before. She did her best to raise me, but my grandmother had troubles of her own.

My grandmother had always struggled to care for me. We had disagreements about anything and everything; even about small things, like a piece of chicken that wasn't cooked right. So when I was placed back with her at 18, I decided to move out ASAP.

## Trying to Get a Place of My Own

I was released from the system with no resources or guidance to help me get out on my own. But I've always had a drive to do better and strive for the best. So I did some networking. I called people I knew from being in the system and asked them questions about how to get my own place and where I could go.

Based on what they told me, I did more research to see what some of the programs were like. Finally, I got my own place.

## Getting Put Out

My next problem was. I didn't know the up-and-downs of paying bills. I was never taught! At that point I worked at the fast food restaurant where I'd worked since I was 15. Back then I thought I was working for a million bucks. Looking back, I realize fast food didn't pay a lot.

To sum it all up, I couldn't afford to live in an apartment that cost \$565 a month plus utilities and other bills. So I got put out of my home and went back to ground zero: living with my grandmother.

To succeed you must learn from your mistakes, seek guidance when you need it, and communicate with others.

Again, we had our differences, and this time she put me out! I had nowhere to go.

## Sleeping in My Car

I forgot to mention I bought a car. I got it from a "buy here, pay here" place, which means they take your money! This was a bad mistake.

The day my grandmother put me out, I slept in my car. I was determined not to ask her for anything. I went from house to house, living with friends and family.

## How I Survived

How did I survive? By having goals and wanting more than what's expected of me. I always communicated with others. I was willing to face my mistakes and learn from them.

## Today and Tomorrow

Today I am very happy to be working with SaySo and my local United Way.

But I still have worries and challenges. I wake up every morning thinking, "What's next?" Not in an excited way, but in a wondering-what's-going-to-hit-me-next way.

I've lived a life of uncertainty. I think I'm making progress, then something happens and I feel like I'm starting over again.

I am proud of how far I've come, and I want you to see the possibilities too.

*La'Sharron Davidson is a Regional Assistant for SaySo, a United Way Youth Director, and a Fostering Youth Opportunities & Community Engagement Fellow.*



# SaySo update

by Lauren Zingraff, SaySo Executive Director

Every year on the 4th Saturday in October, SaySo participates in Make A Difference Day. The largest day of volunteerism in the United States, Make A Difference Day is

sponsored by USA Today & the Newman Foundation.

## Collecting New and Gently Used Duffles

Many young people are forced to carry their personal belongings in trash bags. This is a problem that can be fixed.

As part of Make A Difference Day, for the last several years SaySo has collected new and gently used duffle bags for young people in foster care.

We are asked regularly if we still accept donations after October every year and the answer is "YES"! We are always happy to have items to donate, such as unopened toiletries, school supplies, and other home

items (new sheets or towels) throughout the year.

There is always a need at the holidays. Also, many older youth have little when graduating from high school and hopefully going to college.

You can do a drive to collect duffle bags in your community, your workplace, school, or church. You can help out young people in foster care in your area of North Carolina and donating the items to your local county NC LINKS Coordinator.

For more information, contact SaySo (800/820-0001; sayso@ilrinc.com).

## Save the Date

**What:** 2015 SaySo Saturday, to celebrate SaySo turning **17 years old!**

**When:** March 7, 2015

**Where:** Guilford Tech Community College, Jamestown Location

## SaySo

SaySo, Strong Able Youth Speaking Out, is a statewide, North Carolina-based association of youth aged 14 to 24 who are or have been in out-of-home care. This includes all types of substitute care, including foster care, group homes, and mental health placements.

### MISSION

"To work to improve the substitute care system by educating the community, speaking out about needed changes, and providing support to youth who are or have been in substitute care."



SaySo, Inc  
Tel: 800/820-0001 (toll-free)  
Email: sayso@ilrinc.com  
Web: www.saysoinc.org

# The CARS agreement: A bridge to independence

by Jeanne Preisler

Nearly every young person turning 18 in America wants to leave their parents' house. In their minds, they are "grown." Their parents' rules and curfews seem ridiculous. They want to be out on their own!

Yet in reality, more and more young adults are living with their parents. I suspect the desire to be out on their own remains strong, yet logistically it doesn't make sense. Jobs just aren't as plentiful. Even when you have a job, it may not pay enough to live on.

For many young people, living at home to save money while working or going to school is the best option.

## Different Options for Youth in Care

But what about youth who turn 18 in foster care? Many young adults aging out of our system live in homeless shelters or "couch-surf." Others have no option but to live on the street, where dangers include violence and human trafficking. Some of those who head back to their family of origin find conditions there stressful, unhealthy, or unsafe.

Keep in mind, when many youth in foster care turn 18, they're still in high school!

Every youth in North Carolina needs a stable place to live after they turn 18. Foster parents work hard to help children heal from trauma and navigate the adolescent years. Yet, too often, we act as if something magical happens on that 18th birthday and the young person will somehow be fine on their own.

Young people in foster care often think this, too!

## Young Adults Need Support

The reality is that the part of the brain that manages higher level decision making doesn't fully evolve until we are in our mid to late twenties. For this reason, it is not realistic to think a youth is going to be able to successfully navigate the complexities of the adult world alone.

Young adults need people like you and me in their lives—experienced, wise, older individuals. (*Even if they do not see us as wise!*)

We can help them make good decisions, help them when they are stuck on the side of road, and make sure they have a healthy meal every now and again. We can help them navigate their healthcare or ongoing schooling.

Even young adults living with their families of origin need this level of support. For youth whose lives were impacted by the child welfare system, this level of support is even more important. Research shows that the more caring adults young people have in their life, the better their overall outcomes will be.

In an ideal world, every child would find permanence before their 18th birthday and have strong connections to many caring adults who will be there for a lifetime of birthdays and holidays. But for those that do not

have all this, it is **our job** (as foster parents, as social workers, as community members) to take care of them. A CARS agreement is a tool that can help us do that.

## The CARS Agreement

In North Carolina, we have something called a CARS agreement. This agreement allows a young person to remain in a licensed home or facility while continuing their education (or until they are 21 years of age). CARS stands for Contractual Agreement for Continuing Residential Support.

Under a CARS agreement the youth is not in DSS custody. Rather, they have voluntarily agreed to be in the agency's "placement authority" for the duration of the agreement. This allows the foster parent to continue to receive financial assistance to provide housing and care for the young adult.

So far, so good. But there are at least four challenges to entering into a CARS agreement:

1. County DSS agencies are encouraged to offer CARS, but they don't have to.
2. Youth often say no to the CARS. Tired of living under the umbrella of "DSS," many quickly dismiss the idea without fully understanding the benefits.
3. Under a CARS the financial assistance provided to the foster parent is typically the standard board rate. If the foster parents have been providing therapeutic treatment foster care for the youth, moving to the standard board rate means a reduction in financial assistance for the parents and their supervising agency.
4. Many foster parents and youth are unaware the CARS is even an option.

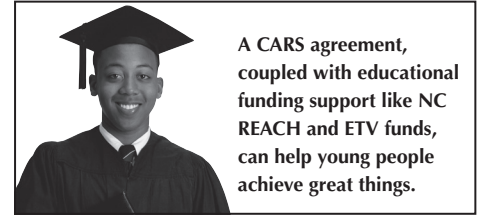
## Kendra's Perspective

Despite these challenges, the CARS has made a huge difference in many young people's lives. Consider Kendra. When she turned 18 in foster care, Kendra opted to sign a CARS. This helped her attend a university she loves, ensured she had a stable home to go to during college breaks, and allowed her, as she put it, to "exceed the expectations that the world has for former foster youth."

The statistics are sobering. In 2012 more than 23,000 youth aged out of foster care in the U.S. (USDHHS, 2013). These young people are less likely to graduate from high school and less likely to attend or graduate college.

One study of young people who aged out found that by age 26, 80% had earned at least a high school degree or GED, compared to 94% in the general population, while just 4% had earned a 4-year college degree, compared to 36% of youth in the general population (Courtney, et al., 2011). Kendra believes the CARS can help us change these statistics.

Kendra shared some great ideas for making the CARS work better for more young



people in our state. For example, Kendra suggests that we do the following:

- Be realistic. We cannot have one conversation about the CARS 90 days before the youth turns 18 and expect them to fully grasp the impact of this decision. We need to start discussing this option with the youth long before they turn 18, and discuss it often.
- Since the goal is to provide the support youth need to ultimately live on their own, foster parents should consider giving the youth half the monthly board payment. This would allow the youth to begin learning to manage money, and it would be an incentive for the youth to participate in a CARS agreement in the first place.
- If your county is not offering CARS agreements, advocate for a change. A CARS, coupled with educational funding support like NC REACH and ETV funds, can help young people achieve great things.

## My Challenge to You

We want our young people to have permanence. But if that can't be achieved, none of our kids should age out alone.

So here's a challenge for all foster parents in North Carolina:

- Be a lifelong, caring adult for at least one child touched by the foster care system.
- Be sure you talk with your child about the CARS option if there is even a slight chance they may not find permanence before their 18th birthday.
- Talk to your county's LINKS social worker to see if there are any youth who have recently aged out that might need extra support.

Margaret Mead famously said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

We are the thoughtful, committed citizens she was referring to. We must ensure those aging out of the foster care system will not have to do it alone.

Jeanne Preisler, a forever mother to two children and former foster parent, works for the NC Division of Social Services.

## WHAT DOES A CARS LOOK LIKE?

Follow this link to find out: <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5108.pdf>



# Adult adoption and my journey to “forever” by Julia S. Charles

“Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.” ~ James Baldwin

I’m adopted. Adopted. What a strangely revealing word. It carries a certain meaning that haunts the very soul of anyone who aspires to escape the expectations of the foster care system—or, as we call it, “the system.” It tells the world so much about me before they ever get to know me.

For someone as private as I am, the word “adopted” forces my transparency in a frustratingly rewarding way. Frustrating because I prefer to reveal the layers of my identity only to those I trust—and it takes more time to build trust than it takes to write this article. Rewarding because every time I have ever shared my story of adoption with complete strangers, I have walked away feeling a peculiar sort of kinship with the audience.

I can only hope to feel that way here, too. In my writing, I am forced to instantly give you something that I have not given many throughout my lifetime—trust. As fearful as I may be, I am reminded why I chose this journey to forever.

## My Journey’s Beginning

Where I am from there aren’t many adoptions that I am aware of. In fact, it’s sort of a taboo word. In my old neighborhood, when bio-parents would fall short, grandparents or aunts stepped in. There was no interference from child welfare. There was no discussion of where a child would be “placed.” There was just family.

At first, my family was no different. I spent my formative years with my grandmother in a happily crowded house. It was not until she passed away that I found myself living with my birth mother.

That’s another strange phrase—“birth mother.” It tells a story all its own. If “adoption” expresses a gain, then the phrase birth mother certainly expresses loss. Such is life.

I remember how badly I wanted to call someone “mom” before that move. I used to dream about it. But what happens when the reality is not as sweet as the dream?

The trouble and the thrill of reality is there is no waking up from it. I could not run from reality any more than I could catch a falling star and put it in my pocket. It just was.

Before I knew it, I was a foster kid and separated from the people I loved most, my siblings.

At age 23, after 10 years in the system and more than a dozen placements, my former foster mother decided to adopt me.

## Adult Adoption

In December 2005—after 10 years in the system, after more than a dozen placements, and after being split up from my siblings—my former foster mother decided to adopt me. I was 23 years old, well beyond the age that most people consider adoption.

She and I discussed it a few times before we moved forward.

She wanted me to know that no matter what life hands me, I have a family that was never leaving. She used to always say to me, “you can’t control how much I love you.” I didn’t always understand what that meant, but it resonated with me. It suggested to me that a fight did not signify the end of things.

It no longer feels strange to call her “Mommy.”

## No Need to Explain

Through Mommy (Lorraine), I have a younger brother. I recall trying to explain to him that I am . . . adopted. In the middle of the conversation he stopped me and asked, “Sweetie?” (That’s what my family calls me.)

“At the end of this story, will you still be my sister?”

I responded, “Yes, of course.”

“Will Mommy still be your mom and my mom?”

Confused, I answered, “Yes, of course.”

He placed his hand on my shoulder and said, “Okay. Well, that’s all that really matters, right?” And he walked away.

At that moment I realized how complete I was. It wasn’t so much that he accepted my status as adopted. After all, he was only five years old. It was the fact that I had spent the majority of my life explaining my status and unpacking my labels to people—foster kid, adopted, etc.—and this was the first moment that I wanted to explain, but did not have to.

## Adoption Takes Off the Masks

When James Baldwin writes, “Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within,” he is not talking about adoption specifically. But he is talking about the type of love that many seek and never find. My conversation with my brother forced me to confront what the world labeled as both beautiful and ugly about me. Beautiful because the word adopted indicates choice—it is delicately deliberate. Ugly

*continued next page*

## Adult Adoption in NC

Julia S. Charles movingly describes what being adopted as an adult has meant to her. Inspired by her story, some readers may be wondering about adult adoption: What is the process like? How does it work in North Carolina?

As a rule, adult adoption is “easier” than other kinds of adoption because there is no legal clearance requirement. In other words, while the end result is the same—the severing of all legal ties between adoptees and their biological parents—there is no requirement for termination of parental rights (TPR), relinquishment, or parental consent. In adult adoptions the adoptee’s parents are notified, though with good cause even this requirement can be waived.

Although the adoptee’s parent’s consent is not required, a parent receiving notice does have the right to request a hearing on whether the adoption should occur. Even so, the uncertainty and delays for appeals that often characterize adoptions of children are not seen in adult adoptions.

If you are considering adult adoption, it would be wise to consult an attorney to help you explore the issue thoroughly and, if needed, to guide you through the process. As additional background, below you will find a list of what is required in adult adoption proceedings in North Carolina.

## Checklist for Clerks of Court

- “Adult” is defined by NCGS 48-1-101(3) as an individual who is 18 years of age, or if under the age of 18, is either married or has been emancipated under applicable State Law.
- Petition for Adult Adoption (DSS-5163), NCGS 48-5-101 and attachments to the DSS-5163.
- Consent to Adoption by Adult Adoptee (DSS-5164).
- Consent to Adoption by Spouse of Petitioner (DSS-5165) (when adult’s stepparent is petitioner) unless waived for cause.
- If applicable, consent to adoption by guardian of incompetent adult adoptee (NCGS 48-5-103). Also need investigation by court appointed GAL other than guardian.
- Proof of Service of Notice by Petitioner to appropriate persons per NCSG 48-2-401, including any adult children of prospective adoptive parent and any parent, spouse, or adult child of adoptee listed in petition to adopt, or certified copies of any written waivers of that notice. NOTE: For cause, the requirement of notice to the adoptee’s parent may be waived.
- Affidavit accounting for any payments or disbursement made or agreed to be made by petitioner in connection with adoption (DSS-5191).
- Decree of Adult Adoption (DSS-5166). NCGS 48-2-605 provides that the prospective adoptive parent and the adoptee shall both appear in person unless the court for cause waives this requirement, in which case an appearance for either or both may be made by an attorney authorized in writing to make an appearance. At least 30 days shall have elapsed from the filing of the adoption petition unless waived by the clerk, but notice of the petition must have been served on all required persons.
- Report to Vital Records for Adult Adoption (DSS-5167).

Source: NCDSS, 2014b

# My journey to “forever”

continued from previous page

because, again, it indicates choice—it arguably demonstrates a failure.

Adoption, in both word and action, “takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.” All the labels I attempted to escape were suddenly the ones I embraced.

I used to wonder about significant events. I wondered, Will I have any family at my wedding? Who will be seated as parent(s) of the bride? Will I have a cheering section when I graduate? Will my children have grandparents?

Those questions that tormented me now bring me the most joy.

And, honestly, I almost missed it because no one talked to me about adoption after foster care. I went into foster care when I was in 6th grade. That’s just about the time people stop offering adoption as an option toward permanence.

## Grief and Gratitude

A few months ago my birth mother died. The days and weeks after I received the news were riddled with unexplainable grief and immea-

I am grateful I never stopped my incessant pursuit of forever just because I was “too old to be adopted.”

asurable gratitude. There is this place in my heart now that I didn’t even know existed. It is a place that only my birth mother can occupy. Because of her decision, as my sister put it, “to choose life,” I have a mother. I have a mother who knows my life’s history and chose to love my birth mother. I have a mother who chose to help me navigate the confusing and endless abyss between my adoptive world and my biological world.

Indeed, it was Mommy (Lorraine) who came to my home to tell me my birth mother had passed away. It was Mommy who sat with me and held me as I cried. She never asked me to explain my tears. She’s good that way. She’s a mother that way.

The thing I love most about being adopted is that I no longer have to hide. I feel safe now. I love that I have room in my heart and peace in my mind for two mothers with very different roles. So, in mourning my birth mother (which I am pretty sure I will do for a couple of forevers), I also celebrate Mommy. Because I love them both.

You know, in foster care they told me that achieving permanency is the objective. Whether through reunification or adoption, a forever family is the goal.

However, they didn’t share with me that after you’ve been adopted you will have encounters with people who do not understand or respect your adoption. There are books about the beauty of being chosen, but where are the books about the other side of adoption?

My grief brings me face-to-face with the reality that of all the kind things I said to my mother before she transitioned, I never said thank you. I never thanked her for letting me have the opportunity to be loved elsewhere, too. I should have said thank you because I am so grateful to my birth mother for this love I have.

Every day that I experience the joy of belonging to this family, I am grateful I never stopped my incessant pursuit of forever just because I was “too old to be adopted.”

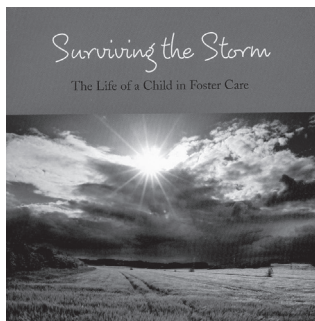
Julia Charles is a foster care alumna and author of *Surviving the Storm: The Life of a Child in Foster Care*.

## Julia S. Charles’ *Surviving the Storm*

*Surviving the Storm: the Life of a Child in Foster Care*, by Julia S. Charles, is an easy-to-read, personal journey of the author’s life in foster care.

Charles also shares stories of those who made a difference in her life and how they helped her build hope and faith for a better life. Now in her twenties, Charles hopes this book will speak to other youths in care as well as the adults who try to help them.

*Surviving the Storm* provides deep insight into the world of youth in foster care. It can be best explored through a focused book club or reading group. Training discussion points are provided at the conclusion of the book for professionals, caregivers, and youths. Following is a brief excerpt from the book.



We arrived at the foster home and I walked up to the door. With a trash bag full of my belongings, I rang the doorbell. An interracial couple came to the door and embraced me. I was taken aback by their forwardness. This was uncomfortable. I could not wait for the hug to be over. The middle aged woman showed me to my room. I did not get a tour of the house that night. After the social worker left, my foster mother closed the door behind her and said it was time for me to go to sleep. Everything was so new. This is foster care?



## As a foster parent in North Carolina,

you are eligible for membership in Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU). We invite you to visit [www.lgfcu.org](http://www.lgfcu.org) to discover all the benefits membership can bring to you and the children you foster.

**LGFCU**  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Foster parents licensed through NC county DSS agencies are eligible for LGFCU membership and can join by visiting any State Employee’s Credit Union (SECU) branch. SECU has at least one branch in all 100 counties. To demonstrate eligibility, present this ad.

Foster parents licensed through private child-placing agencies are not eligible for LGFCU membership.

For more information on LGFCU membership and services, visit <https://www.lgfcu.org/> or contact the LGFCU Administrative Office at 1-800-334-4846 (toll free), or 919-755-0534 (Raleigh), or by sending an email to [info@lgfcu.org](mailto:info@lgfcu.org).



## A reader asks . . .

# What should I tell people interested in foster care and adoption in NC?

**When people learn I am a foster parent they ask how they can help children in North Carolina through foster care and adoption. What should I tell them? Where should I direct them?**

Great question! Foster and adoptive parents are the absolute best recruiters of new foster and adoptive parents.

First, feel free to share your story and the path that brought you to being a foster or adoptive parent, including the agencies you have worked with.

Be realistic but positive when recruiting new families. Share positive stories about the children you have loved and cared for, highlighting the significant need for families who can love children unconditionally.

You can also help dispel myths. For example, make it clear you do not have to be married or own your own home to foster and adopt. There is no age limit once you are 21 years old. Families can say "no" to a placement that is not a good fit.

If a family is interested, their first step should be to call an agency or attend a local orientation. Most agencies hold regular orientation meetings where families can meet staff and learn about next steps and requirements.

Making this first contact is a big step. Many families think about fostering or adopting for years before acting. You can provide support by offering to attend orientation with the family. Or, even better, offer to help your agency's orientation: talk about your experience, serve coffee, or

just answer questions after the meeting. Prospective parents really want to talk to real foster parents, not social workers!

The booklet "You Don't Have to be Perfect to be a Perfect Parent" is also a super resource. Foster parent associations, agencies, or individuals can request copies by emailing [nc.kids@dhhs.nc.org](mailto:nc.kids@dhhs.nc.org) or downloading it from <http://bit.ly/1s8J1fP>.

The NC Kids program is a key resource for families interested in adoption. It provides basic information about becoming a foster and adoptive parent. NC Kids can be found online ([www.adoptnckids.org](http://www.adoptnckids.org)) and by phone (877-NCKIDS-1).

There is also a short, self-paced orientation online at <http://ncswlearn.org/foster>. It explains foster care, describes the children in need of families, and tells you how to take the next step to becoming a licensed foster parent in our state.

We all have a responsibility to recruit new foster and adoptive families, sharing the need throughout our communities. Foster and adoptive parents are the best possible recruiters and we are so grateful for your ongoing help caring for children in foster care!

Response by the NC Division of Social Services. If you have a question about foster care or adoption in North Carolina you'd like answered in "A Reader Asks," send it to us using the contact information in the box at right.

## fostering perspectives (Nov. 2014)

**Sponsors.** NC Division of Social Services, the NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, SaySo, and the Family and Children's Resource Program, part of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work's Jordan Institute for Families.

**Contact Us.** *Fostering Perspectives*, c/o John McMahon, Family and Children's Resource Program, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social, CB# 3550, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3550. Email: [jdmcmaho@unc.edu](mailto:jdmcmaho@unc.edu).

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**Newsletter Staff.** John McMahon (Editor); Mellicent Blythe (Assistant Editor)

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

**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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**Online.** [www.fosteringperspectives.org](http://www.fosteringperspectives.org)

**Subscribe Online.** To be notified about online issues, e-mail [jdmcmaho@unc.edu](mailto:jdmcmaho@unc.edu) with "FP subscribe" in the subject line.

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

## Help Children Achieve Permanency through Adoption: Display the North Carolina Heart Gallery

A Heart Gallery is an exhibit of photographs of children in foster care in need of adoptive homes. North Carolina's first Heart Gallery premiered in Greensboro in 2005. Now the **NC Kids Program**, part of the NC Division of Social Services, has created an updated exhibit that will be ready for release in November 2014.

### The Heart Gallery

The Heart Gallery matches children waiting for adoption with professional photographers who donate their time and talent to take portraits of the children. Thanks to these professional photographers, each child's spirit and remarkable personality shines through in the photographs. The Heart Gallery features children and youth most in need of adoptive placements in North Carolina: teenagers, sibling groups, and children with developmental and physical disabilities.

Once it is completed, the Heart Gallery will be released to exhibitors who will display the photographs to increase awareness of the need for adoption from foster care. The exhibits recruit parents for the children featured in the exhibit and for the hundreds of other North Carolina children waiting for forever families.

### Exhibitors Play a Key Role

Exhibitors in the past have included hospitals, shopping centers, businesses, churches, libraries, private child placing agencies, local departments of social services, and many others.

NC Kids is excited to announce a partnership with the **State Employees Credit Union (SECU)**. Over the next ten months a Heart Gallery will be exhibited in branches in each of SECU's 47 regions across the state.

Heart Galleries introduce people to adoption through foster care and have had success throughout the country in locating permanent adoptive homes for

children in foster care. Six Heart Galleries will be available for display beginning in November 2014, with various sizes and exhibition options.

### Be an Exhibitor!

Please help us achieve permanency for waiting children by exhibiting the North Carolina Heart Gallery in your community this year!

If you are interested in displaying the NC Heart Gallery or have questions, contact Jamie Bazemore ([Jamie.bazemore@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Jamie.bazemore@dhhs.nc.gov); 919/527-6371).





# Help us find families for these children

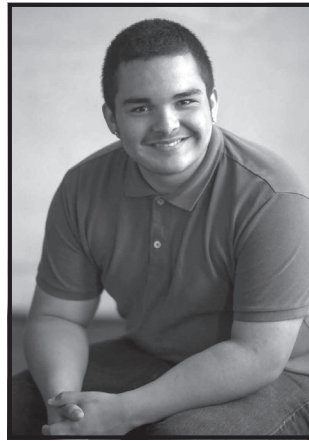
For more information on these children or adoption in general, call the NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 <[www.adoptnckids.org](http://www.adoptnckids.org)>



### Billie (age 14)

Billie is a polite, soft spoken, analytical young lady. She likes to read, listen to music, swim, and experiment with clothes and makeup. She enjoys doing normal teenage things like going to the movies or skating with her friends. Billie enjoys camping and would like more opportunities to travel and have adventures.

Academically gifted, Billie wants to go to college and enter a career where she can help children. She prides herself on being liberal and respecting the rights of others. She wants a family that is receptive to her beliefs and the differences among her friends. Billie has strong ties to her birth family. She would like a forever family that can honor those connections.



### Jose "Angel" (age 16)

Angel is unique, outgoing, aspirational, and fearless. He would love to be a singer or someone famous when he grows up. His favorite subject at school is chorus. He loves anything that has to do with music and singing. Angel also enjoys video games and social media. He likes going to waterparks and enjoys the television show "American Dad."

Angel will thrive in a family environment with a strong emphasis on education. Angel is a young man who would benefit greatly from strong, experienced parents who can help him explore his own identity and expand his social skills.



### Brion (age 17)

Brion is a bright, articulate, savvy young man. He enjoys visiting the beach and the mountains. Brion likes sports, especially basketball and football. He is affectionate with animals and enjoys drawing. He is considering working in law enforcement, social work, or serving in the military when he is an adult. Brion thrives on encouragement and praise.

Brion is seeking a family that will encourage and support him, recognizing his amazing



### Kenneth and Kendra (age 16)

Siblings Kenneth and Kendra are looking for a home together. Kenneth is polite and well-mannered. While sometimes reserved, he can also be talkative and silly. Kenneth is very athletic and loves to play football, basketball, and run track. He is very likeable and enjoys laughing, dressing nice, and feeling like he is part

of a family. Very affectionate, Kendra is quick to smile, extremely personable, and has a vivacious spirit. She is talkative and silly and can be quite candid with her opinions.

Kenneth and Kendra will bring immense happiness to a family and are looking for adoptive parents who want to invest in their future.



### Deja (age 15)

Deja is an outgoing and very helpful young lady. She is smart, with a kind and gentle nature. Soccer, cheerleading, basketball and swimming are some of Deja's favorite activities. She also enjoys crafts and traveling to visit new places. Deja does well in mathematics, social studies, and science.

Deja would like a family that can help her discover her gifts and guide her towards a successful future. She loves her brother Brion very much. It will be important for her family to support this connection.



### Nicole (age 13)

Nicole is a young lady who is easy to laugh and likes to tease those she cares about in a good-natured way. She loves being the center of attention, especially with adults. Nicole is very good with directions and her social worker jokingly refers to her as a "human GPS." Some of Nicole's favorite activities include arts and crafts, shopping, and going to the beach and carnivals. She loves animals and would like to train dogs for a living. She would love to have a dog of her own and has fond memories of a dog she had when she was younger. Nicole's favorite subject at school is art. She loves going to school and does not like to miss any days. A single parent female with a strong, secure, yet friendly personality will be ideal for Nicole.

# Writing Contest

First Prize: \$100 • Second Prize: \$50 • Third Prize: \$25

If you are under 18 and are or have been in foster care, please send us a letter or short essay in response to the following question:



**Parenting can be hard work. What do your foster, adoptive, or kinship parents do to take care of themselves so they can do a good job taking care of you?**

**DEADLINE: February 3, 2015**

E-mail submissions to [jdmcmaho@unc.edu](mailto:jdmcmaho@unc.edu) or mail them to: Fostering Perspectives, Family & Children's Resource Program, CB#3550, UNC-CH School of Social Work, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3550. 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, for which they will also receive a cash award.

#### **Seeking Artwork and Other Writing Submissions**

Submissions can be on any theme. There is no deadline for non-contest submissions: submit your work at any time. If sent via U.S. Mail, artwork should be sent flat (unfolded) on white, unlined paper.

## 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 licensing social worker. If your answers are satisfactory, you'll receive 30 minutes of training credit. If you have questions about this method of gaining in-service training credit, ask your worker.

#### In-Service Quiz, FP v19 n1

1. Define legal permanence, relational permanence, and cultural permanence. Why do these forms of permanence matter?
2. Researchers Mark Courtney and colleagues tracked a group of 26-year-olds who had "aged out" of foster care. What are some of the outcomes these young people experienced?
3. What are three things you can do to promote permanence for young people in foster care?
4. What are the three parts of North Carolina's Permanency Innovation Initiative?
5. What is reinstatement of parental rights in North Carolina? Why might this be an appropriate route to permanence for some children?
6. Why does Donna Foster see life books as sources of healing and strength for people long past their 18th birthday?
7. What are the goals of "Fostering Health NC"? What impact might this initiative have on foster parents and the children they care for?
8. What is a CARS agreement and how can it help young people succeed as they transition to independence and self-sufficiency?
9. What is adult adoption? What are some of its benefits for former foster youth and their families?
10. How can youth who have aged out of care or who are about to age out of care get health insurance through the Affordable Care Act?

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