



Foster Care & Adoption News

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Meet the Stills Family!

Misty loves being a mommy to Amir and Omar. She marvels in the little moments and celebrates the big ones like the recent finalization of Omar's adoption on August 26, 2013. This single parent, who works full time as a microbiologist, says that being an adoptive parent is a different kind of motherhood because it happened on her own terms. We asked Misty to tell us more about her experience as an adoptive parent with Children's Bureau and her life with Amir and Omar.

What prompted your interest in becoming an adoptive parent?

As many young women, I had goals set for my life, and ideal timeline in which these goals were to be met. Of course, nothing ever happens the way we plan it. I decided that I wanted to be a mother by 28 years old. When it became apparent that marriage was not and likely wouldn't be on the horizon I made the decision to pursue motherhood on my own. After failed attempts at natural conception I figured God must have wanted me to go in a different direction. Many of my sorority sisters were social workers at the time, and between them and my mother's suggestions, I decided adoption would be a more fulfilling route to my goal.

How did you find Children's Bureau and why did you choose to adopt through this agency?

My mother had a co-worker who had previously done the Fost-Adopt program through Children's Bureau and told my mother about it. After speaking with the Maria Otero and completing the Initial paperwork, I was confident in the ability of Children's Bureau to act compassionately not only towards the babies, but towards myself and my own unique situation. I was impressed with the thoroughness of the agency in terms of making sure that I knew what I was getting into each step of the way, and their ability to ensure I was prepared for each phase of the process.

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In the News . . .

On Sunday, September 22 on the "All Things Considered" radio program on NPR, Alex Morales, CEO of Children's Bureau and Claudia Felder, a previous foster child who was adopted, were interviewed. To listen to the program, go to this link:

<http://www.npr.org/2013/09/22/225148325/foster-care-in-america-too-many-kids-not-enough-homes>



Our Family Portrait

This is not an ordinary family portrait. There is a little bit of history regarding this picture. Our family was one of ten families awarded, out of forty who were nominated, to receive a free family portrait at my daughter's school.

Our daughter, Janelle who along with her sister Jayla is adopted, grabbed the photo from the time it was given to us and kept it until we got home. At home she requested to keep it in her room. We went to my sister's house and Janelle showed it to my sister, who asked her, "Janelle, who are the people in the photo?" After saying all of the names one by one, at the end Janelle said, "**This is my family!**" Of course, this instantly brought tears to my eyes.

I will always cherish this moment!

Ana Lucia



An Adoption Story continued from page 1

Tell me about your experience with Children's Bureau.

I have nothing but wonderful things to say about Children's Bureau. The social workers and staff are amazing. My social worker visits with Laura were like having a friend over to hang out. If I needed anything, she was a phone call or email away. At no point in either of my foster-adopt experiences did I feel as if I were doing this alone. I was important, my children were important and our needs were important. The agency worked with me very closely for the unexpected arrival of my second son. I had to become recertified in record time and everyone was so helpful. Laura helped set everything up so that my son would be in a safe, CB foster home while my recertification was pending and now we have new friends!



Tell me about the children you have adopted.

My first little guy is named Amir. He became part of my family at 5 days old straight from



the hospital. He was healthy despite the circumstances, and has grown into such a sweet, compassionate and bright boy. Even though I planned for his arrival, I could have never planned for how much I love being his mommy. He is helpful and he loves to make sure everyone around him is happy. We spoil him a bit, but he's a pretty well-rounded little boy. He will be starting preschool in September and he is more than ready.



My second baby is Omar, as luck would have it he is Amir's biological brother. He's 19 months now. He was my special surprise, but Amir knew he was coming. About 2 months before I was contacted by CB Amir started asking me for a baby and making big deals over diaper commercials. I assured

him the two of us were just fine together but then here comes Omar! He is a confident, independent little boy. He has a strong mind and constitution. He has his sweet moments but right now he is all "rough and tumble", no time for kisses! He is different from Amir in many ways but that's what makes this fun and interesting.

How has becoming an adoptive parent changed your life?

I imagine my life has changed the way any new parent's life would... less to no sleep during the infant months, lots more laundry to do, and diaper changing has given me a much stronger stomach these days. But like I tell my friends who ask me, "this is a different kind of motherhood". Being an adoptive parent allowed me to become a mother on my own terms, at the same time giving a home to children who statistically might not receive one. I've always wanted boys, and one thing I remember vividly from training is hearing how African-American boys are the last to be adopted and how disproportionate the number of homes that were willing to accept them in comparison to other children. My goal to become a mother became a mission. If no one wanted these boys, I did. What started as a want became a drive, and it still is. As my situation changes and allows for it, I will continue to foster African-American boys and try to brighten the future for as many as I can.



Any plans to adopt more children?

I would love to. I joke around and tell people "I think I have one left in me". But I would do it again. Right now any further additions to my little family are contingent upon the space I have available. I am confident that I will be blessed with the space to adopt again. If God has another brother for Amir and Omar, I'm sure He'll give me what I need to make it happen.

Welcome to our new Child Share Families!

Child Share is a non-profit organization that recruits foster and adoptive parents specifically through church congregations. Through the years, many of our families have been recruited by Child Share thanks to their hard working staff, especially Bob Levy. Last fiscal year (July 2012 – June 2013), we welcomed the following families to our Children's Bureau /Child Share Family: Rogelio & Veronica Done, Jeremy & Lesley Hoff, Brian Buckley & Teresita Morales, Miguel & Magdalena Zuniga, Candice & Christopher Varner, Kami & Neil Small, Constantina Pair, Keri Ann Luevano & Victor Hugo Velazquez, Tanya & John Bishop, Deborah & Donald Loperena, Carolee & John Dix, and Lisa & James Georgeson.

A WORD FROM LOU NIEMAN, DIRECTOR OF FOSTER CARE & ADOPTIONS: MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION



Every day we wonder how many individuals and families do not apply to foster or adopt children due to the misconceptions about what it takes to help a child in need. Children's Bureau families need to have the willingness, ability and resources to protect and nurture children, meet developmental needs and address delays, support relationships with the child's birth families, connect the child to safe and nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime and be willing and able to work as a member of a professional team. Beyond these minimum requirements, there are specifics that are many times misconstrued.

For instance, individuals do not have to be married to foster or adopt a child. They do not have to own their own home. There is no age limit except for a minimum of 21 years of age – a person needs to have the ability to care for a child of the age for which they show interest. A working parent needs to have the backup of either family members or a friend who can transport the child in the event that they cannot. There are monitored visits with birth parents, visits to the doctor and dentist and after school activities including sports or music lessons for older children. The working parent must be willing and able to pay for childcare out of the stipend for the child the hours he/she is not available. It is important to research child care prior to having a child in the home, so that there is no surprise with the cost of daycare.

Individuals do not have to own their home. They can live in a house, condo or an apartment. They can share a home, if the other person is willing to be fingerprinted and has no criminal history. There needs to be space for a child. A baby must have the ability to move into a room when he/she turns 2 but can share the parent's room until then. Children are able to share rooms.

Adoption is not expensive. Both foster care and adoption offer stipends to help with the care of the child. The minimum monthly stipend for foster care/adoption is \$846 (recently increased) for a child and goes higher with the age of the child. The stipend continues until the child returns to their family, goes to an adoptive home if the family is not adopting, or is adopted by the foster family. Once adopted, the foster family currently receives a stipend of about \$400 from the federal government until the child turns 18, and in some cases 21. There is a federal tax deduction for adoption that you may ask your accountant about to determine your eligibility. The process of applying and becoming a foster/adoptive parent costs around \$400 and includes the cost of fingerprint clearances, DMV clearances, CPR/1st Aid and miscellaneous costs. These are considered non-recurring expenses that can be submitted to the county where you adopt for reimbursement up to \$400.

It does not take a long time to become a foster or foster/adoptive parent. In most cases, if documents are completed in a timely manner, it takes 3-4 months to become a Certified Foster Adoptive Parent. The stipend begins when a child arrives at your home. Please encourage your friends to call Children's Bureau and get their questions answered as we have a great need for families!!

Children's Bureau PRIDE Trainers Co-Author Article to be Published in Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) Magazine, the *Children's Voice*

Children's Bureau Trainers Cynthia Stogel, Foster Care/Adoption Coordinator and Cathy Allan, Foster Care/Adoption Program Coordinator have co-authored an article about the implementation of the PRIDE Model of Practice at Children's Bureau. The article will appear in an upcoming issue of the Children's Voice magazine, published by CWLA.

The article outlines the implementation of the PRIDE Model of Practice at Children's Bureau which includes: teaching prospective foster and adoptive parents and CB staff the PRIDE competencies: protecting and nurturing children, meeting children's developmental needs and addressing delays, supporting children's relationships with their birth families, connecting children to safe and nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime, and working as a member of a professional team. The PRIDE Model of Practice also helps prospective foster and adoptive parents make an informed decision about their willingness, ability, and

resources to put the competencies into practice for the children placed with them.

The next phase for PRIDE at CB will be the implementation of a research project to look at specific child safety, wellbeing and permanency outcomes.

Our consultants for the implementation of the PRIDE Model of Practice are: Dr. Eileen Mayers Pasztor, a foster and adoptive parent, professor at California State University, Long Beach School of Social Work, and CWLA trainer/consultant; and Dr. Donna D. Petras, Director of Training and Models of Practice at CWLA. Both Eileen and Donna were the original developers of PRIDE.

We will share a link to the magazine article when available.



Cathy Allan & Cynthia Stogel

Referral Fee \$500 per Family

To further encourage you, our excellent foster and adoptive families, to refer quality families to become foster and adoptive parents, we have raised the referral fee to \$500! When a family attends an Information Meeting or turns in their application, ask them to write your name as the Referral Source --- it's that easy! When the family becomes certified, you will receive \$250 and when a child is placed with the family, you will receive an additional \$250! Referrals are our best resource for finding quality families, so please share our program with your family and friends. For more information, please contact your social worker.

Join our Adoption Promotion and Support Services Program!

Children's Bureau's Adoption Promotion and Support Services program gives more than 250 adoptive families each year additional help through case management, therapy, mentoring and support groups. If you are facing a challenge or want more support in your journey, we are here to help. Ask your current CSW for an APSS referral or after your adoption finalization, contact Post Adoption Services unit. We also invite you to become mentors. Mentors help adoptive families with vital peer support, information and shared experiences as they go through the adoption process and afterwards. For more information, please call Laura Kriegisch at 310-463-5828 or Delmy Rivera at 626-607-8152. We would love to hear from you!

Support Groups Offered

Children's Bureau provides support groups each month for families at both the Magnolia Family Place in Los Angeles and at the Antelope Valley office. These groups provide a great opportunity for you to meet, learn and share your experiences with other foster care and adoption families. Often-times families in our support groups build lasting friendships outside of the group. Certified parents receive two training hours for attending a meeting. Check your calendar or ask your social worker for information on exact locations, dates and times.

Children's Court to Celebrate National Adoption Month

Children's Court will celebrate National Adoption Month on Friday, November 22nd with a special day that includes the adoption of many children in a festive courtroom filled with balloons, teddy bears, crafts and other activities for families. This is not only a happy time for our families but also for the social workers, attorneys and judges who work hard year-round to find safe, permanent homes for children in need. Congratulations to all of the families who will finalize their adoptions on this wonderful and emotional day!

Annual Appreciation Luncheon: Excellent Day



More than 100 Children's Bureau foster and adoptive parents, Adoption Promotion and Support Services mentors and social workers attended Children's Bureau's Annual Luncheon and Training on May 18 at Magnolia Place Family Center. Kris Losito, a Children's Bureau Board Member, shared the board's role in helping Children's Bureau and expressed her deepest appreciation to our families for their extraordinary work with children in need. The day included breakfast and luncheon buffets along with inspirational speakers. Adoptee, Jeannette Yoffe, MFT reviewed fears that foster and adoptive parents experience and covered attachment focused parenting strategies. Dee Dee Mascarenas, LMFT, trained the audience on forgiveness and the rewards that result from forgiving others. All parents received six hours of training for attending the informative and inspirational day. Raffle prizes were awarded along with Children's Bureau gifts of umbrellas and car shades. Thanks to everyone for your dedication to and support of this annual event! Save the date for next year's event scheduled for April 26, 2014.



CBS' Annual Adoption Special Coming in December

The annual CBS adoption special, *A Home for the Holidays*, will be airing its 15th season in December! This primetime special helps to create public awareness about the joys of adoption and draws attention to the children in public foster care who are waiting to be adopted. Triage Entertainment produces the special in association with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Children's Action Network and Goldsmith Entertainment.

Thanks to the participation of adoption resources and families nationwide, *A Home for the Holidays*, received the Emmy Honors award from the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences in 2009 for the stories told and the awareness brought to viewers.

In the past fourteen years, the one-hour show has featured many famous musicians, directors, comedians, actors and actresses. Watch for the listing time of this television special and prepare to be inspired and educated on the need for adoptive parents in the United States!

**Interested in learning more about Children's Bureau's foster care, adoptions or mentoring programs?
Please give us a call at (800) 730-3933 or (661) 208-4212 or visit us at www.all4kids.org.**