

# Caregiver Connection

August 2009

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers



## What heroic role do you play in improving life for a child?

There is no one person who single-handedly changes the life of an abused child for the better. Even when children connect with a person who believes in them and restores a sense of hope, there are countless others who are making phone calls, driving to appointments, processing payments, serving as mentors, or supporting families directly or indirectly.

Every person in Washington State has the potential to impact a child's life for the better. If you receive this newsletter, chances are you are already making a big difference in a child's life.

Let's not forget the children and youth themselves, they play the most heroic roles of all. They rise above the most difficult circumstances and are often, stronger, wiser people for having overcome adversity.

These are a few stories about youth and caregivers who are all playing a heroic role in putting painful pasts where they belong and creating brighter futures.

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## Cindy Hanson

### Neighbor, Parent, Foster Mom... Hero!



Little did Cindy know, when she opened her home to her daughter's friend for a few months, where it was all going to lead! That was about 14 years and twenty kids ago!

At the time, Cindy was a single mom raising her four children and just wanted to help a neighbor. But as Cindy worked to get the resources she needed to care for her daughter's friend, someone suggested, "You should get licensed as a foster parent." ...And the rest is history!

Cindy originally cared for teen girls, but that changed the day that the Sheriff delivered Heliaz to her door. The troubled 11-year-old had blown his way through several homes and schools, but Cindy recognized Heliaz's spark and his potential. In Cindy's home, Heliaz thrived, becoming a stand-out basketball player in high school.



Heliaz continued to live with Cindy after he turned 18. This past winter, he was diagnosed with brain cancer and he has been in intensive treatment for the past five months. He has had several hospitalizations at Children's Hospital in Seattle and when he is home, he and Cindy are on the road to Seattle several days a week for his treatment. The bond between Heliaz and Cindy is stronger than ever. They are both getting through this ordeal with the love and support of their friends and family – Cindy's grown children and her mother have been lifesavers. Other foster parents such as Marci Meiss have rallied around them, offering support as have members of their Onalaska community.

In the middle of all the turmoil, Cindy and her family try to find time to have some normal fun. The family goes camping during the summer and on weekends at home, they watch movies together. Cindy says she really likes seeing her kids get into sports and her favorite spot is cheering them on from the sidelines.

When asked about what has enabled her to take on the challenges of foster parenting for all these years, Cindy cites patience and kindness. "Kids need that kindness," she says. She also works to create structure for them and keep them busy in positive activities. In addition, she appreciates the opportunities she has had over the years to attend trainings and improve her skills. She says she has repeated many foster parent classes several times, as there is always something to learn and things change over time.

Cindy has a passion for foster parenting and it is what she most wants to be doing. "I just want to make things a little bit better," she says. She wants prospective foster parents to know that nothing can replace that "heart-warming feeling" that you get when you make a difference in the life of a child.

Finally, she wants to make sure that foster parents know the value of their local foster parent association. It is the place to go for resources and support. Cindy would know!

Cindy started out wanting to help a neighbor. She ended up helping a whole lot of young people.

You can too.

## Crystal Stacy

### Foster Youth, Survivor, High School Graduate... Hero!

"I saw Crystal grow from being a shy, meek, mild, scared little girl into a beautiful young woman who can conquer the world." Those are the words of Crystal Stacy's guardian, Goldie Campbell.

Crystal first entered care at age 10, when her mother moved their family back in with Crystal's abusive father. Crystal ran to her grandmother's house and eventually entered foster care. She moved to Goldie's house when she was 13 years old and a guardianship was established a year later. Both she and Goldie are clear that this is her "forever family!" Crystal can count on bringing laundry home and catching a meal from time to time after she moves into her college dorm room this fall.

Crystal says that it was when she moved to Goldie's home that she learned how to be a kid and to have fun, and with Goldie's love and support Crystal soared.

In the fall, Crystal will be attending Eastern Washington University. She plans to major in psychology and become a counselor for kids in crisis. She certainly has the personal experience to know what those young people go through. Helping others is something that Crystal loves to do. She has been very involved in her youth group at church and volunteered this year at the Teen Closet. She says with a laugh, "Whenever anyone needs help with something, everyone says, 'ask Crystal!'"

The Teen Closet activity began as part of Crystal's senior project. In addition, she penned a report about the foster care system, describing the rules kids and foster parents must follow and the training foster parents must receive. She wanted to get the message out that foster parents are something special and must work hard to gain the skills necessary to be effective. She also wanted people to know that the rules created to protect kids can make them feel different from their peers.

Crystal is now a young woman who is all about being normal. She rides her bike and enjoys her friends and sometimes marvels at discovering the simple joys of being a teenager. She knows that Goldie believes in her, and as a result, she believes in herself. She is ready to take on the world!

## Sandra Quiroz Foster Youth, Big Sister, U.S. Citizen... Hero!

Although the percentage of foster care children who graduate is low, Sandra Quiroz is determined to rise above. Sandra graduated from high school in June 2009 and recently was awarded a four year scholarship to University of Phoenix online. Her goal is to become a child psychologist.

Sandra's story began in a single parent home living in extreme poverty. She was removed from her parental home in 2007 due to severe abuse. Her parents failed to make progress with services and parental rights were terminated at the beginning of 2009.

Sandra credits her younger brother and sister for motivating her to move beyond her abuse to graduate high school and pursue a higher education. In an essay written for her application for her scholarship Sandra wrote: "I have learned in a short period of time that I choose not to remain a victim but to rise above it. I come from a place filled with painful memories, experiences and sacrifices, which will be the driving force for me to succeed."

In addition to the routine challenges of being a child in foster care, she had to apply for and was recently granted residency in the United States with the help of her social worker. She has taken advantage of the foster care to 21 program and made tremendous progress with services offered to her. Sandra has truly been an inspiration to those around her and it is clear that the sky is truly the limit for her.

## Limitations of the Adoption Support Program

A new Washington law takes effect July 26, 2009. This law requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to provide specific information to prospective adoptive parents on the limitations of the adoption support program. This is a summary of the program's limits.

### Monthly Cash Payments

Like any parent, adoptive parents are financially responsible for the needs of their children. The program supplements parents' and community resources to assist in covering the ordinary and special needs of the child. The extent of assistance is determined through discussion and negotiation between the adoptive parents and the Adoption Support Program staff. The law limits the amount a family can receive as monthly cash payments to a maximum of the foster care maintenance payment the child would receive if the child were in a foster family home.

### One Time Payments

The Adoption Support Program offers a lump sum or one time payment when a child has an extraordinary need requiring immediate attention. The one time amount received is decided through discussion between the adoptive parents and the Adoption Support Program staff. One time payments are rare. Considerations are individualized. As with the monthly cash payment the amount a family can receive must not be greater than the amount the child would receive if the child were in a foster family home.

### Residential Placement or Group Care

The law does not permit the department to pay for residential placement or group care to a child not in its custody. Adopted children receive the same services, including foster care placement, to the same extent as any child in the general population. Adoption Support Program staff will refer adoptive parents to their local Department of Children and Family Services to discuss services offered.

### Accessing Mental Health Services

Adoption Support offers assistance with individual therapy. Individual therapy means treatment focused on a child's needs, behaviors and interaction with family. Accessing individual therapy is fully detailed in the booklet titled "Post Adoption Services Questions and Answers", pages, 10-13. The booklet is available from an adoption social worker or adoption support staff and this website: [http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/adopt/res\\_resources.asp](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/adopt/res_resources.asp).

Adopted children have access to other mental health services available to any child in the general population. The Mental Health Division has created a parent's guide online at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/>. Eligibility for mental health services, the nature of the services, and funding are subject to change. To find out what services are currently available contact your adoption support program manager at 800-562-5682. For crisis situations, call your local 24 hour crisis line. If a life threatening emergency exists, call 911.

### Availability of Mental Health Services and Assistance with Funding

Families report many challenges in obtaining mental health services for their children whether birth or adopted. Some challenges include: cost of services exceeding available family resources; availability of mental health providers in certain areas and a lack of providers who have the expertise to address foster care/adoption issues. The Adoption Support Program provides limited mental health services funding. Talk to your regional Adoption Support Program Manager about the current availability of mental health services funding.

## The Many Faces of Family

Many kinds of caregivers keep today's families together – not just moms and dads but also aunts and uncles, godparents, grandparents, foster moms and dads, and others. Stop by to see young people's drawings of their families. The Many Faces of Family display in SAM's First Floor Corridor is part of a community partnership with the Department of Social and Health Services (<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/index.asp>), Treehouse for Kids (<http://www.treehouse4kids.org/>) and more.

The reception for Many Faces of Family will take place on the 22nd of August. Go to <http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/> and click on the calendar for reception specifics.

## Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

### ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County, call 206-605-0664 and in any county from Snohomish County north, call 360-510-7601 or 360-863-6530.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

**Family Help Line:** 1-800-932-HOPE or [www.parenttrust.org](http://www.parenttrust.org). The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

**Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect:** Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

**Mental Health Crisis Line Information:** The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

### GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or [www.fpaws.org](http://www.fpaws.org). FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

### RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:  
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:  
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

### CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve  
<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

## Happy Anniversary, Caregiver Connection!

Last August Children's Administration unveiled the first issue of the new Caregiver Connection newsletter, bringing you news and information to help you care for the kids in your home. Looking back, we have heard some great stories, received interesting and pertinent articles, and gotten to know each other a little bit better.

We expect to continue bringing you the information you most want to read about. As we celebrate our one-year anniversary, we want to remind you that your contributions and story suggestions help us to do that! If you read an interesting article you'd like to share, hear an inspiring story, wish to recognize someone's work, tell us about some resource you've discovered, or just ask a question, we hope to hear from you. You can help us keep the Caregiver Connection fresh, relevant, and full of information. Send your questions and contributions to Dinah Martin, [madi300@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:madi300@dshs.wa.gov), or call 360-902-0740.

## Back to school... Already!

The hours of summer are ticking away and you may be thinking about preparations for the kids returning to school. Here are just a few resources for back to school supplies that you may be able to access for the kids in your home.

- **Homes of Hope** will provide a new outfit for 51 children in Asotin, Garfield, and Whitman Counties.
- **My Bag and Teen Closet** are two great Region 1 resources.
- **Donation Station** at the Five Mile Grange in Spokane can help with supplies and clothing.
- Ferndale is having a Back to School Extraganza on August 26th, 3-6pm, at Vista Middle School. There will be school supplies distributed, plus health and dental screenings for K-5.
- The Lewis County Foster Parent Association will have school supplies at the summer picnic.
- **Treehouse** in King County provides school supplies.

Your regional foster care liaisons will have the details about these and other opportunities to prepare your kids for a productive school year.

