

# HOMECOMING

WINTER 2012



## In her own words: REBEKAH'S STORY

When I was three years old, I was placed into foster care when my birth mom was arrested for drug use and child endangerment. She used drugs before, during, and after her pregnancy with me, leaving me with multiple medical problems. Even though I was young, I still remember how hard it was living in foster care and having to move from place to place. I was verbally and even physically abused in some of the foster homes. At one point, I was almost adopted by a couple, but when the husband and wife had marital problems and eventually divorced, they did not adopt me and I had to move yet again. I was miserable, had low self-esteem, and little trust in adults...and I was only six.

It was then, that a lady in a suit came to see me—I thought she was another social worker checking up on me. What I didn't know was that she had been working with Sierra Forever Families (then, Sierra Adoption Services) to adopt a child.

I was suspicious. I did not know how to get close to someone in my life because when I tried before, I was just moved on to the next house.

**“It took me a while to realize my (adoptive) parents are always here for me no matter what... I feel safe now.”**

I was too young to realize the support system that Sierra provided to us. I just kept testing the relationship with this lady. I wanted to see if she would give me away just like everybody else. What a brat I was! But deep down, I just wanted to feel safe and like I belonged.

She didn't give up on me! Eight months later, the adoption was finalized and she became my forever mother. I finally had stability in my life and a wonderful person who loved me.

As I grew older, thanks to therapeutic support, I eventually learned to trust and feel secure. Years later, my mom fell in love with a wonderful man and they got married. I now have a dad and an older brother, I love them, too. It took me a while to realize that my parents are always here for me no matter what happens.

...continued on page 3

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- The More You Know 3
- SFF Calendar 4
- Welcome Home 5
- Kids Are Waiting 6
- Development Update 12
- Expressive Giving 15

## MISSION STATEMENT

We transform the lives of children in foster care by building and nurturing permanent families.

### Sacramento Center

8928 Volunteer Lane, Suite 100  
 Sacramento, CA 95826  
 Tel: (916) 368-5114  
 Fax: (916) 368-5157  
 E-mail: sffsac@sierraff.org

### Nevada City Center

138 New Mohawk Road, Suite 200  
 Nevada City, CA 95959  
 Tel: (530) 478-0900  
 Fax: (530) 478-0970  
 E-mail: sffgv@sierraff.org

### Auburn Center (PlacerKids)

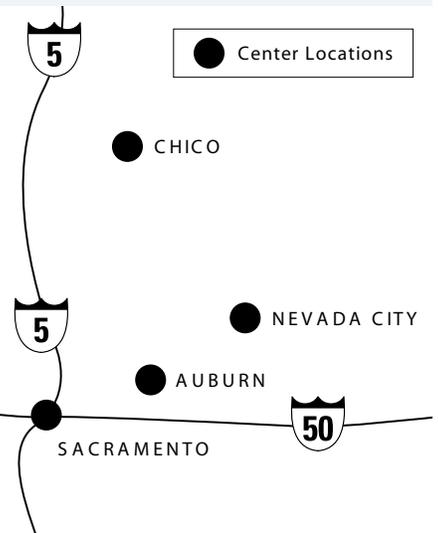
287 Nevada Street  
 Auburn, CA 95603  
 Tel: (530) 887-9982  
 Fax: (530) 887-9994  
 Toll free: 1-888-387-9982  
 E-mail: placerkids@sierraff.org

### Chico Adoptive Family Resource Center

520 Cohasset Road, Suite 140  
 Chico, CA 95926  
 Tel: (530) 879-3861  
 Fax: (530) 896-1792  
 E-mail: sffchico@sierraff.org

### California Department of Social Services/Adoptive Family Resource Center

Warm Line: (800) 268-2967  
 Fax: (916) 484-0430  
 E-mail: rbuchmiller@sierraff.org



VISIT OUR WEBSITE!  
**SIERRAFF.ORG**



#### ABOUT HOMECOMING

Homecoming is a publication of Sierra Forever Families. Donations and/or correspondence may be sent to:

Sierra Forever Families  
 8928 Volunteer Lane, Suite 100  
 Sacramento, CA 95826  
 email: shanson@sierraff.org

#### EDITOR

Sara Hanson

#### EDITORIAL BOARD

Bobby Cobbs  
 Kimberly Cox  
 April Mae Johnson  
 Cassandra Heyward  
 Juli Kramer

#### DESIGN/LAYOUT

Circle Design

#### CONTRIBUTORS

Donna Aleccia  
 Dawn Bateman  
 Bob Herne  
 Garrett McCord  
 Kecia Sakazaki  
 Sandy Sertyn

#### SFF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alan Wolf, President  
 Sarah Krevans, President Elect  
 Jeanne Reaves, Secretary  
 Jim Eldridge, Treasurer  
 Eric Ratinoff, Immediate Past President

Katy Carlsen, M.D.	R.W. "Skip" Reynolds
Bob Earl	Daniel Root
Joe Genshlea	Kathy Van Osten
Dee Hartzog	Parker White
Kate Renwick-Espinosa	
Debra Panattoni	

#### Executive Management

Bob Herne, Executive Director\*  
 Bobby Cobbs, Development and PR Officer\*  
 Glynis Butler-Stone, Program Director\*  
 Linda Merrill, Finance Director\*

\*Sierra Forever Families Staff

#### SFF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Julia Amaral  
 Sean Anderson  
 Fran Barker  
 Tom Bogetich  
 Patrick R. Brady  
 Dennis Cook  
 Greg Finch  
 Elfrena Foord  
 Gail Johnson Vaughan  
 John Kay  
 Chuck Nicholson  
 Richard Osen  
 Megan Vincent  
 David Zorn

## THE MORE YOU KNOW... FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

### KEEPING THE PROMISE OF FAMILY

We transform the lives of children in foster care by building and nurturing permanent families.

We believe foster care is a temporary solution and that all children need a forever family.

We believe this because, within two to four years of emancipating from foster care, more than 50% of these youth have not completed high school, are incarcerated, become pregnant, victimized, or dead. Former foster youth make up the largest group of people using homeless shelters. Children in our communities deserve better outcomes in life.

We are proud of our mission and the services we provide. We are constantly seeking innovative ways to find and maintain permanency for our children: Reunification, Adoption, Mentorship, Family Preservation, Youth Permanency, and more.

This October, our families, staff, board members, volunteers and donors came together to celebrate family. The picnic was a huge success. The park was alive with the joy of families playing, dancing, eating and celebrating life. As one adoptive mom stated, "I know the difference that we have made in our daughter's life, but it is amazing to look around to see so many happy children."

Thanks for the difference you are making in the lives of our children!



Bob Herne,  
Executive Director, MSW  
bherne@sierraaff.org



Over 300 guests including families, mentors, donors, volunteers and youth, gathered to celebrate at Royer Park in Roseville.

### REBEKAH'S STORY *continued from page one*

I'm now 18, and I wanted to share my story because I know first-hand what it is like to feel alone in the foster care system, and how, through stability, therapy, and the promise of permanent love, children can feel safe and hopeful again.

I feel safe now. I have learned to accept my past and I'm planning my future. I'm going to college next year and will study to become a child psychologist. Through my own positive experience with therapy, I feel the difference it has made in my life. I want to make sure that children have someone to talk to and share their feelings with; that they have a safe environment to come to and to make sure their home-life is safe as well. And, I want a family of my own. My children are going to grow up with a loving and supportive family from the start!

I am sharing my story with you in the hope that you will support the work that Sierra does to find forever families for children in foster care. Those children need your help just like I did so many years ago.

Sincerely, Rebekah Gerber

*Happily adopted in 2000*

# SFF CALENDAR: EVENTS AND CLASSES

**EVENTS:** For more information or to volunteer, please call 916-368-5114.

**MARCH 31, 2012: Sierra Forever Families is the selected beneficiary of Point West Rotary's 10th Annual Festa di Vino!**

This signature event brings together fine wine and great food, highlighting California wineries and local restaurants. Guests will enjoy wine tasting, dining, dancing, raffle prizes, live and silent auctions and much more. Tickets are \$45. For information, visit [festadivino.com](http://festadivino.com).

**CLASSES:** Classes, trainings, workshops and support groups require a reservation.

## SACRAMENTO

Second Mondays

**EXPLORING PERMANENCY I.** (Orientation). 6:00-8:30pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

Second Wednesdays\*

**SINGLE & GAY/LESBIAN ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS.** 6:00-8:00pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

Second Thursdays\*

**ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP.** 6:30-8:00pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

January 18 & 25; March 21 & 28

**ADOPTION MODULE 1 & 2.** 5:30-8:30pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

March 3 & 17; May 5 & 19

**EXPLORING PERMANENCY II.** 9:00am-5:30pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

February 29

**MENTAL HEALTH MODULE.** 6:00-8:00pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

February 15; April 18; June 20

**CONCURRENT PLANNING.** 5:30-8:30pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

Call for dates

**MANDATED CHILD ABUSE REPORTING.** 6:00-8:00pm. Sacramento SFF office. Call (916) 368-5114.

## PLACERKIDS

January 21 & 28; March 21 & 28\*

**PRIDE/PRE-SERVICE.** 8:30am-4:30pm. Ongoing. PlacerKids, Auburn. Call Banetta (530) 308-3283 for information and childcare.

First Tuesdays\*

**K.S.S.P. SUPPORT GROUP.** 6:00-7:30pm. Placer Kids, Auburn. Call (916) 774-6802.

Second Thursdays\*

**FOSTER/ADOPTIVE SUPPORT GROUP.** 6:00-8:30pm. PlacerKids, Auburn. Call Banetta (530) 308-3283 for reservations. Call Laurie (530) 889-6794 for childcare.

Third Tuesdays\*

**K.S.S.P. SUPPORT GROUP.** 6:00-7:30pm. Kids First, Roseville. Call (530) 887-3536.

Third Thursdays\*

**PK ORIENTATION FOR FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION.** 6:30-8:30pm. PlacerKids, Auburn. Call Donna (530) 887-9982 for information and childcare.

Fourth Thursdays\*

**FOSTER/ADOPTIVE SUPPORT GROUP.** 6:00-8:30pm. South Placer at Cirby Hills. Call Banetta (530) 308-3283.

TBD

**ADOPTION MODULE.** 9:00am-4:00pm. Placer County Child System of Care. PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED, call Theresa Bardakjian at (530) 889-6758 to register.

## NEVADA COUNTY

First Wednesdays

**EXPLORING PERMANENCY I.** (Orientation). 6:00-9:00pm. Nevada City office. Call (530) 478-0900.

Alternating Fridays\*

**ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP.** 9:00-11:00am. Gold Country Gymnastics, 110 Spring Hill St, Grass Valley. Play care provided for children. Space is limited, please RSVP. Reservations are needed for child care. Call Rebecca at (800) 268-2967.

## YUBA/SUTTER COUNTIES

Third Tuesdays\*

**ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP.** 6:00-8:30pm. Yuba College, 2088 N Beale Rd, Marysville, FKCE, room 1321. Parking pass required. Free childcare and snacks. Free lending library. For more information call Rebecca at (800) 268-2967.

## CHICO

First Tuesdays

**OROVILLE ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP.** 9:30-11:30am. Coffee Diem, 1382 Meyers, Oroville. Call (530) 879-3861.

Second Wednesdays

**PARADISE ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP.** 9:30-11:30am. Paradise Family Resource Center, 6241 Skyway. Call (530) 879-3861.

First Thursdays\*

**CHICO ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP.** 6:30-8:30pm. 520 Cohasset Rd., Suite 140. Call (530) 879-3861.

*\*Childcare available, please make childcare reservations when calling in to sign-up for class.*

**REGISTER ONLINE AT [SIERRAFF.ORG](http://SIERRAFF.ORG)**

# WELCOME HOME: RECENT FINALIZATIONS



## THE FYFE FAMILY

Bob and Rebecca Fyfe are excited to announce the adoption finalization of their beautiful new daughter, Kaylor Elizabeth, age 13, on May 20, 2011.



## THE BAILEY-GOWEN FAMILY

On July 15, 2011, Rich, Brett, Richard, Eric, and Daniel celebrated the adoption finalization of their new son and brother, Isaiah, age 8.

## THE NEWTON-MERIDIETH FAMILY *(not shown)*

Donna Newton and Everett Meridieth proudly announced the adoption of their two children, Donovan and Maryjane, ages 14 and 11½, on August 25, 2011.



## THE HOXSIE FAMILY

Kathy and Rachael are proud to announce the adoption finalization of their new son and brother, Jerry, age 12, on September 16, 2011.



## THE WRIGHT FAMILY

Doug, Lori, and Malaya Wright are excited to announce the adoption finalization of their new son and brother, Luke, age three, on November 18, 2011.



## THE BAILEY-GARDNER FAMILY

On October 11, 2011, Stephanie, Denise, and Savvy celebrated the adoption finalization of their new son and brother, Miles, age 1.

## A FAMILY OF MY OWN

*Sierra Forever Families seeks connections for children before they 'age out' of foster care*

By Brian Hamilton, Staff Writer, The Union, published November 30, 2011

No one helping with homework. No one celebrating graduation. No one encouraging college. No one sharing smiles. No one to cry with. No one to lean on. No one to love.

No one.

It's a harsh reality 16-year-old "Terri" faces, as one of more than 100 foster children in Nevada County without a permanent home. Less than two years away from "aging out" of the system, Terri knows she's running out of time to find a family before she's out on her own. And she's not confident that will happen.

"Yeah, I'm already 16, so there's no point," she says, sitting on the couch and staring at the floor. "I might as well stay in foster care till I'm 18. "It sucks I didn't find home. So I'll stay in foster care, I guess."

She'll be OK, she insists. She's pretty tough now, after being shuffled among six foster homes over the course of 18 months. She says she's learned that when time's up, it's up. There's been no choice. She must move on—again and again. She doesn't really want to "get into all of this," she says. What's the point of talking about it? It's not as though it's going to make a difference, right? One-word answers is all she offers.

Does she want a "forever family?" "Yeah," she says. Does she think that will happen? "No."

### Against the odds

Lana Fredrickson and Sara Hanson share short smiles and take deep breaths as hints of tears well at their eyes. Despite the number of children they've heard talk about being alone in the world in their roles with Sierra Forever Families, they can't help but still be stirred by the stories they share. They know the statistics.

There are 104 children in Nevada County who their organization is hoping to help find a home, for which they've tried to raise awareness in November, observed as National Adoption Month. But if those Nevada County kids are among the 4,000 statewide who age out of the foster care system annually, they're not likely to live happily ever after.

"Within two to four years, over 50 percent are homeless, have not completed high school, are pregnant, unemployed, in prison or dead," said Fredrickson, a Nevada City social worker. "It's the worst set of outcomes for any subset of youth."

They're such dire statistics that they have led to the creation of the *Destination Family Youth Permanency Project*, a pilot program geared to create lifelong connections for children between ages 11 and 18 in Sacramento, Nevada and Placer counties. The goal is to ensure no child ages out of foster care without a permanent family connection that is "as legally, emotionally and physically secure as possible," the organization's website states. The idea, Fredrickson said, is that while working to find children like Terri a permanent family, the highest priority is finding someone who will stand by the child throughout life, whether as an actual adoptive parent, a guardian or as a mentor. If possible, *Destination Family* also attempts a reunification with the child's biological family.

Such a shift away from focusing on adoption led Sierra Adoption Services to change its name to Sierra Forever Families, said Hanson, a public relations specialist. "We expanded our services to include mentoring," she said. "We had linked ourselves with the term 'adoption' and that didn't represent all the other services we offer."

### Opening up

Uncomfortable to speak freely, Terri turns to her sketchbook and journal. She shows a penciled self-portrait of a young, wide-eyed woman looking off into the distance without either a smile or a frown. But the pain the girl feels is as evident as the dark mascara running down her cheeks.

"I write poetry," Terri says, opening her journal—and herself—to a stranger sitting at her side. "'Cut here'—that's the title," she says in sharing a powerful glimpse into her pain. "I hurt myself, so you can't... My scars are a daily reminder of who I used to be and who I can become again."

Told she clearly has talent as both an artist and writer, Terri says it's only the way she can express herself, although she doesn't like to share such thoughts. Outside of her ongoing counseling, there doesn't seem to be others who care to delve deeply into her life. Her shuffle through six foster homes in less than two years hasn't helped her build such a relationship, she says.



Self-portrait by Terri

**To read the rest of the story, please go to [sierraff.org/in-the-press.aspx](http://sierraff.org/in-the-press.aspx)**



A Signature Program of the  
Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

## WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS RECRUITMENT MODEL DEEMED A SUCCESS

**The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA) announced on October 26, 2011, that the Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) recruitment model substantially increases the adoption rates of children from foster care.**

The most comprehensive evaluation ever conducted on family recruitment practices for children in foster care was recently released from DTFA. This five-year study, led by Child Trends, found children served by a Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter, such as Sierra's own Sandy Sertyn, experience substantially higher rates of adoption than children not served by the child focused model. The study found older children and children with mental health disorders achieved even higher rates of adoption, providing new hope to the many children who enter foster care and often languish for years or 'age out' of foster care altogether without the support of permanent, loving families.

The DTFA commissioned the five-year study of Wendy's Wonderful Kids to evaluate the effectiveness of the program's child-focused recruitment model. The research shows that:

- Children in foster care served by WWK recruiters are more than 1.7 times more likely to be adopted than those not served by WWK.
- For older children, the impact of the WWK model is greater and increases with age:  
For children referred to WWK at age 8, the likelihood of adoption was one and one half times higher; for children referred at age 11, the likelihood was two times higher; and for children referred at age 15, the likelihood of adoption was three times higher.
- Children with mental health disorders served by WWK are three times more likely to find forever families than those not served by WWK.

There are no 'unadoptable' children, just unfound families. Sierra Forever Families is the recipient of a grant from the DTFA. Sandy Sertyn is the Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter, and assisted eight children to find permanency with a forever family in 2011. Her work entails building rapport with the children, diligent search of records for family, recruiting for families interested in expanding their family through adoption and working closely with collaborative partners to ensure the best possible match. After a match is made, Sandy assists with the transition and works with the family until adoption finalization.

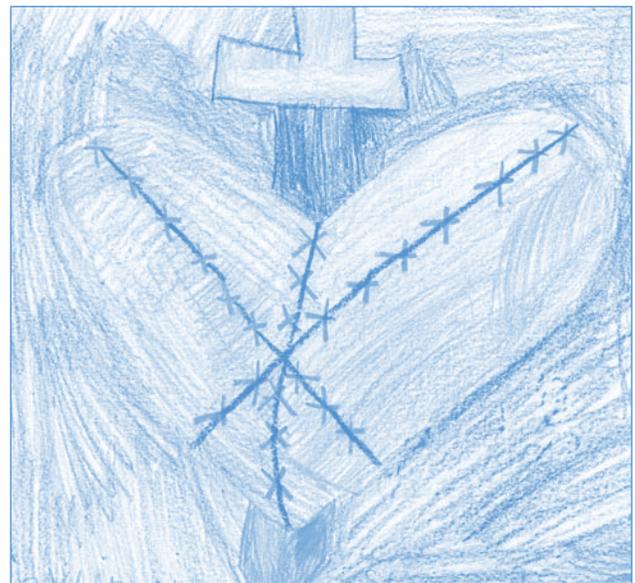
It is with great appreciation that Sierra Forever Families recognizes the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption for enacting real change in the lives of children living in foster care.

## SFF FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Families in Nevada County are staying together with the help of Sierra Forever Families Family Preservation Program. The program, a partnership between Sierra, Child Protective Services and Children's Behavioral Health, delivers in-home support to families with children having mental health challenges. The desired outcome of the services is to have children remain in their homes with an improved quality of life for all family members.

Since the programs inception in 2010, over 90 families have received support services. Services include in-home visitation, individual and family therapy, parent education, support and coaching, community connections, development of family supports systems, helping parents learn more about mental health and working directly with children to model behavior and help them manage or overcome symptoms.

The Family Preservation Program is funded through Medi-Cal's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program, First 5 of Nevada County, federal child abuse prevention funds and underwriting from Sierra Forever Families.



*Dark on the Outside Barbed Wire* by Kaylin

## PLACERKIDS UPDATE



Antoinette Moran-Briones  
Social Work Supervisor

### Welcome Antoinette Moran-Briones

Antoinette joined Sierra Forever Families in September of this year and is the Social Work Supervisor for our Nevada City office and our collaborative office in Auburn, PlacerKids. Antoinette did her undergraduate work at U.C. Davis and obtained her Masters at the Professional School of Psychology. She has always worked in Foster Care and Adoptions. From early on, Antoinette knew she wanted to work with children. She spent a significant amount of time tutoring foster youth in group homes.

Antoinette is married to Steve and together they have a 15-month-old little boy, Antonio. Her biggest joy is spending time with family which includes extended family residing locally as well as in Texas. Her interests include running and cycling.

When asked what she likes about working with Sierra Forever Families and PlacerKids, she responded by saying she likes the strength of staff, the diversity of the programs and over all goal of supporting families and children.

We welcome Antoinette to our Sierra Family!

### AND A NEW LOCATION!

Recently, PlacerKids relocated to 275 Nevada Street in Auburn. The move provides increased space and resources to better serve our families and youth.

## A Race To Give A Place To Live: FUN(D)RAISER



Roseville Dentist, Dr. Kevin Chang and his staff hosted their fifth *A Race To Give A Place To Live* at Race Place Motorsports, an indoor go-kart racing venue in Sacramento. The event serves as both a fundraiser and a FUN-raiser. The combined efforts of the five events have generated over \$20,000 to help find permanent families for children and youth in foster care and has provided nearly 100 youth with a day of racing, prizes, and more.

Unique to this year's event was one of the most fun highlights for the participating youth: a limousine ride to and from the venue! Working in partnership with Sir Speedy Printing & Marketing Services, Dr. Chang provided an extra special treat for the youth, and for many, it was the first time to take such a ride. Two teenage girls were the first to arrive at Sierra's

office in Sacramento and they were so surprised to see the limousine parked out front. They asked if it really was for them. Once they found out that it was, they quickly jumped in and began having a ball looking at the interior color-changing lights and pretending to be movie stars.

Twenty youth raced that day and each enjoyed the limo ride, a catered lunch by Crisp Catering, dental care goodie bag, prizes, and much more. A great day was had by all. One youth said, "This has been the funnest day ever. Thank you!"

Sierra would like to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to Dr. Kevin Chang, his staff and the participating sponsors for continuing to transform the lives of children in foster care.

## WONDER UPDATE

**Wonder recently celebrated the graduation of its Fall training class and is looking forward to matching 30 more children in foster care with caring, consistent adult mentors this fiscal year.** Its active mentoring matches are going strong and the staff commends its volunteers for their outstanding commitment to being a dependable and caring adult and providing opportunities for their Explorers (mentee) to experience “firsts” and childhood fun!

This year, Wonder highlights two of its mentoring matches. The first match we'd like to recognize is Guide Jason Beckstrom and his Explorer Caleb. Jason and Caleb were first matched and met each other in June of 2009. Jason has been a stable, fun, and Caleb might even say, “cool” mentor and has been there for him consistently. Caleb is now 9 years old and looks forward to his time with Jason. At each group outing, the two always arrive with big smiles and ready for some fun! Here is what Jason had to say about his journey with Caleb:

*“My Explorer and I are now in the middle of our 3rd annual journey together and we have had many ‘firsts’ during our two and half years together. One of our favorite activities is eating french fries, so we make it a point to try the french fries at all the different places we go and then we discuss how they rank. Recently we attended our first hockey game and my Explorer concluded that the hockey rink’s french fries were ‘pretty good, but not the best.’ From the time spent together on our journeys, my Explorer and I have become best friends. We look forward to experiencing many more ‘firsts’ together and continuing our quest to find the tastiest french fries in the area!”*



Caleb with his Wonder Guide Jason

We'd also like to recognize Guide Laurie Gwinn and her Explorer Zariah. Laurie also met her Explorer in June of 2009. At the beginning of their second journey, when Zariah turned 13, they decided to join Counselors In Leadership Training (CILT). CILT is an extension of our journey program for matches with teenage Explorers. CILT introduces the Explorer to leadership opportunities within Wonder. Laurie has embraced the importance of adult/youth partnership and intentionally creates a supportive environment for Zariah to develop her leadership skills. Zariah excels at working with the younger Explorers and feels that she and Laurie make a great team. The skills she is developing and Laurie's consistency will benefit Zariah as she navigates adolescence. Here is what Laurie has to say about their journey:

*“Zariah and I are in the third year of our journey together. We have experienced many fun times together and are always willing to try something new. One of our favorite things is to try restaurants with food from different parts of the world. We keep track of what types of food we've tried and think of others we have yet to experience. This has been a wonderful experience for us both and our relationship grows stronger every year. When Zariah turned 13, we were invited to join CILT...a Wonder Teen Group. This was the best thing we could've ever done. This is a great group that gives the Explorers an opportunity to really develop and utilize their leadership skills. In addition, this group allows us to do some fun activities with other teens and I know that Zariah loves that part of CILT.”*



Zariah with her Wonder Guide Laurie

## Announcing Glynis Butler-Stone, New SFF Program Director



Glynis Butler-Stone  
SFF Program Director

Sierra is proud to announce GLYNIS BUTLER-STONE as our new Program Director and we wish to introduce her to you. Glynis loves her hometown of Sacramento and has dedicated the past twenty years to local child welfare.

She enjoys spending free time with her husband who is the head mechanic for a touring professional road cycling team. She has joined him on many tours around the world. Not merely a tag-a-long guest, Glynis has become one of the few female race caravan support drivers for international level races. This important role is both exciting and rewarding. "We work as a team to get a racer back on course. Because of this trust and fast paced action, women aren't typically welcomed as drivers; being a female driver is something I'm most proud of."

Her professional life is just as dynamic as her personality. Prior to joining Sierra's team, Glynis has worked at FamiliesFirst, the Sacramento Children's Home, UC Davis Medical CAARE Center and the Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento.

Glynis recalls her early career, "My heart became impassioned toward child welfare and kids in foster care, especially the youth who are near ageing out." She continued to work diligently with accomplishments that include increasing an EPSDT contract from one-half-million dollars to \$1.4 million, developing a permanency focused residentially based services program, and helping create a transitional housing/ independent living program for emancipating foster youth.

As a new member to Sierra, Glynis is excited to continue to help children and youth have permanency. She states, "Permanent connections are critical for a youth's success. The work we do is a forever process and I appreciate how committed Sierra is to providing support services-even after finalized adoptions and other permanency outcomes take place." Glynis adds, "My hope is to make a difference for as many children as possible and to support Sierra through these tough economic times so we can continue to transform the lives of children in foster care by building and nurturing permanent families."

## A Retirement Farewell to Cassandra Heyward

### AFTER TWELVE YEARS OF SERVICE WITH SIERRA



Cassandra Heyward

Cassandra and her husband, Bob, have thoughtfully planned how they will spend their retirement years. At the end of December, now that she has reached retirement age, they plan to spend the rest of their lives in voluntary service to their family and their church. Starting in April 2012, Cassandra and Bob will serve as Family and Church History Missionaries for 18 months in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Cassandra and Bob have been married for 43 ½ years; have two biological sons, Rob and Jason; two adopted daughters, Tara and Megan; and 16 grandchildren, ages six months to 15 years.

Cassandra obtained her Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Social Work at California State University, Sacramento. Her career began in 1990 at El Dorado County Department of Social Services, where she worked as an Emergency Response After-Hour Worker, then as a Family Reunification Worker, and as the Foster Care Licensing Worker. In 1999, she was hired as an Adoption/Permanency Planning Social Worker II at Sierra Forever Families.

In regards to her twelve years at Sierra, Cassandra stated, "I have enjoyed the opportunity I have had as a social worker building families through adoption and/or other forms of permanency. I am very thankful for the opportunity I have had to work for such a great cause and for such a great agency. I have always told everyone I meet that I have had one of the best jobs anyone could ever ask for, and I will continue to do so the rest of my life." Cassandra has finalized the adoptions of 104 children while working for Sierra.

The leadership and staff of Sierra wishes to THANK Cassandra for her dedicated service in finding permanency for children in the foster care system.

## A New Program, a New Collaboration, and the Right Woman for the Job—Meet Cynthia

Sierra is proud to announce our new Ambassador Family Recruitment Program where families will share their stories of adoption to inspire others interested in providing permanence to children in foster care. We are delighted to welcome CYNTHIA HUTCHISON as our AmeriCorps Family Recruitment Coordinator.

Cynthia has a long and personal history with adoption and permanency focused support. Her younger brother was adopted which gave her a sense of always knowing that she, too, wanted to adopt. She has since been a foster mom to 15 girls and is also the *de facto* parent to one of the young lady's formerly in her home. As to not disrupt current services, Cynthia plans to adopt this young lady when she's an adult.

She not only looks forward to adopting this youth, but is also in the adoption process waiting to be matched. She stated, "My heart is ready to adopt as soon as I'm matched, but in the meantime, I'm busy being a foster mom."

Cynthia is an AmeriCorps member serving at Sierra. As the domestic version of the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps provides funds to local and national organizations and agencies committed to addressing critical community needs. Locally, its programs are administered through the Child Abuse Prevention Council in North Highlands. "When AmeriCorps announced the Family Recruitment Coordinator position with Sierra, I was immediately interested. I'm excited for the opportunity to look for families willing and able to adopt children from foster care."

Cynthia continues, "I'm thrilled to join Sierra and work with our Ambassador Families to extend the reach in our communities. Together we can spread knowledge about the need for adoption and find forever families for waiting children."

To learn more about the Ambassador Family Program, please contact Cynthia at [chutchison@sierraff.org](mailto:chutchison@sierraff.org) or 916.368.5114 ext. 361.



Cynthia Hutchison  
AmeriCorps Family  
Recruitment Coordinator



# AMBASSADOR FAMILYPROGRAM

## CALLING ALL FAMILIES!

**Sierra announces our new AMBASSADOR FAMILY PROGRAM—an innovative program that focused on family recruitment with support from our greatest asset, our FOREVER FAMILIES.**

Our new Ambassador Family Program aims to solicit the support of our forever families to proactively share their experience or adoption story with the goal of inspiring others to create permanency for children living in foster care. Families can help Sierra by participating in outreach activities designed to reach potential foster and adoptive families- from informal visits with those close to you, to more formal presentations or participating in recruitment events. Your experience is key to helping reach out to other families. Many of our families are already doing this simply by sharing their story with friends and neighbors - perhaps planting a seed in their hearts! Thank you for continuing to provide permanency support to all children awaiting families.

Families interested in participating in the Ambassador Family program can contact Cynthia Hutchison at 916.368.5114 ext. 361 or [chutchison@sierraff.org](mailto:chutchison@sierraff.org)

## DEVELOPMENT UPDATE... FROM THE DEVELOPMENT & PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER



Bobby Cobbs,  
Development & Public Relations Officer,  
MSW, CFRE  
bcobbs@sierraff.org

### CHILDREN ARE WAITING...

With the year quickly drawing to a close, this is an ideal time to provide you with a number of highlights of 2011. It is hard to believe that 2011 is nearing its end. Perhaps you are like me in wondering how the time passed so quickly. This past year:

- We worked with over 730 children and youth during their journey toward permanency. 122 celebrated a forever family of their very own through adoption. Others continue their journey through mentorship, nearing finalization with a forever family, or continuing to receive supportive services.
- 84 Wonder Guides (mentors) and Explorers (foster youth) boarded the buses and headed to Camp Wonder where they experienced many wonder moments together. During the year, 123 children participated in the Wonder Mentoring Program.
- On September 12, nearly 200 golfers and volunteers participated in our 7th Annual Golf Classic for Kids and generated a net of \$120,000 to help support our mission.
- In October, more than 300 guests of families, youth, volunteers, donors, and staff enjoyed a day of fun and fellowship at the first annual Sierra Appreciation Picnic. It was heartwarming to see the children laughing, playing, and having their faces painted by the Sugar Plump Fairies.

We are thankful for each and every one of you who have been a part of our Sierra Family—by opening your home and heart, mentoring, volunteering and giving. You are an essential part of the fabric that makes up Sierra Forever Families.

Much has been accomplished this past year. Much remains to be done. Children are still waiting for a forever family of their own.

I encourage you to carefully read “Rebekah’s Story” in this issue to see how someone’s life can be transformed because of Sierra Forever Families.

If you believe it is important to transform a child’s life, step forward and be part of Sierra’s family by contributing today. Your gift will serve as a bridge to a family and to a promising future for a child in foster care. You can help a child experience one of life’s most precious gifts.

There are many ways you can give:

- 1.....Give online by visiting our website at [www.sierraff.org](http://www.sierraff.org)
- 2.....Give by check, credit card
- 3.....Make an automatic monthly contribution from an existing bank account
- 4.....Consider a planned gift such as appreciated securities

If you would like more information about ways to give, contact me today at [bcobbs@sierraff.org](mailto:bcobbs@sierraff.org) or by calling (916) 368-5114.



**Tomorrow's  
LEGACY Club**  
Giving the Gift of Family

## WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY.

**GIVE THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING.**

**Become a member of Tomorrow's Legacy Club (TLC) by remembering Sierra Forever Families in your Estate Planning. In doing so, you will provide a lasting legacy to help children find forever families for years to come.**

**For additional information about TLC and ways to support, call Bobby Cobbs or Kimberly Cox at (916) 368-5114.**



# Are You A Champion?

Sierra Forever Families established the Champions for Children (CFC) Program to provide innovative ways for community leaders, businesses, and corporations to raise \$5,000 or more annually to help provide permanency support to children living in foster care.

Fundraising plans can be as simple as establishing an employee giving program or organizing a letter writing campaign to clients. Some teams host an annual company BBQ luncheon, or set up an “honor-snack” goodie box in their break room. Others hold a holiday gift boutique or a themed garage sale. The ideas are limitless!

“We’re proud of the success of our first annual Oktoberfest, and look forward to finding more ways to make it even better in the coming years. Beers, Brats and Fundraising! We think we’ve found the winning combination!” **KATIE GILL, CFC TEAM CAPTAIN**

DesCor Builders is one of our newest Champions for Children teams. DesCor leadership and staff worked together to create an authentic Bavarian Oktoberfest to raise their \$5,000 goal.

The Oktoberfest event was spearheaded by Team Captains, Katie Gill and Sue Rasmussen. “We’re proud of the success of our first annual Oktoberfest, and look forward to finding more ways to make it even better in the coming years. Beers, Brats and Fundraising! We think we’ve found the winning combination,” remarked Katie.

Nearly 200 guests enjoyed an evening of good food, beer, and music—all while supporting Sierra Forever Families. Not only did the event reach the fundraising goal, it surpassed it, generating \$7,500!

DesCor Builders is led by Brad DesJardin and Neal Cordeiro. “At DesCor, our mission is to be a Model of Success and a Leader in our Community,” stated DesJardin. “We believe there is no better place to create success than in a loving home and that’s why we have partnered with Sierra Forever Families.”

**Do you have what it takes to be a Champion? We’d love explore creative ideas with you to help you raise your \$5,000 goal. For more information, please contact Kimberly Cox at (916) 368-5114 x341 or [kcox@sierraff.org](mailto:kcox@sierraff.org).**



TOP LEFT: (LEFT TO RIGHT) Sue Rasmussen, DesCor Builders CFC Team Leader; Brad DesJardin and Neal Cordeiro, Founders, DesCor Builders; Katie Gill, DesCor Builders CFC Team Leader

TOP RIGHT: Guests enjoying event

BOTTOM: (LEFT TO RIGHT) Check presentation with Jack Paddon, Bobby Cobbs, Neal Cordeiro, and Brad DesJardin

# NOVEMBER: NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

November is recognized as National Adoption Month—providing a platform to build awareness of the tremendous need for families to come forward to provide permanence through adoption. Nationally, there are over 400,000 children living in foster care. The largest population of youth in care is in California, with nearly 60,000 children and youth in foster care. More than 3,000 reside in the Greater Sacramento Region.

On November 3, a seven-hour public awareness vigil was held at the California State Capitol. Over 50 participants including government officials, child advocates, community and business leaders, and adoptive families participated in the Calling Out of Names, each reading aloud over one hundred names and ages of children living in California foster care. More than 5,000 names were read.

On November 19, PlacerKids hosted National Adoption Day at the Historic Courthouse in Auburn, joining family courts across the nation that opened their doors and volunteered their time to finalize the adoptions of thousands of children in care. Several local children finalized their adoptions at the event in Auburn.

## **In honor of National Adoption Month, Sierra annually selects a family to recognize as the Family of the Year. Sierra is pleased to announce that the 2011 Family of the Year is the Johnson family.**

Bryce and Lesley Johnson are the Forever Family of Jaiden, a charming little five- year-old girl. Married for nine years, the Johnson's began working with PlacerKids in 2008 to adopt through the foster care system.

After completing their paperwork and homestudy, they were matched with Jaiden, who was 2 ½ years old at the time. Bryce and Lesley first met Jaiden at a supervised visit at the playland of a local restaurant chain. "The first visit was a bit awkward," recalls Bryce, "but the next day we were able to take Jaiden to the park for a visit." It was during this visit that the Bryce and Lesley knew that Jaiden was meant to be in their lives...in their family. "The very next day Jaiden came to live with us."

Prior to meeting Jaiden, the Johnson's were informed that the county was working with Jaiden's birth mother on a reunification plan. Through the concurrent planning training classes provided by PlacerKids, the couple gained an understanding of the benefits concurrent planning and reunification support would have on the child. "We were a bit nervous at first, but we decided that we needed to support whatever was in Jaiden's best interest," shares Lesley.

Over the course of two and a half years, Jaiden was reunified with her mom three times. Each time Jaiden reentered foster care, the Johnson were called and Jaiden was placed with them. "It was hard not having Jaiden with us and to not know exactly how she was being cared for," Lesley shares. "We attend support groups through PlacerKids and they proved to be very helpful. You could talk about your experience and someone would be there to understand and to share how they were coping."

We always felt like Jaiden was meant to be a part of our lives...our family." In 2010, Jaiden made her last trip home...to her FOREVER FAMILY. Her adoption was finalized on National Adoption Day 2010 in Placer County. "She is now finally home for good and doing really well. She is ours," Bryce stats with a smile.



On November 3, government officials, child advocates, community and business leaders, adoptive families and former foster youth came together to participate in the *Calling Out of Names* for National Adoption Month. At left, Bob Herne awards the 2011 Family of the Year to the Johnson Family.



# EXPRESSIVE GIVING

EXPRESSIVE GIFTS MADE BETWEEN JUNE 2, 2011 AND DECEMBER 15, 2011

## In Memory Of...

Lucy S. Banfield

Anonymous

Donna Mae Colbaugh

Leverage Buying Group

Sharon & Mark Perigen

Sharon & Ron Schommer

Lori Lamson Lindlief

Helen Schureman

George Rose

Deon & Elizabeth Stein

David Scott

Tom & Fran Bogetich

Dr. Elizabeth Smithwick

Kimberly Cox

## In Honor Of...

Dorene Clement

"Bud" Getty

Dajion & Darien Jacobs

Cora & Ruenell Adams

Bobbie Kase

Shelly Bogetich

Diane Knorr & Wonder  
Mentoring Program

Dick and Doris Knorr

William F. Manasse

Francine Vorhees,

Moss Adams LLP

Wells Fargo Insurance

Services Employees Who Care

Sherry McFarland

Alan & Terri Wolf

Peter & Susan Colby

Rita Zorn

Dave Zorn

## Happy Birthday!

Happy Birthday Alan Wolf

Bob & Lavonne Wolf

Happy Birthday  
Sara Hanson!

Anonymous

Ann Aune

Ian Baxter

Kaye Brown

Heidi Cotler

Carolyn Ewing

Rob & Lisa Gribi

Andrew Hanson

Greg Hanson

Carrie Hudson

Janelle Jacobs

Ken Koch

Ed McCune

Jerri Mercurio

Jill Meyer

David Moss

Rob & Kathy Phillips

Suzy Root

Erin Schumacher

George & Kathy Shau

Rob & Cammie Teresi

## Special Mentions...

Joe Genshlea's

"Son of" A Sense of Place

Neal & Mary Jane

Brockmeyer

Mr. & Mrs. David Olson

Richard & Barbara

Thompson

## FEATURED VOLUNTEER: DEBRA PANATTONI

DEBRA PANATTONI is a fully dedicated, adoptive parent, spouse to a chef and commercial realtor, home-school teacher, and member of the Board of Directors for Sierra. This year, Debra added Amazing Volunteer to her credits when she committed to working with Sierra to develop the Ambassador Family Program—a program created to increase family recruitment through partnering with families who have finalized an adoption through Sierra and PlacerKids.

As a training developer in her professional life, Debra brought a tremendous amount of skills to the project. Over the course of six months, Debra spent countless hours researching and creating a curriculum for the AF program including a comprehensive Training Manual and a user friendly Participants Packet. The first round of trainings took place in October and the materials were received extremely well by our initial Ambassador Families.

"Seeing the changes in our son's life makes it so easy for me to want to do whatever I can to help even more children benefit."

Sierra wishes to THANK Debra for dedicating herself to the betterment of children.

### EXTRA THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

This year, Sierra hosted two events that took an incredible amount of volunteer support: 7th Annual Golf Classic for Kids and the Sierra Forever Families' Appreciation Picnic. The events were a tremendous success thanks to our volunteers.

FOR OUR GOLF CLASSIC WE THANK: Waste Connections, Inc., VSP Global, and our faithful Sierra volunteers.

FOR OUR SIERRA PICNIC WE THANK: UCD Lambda Omicron Xi sorority and UCD Epsilon Sigma Rho fraternity, Sugar Plump Fairies of Auburn, Roseville Kiwanis Key Club, Woodcreek High School, and SureWest.



Debra Panattoni



Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit #1234  
Sierra Forever Families  
Sacramento, CA 95826

8928 Volunteer Lane, Suite 100  
Sacramento, CA 95826

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

POINT WEST ROTARY PRESENTS THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

# FESTA *di* VINO



**A CELEBRATION OF FOOD & WINE**

MARCH 31, 2012

6:30-10:30pm

\$45 per person  
Scottish Rite Masonic Center  
6151 H Street  
Sacramento CA 95819

[festadivino.com](http://festadivino.com)

**SIERRA FOREVER FAMILIES IS THE SELECTED BENEFICIARY OF  
POINT WEST ROTARY'S 10TH ANNUAL FESTA DI VINO!**

**Savor the Memories...**

Prep your stomach and cleanse your palette. Festa di Vino 2012 will be here soon! Music. Dancing. Auctions. The areas's best wineries and restaurants are ready to impress. Grab some friends and purchase your tickets now (beginning in January). It's going to be a night to remember and we want to see you there!

More than 20 fantastic restaurants and 15 wineries will be on display. Incredible auction and raffle prizes await. The list only gets bigger as the event gets closer.