



Newsletter

January 2013

A Publication of the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Training Opportunities for Foster/Adoptive Parents North Central Mini Conference in Tuscaloosa, AL January 26th, 2013

WHEN: Saturday, January 26, 2013 Time: 8:30 a.m. To 3:00 p.m.

WHERE: Tuscaloosa Co. DHR, 3716 12th Ave East, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401

RESERVE: Call 888-545-2372, or email afapa@afapa.org Space is limited.

FREE LUNCH: AFAPA will provide lunch. If you have special dietary needs, bring what you need.

DOOR PRIZES: There will be door prizes for those in attendance.

NO CHILDCARE will be available.

AGENDA INCLUDES: 6 HOURS OF YOUR REQUIRED TRAINING

Communications

Connie Rogers

SDHR Recruitment/retention

Special Education

Barbara Lawrence

UA School of Social Work

Foster Parents Bill of Rights

William Hooper

President AFAPA

Individualized Service Plan

Martha Hooper

Afapa Trainer

South Mini Conference in Mobile, AL February 23rd, 2013

WHEN: Saturday, February 23rd, 2013 Time: 8:30 a.m. To 3:00 p.m.

WHERE: Mobile County DHR, 3103 Airport Blvd, Mobile, AL 36606

RESERVE: Call 888-545-2372, or email afapa@afapa.org Space is limited.

FREE LUNCH: AFAPA will provide lunch. If you have special dietary needs, bring what you need.

DOOR PRIZES: There will be door prizes for those in attendance.

NO CHILDCARE will be available.

AGENDA INCLUDES: 6 HOURS OF YOUR REQUIRED TRAINING

Foster Parents in Court

Judge George Brown

Mobile District Judge

Self Help for Foster Parents

Barry Swope

Manager Focal Point services

AFAPA updates

William Hooper

President AFAPA

Coaching the Hurt Child

Lindsey Gurley

APAC

**Annual AFAPA conference at Shocco Springs
May 9th, 10th, and 11th**

More information in next newsletter.



A Message from the President of AFAPA

Hope everyone has had a wonderful Christmas and Holiday season. Looking forward to this new year. This issue has lots of information, please take time to read it all. Lots of training opportunities for foster and adoptive parents are listed. If you adopted in 2012 there is information on adoption tax credit and definition of Special needs adoption. We have had lots of questions about both these in the past year so please take time to read and save for future reference. If you have one of our Foster Parent Daily Journals it would be a good idea to put a copy of this newsletter in it.

Our goal this year is to help find more homes for children in foster care waiting to be adopted. Adoption is a legal process through which a child becomes a part of a family. Adoption is a lifelong commitment and brings rewards for the adopted child and adoptive family. Most of the children in foster care waiting to be adopted are teenagers.

Here are 10 reasons you might want to consider to adopt a teenager.

1. No formula, diapers, bottles or burp rags required.
2. We sleep through the night . . . even if our parents won't.
3. We will be ready to move out sooner . . . but we will always come home to visit.
4. We can program your cell phones and DVD or Blu-ray players and teach you how to run your computer!
5. We will keep you up to date with the latest fashions and trends.
6. Once we get our permits, we can drive you places.
7. You don't just get a child, you get a friend.
8. We can pick up after ourselves and do our own laundry.
9. We will teach you how to become more patient, understanding, kind and empathetic.
10. We all need to share our life dreams, achievements and holidays with someone.

Buddy Hooper

MEET WENDY



Wendy, born in December 1993 is in the 11th grade for the 2012-2013 school year. She was excited to be promoted and is looking forward to attending her junior-senior prom. She enjoyed her floral design class last school year and made several different arrangements. At school she is allowed additional time to complete classwork when necessary.

Wendy is a nice soft-spoken young lady. She likes direct interaction with adults and loves attention from adults. She responds well to re-direction and would benefit from guidance. One of her strengths is helping others. She is a hard worker.

Wendy is open to adoption and desires a loving patient adoptive family. Wendy is currently living in a group home until an adoptive home can be identified for her. She would benefit from being in a home with structure and activities to participate in. She enjoys attending church.

*Photograph provided by
www.heartgalleryalabama.com*

MEET KAYLIE



Kaylie born in July, 2002 is very small in stature and her skin is very pale complexion. She has beautiful brown eyes and medium length blonde hair. Kaylie is a friendly child with a gigantic heart. She loves to be around people. Kaylie is doing well in classes; her special needs necessitates education in a self-contained classroom setting. Because of her developmental disabilities she is very immature and needs help with some basic self-care skills.

Kaylie needs a home that is loving and nurturing to her, and she needs parents that are patient and understanding of her behavioral problems. Kaylie is very excited about the possibility of being adopted, and having a safe and stable home.

*Photograph provided by
www.heartgalleryalabama.com*

MEET MICHAEL & TASHA

John Michael, born in June 1995 and his sister **Tasha**, born in January 1999 live together in the same therapeutic foster home. They have a close bond with one another. They have been in foster care for a number of years and have experienced multiple placements. Both children enjoy playing outside, riding their bikes. Both enjoy music. John Michael has even begun to try his hand at writing some lyrics. Tasha sings in the choir.

Both children need extra help at school and have IEP's in place to provide that extra assistance. Both are working to improve their grades and strive for academic success.

John Michael also enjoys playing basketball and video games. Tasha also likes to draw. She is described as a very loving child with a big hear. She makes friends easily and wants to please everyone.

The children look forward to a forever family and a home where they feel a sense of belonging. John Michael is particularly excited about the prospect of being adopted. He talks about changing his name, having a new identify and a fresh start.



Photograph provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Can you teach someone to Love:

By Jessmynda Dosch-Evangelista



Jessmynda Dosch-Evangelista

I first met Jessmynda almost 3 years ago in Hartford Connecticut at the NACAC conference. Her newly adoptive family had brought her to attend with them. Jessmynda is a very bright and beautiful young lady.

Jessmynda first entered foster care at the age of 2 months because her mother was in jail. Soon after she was placed with her great grandparents and then back with her mother at 1 ½ years old. Between 2 and 11 she bounced between her biological family and foster care and at the age of 11 was placed for adoption. She was in 3 foster homes and 2 group homes before she was adopted at the age of 18. She also had 2 failed adoption placements before being placed with the Evangelista family at the age of 17. In a little over a year after this placement her adoption was final. This is her story in her own words.

Can you teach someone to love? This was a question Harry Harlow attempted to answer in the 1960's when he used infant monkeys and cloth and wire "mothers" to demonstrate the importance of closeness in infancy. This is a question that took me an entire lifetime to answer.

I was declared a ward of state at the age of eleven. My birthmother was arrested for armed robbery

while she was pregnant with me and I was placed in foster care at the age of two months. She went to jail for a two year bid and by the time I was 2 years old I had moved from a foster home to live my with great grandparents until my mom was released from jail.

Unfortunately, my story is not different from many children who grew up in the foster care system. The main difference between me and most children, I feel, is that even when I had the option to sign myself out of foster care and never look back, I chose to wait until I found a family. Although I doubted my decision at times, I have come to understand that this was the most important, and the best, decision I have ever made. When things got difficult for my adoptive family and me, I often found myself asking "why did I want this?" What I came to realize is that even birth children ask themselves why they ended up with the family they were born into.

In terms of teaching someone to love, I grew up thinking that I knew all about unconditional love. As I grew closer to my adoptive family, I was shocked to learn that I hadn't the slightest idea about what "true" love was. I didn't know how to express love, how to receive it, or most of all, how to show it. Sure, I loved giving hugs, and most of the time I was the friend that people

went to when they needed advice. But I learned what true love was when I was faced with the possibility of leaving my adoptive parents.

One morning, my parents and I had an argument about household chores. I got angry and immediately called my caseworker. I told her she needed to come and get me right away because I couldn't stand this family. Things just weren't working out. As I waited to hear back from her, I stopped for a split second and envisioned what would happen next. I knew the drill. She would show up, ask my parents what happened, they would tell her they couldn't take it anymore, and just like that I would pack my things and leave, probably never to hear from that family again. But something inside of me shook. I felt a strange sense of fear; but also a sense of calm. I called the worker back and decided to let her know that I was going to give my parents one last chance to get their act together (I never did anything wrong). Things carried on fine for a few weeks until we had the next explosive argument over something small. As usual, I wanted to leave, to start over and find a new family. I had convinced myself that this was all a mistake. I wasn't meant to be in a family because I couldn't seem to get along with any family I was placed with.

Even when we were angry at each other, my parents showed me a love I had never experienced, or even felt for myself, and I didn't know what to do with it. All I could feel was rage and confusion, like something was terribly wrong with them, or me, or all three of us. My parents and I struggled to communicate about the simplest things. I'm sure at times they felt just as lost and confused about what was going on as I did.

A huge important part of our journey was this beginning stage, when everything was an argument. At the time, my parents were still my foster parents. We fought over how they would introduce me to their family and friends. I called them mom and dad, out of habit mostly. But these words would come to have a much more significant meaning later on in our journey.

I was seventeen years old when I met my parents. At

an age where most people are learning what it means to be independent, I was learning to depend on my family.

Being adopted turned out to be harder than I thought it would be. I thought that having a family meant that I didn't have to feel alone any more, that every Christmas I spent with my family would be a happy one because I didn't have to wake up alone, with no one to celebrate with. And in the grand scheme of things, this was true. I was no longer alone. But each holiday, each birthday was hell for me. The first year was the worst. I felt so alone in this room full of people. I felt pain and sadness so deep, that I began to dread each holiday.

There were two things I struggled with during the holidays. Most painful, was a sadness that stemmed from not being able to celebrate with my birth family. It had been eight years since I had contact with them and being around these people who had their own holiday routines and traditions made me feel so adopted. I struggled to find my place in the family. I always felt like I was less important because I couldn't share memories of holidays past. I wasn't in any of the photo albums, there were no stories to be told about the cute things I did as a child. This triggered a great sense of loss and hopelessness for me.

The second tough issue was a sense of betrayal that I carried with me. Buried beneath the feelings of emptiness and loneliness was a deep rage at the fact that the people who were supposed to love me wanted nothing to do with me. How could I pose for the family Christmas picture when I looked and felt so different from this family? I didn't understand why I couldn't be with the people I felt I belonged to.

The fact that I was transracially adopted made things much more difficult for me. How could I love these people that didn't look like me? Had I been so desperate for love and affection that I forgot that I was black, and that they were white? Thousands of questions like these kept me up at night. They made

While everyone around me was celebrating, I was crying on the inside.

the days hard to get through, and the nights even harder. To make matters worse, how could I possibly share these feelings with my new family?

Fast forward a few years to the day I was adopted. While everyone around me was celebrating, I was crying on the inside. For me, being adopted meant that the identity I had created for myself before was no longer the “real me.” This angered me more than words could express.

My parents and I decided to seek the help of an adoption specialist two hours away from our home. As far as I was concerned, this guy was just another therapist. He would sit down with us, listen to how terrible my childhood was, and struggle to find a way to tell my parents that there was just no hope for us. I had learned about Reactive Attachment Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, I was diagnosed with both in my early teens, and I figured I had seen and heard it all. But months into the therapy, things were going more smoothly. I was finally beginning to understand what unconditional love was. I was finally functioning. The journey in therapy was over in my book. What I didn't realize was that the journey had just begun.

My next “aha moment” came after I found my birth brother with whom I had spent the majority of my early childhood. I talked with my parents and my therapist about the best ways to start communication with my birth family given the length of time since we had seen each other. I started to experience this rage all over again. And just like before, I had managed to convince myself that I was damaged goods and unworthy of love and affection and acceptance from either family. I spiraled back into a deep depression; sleeping for nearly days on end, save for the occasional meal and argument with my parents.

Communication with my birth family came to a screeching halt and I crawled back under my warm blanket of rage and sadness. Rage and sadness protected me, because they kept people from getting close enough to hurt me. Paradoxically, this “safe

haven” was destroying me emotionally. I knew I needed help, but I wasn't sure how to get it. I was too afraid to reach out.

In the next sessions with my therapist, I talked with him about my anxiety and anger. For the first time in my life someone validated my feelings. Even more amazingly, he understood exactly where I was coming from. I feel that this was where I began to understand love. I learned about my inner child. I learned how to meet her where she was. I learned to love her and hold her, to mourn the loss of my birth family with her. I learned that I could protect her, and to listen to her when she cried out for help and love and affection. Finally things started to make sense in a very real way.

I was able to learn to regulate my emotions. And to pay attention to not only what I needed as a young adult, but to listen to that child inside of me and give her exactly what she needed; unconditional love, validation, and support. Although it sounds easy to find your inner child, this was the most difficult thing I have ever done for myself. But I learned to communicate with my family about what was going on inside. I began to feel a range of emotion beyond anger and hurt. I learned that I could feel sad and happy at the same time and that it was okay.

What I realize from looking back on this gut wrenching, emotional journey, is that my parents saw my inner child for who she was, and they loved her even when I couldn't. This is the essence of unconditional love. This radical acceptance of whom I was, what I had been through, and where I was headed was the key to learning to love myself, and my adoptive family.

The most heartbreaking experience I had faced with my adoptive parents was when we decided to visit some of the places I grew up. We visited my third grade teacher in her classroom, the same classroom I was in when I was eight. She showed my parents and me my third grade school picture. It was right there, at that very moment something inside of me snapped. I looked into the eyes of that eight year old, and flashed back to the days of after school beatings and my emotionally volatile home life.

When I saw that little girl sitting there staring into the camera, I saw this look in her eyes. A look that said, someone please love me. Someone please protect me. That picture haunted me for months. How could someone beat that little girl until she bled? How could someone walk away from her? Why didn't she deserve the same affection and care as her brothers?

If my journey has taught me nothing else it has taught me this: when you go through something difficult, whether it's the loss of a loved one, an abusive relationship or one of the many other terrible things that are part of the human experience, the answer to the question why is meaningless. In my case, even if I had known why my mother abandoned me, it would not change the fact that it still happened. This was a tough pill to swallow for a while. I would get so caught up in the 'why' that I couldn't face reality. It had already happened. It was time to mourn the loss, take care of that inner child and move on. There is a school of thought that if you cannot love yourself, no one else will. I couldn't disagree more. If my parents had not shown me the unconditional love and support they did, I would not be who I am today, and that little girl would have never had the chance to be heard, validated and loved.

So to answer the question

“can you teach someone to love?”

I believe you can, but before you can teach someone to love you, or even themselves, you must be prepared for the good, the bad and the ugly that lives within each and every one of us. Learning to love is not so much about being taught or teaching, but more about radical acceptance and the ability to meet your inner child where he or she is.

AFAPA Walk Me Home Event held November 3rd in Montgomery



MEET JACK



Jack, born in March 1996, is a very quiet and reserved young teen. He has a laid back personality and enjoys just hanging out with his friends. He said that he wants people to know that he is funny and is fun to be around. He also enjoys playing football and basketball.

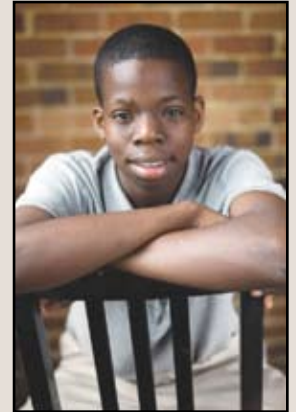
Jack is a good student and earns good grades in school. He enjoys school and likes history and math. Like his older siblings, Jack demonstrates strong values and he enjoys attending church on a regular basis.

Jack is the youngest of a large sibling group and he admires his older siblings. He often seeks their advice about things going on in his life and follows their guidance. He would like to maintain contact with his older siblings when placed with a family.

We are looking for an adoptive family willing to nurture Jack into adulthood and facilitate an on-going relationship with his siblings. For this reason a placement in Alabama is preferred.

*Photograph provided by
www.heartgalleryalabama.com*

MEET J'DEUTE



J'Deute, born September 1999, is a quiet and sweet boy. He enjoys being helpful around the house. He enjoys school and completes his homework with help. His favorite foods are macaroni and cheese and sweet potato pie. He enjoys playing football, riding his bike and playing video games. He takes great pride in his appearance.

He is on the Mime team at church and enjoys spending time in the church. He considers it a second home. When he grows up he would like to be an engineer, actor or football player. He is a charming child who wishes that there were no such thing as bullies!

*Photograph provided by
www.heartgalleryalabama.com*

*A Special Thank You to our friends at
Heart Gallery for suppling us with photos
of the children in need of adoption.*



AFAPA YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

I. Personal Information

Last four Social Security Number: _____

Mark one Foster Child Adopted Child of Alabama Foster Parents

Biological Child of Alabama Foster Parents Child adopted through Alabama DHR

Name (last, first, middle): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Date of Birth: _____

High School: _____ Years Attended: _____

Have you been notified that you will receive any other financial aid? _____

If so, please detail: _____

II. FAMILY & WORKER INFORMATION

Foster Parent's or Guardian's Name: _____

County or agency approve with _____

Address (if different from above): _____

Case Worker: _____ Phone: _____

III. ACADEMIC RECORD (TO BE COMPLETED BY COUNSELOR OR PRINCIPAL)

High School GPA: _____ Date of Graduation (or GED): _____

Course of study (college prep, vocational): _____

IV. LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES (PLEASE USE EXTRA SHEET IF NEEDED)

V. APPLYING FOR (CIRCLE ONE) COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY, OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

Name: _____

If chosen for Scholarship must send acceptance letter of School you will be attending with address where check should be sent.

VI. CONSIDERATION FOR SCHOLARSHIP - REQUIREMENTS a, c, d and e must be completed for application to be considered.

- a. Be a child in the state custody whether living in a foster home, group home, independent living placement, etc. Birth and/or adoptive children of foster parents and children adopted through Alabama DHR system are also eligible.
- b. If chosen to receive scholarship, provide proof of acceptance into a college/university/trade or vocational school.
- c. Fill out all the questions on this application.
- d. Submit with this application three (3) letters of recommendation. Letters can be from foster parents, case workers, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, employers, pastors, etc.).
- e. On a separate sheet of paper and in your own handwriting, make a brief statement of why you are applying for this scholarship. Include your hopes for the future and what you expect to contribute to society.
- f. Be no older than 22 years of age.

VII. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- a. Unused portion or appropriate percentage of funds must be returned if recipient withdraws from school or does not maintain grade point average required by institution to remain in school.
- b. Scholarship funds may be used for tuition, maintenance fees, books, and/or school supplies.
- c. Funds will be paid directly to the college/university or vocational school -- not to recipient.

All information contained in the above application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of Applicant

Date

AFAPA \$1000 STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Frequently asked questions about AFAPA Student Scholarships

Who's eligible?

All graduating seniors & college-age (22 years old or less) children in care as well as birth and adopted children of foster parents or be adopted from Alabama DHR system are eligible to apply for an AFAPA scholarship.

Could the scholarship be used for trade school?

Most definitely!

Can the funds be used for books?

Yes, the scholarship funds can be used for tuition, books, lab fees, or supplies purchased through the school account.

When should I apply?

The deadline for applications is March 1st, 2013.

Please check afapa.org web site or call

1-888-545-2372

Do my grades matter?

AFAPA scholarships are not based on academic achievement. Rather, our review committee will be looking at each individual's needs and goals.

What if I decide not to attend school this year after I am granted the scholarship?

You would not be able to use the scholarship, you would be able to apply for another scholarship when you did start back to school if you are under age 22.

Where can I get an application?

Call the AFAPA office to have one mailed to you 1-888-545-2372. The applications are also on the www.afapa.org web site.

How long has AFAPA been awarding scholarships?

The AFAPA awarded its first two scholarships in the spring of 1999.

Important things to know about AFAPA Scholarships

If chosen to receive scholarship, provide proof of acceptance into a college/university/trade or vocational school is required along with student ID#

Submit application with (3) three letters of recommendation. Letters can be from foster parents, case workers, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, employers, pastors ect.

On a separate sheet of paper include a brief statement of why you are applying for this scholarship. Include your hopes for the future and what you expect to contribute to society.

Be no older than 22 years of age.

Unused portion or appropriate percentage of funds must be returned if recipient withdraws or does not report to school as scheduled. Applies also if student does not maintain grade point average required by institution to remain in school.

Scholarships funds are paid directly to the college/university or vocational school and are deposited into students account. Funds are not paid directly to student and may not be used for personal items.

Scholarship funds may be used for tuition, maintenance fees, books, and or school supplies.

POLICY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Information should be place in Connections Newsletter closest to the beginning of the New Year. Deadline to be set by Scholarship Committee.

Scholarship Committee will collect applications and check for correct information. Attempts will be documented to contact students with missing or incorrect information .

A review committee reflecting diversity will be selected by the Scholarship Committee. Committee will use scoring sheets supplied by the Scholarship Committee to judge each application.

Scholarship Committee will then select winners.

All applicant names and contact information will be given to AFAPA Secretary. Secretary will send letter of congratulations or regrets to each applicant.

Time permitting winners names and pictures will be printed in the AFAPA conference brochure and Connections Newsletter.

Treasurer will send checks to appropriate schools after receiving information from students.

CURRENT SPECIAL NEEDS CRITERIA

Chronic physical or mental disability must have been documented by a medical professional. Normal childhood illnesses (e.g., recurring ear infections in a toddler or allergies) do not meet this criterion. [Code of Alabama 1975 §26-10-22 91]

- b. The child has a known emotional/behavioral issue that requires on-going treatment and that has been documented by a mental health professional. Examples include, but are not limited to, children with a diagnosis of oppositional-defiant disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder. [Code of Alabama 1975 §26-10-22 (2)]
 - c. The child has known and documented factors that place the child at risk of developing a physical or mental disability at a future time. At the time of placement, the child may not have a documented diagnosis or show any signs of a physical or mental disability. Nonetheless, there are known and documented factors, which are captured in the non-identifying background summary, that place the child at high risk for developing such conditions. For example, there may have been prenatal exposure to drugs or exposure at birth, but all medical records, at the time of adoptive placement, indicate the child is functioning, mentally and developmentally, at age appropriate levels. There is a risk that the effects of a particular drug found at delivery will manifest itself in a future medical, emotional/behavioral or developmental problem. Money payment is deferred until the onset of symptoms, but the adoption subsidy agreement must be signed and in effect at the time of placement or prior to the final decree of adoption. [Code of Alabama 1975 §26-10-22 (3)]
 - d. Children who are eight (8) years of age or older. [Code of Alabama 1975 §26-10-22 (4)]
 - e. The child is a member of a sibling group of three (3) or more being placed for adoption in the same home at the same time. [Code of Alabama 1975 §26-10-22 (5)]
 - f. A child has racial or ethnic factors that make it unlikely that the child will be adopted without a subsidy. Documentation of how the child's racial or ethnic factors prohibit him/her from being adopted without subsidy must be submitted to the Office of Permanency and concurrence received from the Office of Permanency prior to entering into any adoption subsidy agreement based on this criterion. Race and ethnicity includes, but is not limited to, African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, or other heritage which may prevent a child from being adopted. [Code of Alabama 1975 §26-10-22 (12)]
3. In most cases, at the time of initiation of adoption proceedings, a child should be in the care or custody of the Department or a public or private child placement agency through
 - a voluntary placement agreement;
 - a voluntary relinquishment; or
 - an involuntary removal of the child from the home in accordance with a judicial determination that remaining in the home would be contrary to the welfare of the child.

The term "care" refers to the responsibility vested in the Department or public or private agency with such responsibility encompassing the planning provided by the Department or agency when the child has a permanency goal of adoption. Refer to Section V (A) in this policy for a discussion on dissolved adoptions.

Election of new officers for Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Association to be held at Shocco Springs May 10th, 2013.

Send letter of interest to be considered for any office to:

AFAPA
1091 County Road 1659
Cullman, Al 35058
Or fax to 775-667-8282, or
email afapa@afapa.org
Nominations and Elections

The term of office for each officer shall be for a period of two (2) years.

- (A) Elections of the officers of this association will be held at the annual training conference. The terms of the officers-elect will begin on the first day of the next accounting year.
- (B) A nominating committee, which shall be appointed by the president will be comprised of five (5) board members. The committee shall present a slate of officers to the voting constituency for consideration and proposed election.
- (C) Any member nominated must be present to verify their eligibility and accept their nomination.
- (A) The president shall be the chief executive officer whose duties and responsibilities include:
1. Preside at all meetings of the association, the board of directors and state conferences.
 2. Be responsible for the general management and supervision of the affairs and operations of the association.
 3. Have the authority to appoint the chairman of all standing committees and appoint committees as needed by the association.
 4. Be a member ex officio with one (1) vote on all contracts or obligations authorized by the board of directors.
 5. Sign all contracts on obligations authorized by the board of directors.
 6. Represent the state association officially and publicly.
 7. Perform other duties as provided by these by-laws or as designated by the board.
 8. Have one (1) vote in the event of a tie vote of the board of directors.
- (B) The 2 vice presidents shall:
- One (1) Vice President of Foster Care Affairs shall be an approved foster parent. One (1) Vice President of Adoption Affairs shall be an adoptive parent.
1. Act in the stead of the president. Should the presidency be declared vacant, the board of directors shall appoint one (1) vice president to complete the term of office.
 2. Serve as co-chairpersons of the annual training conference.
 3. The vice presidents shall co-ordinate works of all committees and submit quarterly reports on their activities to all board members at each board meeting. Co-ordinate all activities concerning foster care and adoption.
 4. Perform other duties as designated by the president or the board.
 5. Co-ordinate all training meetings with regional representatives.
 6. Each vice president has one (1) vote.
- (C) The secretary shall:
1. Keep all records of the executive board, board of directors and general membership meetings.
 2. Submit to the president and those others the president might designate, a copy of any and all minutes taken within four (4) weeks of said meeting.
 3. Be prepared to inform the president of the number of qualified members at any and all meetings.
 4. Update the constitution and by-laws of the association making necessary changes as directed by the association.
 5. Be responsible for all official association correspondence.
 6. Serve a chairperson of the membership committee.
 7. Serve as the official liaison to local associations concerning Chapter Membership.
 8. Perform other duties as designated by the president or the executive board.
 9. Have one (1) vote.
- (D) The treasurer shall:
1. Be responsible for collecting and safeguarding all the funds of the association.
 2. Be responsible for the timely disbursement of association funds as authorized by the president of the association and the board of directors.
 3. Submit all financial records to the board of directors for audit on call.
 4. Make regular reports to the general membership at the annual meeting.
 5. Be properly bonded at the discretion of the board of directors.
 6. Provide monthly financial reports to the executive board and quarterly reports to all board members.
 7. Be responsible for all personnel and tax records of any employees of the association.
 8. Have the financial records ready for an audit committee of no less than three (3) member of the association at the end of each membership year.
 9. Perform other duties as designated by the president or the executive board.

ADOPTION TAX CREDIT

For adoptions finalized in 2012, there is a federal adoption tax credit of up to \$12,650 per child. The 2012 adoption tax credit is NOT refundable, which means taxpayers can only get the credit refunded if they have federal income tax liability (see *below*). Even if the adoption process started in 2011 or expenses were incurred in 2011, any credit claimed in 2012 is nonrefundable.

The credit is paid one time *for each adopted child*, and should be claimed when taxpayers file taxes for 2012.

To be eligible for the credit, parents must:

- **Have adopted a child other than a stepchild** — A child must be either under 18 or be physically or mentally unable to take care of him or herself.
- **Be within the income limits** — How much of the credit parents claim is affected by income. In 2012, families with a modified adjusted gross income below \$189,710 can claim full credit. Those with incomes above \$229,710 cannot claim the credit; those with incomes from \$189,710 to \$229,710 can claim partial credit.

The Amount of Credit to Be Claimed

Families who finalize the adoption of a child with special needs in 2012 (see *details below*) can claim the full credit of \$12,650 whether or not they had any expenses.

Example — A woman adopts three of her grandchildren from foster care and the state paid all of the fees. All three children receive monthly adoption assistance benefits and thus are considered special needs. The grandmother earns less than \$189,710 so can claim the full credit of \$12,650 per child for a total of 37,950. How much the grandmother actually receives, however, will depend on her tax liability (explained below).

Other adopters can claim a credit based on their qualified adoption expenses, which are the reasonable and necessary expenses paid to complete the adoption as long as those expenses are not reimbursed by

anyone else. If the expenses are less than \$12,650, the adopters claim only the amount of the expenses. If expenses exceed \$12,650, the maximum to be claimed is \$12,650 per child.

Example — A couple adopted two children from China and had \$40,000 in legal, travel, and agency fees. They received a grant of \$20,000, leaving them with \$20,000 in qualified adoption expenses. They can claim only \$20,000 (not the full \$25,300 they might have been eligible for had their expenses been higher).

When to Claim the Credit

Parents who adopt a child with special needs and are not basing their request on expenses claim the credit the year of finalization. Parents who adopt internationally cannot claim the credit until the year of finalization. Parents who are adopting from the U.S. and claiming qualified adoption expenses can claim the credit the year of finalization or the year after they spent the funds.

Example — A family begins adopting a U.S. infant in 2010 and incurs \$4,000 in expenses in 2010, \$5,000 in 2011, and \$3,000 in 2012. The adoption finalizes in 2012. The parents must file for the \$4,000 spent in 2010 on their 2011 taxes. They cannot claim the \$5,000 and \$3,000 until they file their 2012 taxes.

For adoptions finalized after December 31, 2012, the adoption tax credit is very different even if the adoption was initiated in 2012. For 2013, the adoption tax credit is only for parents who have qualified adoption expenses in the adoption of a child with special needs. No private or international adopters will benefit, and special needs adopters must have expenses.

Qualifying as Special Needs

Families who finalized in 2012 the adoption of a child who has been determined to have special needs can claim the full credit of \$12,650 regardless of their adoption expenses. The credit for all other adopted children is based on the family's qualified adoption expenses.

Basically, a child with special needs is a U.S. foster child who receives adoption subsidy or adoption assistance program benefits (which can include a monthly payment, Medicaid, or reimbursement of nonrecurring expenses). The instructions for the 2011 tax credit explain that to be considered a child with special needs, the child must meet all three of the following characteristics:

- “The child was a citizen or resident of the United States or its possessions at the time the adoption effort began (US child).
- A state (including the District of Columbia) has determined that the child cannot or should not be returned to his or her parents’ home.
- The state has determined that the child will not be adopted unless assistance is provided to the adoptive parents. Factors used by states to make this determination include:
 - The child's ethnic background and age,
 - Whether the child is a member of a minority or sibling group, and
 - Whether the child has a medical condition or a physical, mental, or emotional handicap.”

Just because a child is disabled does not mean the child is special needs under the tax credit. No child adopted internationally is considered special needs for the adoption tax credit. Not even every child adopted from foster care is considered special needs (about 10 percent of children adopted from care do not receive adoption assistance support). **Those who do not receive any support from the adoption assistance program are likely not to have been determined to have special needs.**

Bottom line, if your child does not receive adoption subsidy/adoption assistance benefits, you will likely have to have qualified expenses to claim the credit.

The bill to avert the fiscal cliff, which was signed on January 2, made the adoption tax credit permanent, extending the credit as it was in the 2001 Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act.

The credit will remain flat for special needs adoptions, which means that people who adopt children who are determined to be special needs (or hard to place) by a state or county child welfare agency can claim the maximum credit regardless of their expenses.

The adoption credit is not refundable for 2012 and beyond, which means that only those individuals with tax liability will benefit.

We cannot yet confirm the maximum amount of the credit for 2013, but it will be at least \$10,000 (but might be higher due to adjustments for inflation).

**For more information visit
adoptiontaxcredit.org and or www.nacac.org**



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