



Newsletter

November 2015

A Publication of the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

**I didn't give you
the gift of life,
life gave me
the gift of you!**

—Unknown

**Happy National
Adoption Month!**



A message from the President

From the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association Board we want to wish each of you a Happy Thanksgiving.

This has been a very busy year for our board and we have gotten to travel around the state to meet many of you. We have visited more counties this year than any year before. We have had representatives at GPS classes in about 20 counties. We have attended county foster/adoptive parent association meeting in about 30 counties. AFAPA representatives have conducted training in counties to both foster/adoptive parents and local DHR staff.

This issue serves to inform you of some important dates and events coming up this year.

Mark your Calendars

Remember March 1st is deadline for turning in applications for student scholarships through afapa. Applications can be found on the afapa.org website.

The Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association annual conference will be at Shocco Springs May 6th, 7th, and 8th. There are 2 ways to register this year. You can call Shocco at 1-800-280-1105 or you can register online on the afapa.org website.

The Annual Walk Me Home event will be in Baldwin County November 7th. Check the www.firstgiving.com/walkmehome page for more details.

National Foster Parent Conference will be in Las Vegas Nevada www.nfpaonline.com

The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC conference) will be in Nashville Tennessee www.nacac.org

Please check the afapa.org website often for updates on events for foster and adoptive parents.

Please read and enjoy this issue of our newsletter. If you know a foster parent who is not receiving this let me know and it will be available online at www.afapa.org.

Buddy Hooper / *President AFAPA*

OBSERVING ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

Each year, November is recognized as National Adoption Awareness Month. While all adoption-related issues are important, the particular focus of this month is the adoption of children currently in foster care.

Activities and celebrations are kicked off with a Presidential Proclamation, and while efforts made at the national level certainly help build awareness of adoption, participation in local programs, events, and activities by those of us with a direct connection to adoption can often be the most effective way to promote positive perceptions, debunk the myths, and draw attention to the tens of thousands of children in foster care who wait and hope for permanent families.

ADOPTION MONTH HISTORY

The first major effort to promote awareness of the need for adoptive families for children in the foster care system occurred in Massachusetts. In 1976, then-Governor Mike Dukakis proclaimed Adoption Week and the idea grew in popularity and spread throughout the nation. President Gerald Ford made the first National Adoption Week proclamation, and in 1990, the week was expanded to a month due to the number of states participating and the number of events.

During the month, states, communities, public and private organizations, businesses, families, and individuals celebrate adoption as a positive way to build families. Across the nation, activities and observances such as recognition dinners, public awareness and recruitment campaigns, and special events spotlight the needs of children who need permanent families. It also includes National Adoption Day, traditionally a Saturday, which is observed in courthouses across the nation as thousands of adoptions are finalized simultaneously.

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

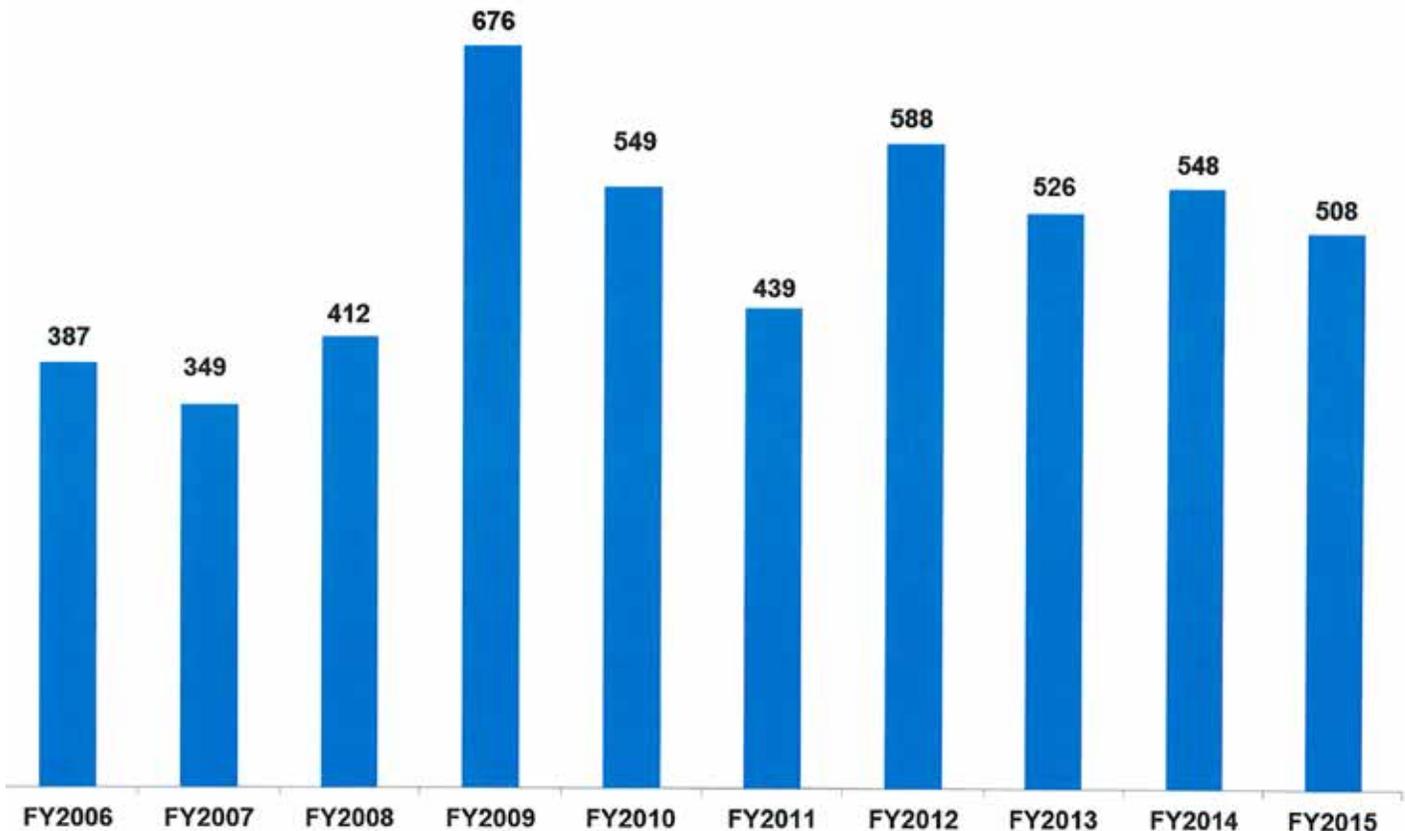
We never outgrow the need for family is the theme for the 2015 National Adoption Month initiative. NAM is a perfect opportunity for us not only to acknowledge the 230 or so children in Alabama who are legally available and waiting for an adoptive family to be identified, but it is also an excellent time for us to convey our appreciation to the foster/adoptive families who finalized adoptions of more than 500 children from Alabama's foster care system in FY 2015. We congratulate you all as you begin to build a lifetime of memories together.

The focus of the 2015 initiative is adoption of older children from foster care. I invite you to visit the NAM web site for an on-line scrapbook illustrating reasons why youth in care need a forever family. The link to the scrapbook is: https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/about/promoting/illustration/?utm_source=crosslink&utm_medium=home&utm_content=illustration&utm_campaign=NAM15

We thank you all for continuing to Open your Heart and Opening your Home to the children in our care and encourage you to continue to help in our efforts to recruit additional families for our waiting children.

Nancy Buckner
Commissioner Alabama Department of Human Resources

Adoptions Finalized by Fiscal Year



FEDERAL ADOPTION TAX CREDIT FOR FINALIZED ADOPTIONS IN 2014

From nacac.org website

For adoptions finalized in 2014, there is a federal adoption tax credit of up to \$13,190 per child. The 2014 adoption tax credit is **NOT** a refundable credit, which means taxpayers can only get the credit refunded if they have federal income tax liability.

The credit is paid one time *for each adopted child*, and should be claimed when taxpayers file taxes for 2014 (typically in early 2015).

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 2014, families with a modified adjusted gross income below \$197,880 can claim full credit. Those with incomes above \$237,880 cannot claim the credit; those with incomes from \$197,880 to \$237,880 can claim partial credit.

The Amount of Credit to Be Claimed

Families who finalize the adoption of a child with special needs in 2014 can claim the full credit of \$13,190 on the line that asks for expenses—whether or not they had any expenses.

A child with special needs is defined as a child who has at least one of the following needs or circumstances that may be a barrier to adoption without financial assistance:

- Eight years of age or older
- Member of a sibling group of three or more children placed together at the same time
- A child who has certain documented physical, mental, or emotional issues
- A child at risk of physical, mental or emotional difficulties in the future, due to high risk factors document in the background information

To be eligible for adoption assistance, a child must first be in the care and custody of the Department of Human Resources or an Alabama licensed child-placing agency or be eligible to receive SSI at the time of placement.

TAX BREAKS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

From www.1040.com

If you're a foster parent, it can be confusing to try to figure out what tax breaks and advantages are available to you. Foster children are often **not** eligible for some of the same credits and deductions as biological or adoptive children. But there are a couple of valuable tax breaks available to you.

First, let's define who a foster child is: A foster child is a child placed with you by judgment, court order, or an authorized placement agency (state or local government organization). If the child has not been placed with you by the courts or a government agency, you can't claim foster care tax breaks. But you may be eligible to claim the child as a dependent

FOSTER CARE PAYMENTS

If you receive foster care payments from a child placement agency, or the state or local government, the payments are **nontaxable** income. The reasoning here is that the money is for the support of the foster child, and aren't just going into your pocket for your use, the way other income would.

FOSTER CARE EXPENSES

You may also be able to deduct your unreimbursed foster care expenses as a charitable donation. The expenses are deductible if the agency or organization who placed the child with you can receive charitable donations. If the agency can't accept charitable donations, the unreimbursed expenses may qualify as support provided by you. And support provided by you counts toward your being able to claim the child as a dependent. If you provide at least half of the support for the child and meet the other requirements, you qualify for claiming the child as a dependent.

CLAIMING A FOSTER CHILD

Adding a foster child to your tax return is essentially the same as adding any other child. It all starts with the **Dependent** screen. For the relationship, choose Foster Child. Provided that you meet the requirements. Child must be in your home at least 6 months and 1 day.



FOSTER PARENTING TIPS

By: John DeGarmo

The addition of a foster child to your household is sure to bring changes in your family dynamics. Many adjustments will have to be made in your home. After all, it is not just the adults in your house who will be fostering this child. Your own children will have an important role in the well being and safety of your new arrival. Relatives may also be counted on to contribute to your foster child, as well. You may also find that neighbors, friends, and church members will also wish to help you and your foster child.

Take some time to sit down with your children and remind them why you chose to be a foster parent. Share with them the information they need to know about your new foster child. If they are too young to understand why a child might be in foster care, do not burden or confuse them with this information, they will simply not need more information or details. Your older children may be curious as to why the foster child is coming to live with them. Share with them what you know, and remind them that the foster child is probably hurting, frightened, and may reject your family in the first few days and weeks. Tell your children that it will take time to form a relationship with the foster child. Your own children may have concerns. Perhaps they are worried that they will have to share you with their new foster sibling. They may resent that there is a new person joining their family. Ask them to share their feelings with you, and listen to what they have to say. Reassure your own children that you will always be there for them. You will also want to plan on setting aside some special time for just you and your own children, as they will need time alone with you during your fostering. Make sure you also set aside some special time for just you and your spouse. As a foster parent, you may become worn out and exhausted. If you do not give attention to your own marriage and your spouse, but instead focus on being a parent to your children and your foster child, you may find your personal life suffering.



MEET ISIAH



Isiah, born February 2000 is a charming, creative young man with a smile that will melt your heart. Isiah is a good listener and does best with direct and consistent communication. He receives special education services in school for math. He responds well to one on one interaction. Isiah is very intelligent and has great social skills. Isiah makes friends easily and is very personable. He enjoys sports such as football and basketball and has played

on his school team. He also enjoys video games, movies, and eating pizza, hamburgers, and fried chicken.

Photograph provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

MEET JASON & ALEX

Jason, born November 2000, loves to draw and make things for his siblings. He is very attached to his four other siblings and will need to continue to have a close relationship with them. He is a very sweet child and is eager to please. He is very quiet and at times will withdraw and stay in the background to not be noticed. However, he really does enjoy attention. He will need someone to be patient with him.



Alex, born November 2001, is the second oldest in this sibling group. Alex loves to draw and is a very good artist. He loves to play games on his Nintendo DS. He is very eager to please and has a pleasant and funny personality. Alex enjoys outdoors and going on special outings. He is a very sweet child and is eager to please. He desires to be the center of attention and will fight to get your attention. He also has a very close relationship with his siblings. Alex and Jason will need a two-parent family willing to deal with behavioral issues, such as anger outbursts and defiance. They both desire a lot of love and will flourish with a strong male role model.

Photograph provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Dear Friends of Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Charity begins on the golf course at the Regions Tradition. You have the opportunity to support the AFAPA Scholarship Program for Foster & Adoptive youth by participating in the Birdies for Charity program.

Birdies for Charity is a fundraising program through the Regions Tradition that is designed to give charities the opportunity to generate contributions for their organization. Through this program, AFAPA will receive 100% of the donations generated on its behalf! Simply make a flat donation of \$20 or more, or make a pledge of \$0.05 or more per birdie. It is expected that approximately 900 birdies will be made by the Champions Tour players at the 2015 Regions Tradition. Why is your donation important? All of the participating charities will have the opportunity to receive additional funds by having their donations matched by Regions Tradition thanks to the Matching Funds Sponsor, SouthWest Water Company.

To create additional excitement, the Regions Tradition is giving you the chance to "Guess the Birdies" that will be made during the tournament by the Champions Tour Players! The donors who guess the correct amount of birdies are entered into a drawing to win \$2,500!

Please help us reach our goal by making a donation to the Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Association through the Birdies for Charity program! To make a donation please go online and donate at www.regionstradition.com. The last day to submit your donation is Friday, June 10, 2016. Thank you in advance for your support. You can find the direct link on our facebook page Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Association. If you prefer to send a check please make it out to PGA Tours Charities, Inc. Send to AFAPA 1091 County Road 1659 Cullman, AL 35058.

Sincerely,

William Hooper
President of the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association



Grand Prize

A correct guess could win the
Grand prize:

\$2,500

Weekly Give-A-Ways

Each donor will be entered into a weekly drawing for prizes beginning in December, 2015.

Prizes include:

Nick Saban autographed football
2016 **Iron Bowl** Tickets

Regions Tradition VIP tickets

Gary Player autographed item

Bo Jackson autographed baseball

2016 **SEC Baseball** Championship tickets

Deontay Wilder autographed glove

2016 **Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama** tickets

Davis Love III autographed hat

Gift Certificates and many other great prizes



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Celebrating Foster Care and Adoption

GEORGIA, ALABAMA SIGN UNPRECEDENTED AGREEMENT TO SERVE VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

March 20, 2015

LAGRANGE, GA—Leaders of child welfare agencies in Alabama and Georgia signed an agreement Friday that eliminates barriers for social workers seeking homes for vulnerable children on the two states' border.

The Georgia-Alabama Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) Border Agreement allows for greater cooperation between the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services and the Alabama Department of Human Resources as the agencies work to provide safe and stable housing for both youth who are in foster care and for children who are at risk of entering state custody.

ICPC agreements across the country govern the placement of children from one state into another, ensuring prospective homes are safe and suitable before they are approved. Georgia and Alabama's agreement will speed the state-to-state approval process for the affected counties and provide children with options that allow them to stay connected with relatives and communities.

"A state line shouldn't be a barrier when it comes to finding the safest and most appropriate place for a child to live," said Georgia DFCS Director Bobby Cagle. "Very often, the children we work with have a relative just one county over who can provide a safe and loving home for them in a time of crisis, eliminating the need for them to come into foster care. If the next county over happens to be in another state, that shouldn't stand in the way of the child's best interest."

The agreement, signed Friday, is an expansion of a previous ICPC agreement between the two states. While other states have similar agreements, the partnership between Georgia and Alabama is the most expansive of any border agreement in the country.

"When we seek to protect a child from an abusive situation, we must also seek to protect them from the trauma of having to break ties with their extended families and their communities when they are removed from their homes," said Nancy Buckner, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Human Resources. "The level of cooperation between Georgia and Alabama is unprecedented and allows children the opportunity to be with caregivers who are not only capable of caring for them but who are familiar to them."

Originally executed as a pilot project in February 2014, the border agreement between Georgia and Alabama has been expanded to all counties on the Georgia-Alabama border. Georgia also has ICPC border agreements with Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee.

To date, Georgia and Alabama's agreement has prevented more than 70 children from entering foster care.

Georgia counties covered by the agreement are: Calhoun, Carroll, Chattahoochee, Chattooga, Clay, Dade, Decatur, Early, Floyd, Haralson, Harris, Heard, Marion, Miller, Muscogee, Polk, Quitman, Randolph, Seminole, Stewart, Talbot, Taylor, Troup, Walker and Webster.

Alabama counties affected by the agreement are: Barbour, Chambers, Cherokee, Cleburne, DeKalb, Henry, Houston, Jackson, Lee, Randolph and Russell.

MEET NEHEMAIH

Nehemiah, born December 2010 is non-ambulatory and is wheelchair dependent. He is nonverbal but will sometimes respond with a smile as he is able to hear. He likes to sleep during the day and lay in his crib bed at night looking around. Nehemiah is totally dependent for all of his daily living skills and will require 24 hour supervision as he is currently receiving care in a nursing skilled facility. Ne-



hemiah reportedly likes the one-on-one attention & relaxation activities he participates in during physical therapy to stimulate his muscles. He will need a non-smoking family due to his use of continuous oxygen. Nehemiah needs a family who will be very patient and nurturing with a medical background due to his extensive medical needs.

Photograph provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

MEET TAYLOR



Taylor, born October 1998 is a happy and loving child who wants to be a part of a real family. This family must be attune to the type of environment in which Taylor will thrive. Taylor is in need of a family that is understanding of her past experience and can meet her with structure and loving patience. She can best thrive in a

home that is structured and free from peer conflict and pressures. Taylor enjoys shopping and having fun with her friends in her spare time. Taylor wants to be an actress when she grows up and would love to visit California one day.

Photograph provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com



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AFAPA NEWSLETTER INFO:

Articles can be submitted to Buddy Hooper, Editor. E-mail submissions should be addressed to afapa@afapa.org. Otherwise, mail to AFAPA 1091 County Road 1659 Cullman, AL 35058. Deadline dates fall the first of the month in February, May, August, & November.



COME JOIN US AT THE BEACH

Help us celebrate November as National Adoption Month.

Walk Me Home ... to the place I belong event

November 7th 10:00AM at State Park Golf Course Parking Lot.

Everyone is invite to participate. There will be fun games for the kids and everyone gets a free tee shirt. Registration begins at 9:00am with

Walk starting at 10:00. Proceeds go to support efforts of the Baldwin County Foster/Adoptive Parent Association.

Visit the website www.firstgiving.com/walkmehome for more information.