

## In this issue >>>

- ❖ Around the Agency
- ❖ Resource Parent/Youth Spotlights
- ❖ Mother's Day 2019
- ❖ Let's Talk Adoption and Legal Guardianship
- ❖ Resource Parent Tips
- ❖ Carrie's Corner
- ❖ Recipe of the Month



Issue  
**THREE**

*Our Mission: To provide safe homes, healing and healthy environments and encouraging youth empowerment.*

# The Heartbeat

**The Official Newsletter of The Heart Matters Foster Family Agency**



### **Healthy Summer Snack Idea: All-Fruit Popsicles**

*Fill a popsicle mold (or small paper cup) with sliced fruit and berries, fill with coconut water (sweeten it with a bit of honey or maple syrup), insert stick, and freeze until firm.*

***"Parenthood requires love,  
not DNA."***

***-Anonymous***

## Around the Agency

***Here we GROW again!***

Hi Everyone! As you know, our agency continues to blossom and make new connections everyday. Many of you have had a chance to meet our new staff member, but for those of you have not had the pleasure, please allow me to introduce...Heather Ford!

We had the extreme pleasure of meeting Heather as a student intern as she completed her Bachelor's in Social Work while attending Brandman University. This spring, she completed her degree and her internship hours and we were excited to bring her on board as our new Corporate Relations Coordinator. Many of you have communicated with her during the holidays and on specific events she has planned, to include our recent Mother's Day Appreciation Event. Heather brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to our agency, and we cannot be more grateful for her joining our family here at The Heart Matters FFA!



**Heather Ford, BSW  
Corporate Relations Coordinator**

# *The Heart Matters FFA Youth Spotlight*



**“Here we are not zeros anymore.”**

*-BH, 17 years old*

Intelligent, responsible, aware, and caring are some of the words which came to mind while speaking with one of the foster youth placed in our agency. This young woman is 17 years old and has had an amazing year. As a senior in high school she will be graduating and attending college in San Diego. She was honorably awarded a scholarship to assist her in obtaining higher education. I sat down with her and spoke about her experiences in foster care and I invite you to read her amazing story below.

This month I visited with one of our female teenage youth at her resource home. She was extremely kind and open while speaking with me. This young lady has been with us for about a year, but in foster care for three years. She wanted to make sure I knew she was not in foster care due to violence, abuse, or her own delinquent acts. She wanted it known she is here due to her biological caregiver being diagnosed with a disease which enabled her to adequately care for her and her siblings. She is aware of the negative outlook on foster youth and wants to combat and change that view. She is attending college to work toward becoming a school counselor for foster youth and hopes to return to her high school and guide youth towards success. It was expressed that she had previously been asked why she was trying to go to college when she knew she wouldn't be able to afford it or get in. She felt like she was nothing before coming to her current placement. At The Heart Matters she was able to gain access to the services she required and obtained the support she desperately needed to succeed from her resource home. Her current resource parent gave her more freedom and treated her like an individual capable of responsibility. She said “here we are not zeros anymore.”

The services and support provided gave her the opportunity to apply for, and be awarded, a scholarship which has assisted in paying for her college of choice. She is excited for college, but worried because the closest store is far from her living space. She has already calculated transportation times and the cost of getting her to the closest shopping outlet. Her biggest addiction is shoes. When asked what built her love for shoes she shared her experience of being told rude and condescending remarks during grade school. The remarks were based on her choice of shoe and the fact that she only wore one pair all year. Even though she knows not all people will treat her that way and she should just ignore their comments, this experience has left a constant negative feeling within her regarding shoes. Therefore, she has bought a variety of shoes and no longer has to wear just one pair all year. Some of her other hobbies during high school were D.I.Y. activities such as making face masks to pass the time, as well as riding her bike. She also spent a great amount of time in marching band at her high schools. Her favorite instrument to play was the mellophone because it was the easiest to carry and play while marching for long periods of time. She does not plan to continue with this activity in college, but is grateful for the experiences she was able to have while in high school because of it.

This young lady has a great head on her shoulders and consistently exhibits the ability to be independent. I am grateful I had the opportunity to meet her and have no doubt she will continue to be successful. We are proud she has become part of The Heart Matters Forever Family.

# *The Heart Matters FFA Resource Parent Spotlight*



**“We are a family, this is your home.”**

*-Jimmy McGee, Resource Parent*

In honor of Father’s Day, we wanted to spotlight one of our extraordinary resource/foster fathers who has been fostering teenage males for 19 years. He has learned as much from his sons, as they have learned from him. We invite you to read his amazing story below...

Jimmy McGee began fostering in the year 2000. The thought originated with his wife, but soon became his passion. When his wife died, he continued to foster because he knew how much he was helping the young men placed in his home. Since 2000, Jimmy has been with four different agencies and became part of The Heart Matters Family two and a half years ago. There are currently 6 foster youth placed in Mr. McGee’s home. In addition to the 6 teenage boys, one of his previous foster youth, who has been with Jimmy since he was 15, is now a tenant in his home at the age of 23. This fact represents how Mr. McGee cares for these young men as his own sons.

Jimmy explained that he fosters teenage males because he remembers life as a teenager and how it is a rough time between being a boy and becoming a man. He wanted to help these young men succeed and assist them in becoming the best men they could be. “It isn’t always easy. We don’t always agree. I allow them to express themselves and be understood, and when I am wrong I can admit it. I expect the same from them. We listen to each other and have a mutual respect for one another. Every experience, good or bad, is a learning experience. When they come here they know we are a family, and this is their home.” Mr. McGee’s few words of advice for those thinking of fostering, in the process of fostering, and currently fostering is to not get into this for the money. If you don’t truly care for these kids and have a desire to help them, don’t do it. This is a 24/7 agreement. You are here to care and support the youth placed in your home, and if you’re in it for the money, you will just end up hurting them more than they have already been hurt.

Jimmy has remained with The Heart Matters Foster Family Agency because of the family atmosphere we present. He explained he is not alone in the fostering process and that he can rely on our agency to act in partnership with him to assist in supporting and empowering not only the youth placed within his home, but every youth placed with our agency.



# *Mother's Day Appreciation Event 2019*

In honor of Mother's Day, The Heart Matters FFA showered our Resource Mother's with love and appreciation at their very own Sip and Paint. The event was hosted at Purple Easel in Ontario, CA and was a huge success!!

Our agency wanted our Resource Mother's to understand just how much we love and appreciate them, by providing them with a quick escape, complete with food, beverages...and of course... GIFTS!! Each of our lovely ladies were able to participate in an instructor-led painting that they could take home and call their own.

We are appreciative of our Corporate Relations Coordinator, Heather, for all of her hard work coordinating this event and ensuring our mothers knew just how much they mean to us for all that they do! We would also like to thank our sponsors for their kind donations, they made our event so much more memorable for all who attended. A heartfelt thank you to the following, We could not have made this event happen without you!!!

- ❖ BJ's Restaurant
- ❖ Vince's Spaghetti
- ❖ Nothing Bundt Cakes (Riverside and Redlands)
- ❖ Muffin Top Bakery
- ❖ Blue Leaf Studio Florist
- ❖ Flowers Just Because
- ❖ The Nature of Things
- ❖ Karla's Flowers
- ❖ Tommy Austin Florist
- ❖ Archibald Flowers
- ❖ Szilvia's Floral Designs
- ❖ Ontario Flowers & Supplies



# *Let's Talk Adoption & Legal Guardianship*

So you have been asked to provide permanency to one of your wonderful children who you have fostered for some time now....this is a big decision, and we are here to help! Lets talk Adoption and Legal Guardianship. Hopefully this information helps you be better prepared for the task ahead of you and provides you with adequate information about the decision you are making.

The reason why adoption and legal guardianship are so confusing is because the two options have many similarities. They both accomplish the goal of providing a child with a stable, supportive parent, although, as you'll find out below, the legal implications of that vary between adoption vs. guardianship.

**Legal guardianship** is a temporary caregiving situation for a child. When a parent chooses to place their child in a legal guardianship, it's to ensure the child receives necessary care that the legal parent can't provide at the moment — but intends to after a certain period of time. Legal guardianships can give guardians custody of a child until they're 18 years old; however, the legal parents retain all legal parental rights for the child. Therefore, the child's legal parents can always terminate the guardianship and reclaim custody of the child, as well as pass inheritance along to the child. A legal guardian cannot pass along their own inheritance to the child in their custody unless a special provision is made in their will.

**Adoption**, on the other hand, is a process that legally terminates the rights of a child's legal or biological parents as they are placed into the custody of new adoptive parents. Unlike guardianship, adoption is not temporary; it's a permanent decision that legally separates a child from their legal/biological parents. After an adoption, a child's legal or biological parents cannot reclaim the rights to their child. An adoption also excludes legal parents from any child support obligation and any rights to visitation, unless previously agreed upon in an open adoption agreement.

*Asking for help when needed is a **STRENGTH**, not a **WEAKNESS**!*

Parents who have adopted or become legal guardians of a child or youth from foster care may find themselves unprepared to manage their child's mental health needs. Any training they may have received related to the trauma and loss experienced by children in foster care often becomes a distant memory. Once permanency has been established, they no longer have an agency social worker to consult with. This can leave parents feeling isolated and alone when facing challenges. Many families are unaware of the post-permanency services offered by the child welfare or adoption agency that facilitated their adoption or guardianship. Others may be hesitant to admit they are in need of help.

Reluctance to request help, or to decide to seek therapy or counseling, may be difficult to overcome. It is helpful to examine the feelings you may have around asking for help as you embark on this journey. Examine your attitudes around the possibility of needing help, **BEFORE YOU NEED IT!!!**

Make sure you ask all necessary questions about post-permanency services for the child and for you!!!

# *Helpful Tips For Resource Parents*

***If a child is in foster care, they likely experienced trauma and loss.***

- Help them understand they are not alone, or the only one who experienced challenges.
- Feelings around these experiences may come up for them at different times.
- Trauma and loss can make it difficult to maintain close relationships.
- It is important to have someone safe to talk to when these feelings come up.

***Dealing with experiences and feelings is a journey that may reveal itself to each child differently and at different times in their lives.***

- Help them look at experiences as more than a “one time deal”
- Help them work through feelings and understand it is an ongoing process.
- Research how the child’s brain works and leads to new understanding of coping with trauma and loss.

***Asking for help is difficult for most people.***

- Everyone needs help sometimes, and the best way to get it is to ASK!!
- Help them understand it is important to look to people they know care for them for help.
- People can become numb to their emotional pain or feel hopeless so they do not seek help. Do NOT let this happen to you!!!

***Asking for help for yourself when needed is a valuable strength to have in life.***

- Some people go their whole life without learning this!
- It may make you feel vulnerable or fear being seen as weak, but asking for help is a sign of strength and a way to get what you need.
- It is perfectly okay to ask for help, at any time.

***We must challenge and debunk the stigma and shame in our society about seeking help for mental health issues.***

- More and more people are talking about mental health than ever before! There is a national movement to debunk the myth about mental health.
- In our society, many of us have taken on the belief that if our spirits or minds are hurting, then there’s shame in seeking help. This is just not true.
- There is no more shame in getting professional help when our hearts and minds hurt than in getting help when it comes to home repairs or fixing an appliance, or going to the doctor when sick or hurt.

# Carrie's Corner

*A Note from Our Executive Director*



**For almost two decades**, I have worked with foster parents, which our state has now re-branded as resource parents. These extraordinary, unique individuals have certainly left an indelible, positive imprint on my life. I am not sure I have the skills to craft an appropriate expression of the gratitude I have for those who have turned their homes and lives into sanctuaries, hospitals, safe havens, classrooms and sometimes even battlefields for our children and youth (and not without costs). But here I go:

- ♥ Thank you for the courage to welcome a stranger into your home with little to no knowledge of who they are or what impact they will make.
- ♥ Thank you for being driven by the hope and faith that you can make a positive difference in the life of a child or youth.
- ♥ Thank you for allowing your values and world views to be challenged by a young person coming from a very different place in life than your own.
- ♥ Thank you for understanding the damaging impact of childhood trauma, and making every effort to help foster children and youth heal.
- ♥ Thank you for putting your family stability, harmony and relationships at risk for the sake of a child not your own.
- ♥ Thank you for dealing with disappointments by getting right back on the horse and marching full steam ahead.
- ♥ Thank you for taking in children and youth, at all hours of the night, under crazy circumstances and much uncertainty.
- ♥ Thank you for putting your lives “under the microscope,” in essence, living in a glass house under the scrutiny of so many agency eyes.
- ♥ Thank you for going to battle with schools, doctors, social workers, probation officers, even neighbors, as an advocate for your kids.
- ♥ Thank you for many nights of little to no sleep as you have served as a comforter, consoler or watchdog.
- ♥ Thank you for magically making the limited reimbursement you receive stretch far enough to make sure your children’s needs are met.
- ♥ Thank you for being the “Transporter”– running kids here, there and everywhere.
- ♥ Thank you for altering your home and lifestyle in order to comply with licensing and safety regulations.
- ♥ Thank you for working within a challenging licensing system, which can automatically assume you are “guilty” of any complaint until proven otherwise.
- ♥ Thank you for participating in lots and lots of training, and also for seeking advice when you need it most.
- ♥ Thank you for traveling the “extra mile” and more – over and over and over...
- ♥ Thank you for laying out your life story – the good and the bad– in plain view, in order to become a foster parent.
- ♥ Thank you for participating in team meetings, individual education planning, case debriefings, attending court and all of the extra activities that come bundled in with your foster child.
- ♥ Thank you for your creativity and all the amazing, fun ideas and activities you come up with to help your foster children.
- ♥ Thank you for filling out lots of forms, saving receipts, completing logs, maintaining secure files and records, and conducting all of the other “administrative” duties required of foster parents.
- ♥ Thank you for asking for emergency help and assistance when needed.
- ♥ Thank you for being the “first responder” to the multiple emergencies and crises with your foster children.
- ♥ Thank you for being a counselor, a tutor, a coach, a friend and a role model to your children and teens.
- ♥ Thank you for letting your home become “Grand Central Station” with so many workers intruding into your space.
- ♥ Thank you for being a wonderful, willing team player.
- ♥ Thank you for loving the unlovely, healing the hurt, guiding the lost and correcting inappropriate behavior.
- ♥ Thank you for staying connected with your foster children, long after they have left your home.
- ♥ Thank you for being one of the most significant, lifelong influences in the life of a foster child or youth.

Thank you for being Mom or Dad when you didn't need to be!



# Recipe of the Month

## SUMMER TIME SMOOTHIE RECIPES

### Peachy Punch

Sip on summer, no matter the season. Blend 1 cup frozen peaches, 2 cups almond milk, 1 banana and a handful of frozen strawberries for a sweet start to the day.

### Purple Power

The best healthy smoothie recipes for kids are those that incorporate greens, but getting your kids to actually drink them can be a challenge. "To get kids to drink green smoothies, start with 1 cup of mild greens like spinach, romaine, and kale mixed with some frozen fruit and water or milk," Masters suggests. "If your kids don't go for green, add vibrant purple picks like cranberry, pomegranate and grape juices, and add beets, berries and red grapes for gorgeous berry-looking smoothies that don't turn murky brown."

### PB&B

Your kids love peanut butter and banana sandwiches, so serve up the same tastes in a glass. Add 2 cups almond milk, 1 banana, 1 cup leafy greens (such as spinach or kale), 1 tablespoon chia or flax seed and 1 tablespoon peanut or almond butter to a blender and mix on high.



*"Sometimes the heart  
sees what is invisible to  
the eye."*

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