



Reaching Out in Katy Adoption &

Children in foster care or who are waiting for adoption span from pre-born babies to teens. They are unable to be raised by their biological parents, for whatever reasons, and they need and deserve loving, committed families. When looking into the eyes of a child waiting to be placed with a loving home, you'll see a person who dreams of a place to belong, who needs encouragement to grow ... a place to begin. As a society we know this, as a community we speak of it, yet the reality is there are thousands of children worldwide waiting to be adopted or fostered. Children of all ages and races are waiting for someone to say, "I want to love you and take care of you."

Foster Care and Adoption in Texas

In 2007 The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services reported 33,615 children were in foster care. Local Houston organizations like DFPS and the Catholic Charities Foster Care Program strive to find temporary homes for children, while other organizations, like AdopTexas, work to assist birth mothers in finding homes for their unborn children. "We believe that every child has the right to the love, protection, and care provided by a capable and committed family," says Barbara Feliciano of Catholic Charities. Often, in order to smooth the transition in these situations, both the foster and adoptive families and the children involved need adequate counseling and assistance to aid them on their journey.

Help For All

Foster families step into a child's life usually in the toughest of circumstances. But just as these families bring light to those children walking dark paths, those children often illuminate the families who cared for them for years to come. Long time Katy residents, Sandy Edwards and her husband Carl were that light years ago for two small children whose father was terminally ill. The Edwardses had no children of their own and had never met the family in need. But after hearing about their situation, they immediately agreed to help. "We wanted to do what was best for the kids," Sandy explains. The Edwardses cared for the children for four months while their mother stayed with their father in Hospice Care. "That was our first experience as foster parents," Sandy reflects. When the father passed away the children were reunited with their mother. "That experience changed our lives forever. Since then we have fostered 16 more children," shares Sandy.



Angelo and Valerie with their adopted daughter Hannah



The Edwards Family

Foster Care

by Jennifer Counter and Rebecca Bearden *photography by* Lisa Mangos

Responsibility Reflections

Sandy remembers every child she has helped raise. She did everything from taking them to baseball games, to buying new glasses, to teaching one little girl to read. Sandy remembers each child individually not only for what she gave them, but also for what they gave to her in return. As she shares these special moments, there is sadness in her voice because they are no longer with her. But there is also joy because they will forever be in her heart. She explains, "You always have space in your heart for one more child." The responsibilities of a foster and adoptive family mostly entail

those same duties that biological families could identify with. But special provisions and training might be necessary for families when issues arise concerning advocating for the child in their schools, keeping the lines of communication open for a social worker, allowing efforts to be made toward reunifying children with their birth families, and providing a positive role model for them. Sandy says, "For me, the bottom line is: It was our responsibility to show these children that people DO care and that they have a safe place to call home. It was more than a responsibility though. It was an honor; every time it was an honor, and I would do it again and again."



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The Carfiorro family

Many Adoption Options

Adoption has changed considerably in recent years, and adoptive parents now have more choices to make. Choices like open or closed adoption, international or domestic adoption, pre-born or foster care children are considerations families should make. Non Profit organizations, like the Gladney Adoption Agency out of Dallas, Texas, have experienced these changes firsthand. "Gladney has been around for 120 years, and we have evolved as adoption has evolved," says Jennifer Lanter, Public Information Officer. Gladney, like other agencies in the United States, offers adoption services via their Infant Adoption Agency, placing newborn infants with adoptive parents and through their New Beginnings Program, which partners with Child Protective Services to place special needs and older children. "We place between 360-400 children in adoptive homes each year and we assist about 150 women per year in placing their children in loving homes," explains Jennifer. Agencies like Gladney support mothers in making healthy living choices for their unborn children and encourage birth mothers to

“...every child has the right to the love, protection, and care provided by capable and committed families”

- Barbara Feliciano

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stay in contact with not only the adoptive parents and children but also with the agency. “We really have a philosophy of family for life,” states Jennifer.

More Than a Change in Parenting

Adoption is more than a legal transfer of parental rights. Adoption is an emotional transformation with the ability to positively change the lives of everyone involved. Katy residents Valerie Carfiorro and her husband Angelo Carfiorro agree, “You have to be committed to the whole process, especially the emotional transformation.” Six years ago the Carfiorros became the court appointed legal guardians of their niece Hannah. When asked if she thinks they made the right choice in seeking guardianship of Hannah, Valerie said, “She is a special needs child and the thought of her being shuffled around broke my heart, so we brought her home with us.” Valerie continues, “Being a legal guardian to a child that I did not birth has been a tremendous experience. It’s amazing to see how it affects you and it has made me appreciate my own children even more,” says Valerie. Sandy shares the impact it has on your own children when you foster, “My children have become more empathetic people; they learn that it’s time share, everything from toys to Mommy, but that has to be the attitude in order for it to work”

Giving at its Best

The Carfiorros and the Edwardses make our world a better place. Their acts of selfless giving to children resonate in the Katy community. Barbara De Angelis once said, “Love is a choice you make from moment to moment.” She was thinking of these Katy families and all the other foster and adoptive parents in the world who choose to take in and love needy children one moment at a time. **KM**

JENNIFER COUNTER is a free lance writer and the youngest of sixteen children. She lives in Katy with her six year old daughter Lauren. She is passionate about children and she hopes to one day be a foster or adoptive parent.



Melissa, Hubie, and daughter Olivia



The Orgerons have a blended family of adopted and foster children

Requirements for Foster and Adoptive Families

- Be at least 21 years of age, single or married, financially stable, responsible adult.
- Complete an application.
- Provide relative and non-relative references.
- Have adequate sleeping/living space.
- Agree to a nonphysical discipline policy.
- Fire/health/safety inspections of the home.
- TB testing for entire family.
- Agree to a home study which includes visits with all household members.
- Obtain and maintain CPR/First Aid Certification.
- Attend 20 hours or more of training each year.

Resources on Fostering and Adopting Children in Texas

- **Texas Adoption Resource Exchange**
dfps.state.tx.us
- **Catholic Charities**
catholiccharities.org
- **Texas Foster Family Association**
tffa.org
- **Gladney Center for Adoption**
gladney.org
- **Council on Adoptable Children of Texas**
texas-coac.org
- **Texas Administrative Code**
sos.state.tx.us/tac
- **Adopt Texas**
adopttexas.com