



Fostering Forever Families

by **Rhonda Riley**

NECCO

Adelaide was just 4 years old when she entered foster care as a result of neglect and abuse. After two placements and three years in foster care, Adelaide found herself in the home of Pamela Clifton. It was then that, like so many “aha moments” that can transform a life, everything just clicked. In 2010 Pamela married Tony Rolen with every intention of extending their family to include Adelaide. In April of this year, the Rolens officially adopted her.

At 8 years old, Adelaide had waited 4 years – half of her life – to find a place she could permanently call home. It wasn't easy. In addition to the typical challenges associated with


growing up, the child faced many significant obstacles on the long, difficult and often heartbreaking road to permanency. While Adelaide eventually found an adoptive family, her experience is, unfortunately, an all too common one. According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, over 114,000 children were waiting to be adopted from foster care at the end of fiscal year 2009. That same report showed that more than 2,000 of those kids lived in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Every day in this country children ranging in age from birth to 17 years wait for months, and in many cases years, to find a forever family they can call their own.

Becoming an adoptive parent isn't a decision to be taken lightly. The adoption process itself can be tedious and time consuming, requiring extensive paperwork and lots of patience. Fortunately, there are several foster and adoption



FOSTERING FOREVER FAMILIES

Necco welcomes those interested in fostering, adopting, and foster-to-adopt placements. Necco also provides professional, complete independent adoption home studies to adoptive parents in Paducah and the surrounding area.



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agencies in this area working to connect kids in foster care with loving adoptive families. Since the beginning of 2011 Necco of Paducah has helped transition four youth from foster care to adoption. This may seem like a small number, but not when you consider that these kids range in age from 5 to 17 years of age. In addition to the four foster-to-adoptions this year there are several more already living with their soon to be adoptive families, waiting for the formalities to be completed.

Finding adoptive homes for kids in foster care isn't an easy task. To address specific needs and desires, agencies work with families that are interested in either foster care, adoption, or both. For example, some families prefer to help as many children as possible by fostering only. They remain part of the child's support system and continue to be a resource whether the goal is reunification with the biological family, or transitioning to a potential adoptive home. Other families become foster parents with the intention of adopting. As with the Rolens, these foster-to adopt homes provide transition support for children in foster care. Like Adelaide, these kids live each day in foster care hoping to find an adoptive home when reunification with the biological family is no longer an option.

A good adoption or foster care agency works with foster kids and adoptive families, building positive relationships during the foster-to-adopt process. Necco is one of those agencies

and it has the resources and services available to work with kids who need therapeutic foster care. When kids enter therapeutic foster care, they are carefully matched with waiting foster homes during a thoughtful process that takes into account the child's individual therapeutic needs, and the resources that the family has to meet those needs. By carefully pairing kids with families, the groundwork for a potential adoption is established early on. While not all children in foster care are adopted by the same parents that foster them, the matching process and subsequent case planning allow workers to get to know the child, and can help facilitate finding the right family. For individuals seeking to adopt who are not foster parents, only a couple of local agencies provide independent adoption home study services. They can prepare a thorough and professional home study dossier that adoptive parents can present to an adoption agency or adoption attorney .

If you've considered fostering or adopting, or would like to know more about therapeutic foster care or the home study process please contact a reputable local foster care or adoption agency. ❖

Rhonda Riley is Program Director at Necco of Paducah. To learn more, contact 898-1293 or visit us online at www.necco.org.

Names have been changed to protect privacy. Statistics retrieved online June 6, 2010 from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/adoptchild09.pdf
To learn more about adopting in Kentucky, check out the Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP) at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/Special+Needs+Adoption+Program+%28SNAP%29.htm>.



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