

Family Times

Christian Family Services



Volume XXXVIII Issue 3

September 2016

They Don't Stay Little Forever!

You have no doubt heard the expression, *the more things change the more they stay the same*. Or, *what goes around comes around*. I guess these can be viewed from different perspectives.

Parents often think that it takes forever before they begin having kids. But, then once they come, they lament that they are growing up too fast.

The same can be said by grandparents. I know Debbie and I couldn't wait to have grandkids. Now that we do, they are growing up way too soon!

Here at CFS, our primary focus is working with moms and helping them discern the best interests for their child. We take great pride in the placement of their precious babies with our awesome families. We continue to minister to these moms afterward, but now there is also a new tug on our hearts. That tug is longing to see what God has had planned all along for that particular child. We love seeing how they are growing and changing (even if only from afar).



Caitlyn, age 13,
with her dad,
Calvin



Maddie then
and at 10 years.

Our problem, often like grandparents, is that we don't get to see these precious gifts often enough. And when we do, it is bittersweet.

Included throughout this newsletter are pictures of babies that are all grown up, or at least not babies any more. We thank our families for sharing. We are very proud of "our babies" and their families for being wise stewards of the gift and responsibility that God gave them.



Justin, age 5

We do everything to ensure that moms (and/or dads & family) get to stay abreast of their baby's growth and development. Not as important, but at the same time, we almost get jealous when we are left out of the loop.

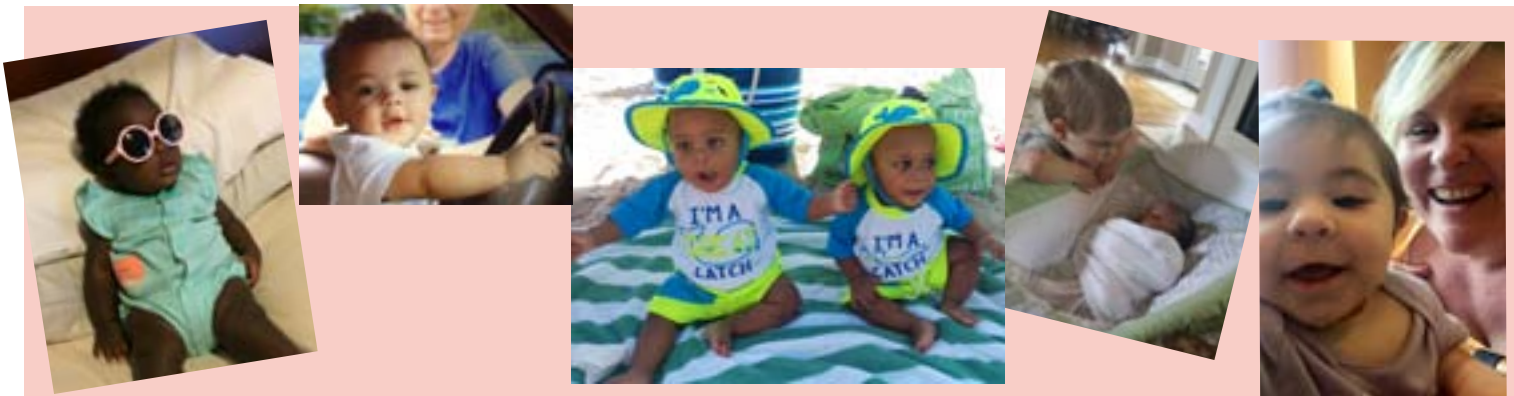
Plus, I can't tell you how many current CFS Birth Moms want to know how other babies placed for adoption with our families have fared.

They take comfort in knowing about others that we can point to and show how they have truly been blessed. They love hearing that they do not harbor ill feelings toward their birth moms, etc., but rather feel blessed for the families that their moms chose for them.

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Honor A Special Person in Your Life through a Gift to CFS

An acknowledgement can be personalized for your needs: See the back cover for details.



Calls From Jerry!



PETE & HEATHER

Adoptive Parents

“Phone calls from Jerry Callens are the best!”



JENNY

Adoptive Mom

“Jerry is good at making up some good reasons for calling....which end up making good memories! The second time he called us....I said Jerry now tell me why you’re really calling. I heard Debbie in the background say....Jerry just tell her she’s not buying the small talk! What wonderful memories.”



DANTE

Adoptive Mom

“Two years ago today we got a phone call from Jerry Callens, our adoption agency’s director, at 8:45PM! He was calling to make “small talk” but I wasn’t buying it....I was on pins and needles waiting to hear the REAL reason he was calling! Needless to say, that phone call changed our (and many of your) lives forever! He told us that a birth mom had chosen our family to adopt and love her precious baby boy....In THREE WEEKS! As you can imagine there was no sleep to be had that night! It was excited late night calls, lots of tears, lots of laughter, lots of “I can’t believe it!!!” And even more praises to our God who knew that Maverick would be ours from the forming of the earth! Now, two years later, there is not a doubt in my mind that our sweet boy was 1000% made for our family!”



Christian Family Services almost new vehicle: a 2016 Toyota Camry

Manna From Heaven

Why am I ever surprised at how God answers prayers? Once again He has answered in His own way, in His own time.

Flashback: May 18, 2016, the CFS vehicle was in a collision. The 2005 Toyota Camry had served CFS since that year. It had traveled 289,000 miles, placed 134 babies with Christian Families and allowed us to work with well over 500 Birth Mothers. When another car ran a red light and hit Jerry, the

insurance ruled the car a total loss.

CFS struggled with the vehicle issue for three months. But during that time, He touched the hearts and blessed (Acts 20:35)...individuals and one church as a reminder to us:

“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:8

The more time that went by, the more the funds came in, and ultimately God blessed CFS with a much newer car with lower miles than we ever dreamed of, or asked for! No doubt He intends this car to be as instrumental in reaching moms as the last and equip CFS to continue abounding in this great work.

To God be the glory!



Recent Finalizations



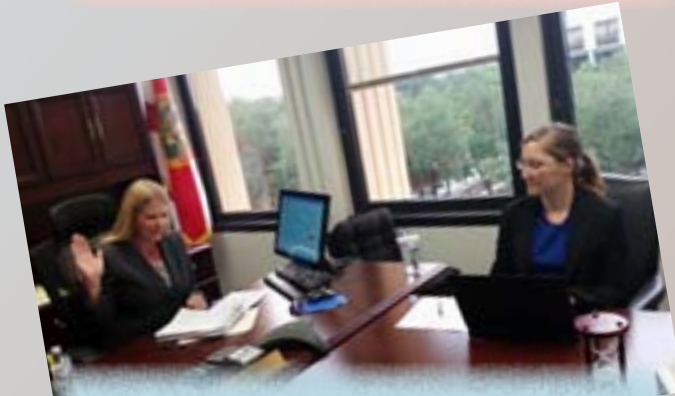
June 17, 2016

Michael and Shannon added Cameron to their family in Hillsborough County. The Honorable Christopher C. Nash finalized the adoption. Kennedy is happy to be a big sister!



July 14, 2016

Greg and Donna were pleased to make Emmeline's placement into their family official. They took a few moments to pose for a photo in front of the Alachua County Courthouse.

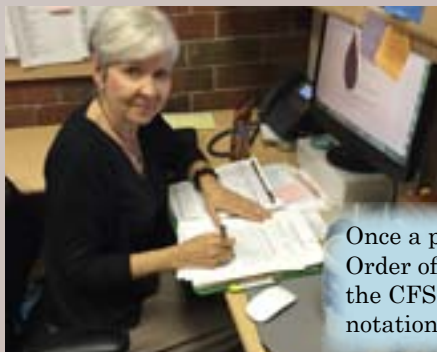


A look inside the Judges' Chambers during a finalization. Judge Donna Keim and Court Attorney Katherine Mockler *telephonically* join CFS Attorney Mitch Albaugh and a CFS adoptive family. The triangular box is a speaker phone. The Judge handles the proceedings as if everyone were physically present.



August 23, 2016

New parents Colton and Abby following Maverick's finalization. Their court proceeding was accomplished telephonically from their home state.



Once a placement has been finalized, the Judges' signed Order of Finalization is documented and made part of the CFS family's file. Shown at left is Debbie making this notation for a family, before the completed file is sealed.

Continued from front page:

They Don't Stay Little Forever...

Birth Mothers love hearing that the child they placed for adoption are involved in outside activities like sports, have graduated college, are now married and maybe have a family of their own, or that they have successful careers.

So we continue to *plead* with our families to not forget about CFS! Like surrogate grandparents, we want to know how *our kids* are doing. It is also a **great encouragement** to us to keep on doing what we're doing when we can see God's hand working through this ministry.

Remember, *they don't stay little forever* and time has a way of eroding our best intentions.

We covet your continued prayers for this effort and want you to know that God is using you in this special ministry. Please remember CFS in your monthly giving and consider becoming a Hearts for Hope donor.

~ Jerry



It is no surprise that Sofia, 13 and Sunny, 11, enjoy sharing their favorite college sports team with everyone!

Below: Sofia and Sunny not long after their placements!



Like many her age, 16 year old Laney poses behind the steering wheel of a car!

CFS appreciates your ongoing support through community campaigns, direct donations and fundraiser participation

- ☆ United Way Campaign
- ☆ Amazon and Ebay Giving Campaigns
- ☆ Employer matching gifts
- ☆ *Hearts for Hope* monthly donors
- ☆ Church hosted Baby Bottle Boomerang campaigns
- ☆ Game Day Parking Fundraiser during UF Home games
- ☆ Items donated for Birth Mother Bags
- ☆ Your interaction with CFS social media, getting the word out to those who may need the services of this ministry.



It may be the Friend of a Friend who needs CFS to answer their call!

“We live our lives and forget they're adopted.”
shared a CFS Adoptive Parent



Tyler, age 14, and his parents Rebecca and Troy, visted with CFS staff during the recent EQUIP conference in Orlando.

CFS and its Peripheral Ministry

Your donations provide connections across the years.

When 28 year old Joe called CFS, his only request was for contact information for his Birth Mother.

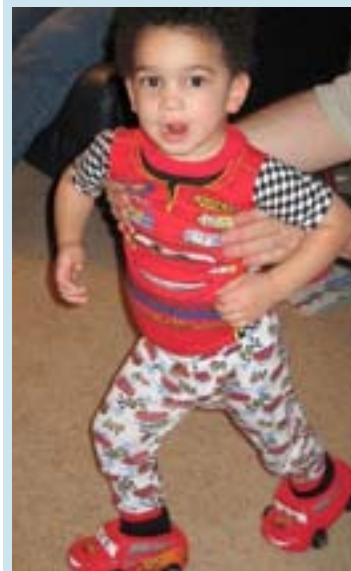
After a CFS Case Worker reviewed his file, a letter was sent to the last address we had for his Birth Mother. When the letter was returned with no forwarding address, CFS staff turned to social media to find her.

Using clues gathered from the adoption file, a CFS Case Worker sent an instant message via FaceBook to women with names similar to Joe's Birth Mother.

Within minutes, CFS received a phone call from the sought after Birth Mother. She was happy, scared, surprised!

Once she gave permission for her information to be shared, she and her Birth Child made contact.

Donors such as you give hope to those searching.



Christian then, and as an eleven year old!



Jerry felt blessed to be able to catch up with a few people CFS has had the opportunity to work with. Laura (left) and her Birth Mother, Jennifer, pose for a photo with Jerry at a family celebration.

“There is life after adoption, you may lose family members you may lose friends. But at the end of the day ask yourself: What’s more important, giving your child life that you couldn’t, giving your child an opportunity to grow up, and not having to experience the same things you went through, Or keeping your family, friends happy?”

...my story did not end at the placement of my child with an adoptive family. It was just the beginning. I went back to college, I graduated, I gave my life back to Christ. I was able to meet my husband, and

”

... life continued.

Shared by a CFS Birth Mother

CFS An Ongoing Ministry

This year, Christian Family Services has fielded a number of calls from past birth mothers and grown adoptees that desire to make contact with one another. CFS has also received calls from adoptive families in need of additional health information for their child.

As long as CFS clients keep our office updated with their current contact information, we will strive to continue to offer this link between birth and adoptive clients.



What are the options to those whose adoption agency closed? The legislature of the state of Florida created a safety net when the Florida Adoption Reunion Registry (FARR) was formed in 1982. For a small fee, adoptees and birth parents may register and consent to release of their identifying information.

At each placement, Birth Mothers are given a FARR application and brochure. Past clients who desire to be part of the registry are offered an application or directed to the web site.

*“I’m so glad you (CFS) are still open. I talk to other women who’ve placed their children and their agencies have closed.”
from a CFS Birth Mother*

In Memory:

Leroy Frison, who passed to an eternal life on July 22, 2016. He served as an elder in the church and lived a very abundant life. He knew what was important. He loved us all and he served every one with a happy heart and a willing spirit. He knew that God loved him and wanted to bless him. Leroy loved God and he had a want to spirit as he served God, his family and friends, his church family, and CFS as a member of the board.



Leroy saved his words. When he spoke, we listened. Though his words might have been few, he was a wise man and there was much wisdom and insight when he spoke. His life and example spoke so clearly that there was never any doubt that he loved God and wanted others to experience that same relationship with God that he experienced. His heart ached for the struggle that young moms experience in dealing with an unplanned pregnancy.



Behind the scenes he was always counseling, encouraging, helping, praying for and with others, and serving God as a minister of reconciliation. He loved to fish, but he was all about helping others so he could share the love of Jesus with them. He had a passion for the moms, babies, and families that CFS serves.

Leroy was a spirit filled man. The qualities listed in Galatians 5:22-23 describe Leroy perfectly. His wife and family are proof of his example. I am thankful that God put Leroy in our lives and I pray that God will give us comfort and peace as we strive to follow his example, as he followed Christ.

From the (former) President of the CFS Board:

“I recently accepted a position in Washington, D.C. with the same agency that currently employs me. While this was not an easy decision, Marie and I have daughters and grandchildren in the area. It seemed like a good compromise to take the job in D.C. and be able to see my family more often.

The ministry of Christian Family Services has always been a shining example of helping those in need and especially providing a forever Christian home for many children. It is a ministry that we can all be proud to be a part of.

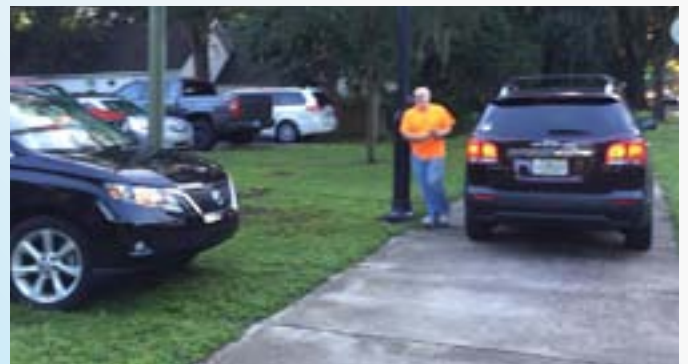
I want to thank all of you, fellow board members, staff and everyone involved in one way or another for your service in the CFS ministry. I believe God has a plan for CFS and He will continue to bless the efforts on behalf of children and families. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with all of you. God bless!"



~Jesse Wilson



Jesse and his wife Marie hosted a kick off meal in 2015 for volunteers who assist with the Game Day Parking fundraiser for CFS.



Jesse, wearing his “Tennessee Orange” shirt, guiding a driver down the sidewalk to back into a space during the Game Day Parking fundraiser.

CHANGE:

Sometimes that seems like such a *dirty* word.

As you will have read elsewhere in this Newsletter, CFS lost *Jesse Wilson* back at the beginning of the summer. Jesse & Marie served as Foster Parents in the early years of CFS. Jesse has been a board member since the '90s, and has served as President of the CFS Board of Directors for over 13 years. His positive, can-do spirit will definitely be missed. We wish him well in his work in DC and know that he is enjoying being closer to those grandkids. CFS board member *Leroy Frison* of Gainesville unexpectedly went home to meet the Lord this summer. He was also an elder in the church here who was loved by all. His calm, quiet, loving spirit will not be forgotten.

We have most recently been informed that *Don Dasher*, a Board member from Newberry since 2009, is reluctantly stepping down due to health issues and early retirement. He was always an encouragement to the CFS staff. Don's involvement and quick wit will be missed. Finally, *Tim Berry*, a board member for 14 years, is making it official. Since his move to Searcy Arkansas back in 2014, it has been extremely difficult for Tim to stay plugged-in long distance. It is with sadness yet anticipation, knowing that Tim (& Susan) will continue to be praying and supporting CFS as they have for so many years. The daughter they adopted through CFS, is now 15!



All in all that makes *four* board members we have lost this summer!

In addition, we have lost one of our caseworkers. For two and a half years, *Karissa Stewart* has been a great asset to this ministry. Karissa's passion for

moms and her many talents will be missed. We wish God's best in her future endeavors.

CFS definitely finds itself in a "season of change." Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us that there is a time for everything.

Psalms 62:8 says, *Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.*

As we come to the *conclusion of the matter* (Ecclesiastes 12:13), we do not know what the future holds for CFS, but we do know that this is **God's ministry**. We do know that He has a great heart for the *fatherless* and their Moms. We believe that we have a Biblical mandate to minister to those moms dealing with unplanned pregnancies and to help them make an informed, educated choice concerning the best interest of their babies. We have an obligation to make available to them, if they choose, the best prospective adoptive families that God has provided.

So we choose to believe that God has great plans for

CFS' future. He has already blessed us with a *new vehicle*. Our *new website* will be more birth-mother-friendly and should be up and running within the next few weeks! We will soon be *marketing* our waiting families on our website, giving them greater exposure to moms who are searching. Other changes may be coming in the near future. One thing we know for certain, we are committed to *pressing on to the goal* (Philippians 3:14), of making ourselves available to be used by Him.

Please keep this ministry in your prayers.



Karissa documenting Birth Mother files at her desk (above) and ministering to a CFS Birth Mother during a Cesarean Section (left).

They don't stay little forever...

Shown at right is Max, who was placed in 2003. At 10 years, he and his family visited the CFS office. Max is shown trying out Jerry's desk and chair! (lower right)



Hanna as an infant after her placement in 2005 (above), and as a 9 year old (below).



Search & Reunion: *continuing the ministry of CFS*

There is great reward in the ministry that we do at CFS. There is great joy at a new life, a new family and hope given in a seemingly hopeless situation. We say to these new families "Don't forget us! Please keep in touch." We say to these brave birth parents, "Please let us hear from you. We don't want to lose touch. We are here for you."

But life happens and sometimes communication ends. Then one day, we get a phone call from an adult CFS adoptee searching for their birth parent.

They may have some information about Birth Parents and they may not. Adoption records in Florida are not open, so the information we have in their file is confidential. We can give them non-identifying information, which many of them may already have from their birth.

Recently, CFS was contacted by a birth parent who placed a child 30+ years ago. She admitted that she had lost touch because her life was in turmoil for many years. After the adoptive placement, she married, had other children, but her life fell apart when she became involved with drugs. She eventually wound up being homeless and living in a homeless shelter. Someone from church befriended her and she eventually told that person her adoption story. The friend encouraged her to contact her agency (CFS) to see about reconnecting with her child. After she moved out of the shelter and began a new life, she got up her courage to meet with me. I was able to encourage that her sacrifice was brave and she should feel no guilt for placing her child for adoption. We cried and prayed together. I offered to try and reconnect them, if possible. I was able to send a letter to



a relative who contacted the adoptee.

The young lady called me and said she had been looking for her birth mother. She wanted to tell her what a wonderful gift she had given her, the gift of a wonderful family and a great life.

Birth mom and adoptee talked on the phone and they are looking forward to meeting in person soon. I listened to the birth mom on the phone as she described the joy she had to finally reaffirm that her decision was the right one. Her daughter was able to have a loving, stable Christian family, a good education and had married a wonderful man. I could hear in her voice the great burden lifted as she spoke about this.

As happy as this particular outcome was, my heart was a bit heavy because I wished that we had been able to reassure and counsel this mom sooner.

When we say that we counsel birth parents, adoptive families and adoptees for as long as they may need us, we do mean it. Sometimes it may be 20 or 30 years later, but we are here.



So, the ministry of CFS to women and families is not a one time event, but is ongoing.

~Debbie



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*Hearts for Hope donors commit to giving \$84 each month for a year. Please consider monthly giving.

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