



# Adoption & Foster Care News

Lutheran Social Services—Updates from the La Crosse Office

## Welcome Home in 2010!

On behalf of all of us here at LSS-La Crosse, we would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to you and your family. It has been a joy watching your family grow!

### DOMESTIC

- RaeAnn Rylee Ruzic was adopted by Pat, Carol and big brother Victor on August 17th. Her parents went through education group in January 2007.
- Reagan Rhonda Lamberty was adopted by Scott, Rebecca and big brothers Gabe & Grant on July 2nd. Her parents went through education group in July 2008. Grant was also adopted through the Russia program in 2007.
- Brandon Patrick Wanke was adopted by Phillip and Julie on March 30th. His parents went through education group in January 2009.
- Alexa Denise Blaken was adopted by Justin and Anna on February 9th. Her parents went through group in July, 2008.
- Levi Wulf was adopted by Lance and Jennifer on October 26th. His parents went through education group in 2008.



### INTERNATIONAL

- Jonathan & Lori Schulz welcomed Richcard and Wedmerline from Haiti on January 25th.
- Rick & Rona Steinhoff welcomed Samuel, Noah, Mariah, Faith and Grace home from Ethiopia on February 20th.
- Dan & JaAnn Gratz welcomed Kira home from China on March 13th.
- Pete & Jackie Koehler welcomed Laura and Matthew home from Russia on March 17th.
- Steven & Shelley Benusa welcomed Tsion home from Ethiopia on April 2nd.
- Niall & Ashley welcomed Lucian home from Ethiopia on May 14th.
- Craig & Caroline Fisher welcomed Alex and Andrew home from Russia on June 6th.
- Derek & Julie Nordeen welcomed William home from South Korea on June 30th.
- Christopher & Jennifer Larson welcomed Mirhet home from Ethiopia on June 30th.
- Craig & Jackie Lenz welcomed Nathan home from September 3rd.
- Rollie & Dana Conrad welcomed Logan home from Russia on September 10th.
- Randy & Amy Vesbach welcomed Mei Ling home from China on September 22nd.

## November 2010

### Special points of Interest:

- ☺ Welcome Home!
- ☺ Scrapbooking materials needed for Birth Parent project.
- ☺ Ethiopia Family & Children Get-Together
- ☺ What is National Adoption Month?
- ☺ 2010 Adoption Picnic
- ☺ Where's Home?

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## Domestic News

Hi all - I'm so glad we are once again bringing you this newsletter! It's such a great way to stay in contact and let every one know how the program is doing. I'm happy to report that the domestic program continues to stay right on track with previous years as far as placements. This is great news for all of our waiting families! We are serving more complex birth parents and moving families through the program. The La Crosse office has had 4 placements so far in 2010, and program-wide there have been 48.

I will soon be finding out how many

families can be added to the program for 2011, but most likely it will be 6 new families from our area. I will be holding study groups in January and June, in case any of you past families would like to come and share your story - just get in touch with me.

I'm also starting a new program for birth parents. I will be making a life book with each of them to send with their child as they place them for adoption. It will be a great way to work through some of the feelings birth parents have to deal with, but also a beautiful keepsake for the child from their birth parents. Please

see the 'Wanted section' if you have any extra supplies you'd like to donate.

As we head into the holiday season, I just want to take a moment to tell each and every one of you how thankful I am to be a part of this journey with you. Whether you've completed that journey, are somewhere in the middle of it or have yet to take your first step, it is an honor and a privilege to be a part of it.

Laura, [lconley@lsswis.org](mailto:lconley@lsswis.org)

## International News



On August 20<sup>th</sup>, the local families who adopted their children from

Ethiopia got together at LSS. The families had an opportunity to meet one another, share their adoption journeys and the kids got to meet one another as well.

The plan is for these families to continue to get together and stay connected with one another. It was a great time and fun to see all those beautiful kids from Ethiopia. If you know of any other family who may want to be part of this group,

please let me know and I will add them to the e-mail list.

If there are other families who want to do this same kind of networking who have adopted from other countries, please let me know and I will be happy to organize the first meeting. You can reach me at 608-787-7549 or [cschroed@lsswis.org](mailto:cschroed@lsswis.org).

Cheryl

## 2010 Adoption Picnic

The 2010 LSS Adoptive Families Picnic was another great success! One of these years we'll remember to take some pictures to publish. We had a beautiful day, filled with good conversation, the sounds of kids of all ages and great food. It was a wonderful way to celebrate all of our families, no matter what program you adopted from.

We have previously held the picnic every two years, but after this success we've decided to do it yearly. Keep it in mind for next fall! There is nothing as rewarding for us than to see your kids growing up happy and healthy and we hope the companionship of other adopted families and kids is just as rewarding for you.

### WANTED!!!!

Looking for scrapbooking supplies for a new birth parent project. Anyone who has extra scrapbooking supplies to donate, please contact Laura: [lconley@lsswis.org](mailto:lconley@lsswis.org)

We will take any thing, and I can pick it up. Thank you!

*Perfect in the eyes  
of their families*

Kids with Cleft  
Lip and Palate  
from China

The adopted children above were born with a birth defect affecting the upper lip and mouth. With some surgeries and speech therapy, the kids live a healthy, normal life. Please consider adoption, sponsorship or donating for surgeries of these wonderful kids. The current wait time to adopt is minimal.

This poster was the creation of a local adoptive mother who wanted to advocate on behalf of children in China with cleft lip and palate who deserve to have loving, permanent homes through adoption.

She was inspired by her own son, who is pictured in this poster. Couples who are considering adopting from China know that to adopt a "healthy" child from China is now taking five years and longer to even get a referral. Children with mild special needs, such as the children pictured in this poster, are more readily available for adoption.

If anyone is interested in finding out about China adoption programs, please let me know and we can set up an office visit.

Thank you to this adoptive mom for advocating on behalf of these children!

Cheryl—[cschroed@lsswis.org](mailto:cschroed@lsswis.org)

## What is National Adoption Month?

Well, it all started in 1976, when Gov. Michael Dukakis announced an Adoption Week for Massachusetts, and President Gerald Ford proclaimed a national celebration of Adoption Week. In 1984, President Reagan again proclaimed a National Adoption Week. The more states participated, the more festivities were planned. That's why President Clinton proclaimed November as National Adoption Month in 1995.

The celebration usually includes National Adoption Day with court-houses throughout the nation participating and hundreds of adoptions being finalized simultaneously. National Adoption Month is about celebrating family and to bring about an awareness of adoption.

There are so many ways to celebrate adoption, one of my

favorite ways is to watch *A Home for the Holidays*. This heart warming holiday special will air on **Wednesday, December 22, 2010**, featuring all-star talent. See the joy of having a family through the eyes of a child -- not just for the holidays, but forever!

For more ideas about celebrating National Adoption Month you can go to [www.nationaladoptionday.org](http://www.nationaladoptionday.org).

# Built by Youth, Powered by Youth, Changing Life in Foster Care

Wow, those words jumped off my computer screen and hit me right in my foster care! Tell me more.

It is from a website called [Foster Club](http://www.fosterclub.com) at [www.fosterclub.com](http://www.fosterclub.com). It is a national network for young people to help each other through this maze called foster care.

There are 513,000 American children and youth in foster care. Every two minutes, a child's life changes as they enter the foster care system and [Foster Club](http://www.fosterclub.com) is their club to turn to for advice, information and hope.

Foster Club helps open the way for young people to transform their lives and provides a forum to

raise their voice. Members engage with peers and regain control over their situation through support, skill building, and healing opportunities. Foster Club's young leaders achieve impressive levels of success as they demonstrate remarkable resilience. Here they have real life opportunities to become true heroes as they reach back to improve the foster care system for their younger peers.

The members of Foster Club are resilient young people determined to build a better future for themselves and for other kids coming up through the system behind them. If you would like to

learn more about Foster Club or how you can support young people in foster care. call 503-717-1552.

And.....there is also information for parents and social workers called [Tools for Child Welfare Professionals](#) and an Adult Message Board plus a Booster Club. A youth and separate adult newsletter is sent to your email account.

Selections include:

<a href="#">foster care facts</a>	<a href="#">real stories</a>
<a href="#">questions+answers</a>	<a href="#">topics</a>
<a href="#">foster to famous</a>	<a href="#">take action</a>
<a href="#">contests</a>	<a href="#">store</a>
<a href="#">young leaders</a>	<a href="#">newsroom</a>

## Special Needs News

My name is Marlene Sherwin and I having been working at LSS for a year now as an adoption social worker. I have been a special needs adoption worker for the last ten years.

I personally got interested in being an adoption social worker after my husband and I adopted three children from the special needs program over twenty years ago. We were pretty naive about the trauma and grief that these children experience. Many of these children want to be with their birth families no matter how badly they were neglected or abused. We decided fairly soon after we got our sons that we needed to have contact with their birth families to make sure our children did not feel abandoned by them. We never spoke negatively about their families because we knew they would always have some type of connection with that family and were tied to them biologically. Our sons and daughter also had foster families that they were close to and we made sure that we kept in

contact with them and they continue to have contact with them as adults.

The fundamental purpose of the Special Needs Adoption Program is to provide permanency through adoption for children who are in the guardianship of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and to assess potential adoptive parents to determine their ability to adopt a child. This mission is accomplished by a partnership with the State of Wisconsin and licensed private agencies. The child is considered the primary client and the best interests of the child are paramount in identifying and selecting a potential adoptive placement. Special needs children generally have some physical, behavioral or emotional care needs and came to local human services departments because of neglect and various kinds of abuse. Most of the children in our program are adopted by their foster parents and we assist those families with the transition to be adoptive parents. We help families by

doing their home study, and setting up adoption assistance (subsidy) monitor the family and child in the home and doing the finalization work for the family.

The families I work with are very committed to helping their children heal and over the last 10 years I have had the privilege of working with some outstanding families who consistently put children first. The children in the special needs program are generally a little older; four years to sixteen years old and appear resilient, but sometimes the emotional damage does not show, but comes out in strange and bizarre ways. Special Needs Adoption is not for the faint of heart, it can be extremely challenging to parent these children, but in the end most families find it very satisfying and are so appreciative of the little steps the child is able to make.

Marlene—[msherwin@lsswis.org](mailto:msherwin@lsswis.org)  
Sandy—[smyer@lsswis.org](mailto:smyer@lsswis.org)

# See the world through the eyes of a child

“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” Matthew 19:13-15

*Together we live out the power and promise of our Baptism through which God has claimed us as God's own and called us to lives of justice, kindness and humility.*



Through the eyes of a child, we see hope. Together, we must nurture and love our children and youth. They are the future. A number of services are available for children and youth through Lutheran Social Services' ministry, including:

- *Finding forever families for children through adoption*
- *Offering support services that allow homeless and runaway youth to be reunited with their families*
  - *Child care*
  - *And more!*

*Motivated by the compassion of Christ, we help people improve the quality of their lives.*

**LSS** Lutheran Social Services  
of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Inc.  
[www.lsswis.org](http://www.lsswis.org)

## Celebrating Children

November 2010 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of National Adoption month and the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of National Runaway Prevention month.

Indeed, it is a time to not only celebrate the gift of children but to also recognize that there are many children and youth who need help.

### The Facts:

Every year more than 100,000 children in foster care are available for adoption. The average child waits for an adoptive family for more than two years.

Between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away in a year. Youth aged 12-17 are at higher risk for homelessness than adults.

From adoption services to childcare to support services for runaway and homeless youth -Lutheran Social Services is here to help. Together, we can make a difference. Learn more about LSS at [www.lsswis.org](http://www.lsswis.org).

*According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children National Runaway Services statistics*

## Change of Email or Address? Please let us know!

Please be sure to remember LSS when you move! We love being able to send your family our latest information including our newsletter, Adoption & Foster Care News—Updates from the La Crosse Office.

But if we can't find you, these items can't either. So please, remember to notify us of any address change.

Thank you!

We have moved! Our new address is:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_



LSS believes every adoption is a small miracle that transforms loss into love. Adoption gives to everybody it touches - a child receives a home and the love of a family, and the adoptive family is blessed with one of life's most rewarding experiences.



Find us! <http://www.facebook.com/lssadopt>

Mailing Address Label 1

## Where's Home?



**THE STORY:** A kitten named Littleprints has a confusing and sometimes scary life at home, though sometimes it's not so bad and sometimes it's

even fun. One thing that's certain is that he never knows what to expect. Suddenly one day he is taken away from everyone and everything familiar. Like his siblings, he is taken from his home to live with strangers. For one reason then another, he is moved again and again. At one point, when he encounters one of his sisters, he tells her

sadly: "I don't even remember what our parents smell like."

**THE BOOK:** In *Where's Home?*, the author explores the feelings of children who have witnessed violence, experienced abuse or neglect, and have been taken from their homes. These children don't know how to think about what has happened to them. *Where's Home?* offers a way for them and for their foster or adoptive parents to think about very difficult issues. Adults and children alike will feel Littleprints' sadness, loss, fear, and confusion. This story is ultimately a story of hope. It will encourage empathy and understanding in all readers. (While this story can be enjoyed for independent reading at the grade 3 level, the author strongly

encourages that it be read aloud and shared over a number of sittings for children ages 5-12.)

**Author:** **Gabrielle Israelievitch**, RSW, PhD, is a practicing child psychotherapist, visual artist, and writer. Previously, she was a teacher of deaf children. Her most recent publication is "Hiding and Seeking and Being Found: Reflections on the hide-and-seek game in the clinical playroom." (*Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy*, 2008). This is her second book for children.

**Illustrator:** **Juliana Neufeld**, is an award-winning illustrator based in Toronto. She is a regular contributor to *The Globe and Mail*.