

Northeast Ohio Adoption Services  
Melissa Tharpe, Editor

April 2009 Edition

## *April is Child Abuse Prevention Month*

Throughout the month of April, communities around the state of Ohio are raising awareness about child abuse. Colorful pinwheels have been placed outside of many public buildings to represent an individual case of child abuse and neglect. According to Prevent Child Abuse Ohio, this campaign was first started by Prevent Child Abuse Georgia and later adopted by the National Prevent Child Abuse organization. The campaign is built around the symbol of the pinwheel. Pinwheels are a happy and uplifting symbol of childhood. As a campaign symbol, a pinwheel conveys the message that every child deserves the chance be raised in a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment

In 2005, there were 93,251 reports of child abuse and neglect in the state of Ohio. Most Ohioans are unaware of how widespread the problems of child abuse and neglect are in their local community.

Another campaign that is happening concerning Child Abuse Prevention month is the Blue Ribbon Campaign. In the spring of 1989, Bonnie Finney, a Norfolk, Virginia grandmother, took a stand against child abuse when she tied a symbolic ribbon to her van. It was a signal to her community of personal commitment to involve everyone in the battle to stop child abuse. Bonnie's own grandson was a tragic victim of child abuse. His death gave her blue ribbon its own inspiring message. In her words....

"The blue ribbon serves as a constant reminder to fight for protection for our children. We must protect our most precious gift of all...our children. Please wear a blue ribbon...put one on your car...give one to your friends....tell them what it means...you may save a child's life!

The spirit of her Blue Ribbon grew until it inspired a statewide community-based effort to prevent and stop child abuse in every town, city, and country.

To learn more about these and other programs, visit  
<http://www.pcao.org/programs/prevent.cfm>



## Meet Linda Miller—Chairman of the NOAS Board of Trustees



Linda Miller, Chairperson of the NOAS Board of Trustees, is serving her second “hands-on” term. There are two reasons that Linda keeps leading the way for the mission of the agency. First, she has a special talent for putting together good and competent board members to help find loving families for school aged Ohio kids. Second, she inspires everyone with her own brand of emotional energy and a “can do” attitude. She leads the way with the board, and with what they do— “the business of running the agency,” is how Linda describes it. And, at almost every special event, Linda is sure to be there, taking the lead and pitching in.

When Linda first joined NOAS’ board in 2000, she was close to retiring from her original career as a licensed social worker, working with teens impacted by drugs and alcohol. Her professional background is certainly a plus—good for understanding what challenges children served by the child welfare system may face.

Linda and her husband Lee have long volunteered for young people in other ways, too. Lee is very involved advising the SAE fraternity from Mt. Union College. They open their Chagrin Falls home for the Senior Dinner and Business Etiquette Experience for the fraternity. The Miller family, over a twenty year period, has also welcomed seven foreign exchange students from all over the world. Now those friendships have developed into a global

network of hospitality for the Millers. Their “family” has expanded to include not only their two grown sons and grandchildren, but dear friends from around the world.

Linda knows the importance of family. Her early family life, stabilized by her giving, caring mother, is still the force behind her, fueling her determination to aid every child she can in a helpful way. She admires both foster and adoptive parents, but believes that “adoption makes so much more sense than fostering, so a child has a family to count on forever.”

In her role as NOAS board chair, Linda’s emphasis is to work behind the scenes. Her goals are refining policy, innovative fundraising, recruiting committed board members, evaluating programs to enhance the agency mission, and keeping the work focused and cutting edge. She has gathered a very talented group for the board. She says, “We have dedicated people with varied skills, business leaders, an attorney, a restaurant owner, a social service trainer, community activists, and financial experts. We all work well together.”

About the future, “Researching the newest Family Finding initiative has been very exciting this past year,” Linda says. “It can help isolated, lonely children connect to appropriate, caring biological family members or former family friends. Those positive family ties may lead to the right person to mentor, support, connect with, or even possibly adopt them.”

Linda has already chaired the last seven Cleveland area Dave Thomas Celebrity Cookoffs held at the Benihana Japanese Steakhouse in Beachwood. The Cookoff, a joyful and effective collaboration between community volunteers and leaders along with The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, is a major fundraiser. Linda says, “The Cookoff is fun for all while providing vital support.”

In her spare time, after her board work, travel, and family hospitality, Linda makes some time to bake. Giving her homemade holiday gifts--bountiful gourmet fruitcakes for board and staff--is another of her very generous traditions.

Linda’s warm-hearted leadership, two times around, is an invaluable asset to everyone at Northeast Ohio Adoption Services. So we echo, “Linda, thank you, thank you!”

--Judy McCartney

# Brian Needs A Home

Brian is a charming and likable tenth grader who is attending a specialized school this year to give him the support and special needs services to develop at his own level. He enjoys school very much, he says, and has some new friends there. He has a new scooter that he is extremely proud of, and he wants to learn to do stunts on ramps with it someday. His scooter is one of his favorite ways to play outside and he keeps the chrome well polished so that it is ready to go, year-round.

Another favorite pastime of Brian's is playing chess, checkers, or cards. He loves crazy eights, 21, UNO, rummy, and solitaire. He likes Wii, video games and some board games, too. In summer he likes to have fun is doing "cannonballs" off a diving board into a swimming pool. He favors having lots of equipment for swimming, goggles, flippers, a life vest, a mask, and maybe a snorkel. He likes to be the center of attention at the pool with friends, other campers, or classmates—even laughing at himself good naturedly or taking on a dare to make the biggest splash off the board. Brian likes camping and fishing. He likes to put on a life vest and go fishing from a boat. Camping is another outdoor family activity that he enjoys. He adds that if he could have a wish granted, that taking karate lessons would top his wish list, perhaps a good way to improve large motor coordination skills. Brian also loves going to zoos and museums, good family fun while learning and seeing something new. He is fascinated by Bengals at the zoo.

Brian has been studying the Bible, and hopes to keep attending a Pentecostal, Baptist, or Protestant youth or study group. He enjoys discussing moral, religious, or life style issues related to sobriety and religion. He has highlighted favorite passages in his Bible. He adds that he might even like to follow a religious vocation someday in a mission or preaching field. Brian collects Bibles, he says and takes time to read his New Testament in bed late at night before going to sleep. He is a believer in both world peace and family peace, and non-violent ways of solving problems. He even wonders what it would be like to be the president, making major decisions about hunger, world peace, and distributing the country's treasury.

Brian likes to draw religious cartoons with younger kids in mind, working on the well-known VeggieTale character, Larry the Cucumber. He encouragingly explains



humorously to any would-be artists, "If you can make half an oval or connect it, you've got Larry!" Brian has a distinct knack for making people smile, including himself!

Thinking about an adoptive family, something he wants very much and very soon, he hopes that the family who wants to adopt him does not have firearms, because gun safety concerns him. He does know that a family, a "protective dad and a caring mom" are very important. He says that he would bring good qualities to a family, and that he "wouldn't harm anything." His foster parents say that he helps out with family tasks and chores with a helpful and cheerful attitude. They enjoy the upbeat attitude they have experienced with him and find that Brian adds a happy, helpful note to their family life. Would Brian fit into your caring family circle? Do you have the energy and expertise to lend him the helping hand he may need for the long run?

Find out more about adopting Brian. Call Northeast Ohio Adoption Services at 1-800-686-6627, ext. 126.

## Faces of Adoption is on TV!

See Umar on



See Kayla on



Visit [noas.com](http://noas.com) to see more Faces of Adoption segments.

# HAPPY ADOPTION DAY!

One of the happiest days of a child's life is the day he or she becomes a member of an adoptive family. The following families and children recently legalized their adoption:

Brandon and Laura B. adopted Brandon and Zachary on 3/26/2009  
Christopher and Noreen H. adopted Travis and Will on 3/29/2009

## Congratulations!

SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN NEED OF SERVICES BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER AN ADOPTION



### Adoption Support Group

#### An Invitation to All Foster and Adoptive Families

#### What I can expect from the group:

- People who will listen and offer helpful advice
- People who will not judge
- A place to just listen to others
- Connection with others who have similar experiences
- A place to find out about resources and current information

Group meets the 1st Thursday of every month at NOAS Warren Office  
5000 E. Market St. Suite 26 Warren, OH from 7-8:30 p.m.

To register, phone Cynthia Wallis at 1-800-686-6627 x 147



Northeast Ohio  
Adoption Services

Northeast Ohio Adoption Services  
5000 E. Market Street  
Warren, Ohio 44484

Phone: 1-800-686-6627 x147  
Fax: 330-856-5586  
E-mail: cwallis@noas.com



Guardian Angels Support Group  
East Fairfield United Methodist Church  
45675 St. Rte. 558  
New Waterford, Ohio 44445

Six years ago, Kelly Harding formed a Christian faith based support group for families who are raising a special needs child. The group meets the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm at the address listed above. She strongly feels that when a child with special needs enters the family, the family itself becomes a special needs family. Her support group is comprised of 50% foster and adoptive families from various agencies in the surrounding area. All family members are encouraged to attend the support group (childcare is provided) and the family outings that are planned. If you would like more information regarding this support group, please call Kelly at #330-482-4630. She will be happy to answer any of your questions. There is no registration required for attendance.

*Northeast Ohio Adoption Services presents:*

## **“Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: The Forgotten Child” and “Lifebooks”**

**939-3: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: The Forgotten Children** — This devastating syndrome is 100% preventable. Research indicates that as many as 80% of children in foster care may have this syndrome or other related effects due to maternal alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Many personal parenting tips and suggestions have been incorporated into this training along with an understanding of the syndrome and the effects of parenting a diagnosed child. This training is of special interest to the trainer as her oldest son has been diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Effect from his birth mother’s ingestion of alcohol during her pregnancy.

**935: Lifebooks** — The State of Ohio requires that each foster child in custody after twelve months will have a Lifebook. Beginning a Lifebook from the first day of a child’s placement is the goal of this training. Tips, techniques, activities, and actual examples of pages will be included. This training was formatted for foster/adoptive parents and case managers who are responsible for beginning the Lifebook process with foster/adoptive children.

**WHERE:** Northeast Ohio Adoption Services  
Warren, OH

**WHEN:** Saturday, April 25, 2009  
9:00 a.m. – noon (*Fetal Alcohol*)  
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (*Lifebooks*)

**TRAINER:** Cynthia Wallis, MA, CFLE

**To register call:**

Gail at (330) 856-5582, ext. 128  
or email her at [gseekins@noas.com](mailto:gseekins@noas.com)

*Please clarify directions when registering.*

Each workshop is worth 3 hours toward the foster parent training requirement.

*Certificates will be provided.*





FLORIDA STATE  
UNIVERSITY



## **Gay & Lesbian Adoptive Family Study**

### **Seeking Participants**

Gay and lesbian individuals or couples who have adopted a child

### **Participation**

Completion of a web-based survey

**For more information, please Contact Dr. Scott Ryan at:**

sryan@fsu.edu

1-850-644-9747

**GAY & LESBIAN ADOPTIVE FAMILY PROJECT**