



In C.A.S.E.

The Center for Adoption Support and Education, Inc.

an adoptive family support center

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In C.A.S.E.*

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Holly van Gulden

The Center For Adoption Support and Education

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Tossing Pebbles

Holly van Gulden, adoption specialist and author of *REAL PARENTS, REAL CHILDREN* is well-known for helping parents learn how to communicate effectively with their adopted children and adolescents. She addressed this subject at C.A.S.E.'s recent KAN Conference on November 13. Opening the door to communication with children or teens about adoption is no easy task, especially with kids who tend to be more private or reserved when it comes to sharing their thoughts and feelings. We know that "talking is good for everyone" - our theme at C.A.S.E., but parents are often puzzled by what to do when they receive either no response or one-word answers to questions aimed at fostering discussion. Ms. Gulden sympathizes with our dilemma.

Questions often elicit yes or no responses. "Do you ever think about your birth mom?" "Yes" or "No." "What do you think about your birth parents?" might get you more, but can also be perceived as intrusive and elicit a response such as, "I don't know." What's a well-meaning parent to do? How do we help our children express themselves so that we can try to answer questions, clarify misconceptions, or provide comfort around difficult feelings - sadness, anger, confusion, worry? One tool is what Holly calls her "pebble technique". It is a real gem.

WHAT IS IT? IT'S SIMPLE, BUT COMPLEX. It's the easiest and the hardest thing to do. Holly encourages parents to make a comment - a statement related to adoption - and see if, how and when your child or teen responds to it. For example, a parent might say, "I was thinking about your soccer. I really admire the way you have developed your athletic ability in soccer and am so glad that we made sure to get you to all those practices. I wonder if you got your athletic

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Can you hear me now? Sending Signals Through Space

"Honoring all facets of the adoption circle and networking with other families was the best part of the Conference", was just one quote from our families that participated in this year's annual Kids' Adoption Network Conference! The Conference took place on November 13 - C.A.S.E.'s way of celebrating National Adoption Month (November!) It is always a thrill to see 125+ hands raised high when Debbie Riley, Executive Director, asks the audience "Who here has joined their family through adoption?" The audience was privileged to meet Debbie McFadden and her daughter, Tatyana McFadden, a 16 year old adopted from Russia at the age of 6. Tatyana won silver and bronze medals in the Paraymics held in Greece this past summer. Tatyana's inspiring message of courage and determination was clearly heard by all in attendance. She beautifully conveyed to the children and teens how an individual can achieve so much despite a rough beginning and seemingly insurmountable challenges. *(continued on p. 2)*

Tossing Pebbles

(continued from p. 1)

talent from your birth mother or birth father.” Your child is free to comment back - then, two months later or never! Like tossing a pebble in a stream, which creates a ripple effect, your comment may cause the wheels to turn in your child’s head - or heart - and allow him to share what he is thinking or feeling. It might take no time... or it might take a day or a month for the ripples to formulate into a response. Ms. Gulden shared that it once took her daughter two months to respond to a “pebble” she had tossed. What matters most is that you convey your comfort with discussion of adoption – and your readiness to “hear your child” “now” or whenever he is ready to talk, regardless of whatever he has to say. Your child may share something about adoption that he is thinking about or feeling that does not even appear to be directly related to your specific comment! You have opened the door to communication – that is what is important.

Ms. Van Gulden notes that “pebbles” like the example given “give everybody a role”, tying everyone together in something important to the child. In this example, the child’s athletic ability – the child inherited the talent from the birth parents, the child developed his talent, and the adoptive parents helped to foster the talent. The really significant message is – we can talk about birth parents, adoption, and our family.

For those of you who attended the conference as well as those of you who were not able to attend, if you would like to learn more about the pebble technique and other effective tools for communication about adoption, we are offering our most requested workshop on Talking With Children About Adoption, led by Ellen Singer, LCSW-C on January 27, 2005. (See program calendar on page? For further details.) 🍀



Can you hear me now?

(continued from p. 1)

The children’s program began with entertainment provided by Mad Science. They saw liquids disappear into the air and flames turn different colors! In their first workshop around the theme of “outer space” - the children created planets to represent their individual selves, and moons to identify those people with whom they can communicate their thoughts and feelings about adoption.

The children’s second workshop was developed with one of the KAN Conference’s major objectives in mind - to enable children, from all kinds of adoptive families, to feel part of the larger adoption community. As children of adoption strive to understand and make sense of their own adoption story, C.A.S.E. believes it is very important for adopted children to also understand the adoption experiences of their peers. At five different “space stations”, the children learned about the history of adoption, domestic adoption, international adoption, adoption from foster care and kinship adoption. They then demonstrated their newfound knowledge through a game version based on Family Feud –

“Space Race”. The children had fun as they also became even W.I.S.E.-ER about adoption!

C.A.S.E. was excited to have 18 teens participating in the teen program this year. The teens had the opportunity to explore the theme of communication with Debbie Riley and Keith Silverstein, an adult adoptee who came from California. Using creative costumes and props, the teens created five “public service announcements” to educate others about the history of adoption and the four types of adoption. Later in the day, the teens joined the parents to listen to a panel of adult adoptees (including Keith) share their moving, poignant and sometimes humorous experiences of growing up in an adoptive family.

While the children were learning how to effectively communicate about adoption, Holly van Gulden, adoption specialist and author of REAL CHILDREN, REAL PARENTS taught the parents how to “decipher” their children’s messages and respond appropriately and effectively to those messages. Through sharing her personal story as both a “birth” child who grew up in an adoptive family and as an adoptive parent, Ms. Van Gulden demonstrated how to provide children with the encouragement and support they need to master the unique emotional challenges of adoption as they grow. For more on Ms. Van Gulden’s presentation please see the article, TOSSING PEBBLES.

We want to thank all of the families who helped make this year’s KAN Conference a successful event. As one parent exclaimed, “I wish I had known about this in previous years!” Planning is already under way for next November’s Kan Conference! 🍀

DONATE YOUR CAR

If you want to get rid of that clunker sitting in the driveway or know someone who does, contact Daphne at (301) 593-9200 to begin the quick and easy process. This tax deductible donation also includes boats, motorcycles and RVs.

Special 2005 EVENTS

We need your support!

STEP INTO SPRING

The Center for Adoption Support and Education, Inc. presents a **Champagne Luncheon and Fashion Show** to

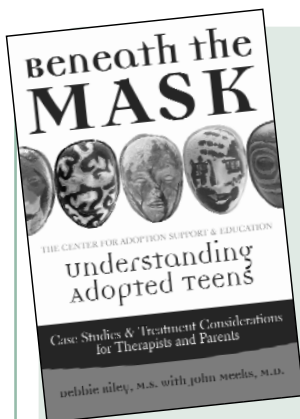
benefit C.A.S.E. programs for adoptive and foster families.

The event will feature fashions by Chico's and shoes from Zelaya of Bethesda.

A perfect outing for those who want to keep up with the latest styles! The Fashion Show is scheduled for **Saturday, February 26, 2005** at Kenwood Golf and Country Club, Bethesda, Maryland. Tickets are \$50 per person. If you would like to receive an invitation or sponsor a table, please contact Valerie at (301) 593-9200.

A BLAZING EVENT!

C.A.S.E. announces **A Blazing Event: A Repeat Performance! – a rock and roll dance** – to the music of Larry and the Flames, featuring Dr. Bill Stixrud, LIVE! Last year's Blazing event was an overwhelming success with over 350 attendees. This year's dance is planned for **Saturday, April 9, 2005**, 8-midnight at Indian Spring Country Club, Silver Spring, Maryland. Cocktail buffet, dessert, cash bar and a silent auction with over 100 unique items are included. Tickets are \$75 and invitations will be mailed in February. If you would like to sponsor a table or donate auction items, please contact Valerie at (301) 593-9200. Reserve early as we sold out last year. 🍏



New Publication from CASE!

CASE is excited to announce the release of the long-awaited book by Debbie Riley, M.S., Executive Director – *Beneath the Mask: Understanding Adopted Teens*. Putting together their many years of experience treating adolescents and their families, Ms. Riley has collaborated with child and adolescent psychiatrist, Dr. John Meeks, to write the first book of its kind. *Beneath the Mask* will help both parents and clinicians to understand the world of adopted adolescents and learn how to strengthen adoptive family life.

In celebration of its release, we invite you to join us at a presentation and book signing by Ms. Riley on Thursday, March 17th from 7:00-9:00 p.m. Ms. Riley will share her insights into the challenges adopted teens and their parents face and practical suggestions for navigating the issues that may arise.

COMMUNITY Connections

WE HAVE MOVED!

Effective December 1, 2004, our Virginia office relocated! C.A.S.E. also introduces LaVoyce B. Reid, Project Coordinator and Therapist. Ms. Reid is a seasoned clinician who brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the Virginia community and families. Our Virginia office will continue to offer services through the Adoption Family Preservation Project, a partnership with the Virginia Department of Social Services and United Methodist Family Services. These services will include comprehensive counseling services, individual, family and crisis intervention, school outreach, parent education, and forums to adoptive families in Virginia whose children were placed through a public child welfare agency. Our counseling services for families who do not qualify for services through the Preservation Project will be limited during this re-organization period.

King's Park Professional Building
8996 Burke Lake Road, Suite 201
Burke, VA 22015
(703) 425-3703



A HOLE-IN-ONE (PHOTO OF PLAYERS)

C.A.S.E.'s 3rd Annual Golf Benefit Tournament was a great success raising over \$45,000! The proceeds from the event enabled C.A.S.E. to continue to provide a wide range of specialized support services to children and their families who were built through adoption and also served to increase the awareness of adoption within our community. The Tournament welcomed 125 players to Indian Springs Country Club to enjoy 18 holes of golf and a wonderful buffet dinner with award presentations. 🍏



Winter 2005 Schedule - Groups and Workshops

SILVER SPRING

Friday, January 28, 2005

9:00 a.m. – noon

ADOPTED CHILDREN: ADDRESSING THE LEARNING AND EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

Featuring Dr. William Stixrud and Debbie Riley, M.S., this FREE workshop for educators and school counselors will explore the neuropsychological connections between adoption, learning and psycho-social issues. Effective strategies will be provided for children in the school environment. Adoption-Sensitive Evaluation and Support Services, a collaborative project between C.A.S.E. and WSA, will be presented along with the implications for your students and families. Dr. Stixrud, psychologist, specializes in the evaluation of children and adults with learning disabilities. Contact Ayanna at (301) 593-9200 to pre-register.

Thursday, February 17th, 2005

7:00-8:30 p.m.

TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT ADOPTION

This is C.A.S.E.'s most-requested workshop. Ellen Singer will help parents establish comfortable, effective communication within the family about adoption. We will concentrate primarily on children ages 3-12, and learn about the process of sharing information (including "difficult information") about adoption stories as children's understanding and emotional needs change as they grow. \$20 per person/family, child care available - \$10 per child. Contact Ayanna at (301) 593-9200 to pre-register. (snow date Feb. 24th)

Thursday, March 17th, 2005

7:00-9:00 p.m.

BENEATH THE MASK: UNDERSTANDING ADOPTED TEENS

This program title is also the title of the new book by Debbie Riley, Executive Director of C.A.S.E. – to be released in early February. We invite you to join Ms. Riley in a discussion of the "extra layer" of challenges faced by adopted teens. In addition, parents and teens who were included in the book will also share their thoughts. We will explore the important ways that parents can provide the support and guidance their teens need. Discussion will include a book signing by Ms. Riley. \$35 per person/family. Contact Ayanna by January 17th at (301) 593-9200 to pre-register.

We ask that you call to pre-register for all workshops!

Space is limited, please pre-register.

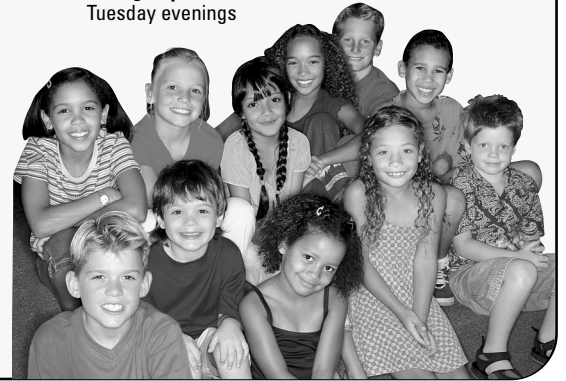
For more information see the C.A.S.E. website, www.adoptionsupport.org.

The Kids' Adoption Network (K.A.N.) groups are now forming! Our 8-week program continues to bring together children and teens from many adoptive backgrounds for fun activities in a safe place to learn and share. Contact Valerie for more information or to register at (301) 593-9200.

Silver Spring, Maryland
K.A.N. group for 4th & 5th grades
Thursday evenings

Silver Spring, Maryland
Social Skills group for 6th - 8th grades
Thursday evenings

Silver Spring, Maryland
Teen group
Tuesday evenings



Visit C.A.S.E.'s Website!



www.adoptionsupport.org

The Center For Adoption Support and Education, Inc.

11120 New Hampshire Avenue

Suite 205

Silver Spring, MD 20904

Phone: 301-593-9200

Fax: 301-593-9203

Email: caseadopt@adoptionsupport.org

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