

# FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY

SPRING 2012

## A Forever Family for Jaiden

Bryce and Lesley Johnson have been married for more than 10 years and have always desired to be parents. Due to a variety of reasons, they were not able to have a child naturally. Knowing that there are so many children living in foster care, the Johnsons began to research options including foster care and adoption.

Through their research, they found the PlacerKids office in Auburn. (PlacerKids is a partnership between Sierra Forever Families and Placer County Children's System of Care.) After attending the Exploring Permanency and Foster Care orientation, they knew they had found the right fit and began the process to adopt.

In 2008, after completing their paperwork and homestudy, they were matched with Jaiden, who was two-years-old at the time. Bryce and Lesley first met Jaiden at a supervised visit at the playland of a local restaurant chain. "The first visit was a bit awkward," recalls Bryce, "but the next day, we were able to take Jaiden to the park for a visit." It was during this visit that Bryce and Lesley knew Jaiden was meant to be in their lives. "The very next day Jaiden came to live with us."

Prior to meeting Jaiden, the Johnsons were informed that the county was working with Jaiden's birth mother on a reunification plan. Through the concurrent planning training classes provided by PlacerKids, Bryce and Lesley gained an understanding of the benefits concurrent planning and reunification support would have for Jaiden. "We were a bit nervous at first, but we decided that we needed to support what was best for Jaiden," recalls Lesley.

Over the course of two-and-a-half years, Jaiden reunified with her mom three times. The first reunification lasted six months, and then Jaiden re-entered foster care. Each time the Johnsons were called and Jaiden was placed with them. "It was hard not having Jaiden with us and to not know exactly how she was being cared for," Lesley shares. "We attended support groups through PlacerKids and they proved to be very helpful. You could talk about your experience and someone would be there to understand and to share how they were coping."

Two more reunification attempts were made, each one lasting a few months, and each time the Johnsons welcomed Jaiden back into their home. Sadly, Jaiden's birth mother was not able to maintain a healthy, safe environment for her, and, for the last time, she re-entered foster care.

In 2010, Jaiden made her last trip home...to her FOREVER FAMILY. Her adoption was finalized on National Adoption Day in Placer County. "She is now finally home for good. She is ours." Bryce gleams.

"We always felt like Jaiden was meant to be a part of our lives...our family," Bryce shares with a smile. One of the most positive aspects of concurrent planning is that an adoptive family is identified for the child when they first enter foster care. If reunification fails, this same family is able to adopt the child, removing the potential trauma created when children move from one placement to another while in foster care. The Johnsons now have the joy of family. Forever!

"[Jaiden] is now finally home for good. She is ours."



LEFT TO RIGHT: Geronimo, Jaiden and Lesley; Jaiden with her horse Geronimo; 2011 Family of the Year: Lesley, Jaiden and Bryce Johnson

For your constant support of Sierra Forever Families we

## This Mother's Day and Father's Day... GIVE A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

**This Mother's Day, don't give Mom a box of chocolates; on Father's Day, don't give Dad another tie. Instead, give a meaningful gift expressing how their care has made an impact in your life.**

There are many ways to honor someone or celebrate a special occasion; one significant way is to make an Expressive Gift donation on behalf of loved ones. When gifts are made to Sierra in the honor or memory of a special person, we are happy to share your kind thoughts and send a card, with no gift amount mentioned, on your behalf. Honorees are also featured in our Agency's next Homecoming Newsletter.

IN ADDITION TO OUR ONGOING EXPRESSIVE GIVING CAMPAIGN, SIERRA HAS MADE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS TO MAKE YOUR EXPRESSIVE GIFT EVEN MORE SPECIAL THIS MOTHER'S DAY AND FATHER'S DAY WITH OUR UNIQUE PACKAGE OPPORTUNITIES. Imagine her delight when you give a rose representing a gift in her honor to help children in foster care have the loving support she has given you. Picture how much more enjoyable the crack of a bat will be to Dad when you enjoy a baseball game together because of a donation made to help find families for children in foster care. This year, Sierra is pleased to help create such special experiences through Expressive Giving. (See Special Package options enclosed.)

**MOTHER'S DAY IS SUNDAY, MAY 13.** For every donation of \$25\* or more given during April 20-May 7, Sierra will provide a commemorative greeting card and a beautifully wrapped rose from Rust Florist (rose is available for pick-up by donor on Saturday, May 12 from 9am-12pm at their East Sacramento location). And you can upgrade your package to include two tickets to a show\*\* at B Street Theatre.

**FATHER'S DAY IS SUNDAY, JUNE 17.** For gifts of \$55\* or more given during April 20-June 11, in honor of an important man in your life, Sierra will provide a commemorative greeting card with two tickets to see the River Cats' Father's Day game\*\* live at Raley Field. A private group stadium tour upgrade is also available.

In a unique way, you will reveal how their love and support continues and inspires you to give a gift in her/his honor that will make a difference to benefit children in foster care. Make your gift mean even more!

*\*All Expressive Giving honorees are sent a card, with no amount mentioned, for donations of any amount.*

*\*\*Special occasion benefit packages are included with minimum donation noted received by date specified.*

*Sierra Forever Families would like to express our own SPECIAL THANKS to our generous partners: Rust Florist, B Street Theatre, and the Sacramento River Cats!*

Please use the enclosed ordering form to make an Expressive Gift. If you wish to participate in our special occasion packages, please ensure Sierra receives your completed information by May 7 for Mother's Day and June 11 for Father's Day.

If you have any questions, please contact April Johnson at 916.368.5114 or [ajohnson@sierraff.org](mailto:ajohnson@sierraff.org).

## Point West Rotary Celebrates 10 Years of **FESTA VINO**

### A CELEBRATION OF FOOD & WINE BENEFITING SIERRA FOREVER FAMILIES AND LOCAL CHILDREN'S CHARITIES

Point West Rotary, one of the largest Rotary clubs in Sacramento, hosted its 10th Festa di Vino – A Celebration of Food and Wine – on March 31 at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center in Sacramento.

Festa di Vino showcased more than 20 local restaurants and 25 wine makers from Northern California. More than 600 guests worked up an appetite while dancing to the music of the Q-Balls, a local favorite. For those guests who felt lucky, an extensive raffle was hosted and many went home with great prizes. Also as part of the night, a wide-range of desirable items were available for bid in the silent and live auctions. This incredible evening not only delighted attendees but, through a portion of the proceeds, also supported Sierra Forever Families' mission to transform the lives of children living in foster care by building and nurturing permanent families.

"Sierra Forever Families is pleased to be selected as a charity partner for Festa di Vino hosted by Point West Rotary," said Bob Herne, executive director, Sierra Forever Families. "The partnership not only provided needed funding for our programs but also allowed for our organization to promote its mission to a large portion of our local community."

Sierra Forever Families sincerely THANKS Point West Rotary for selecting our agency as its charity partner for Festa di Vino 2012!

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## SCRAP COPPER COLLECTIONS HELP CHILDREN FIND PERMANENCY

The Champions for Children (CFC) program was established as a unique way to raise the annual support needed to place a child or sibling group in a permanent, loving home. The success of this program relies on teams of individuals, businesses, or other organizations who develop a variety of methods to raise \$5,000 or more each year.



**CHAMPIONS  
FORCHILDREN**

A Sierra Forever Families Program

One of our newest CFC teams came up with an original idea to accomplish their fundraising goal of \$5,000. Terry Risse, president of Iron Mechanical talked with his employees and they decided to direct the funds of their scrap copper recycling to the Champions for Children program. This project combines team-building and fundraising to reach the ultimate goal...transforming the lives of children in foster care!

Risse and his team put a simple plan in place that included a primary collection box in the main shop and collection bins on each job site. The company's employees feel great about raising money to help children in foster care find forever families. This program generated positive energy on the jobsites and Risse began seeing a tremendous increase in his scrap copper recycling.

Because this program was such a success for Iron Mechanical – Risse and the Sierra staff began marketing the Champions for Children Copper Fund to other mechanical contractors in our region. Recently, the CFC Copper Fund received an endorsement from the statewide association of PHCC (Plumbing, Heating and Cooling Contractors) and Sierra was invited to their Sacramento Trade Show to introduce the CFC Copper Fund to the contractors attending.

Since the Champions for Children Program began in 1996, the lives of more than 450 children have been transformed forever. We salute organizations like Iron Mechanical for their compassion and ingenuity. It's because of people like Terry Risse and his team that the Champions for Children Program continues to grow.

If you'd like more information about Champions for Children Program or the new CFC Copper Fund, please contact Kimberly Cox at 916.368.5114 or [kcox@sierraff.org](mailto:kcox@sierraff.org).

## VISION FOR ADDED GENEROSITY

Sierra is always honored when employees make gift contributions and also engage their employers to learning about Sierra. One of our longtime partners is VSP Global and we celebrate and share their vision of generosity.

VSP Global provides benefits, services, products, and solutions that are unparalleled in the optical industry. Their global headquarters are located in Rancho Cordova, CA. This incredible company is a community leader. Since 2006, we have been thrilled to have their partnership to help children in foster care find permanency.

We especially thank VSP Global's CEO Rob Lynch and Chief Marketing Officer Kate Renwick-Espinosa for yet another generous gift this year! We also acknowledge the company's other involvements with Sierra. For the past five years, VSP employees represented our largest group of volunteers during our annual golf tournament. The company allows Sierra staff to use their office for special meetings, and provides assistance with public relations and marketing outreach.

Renwick-Espinosa says the company likes to be involved because, "All of our employees can relate to the impact that family has on our lives and the fact that every child deserves the permanency of a forever family."

Like VSP, other companies also contribute to Sierra in support of their employees who give donations to the agency. Many employers match employee gifts, provide employee giving opportunities of pre-tax payroll deductions, grant donations on behalf of employee hours worked, and/or allot paid time-off for volunteer hours with Sierra.

*Thank you to: Apple, AT&T, Bank of America, Costco, GAP, Hewlett Packard, PG&E, Umpqua Bank, UPS, VSP Global, and Wells Fargo Bank for supporting their wonderful employees' desires to give back to their communities in support of Sierra Forever Families!*

Does your company match gifts, offer employee giving or volunteer hour programs? Perhaps you never thought to ask before, but now can see the added impact that comes from such generous companies. Talk to your employer and discover how you can help transform the lives of children in foster care.

For questions regarding employer supported gifts, please contact Bobby Cobbs at 916.368.5114.

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**For current information about Sierra events and opportunities to support, please visit us at [sierraff.org](http://sierraff.org)**

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## Family is Forever!

### FOSTER CARE SHOULD BE TEMPORARY

May is Foster Care Awareness Month. It is a time we highlight the needs of children and youth in foster care in our community. Foster care is intended to provide a safe place for children and youth who are removed temporarily from their families.

Unfortunately, too many children and youth remain in the foster care system far too long. Sadly, many end up emancipating out of foster care when they turn 19 years of age without a permanent life-long connection with family.

All children and youth need and deserve a forever family. That is why Sierra Forever Families is here. Everything we do focuses on providing children and youth in foster care with a permanent, loving life-long connection, whether through adoption, guardianship, reunification, or living with a relative.

You can help us provide a forever family for those remaining in foster care in our community. Currently, that total is approximately 2,500 children and youth. Nearly half languish in long-term foster care with no plans to reunify with their birth family. You can help!

All children and youth need and deserve a forever family.

There are many ways you can make a difference:

- Make a gift online by visiting [www.sierraff.org](http://www.sierraff.org) and clicking on the Become a Supporter tab.
- Set-up an automatic payment through your online banking account using bill pay. You can set the amount and duration of the gift commitment and can alter your plans anytime.
- Give almost any item of value including appreciated securities, real estate, etc.
- Make a pledge commitment to be paid over a period of time.
- Include Sierra Forever Families in your estate plans.

**You can make a difference and transform a child's life with a gift today! We will be happy to visit with you to discuss your wishes. Contact us today.**

## ESSENTIAL SUPPORT

Sierra Forever Families gratefully acknowledges the nine corporations and foundations that have contributed to our Annual Fund through grant awards from November 1, 2011 to April 1, 2012. The funds donated (\$64,500) help provide essential support for programs and services to children and youth in foster care.

Grant awards received:

- **Supporting Permanency Services are Arata Brothers Trust, Sundt Foundation, and Yocha Dehe Community Fund**
- **Supporting the Wonder Mentoring Program are Chevron Foundation, El Dorado Savings Bank, In-N-Out Burger Foundation, Laine Albrecht Foundation, Rotary Club of Sacramento, and M & M Whitmire Foundation**

We extend SPECIAL THANKS to the Yocha Dehe Community Fund for supporting permanency services in the counties of Yolo and Sacramento with a generous grant of \$25,000. The Yocha Dehe Community Fund is dedicated to creating a healthy community through engaged philanthropy, deep community knowledge and awareness, and active leadership. Focusing on six core elements, the Community Fund uses philanthropy in ways that can effectively build a high quality of life for Yolo County residents and Native people wherever they live. We are honored to be a recipient!

**To learn more about becoming a supporter through our grants and foundation programs, please contact: Juli Kramer at 916.368.5114 or [jkramer@sierraff.org](mailto:jkramer@sierraff.org).**