

CHRISTIAN FAMILY SERVICES FAMILY TIMES

VOLUME XLVI ISSUE II

SUMMER 2024



HOW THE MINISTRY IS FAMILY

A family to past, present and future women, babies and families.

There has never been a time in my life that I didn't know I was adopted. My parents faithfully and openly talked about adoption (for myself and my brothers) from the time they brought us home. Part of that conversation was about a little adoption agency in Gainesville, Florida, where I "came" from. Thirty-eight years after my own adoption, when my husband and I chose to grow our family via adoption, it made sense to start our search for an agency by looking into CFS. My husband, Jason, and I now have three children (one biological, and two adopted from Christian Family Services).



Melissa with her mom, dad and brother

From initial contact to finalization, CFS went above and beyond for us, our babies, and our birth mothers. They were professional, thorough, honest, loving, and kind.

Donna walked us through all our paperwork, gently and diplomatically nudged others along when needed, encouraged my patience, and worked tirelessly to make sure everything was in place for when we received "the call". Twice. She has celebrated with us when our family has grown, and she has shown us Christ's love through her diligent and tireless efforts.

We've worked with social workers Jasmine and Kim for our respective adoptions, and they were both WONDERFUL at diplomacy, comfort, and showing care throughout the process. During our most recent adoption Kim spent time with me in the hospital. I found her to be a loving and open person, with a beautiful heart for adoption and for people. She even spent time talking to me about my own adoption, meeting my birth mother for the first time, and how to work through complicated emotions and set boundaries that are comfortable to us both to give us time to grow in our relationship.



Jason, Melissa's husband, with Zachary and Ben (holding Melody)

We call Jerry "Papa Jerry" to our kids (I suspect he's called that to many children). He has always gone above and beyond to meet our needs and care for us, our babies, and our birth moms. He has a wealth of knowledge about adoption and is a great sounding board for questions and concerns. He is a calming and comforting presence, he always shows wisdom and discernment, and he has gone out of his way to be as physically present as possible during our stays in Florida to meet our babies.

Continued on PG. 2

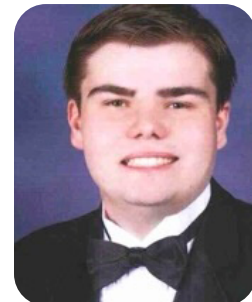
CFS ALUMNI



Libby is a busy rising Sophomore. She is the first chair clarinet in concert band, a pianist, and a varsity soccer athlete.



Hayden is a graduating senior who recently completed a 2-year Building Construction Program. He enjoys welding and plans to make it his career!



Trevor is part of the class of '24 and will graduate in May.

Do you have an update we can share? Send photo and update to info@cfsfl.org

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Melissa's adoption finalization

Both of our CFS babies were NICU babies. CFS visited, called, texted, and made sure we had everything we needed to comfortably wait out our time in Florida until we could bring our precious babies home. They held our hands up as we cared for, prayed for, and loved the new members of our family.

Christian Family Services has helped us build our family, and in the process, they have become family. The team at CFS has seen us laugh and cry, they've seen us at our best and possibly a little bit at our worst. They've seen us fall completely and totally in love with the babies that they placed with us. We have come to trust the team at CFS implicitly – and working with them has been a joy.

In our household we show honor, love, and respect to the birth mothers who made loving and tough decisions for the babies they were carrying, and Christian Family Services places the same honor, love, and respect on those beautiful women who reach out to them for help and a plan. CFS becomes the hands and feet of Jesus to birth moms, and I cannot thank them enough for that.

MARCH - APRIL
2024

HONOR TO:

**In honor of our children,
Amie & Alec Garcia**

Greg & Kay Garcia

**Honor to all the "foster
parents" who cared for CFS
babies over the years-you are
way more than "foster" to us,
more like our child's
"Oma & Opa."**

Karen & Mark Mokry

FINALIZATIONS



*Justin & Miranda welcomed daughter
Navy Gail and made it official in court
on March 5, 2024*



*Jason & Melissa finalized the adoption
of their daughter, Melody Hope, on April
30, 2024. Melody's big brothers Ben
and Zachary were in attendance and
got to speak to the judge!*



*Casey & Deborah gave Camden Edward their
last name on April 30, 2024 at his finalization
hearing.*

GRANTS FOR ADOPTION

Adoptive Families who make application to adopt with CFS are offered access to Your Adoption Finance Coach (YAFC) for ways to fund their adoption. Our last report from YAFC stated that 12 CFS Adoptive Families reported or raised a total of \$264,495.00. CFS is grateful for the grant options available to adoptive families, a few are show here.



LETTING GO & SAYING GOOD-BYE IS HARD:



The Lord has truly blessed my journey, guiding me as a devoted husband to a remarkable, God-fearing wife, a father to two cherished daughters, a time as a pilot in the Air Force, a committed church minister, and now, for 22 years, as the Director of Christian Family Services (CFS). As of the end of April '24, I've had the privilege of witnessing 229 babies placed, countless prayers from mothers answered, and families enriched. It is undoubtedly my involvement in the CFS ministry that has been the most humbling aspect of my life. While I am grateful for the kind words, I must attribute all glory to the Lord, for it is He who orchestrates these remarkable outcomes.

Despite my introverted nature, I've been humbled by the way the Lord has enabled me to support mothers facing unplanned pregnancies—women I may have never otherwise encountered. The Lord provided opportunities to come alongside these women at one of the most critical times in their lives; a time when she is jaded and has learned not to trust anyone. To be there in a non-judgmental, compassionate way when, often, no one else was ever there for her. To have the opportunity to be a conduit of God's love and mercy. To be an example of a Godly man and show her that there are good people in the world who do not have a personal agenda. To plant seeds that hopefully will, if not now, one day lead her to God.

There have been many blessings to me throughout my career with CFS. The blessing of supporting a mom in the delivery room, witnessing and being a part of the delivery and birth of her baby. Witnessing not only the miracle of birth, but also watching God totally change a woman's heart at that instant. One who now, for the first time, is willing to give up her old lifestyle, that she couldn't wait to get back to, to be a mother that can't imagine ever being the same.

The blessing of connecting families who have prayed for God to bring a baby to their family. As an adoptive dad, I know what it meant to Debbie and I and it is fulfilling to be a conduit of God's blessings. To provide the opportunity for a child to grow up in a loving, Christian home with a mom and a dad who both love the Lord.

The blessing of knowing countless numbers of babies' lives have been saved through counseling and support of moms who choose to parent and those that choose adoption. Lives saved because pregnancy centers had the CFS training and were better equipped to offer that abortion-minded-mom an alternative. Not only pregnancy centers around the state, but hospitals that our moms have delivered in that were so impressed with CFS and the care given to each mom that they often "refer" moms who are considering adoption at the last minute to contact us, or they contact us when they have a Safe Haven baby.

CFS, the Lord's ministry, has now been in existence for 46 years, placing 563 babies, counseling thousands of moms and providing real resources that save babies lives. I was not the fundraiser that the ministry needed yet through faithful partners like you, He always provided the means to reach out and be His image bearer to these moms.

Please continue to keep CFS in your prayers. Pray for the Board as they continue their search for the next Director. Pray for the future of CFS. I am excited to see what the Lord now has in store for CFS moving forward. God is faithful to more than we can even imagine.

"The fields are white unto harvest." Your partnership is needed now more than ever to be the life-blood through which the Lord enables moms to be blessed, babies to be saved and families to grow. We invite you to join us as a financial partner in this ministry. If you're already contributing, please consider making regular monthly donations. And if you're already giving monthly, we ask you to consider increasing your gift, even if it's just by \$10. Remember, in the hands of the Lord, any amount can be multiplied to make a significant impact.

We are serving the Lord by serving His children



Donate NOW to impact the
lives of babies

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THANK YOU KIM

What a blessing Kim Tang has been to Christian Family Services these past two years. She has provided care to Florida women with unplanned pregnancies, witnessed signing of consents and placements, and worked with Adoptive Families for their Home Studies and Post Places Visits. She formerly served as a caseworker for CFS in the late 80's-early nineties (and was Kim Gonko at that time).

Kim's vast experience in the field of Social Work, working directly with women and families, will be difficult to replace. Staff will miss her greatly, but we know new adventures await her as she moves closer to her family.



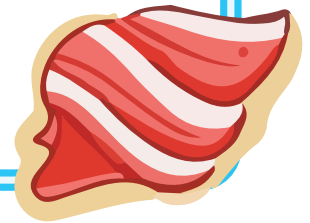
Kim with Annabelle following the signing of consents with her Birth Mother.



Kim Gonko holds Rachael outside the CFS office in 1989



During a post placement visit, Kim takes a moment to pose for a photo with Malachi in his parent's home



YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE

Save a baby's life & bless them with a Christian Family through the Ministry of *Christian Family Services.*

MY INVOLVEMENT

My Monthly Pledge: to sustain the ministry throughout the year:

☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ Other _____

My One Time Gift Today: to meet immediate needs.

☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1000 ☐ Other _____

☐ **This donation is sent in memory or honor of:** _____

Please notify: Name _____ Relationship to Honoree _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Name _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

☐ **Check Included**

☐ **Automatic Monthly Giving:** ☐ Check ☐ Credit Card ☐ Debit Card

Signature _____ Date _____

☐ **Credit Card:** MasterCard/Visa

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____ CVV _____

Signature _____



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A SAFE HAVEN

A Safe Haven for Newborns is dedicated to saving the precious lives of newborns from the dangers of abandonment and assisting pregnant girls and women in crisis.

Florida's Safe Haven Law allows mothers, or fathers of an unharmed newborn, approximately seven days old or less, to be left with someone at a hospital, fire rescue station or emergency medical service station. Parents get anonymity and won't face criminal prosecution unless the infant has any signs of abuse or neglect.

The hospital contacts a participating private adoption agency who will then arrange placement of the newborn with a waiting family. CFS waiting families have received Safe Haven infants over the years.

Read more about this non-profit at <https://asafehavenfornewborns.com/>



Kim at a hospital where CFS received a Safe Haven call. Kim was able to meet with the hospital social worker, the newborn, and work towards placing the child for adoption with the appropriate waiting family.

OTHER WAYS TO DONATE TO CFS...



Merck Gives Back
Volunteer • Contribute • Connect



MARCH - APRIL
2024

IN MEMORY OF

John Richard Allen

Linda Allen

Frances Booth

Deana Brannan

Joshua Dale Brown

Linda Case

Mary Ellen Callens

Deana Brannan

West President Church of Christ

Darrel Couch

Linda Case

Bob Poppell

Deana Brannan

Bert Hadley

Veda Schumacher

Linda Case



★ PLACEMENTS ★



John Michael 3/5/24



Dillion Dean 03/29/24



Ruthie 04/18/2024



Jessie 04/18/2024

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10 YEARS

*"Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise" (Prov 31:31)*

These words from long ago sum up **"10"-YEARS** of ministry that Donna Brooker has and continues to provide as the Ministry Assistant of Christian Family Services.

Donna has been an invaluable resource to this ministry and its Director. She not only fulfills the normal duties associated with administrative staff, but being true to her title of Ministry Assistant, she is an active listener. When she is on the phone with an expectant mom or an adoptive family, her care and compassion come through in the helpful and encouraging information she shares.

She has taken on the responsibility for the major fund raiser, Gator Game Parking, which demands a tremendous amount of time, above and beyond her normal duties. She researches new ideas and offers, and sometimes implements, them into the program. She has been heavily involved from time to time in major changes such as banking, websites, marketing and social media. She is always in search of new and more effective ways for the ministry to operate.

It can truly be said that she is the "hub" in the CFS office. She is the one that all the staff relies on to keep them straight and ensure that nothing falls through the cracks. It has been said that Donna is pragmatic, but kind; compassionate and generous. She freely goes above and beyond with her time and efforts to further the success of the ministry of CFS.

In addition, Donna is an important part of her husband's preaching ministry at the Cross City Church of Christ, and is involved in the local jail ministry. She continues to be involved with the University City Church of Christ, where her caring compassion often comes through in her relationships with others.

Let's honor a woman of God who is devoted to Christ, compassionate towards others and who sets an example for all to follow. Please pray for Donna as she continues to be a blessing during this time of transition.



LADS TO LEADERS PROJECT GIVES TO OTHERS

A Good Samaritan project provided supplies for the women and families CFS works with.

Tina Vairo, a member of University City Church of Christ, assisted several girls to collect and prepare the bags for CFS. A few days later, she brought some of the L2L girls with her to deliver the bags. Juliana, Kinsley, Brielle and Tina posed by the CFS sign. CFS Staff discussed the ministry with the girls and answered questions, then looked at the wall of babies in the CFS hallway before leaving.

Staff

Jerry D. Callens, Exec. Director & Caseworker
Donna L. Brooker, Ministry Assistant
Kim Tang, Caseworker
Becky Barclift, Bookkeeper
Katy Horton, Social Media & Graphic Design
John & Charlotte JeBailey, Cradle Care
Dan & Tess Hunting, Cradle Care

Board of Directors

Jimmie Brunson
Jackie Collins
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Holly Garvey
Ramon Osjeo
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