



Contact

NOVEMBER 2020

FROM MOPTA PRESIDENT

Adoption Awareness

BY CARLA WIESE



The original idea for a recognized adoption awareness week came from Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis in 1976, when he recognized the importance of adoption by stating that his state would celebrate adoption awareness for one week. Fast forward to 1984, President Reagan proclaimed the first National Adoption Week, which created a ripple effect in around the country. As more and more states began to hold events for National Adoption Week, it became clear that simply a week was not enough. President Clinton named November National Adoption Month in 1995, and we've been celebrating it ever since!

Adoption is a beautiful thing! In celebration of adoption and National Adoption month instead of my usual president's article I am going to highlight several families on our own Board of Mangers whose lives have been transformed by adoption (including my own). We are going to share with you our personal stories of adoption. I hope that upon reading these stories you will be inspired to learn more.

On the following pages, you'll find features of three adoptive families and two birth mothers.

FAMILY IS MORE THAN BLOOD

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The McKinney Family

Growing our family by adoption has been the most beautiful experience we have ever been through. My husband, John and I are very lucky to be adoptive parents to our beautiful daughter, MacKenzie.

After years of struggling with fertility issues, we decided adoption was the right choice. We first started thinking about international adoption and explored options there. Eventually we decided to go with domestic adoption. Physically, we were waiting to see and meet our child. Emotionally, we were waiting to become her parents. We waited about 13 months before we received our call and that day will forever be celebrated in our family.

Our hearts were racing and we experienced so many emotions that this day had finally come. Our daughter had been born in the morning and we were landing in Maryland within 24 hours. We went straight to the hospital to meet our beautiful daughter. John and I were able to meet our daughter's birth mother and her two children. This was a great experience for us and one we will share with our daughter when she is older

Today, MacKenzie is 10 years old now and has been the biggest blessing to our family. John and I will be forever grateful for her birth mother.

John and I became foster parents to our two nieces and nephew a couple years ago. Our family size doubled! What a wonderful experience for our family. We have been able to develop a relationship with our nieces and nephew and MacKenzie with her cousins. Our lives are forever impacted by the love we have come to know and share.



FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE



FILM NEGATIVE

The Wilmoth Family

My family grew from adoption and part of that growth expanding through biological families of my six adopted and five former foster kiddos' being a part of my family, community, church, and daily life. Adoption can be a process that is full of grief, but I've seen the beauty rise from that through healing and transparency. My husband and I encourage our children -- no matter their age -- to talk and ask questions about foster care and adoption and now that conversation become a part of our daily verbiage.

I've seen our children rise above their fears and become their own advocates! No matter how they became a part of our family, they know they are forever our kiddo and that security is a platform they can leap from to encourage others how to be the best version of themselves.

2 of our 6 adoptions were on National Adoption Day in November, 2016 and I'll always remember that day full of relief and joy. But seeing my children grow into their own advocates has become my daily reminder that adoption isn't "the end" but just "let's get started" instead! I encourage everyone to observe National Adoption Month by getting to know those around you affected by adoption and support the families and organizations working to assist those in the foster care and adoption world. Be part of the adoption community and bring awareness to #NationalAdoptionMonth 2020!



Felicia - Birth Mother

My social media bio often says "Mama to 3. Mother of 4." because I never want to exclude the child I birthed, but didn't raise. I am so blessed to be the birth mother to an incredible 15-year-old boy, Andrew, but I had no hand in raising him to be the person he is today. Every adoption story is special and unique; there is no one-size-fits-all. There are so many people around us that have adoption as a part of their lives and that should be celebrated!

I learned early on why the term "**gave up**" hurts so deeply. Yes, I did 'give up' some important things that I wish I could have enjoyed with Andrew. But the choice I made wasn't easy or careless and certainly **wasn't made lightly**. The proper way to refer to the adoption process is "**made an adoption plan**" or "**placed** for adoption" because it was a carefully thought out plan for the best outcome for the child and the child was lovingly placed with his/her new family. I lost a lot the day I placed my son with his family, but he gained so much more than I could have ever imagined -- and that makes it all so worth it!

My adoption plan was initially for a semi-open adoption. That meant I received letters and photo updates in the beginning, but there was never any promise of anything beyond that. I am fortunate that his adoptive parents were open to letting me be a part of **our son's** life. For the first several years, I was not ready to let them into my life; I needed time for my wounds and heartache to heal. But once I was ready, 8-year-old Andrew and his parents welcomed me with open arms. We were able to meet face-to-face for the first time since the hospital and have been able to enjoy in-person visits at each others' homes each year since. I have been welcomed at family celebrations and have been able to foster a sibling relationship with all four of my children.

There is a common saying about moms having a piece of their hearts walk around outside of their body, referring to their children. Let me tell you, it takes on a whole new level when that piece of your heart lives in a completely different state and is being raised as a part of another family! The 3 kids in my home never forget about their oldest brother and love to talk to him on the phone and spend each day looking forward to the next time they are with him in person. For me, it helps so much to be able to openly communicate with his family and know firsthand how loved and well-cared for he is. Andrew has an incredible and profound impact on so many lives already, I can't wait to see how he tackles the world in front of him with the tools his parents have given him and the love we all have for him.



Adoption is
another word for
LOVE

adoption lingo

- **Open** Adoption--free exchange of information between birth parents and adoptive parents
- **Semi-open** Adoption--some information is exchanged, often photos or letters, but not all information
- **Closed** Adoption--no information is exchanged and no updates required
- The type of adoption is often chosen at or before birth or placement of the child as a joint choice between the adoptive parents' wishes and the birth parents' wishes.
- Adoption type can change from one to another unless there is a contract in place that specifies otherwise.

Katherine – Birth Mother

HELLO! I'M KATHERINE SARTAIN. I AM A BIRTH MOTHER OF A BEAUTIFUL, INTELLIGENT DAUGHTER. SHE IS NOW 22 YEARS OLD. I CHOSE AN OPEN ADOPTION FROM BEFORE HER BIRTH. I KNEW GIVEN MY SITUATION I WAS NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GIVE HER EVERYTHING I WANTED HER TO HAVE, BUT I STILL WANTED BE A PART OF HER LIFE. WITH AN OPEN ADOPTION, WE COULD STILL KNOW EACH OTHER. IT HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN EASY, BUT I DO BELIEVE THIS WAS THE BEST. I STILL WORRIED LIKE A MOMMA AND I WAS THERE TO GIVE ADVICE AS NEEDED. HAVING AN OPEN ADOPTION MEANT HAVING A RELATIONSHIP WITH A WHOLE OTHER FAMILY. I WAS VERY LUCKY THAT WE FIT TOGETHER AS WELL AS WE HAVE, AGAIN NOT ALWAYS EASY. THERE WERE UPS AND DOWNS, BUT I WOULDN'T TRADE IT FOR ANYTHING.



The Wiese Family

Family is not defined by DNA;
it is defined by love!



Finally, there is my family's story. In 2011 we adopted a beautiful baby girl that was the perfect ending to our family. God had already blessed Rick and I with three wonderful sons but we knew there was more to our family's story. Adoption was something we had always felt passionately and how we ultimately decided to complete our family. With that decision we began to do our homework we read numerous books on adoption and spoke to counselors in preparation for our new arrival.

As a mother I was worried how it would be to parent an adopted child? I worried if we would have an instant bond. I worried about knowing the correct way to explain to her own adoption story. I worried that we would not be selected by a birthmother. I just worried! Then came Katie! As we entered the NICU on that October afternoon and saw her for the first time I knew. She was my daughter no more or less than my sons. She felt like she had always been a part of our family. Thankfully, parents do not have a finite amount of love for our children but rather an infinite amount.

I can say being an adoptive family is not always easy. Adoption has taught us so much and also strengthened our family in so many ways. Our family looks different, we have heard some negative comments and are used to curious stares. However, our family has been given a platform that has also allowed us to speak to people openly and change minds while opening hearts about transracial adoption. I have watched my boys become fierce protectors of their baby sister. I have watched my now 9-year-old daughter speak openly about her story. We are so thankful to Katie's birthmother. Our family has been blessed by adoption!



Be The One Award Winner

BY MELISSA RANDOL, MSBA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Part of the traditional greeting among the members of the East African Maasai tribes is “Kasserian ingera?” or, when translated to English, “And how are the children?” This greeting is exchanged even between those members of the community who do not have any children of their own. According to the Maasai culture, the health and well-being of the community is predicated upon the health and well-being of all its children.

This same question is the foundation of public education. In large part, it’s the reason our communities and our state created and sustain a system of education available to all children... to ensure we can affirmatively answer how all of our children are doing. We must provide our children with a quality education that prepares them for their futures, if our communities are to achieve success.

This question is also one that permeates the purpose of the Missouri PTA. The training provided by MOPTA, the advocacy coordinated by MOPTA, and the devotion of countless volunteer hours by MOPTA

members is for the purpose of ensuring all children in all of our communities throughout our state have equitable and adequate opportunities for success and that starts with a quality public education.

MSBA and MOPTA have enjoyed a close bond because our focus is the same – to put the needs of our children first and to ensure that we define “our children” as “all children.”

I have been a card-carrying member of MOPTA since the first enrollment night when my son started kindergarten over 20 years ago. I continue to be inspired by MOPTA’s purpose, commitment, advocacy, and leadership. MOPTA helped prepare me to be a better partner with my children’s teachers throughout their K-12 years. MOPTA’s conferences, workshops, and newsletters were a lifeline for me. I honestly don’t know how parents and guardians navigate the 13+ years of their child(ren)’s education without the resources provided by MOPTA.

Last month, I learned that MOPTA bestowed me with the honor of receiving the “Tina Zubeck: Be the One” award. I had the honor of meeting Tina when I was a young parent. She quickly became a dear friend and a role model. When now Immediate Past President Susan Rupert called my name, I was choking up because I was thinking about Tina and all she did to advance opportunities for all children. I was also thinking of Susan Rupert and the leadership I watched her provide to public education this past year as the Chair of the Education Roundtable. I was thinking of Carla Wiese and her passionate advocacy for all children. I was reflecting on all of the fantastic, talented PTA leaders who devote hour after hour not just for their own children, but for my children and for all of the 918,000+ children who are attending Missouri’s public schools. This award represents an organization I hold in the highest regard and this award will always be cherished because it represents all of you and your advocacy for all children. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. And thank you for always asking the question, “And how are all of the children?”

MOPTA Council Highlight

BY LORI PRUSSMAN

Kuddos to those Council presidents who are advocating for our students and our local units! Council presidents play a major role in the PTA family. Council presidents are providing leadership training and passing along important State and National PTA news to the local level in a timely manner. These leaders are the direct connection of the units to the State level. They often are helping the regional directors/PTA ambassadors to collect much needed information, new officers contact information and financial reports, that keep units in good standing.

They are also the bridge for communications from our school districts, creating an open line of communication from our district leadership and working together to build strong partnerships. Study after study shows that students excel when parents, teachers and administration work together to create an atmosphere of "family" in our schools. Working together to build a better future for all students!

Unfortunately, these individuals may go unnoticed and may not get the recognition that they deserve. We just want to give these hard working individuals a "shout out" and a great big "THANK YOU"! Keep up the great work and never be afraid to ask questions when you aren't sure about something. We are all working together to do the best for all students and we appreciate your place at the table.

First-year Presidents serving our councils for 2020-2021 term:

Grandview Council - Elaine Brewer
Hazelwood Council - Gayle Richardson
Nixa Council - Jason Goodall
Springfield Council - Mandy Mitchell

Returning Council Presidents for 2020-2021 term:

Blue Springs Council - Meg Young (2nd year of term)
Independence Council PTA - Angie Warner (2nd term)
Liberty Council - Jennie Alexander (2nd term)
North Kansas City Council - Brian Mercer (6th term)
Park Hill Council - Jessica Mayberry (2nd term)
Raymore-Peculiar Council - Christi Feagins (2nd term)
Raytown Council - Samira Johnson (2nd term)
St. Joseph Council - Erica Caples (2nd year)

Thank you to those Council Presidents who passed the gavel and served during 2019-2020

Rosa Valdez Parks - Columbia Council
Charolette Gantt - Grandview Council
Steven Cook - Hazelwood Council
Megan Prusnell - Lee's Summit Council
Lori Retone - Nixa Council - Ozark Council
Julia Spiva - Springfield Council

These Councils have not yet held elections for 2020-2021 *Columbia Council*

Lee's Summit Council
Ozark Council

Good Standing Deadline is December 1st

What is needed to be in good standing?

Send all of the following to Missouri State PTA:

1. Membership dues submitted regularly
2. Unit annual financial review (formerly referred to as Audit)
3. Fiscal Year-End Report (think budget)
4. Copy of 990 submission to the IRS
5. Bylaws submitted and approved within the last 3 years
6. Current term Officer's list (even if things didn't change from previous term)

Answers to many questions may be found with your Missouri PTA Regional Director or found [here](#) or by emailing office1@mopta.org

remember: Good Standing is a requirement for all grants, awards, scholarships and Reflections programs.

November Unit/Council President's Monthly Checklist

- Send in dues to State
- Plan for next general meeting
- E-learning - Effective Advocacy For Your Child
- Keep communication avenues current (social media, website, newsletters)
- Share *CONTACT* email with your members and consider submitting article for publication to FeliciaB@mopta.org!
- Share MOPTA social media posts
- Complete all items on "Good Standing Checklist" by December 1

MOPTA CALENDAR SNAPSHOT

Check out MOPTA's new Calendar feature found on the left side of our homepage! It can be integrated with your existing Google calendar and loads amazing resources and reminders to help your unit be successful. Here are some highlights, but check the full calendar for much more!

NOV. 16 NPTA & GOOGLE WORKSHOP - 2P

NOV. 19 ZOOM INTO MEMBERSHIP - 7:30

NOV. 20 NPTA GRANTS DEADLINE

NOV. 26 HAPPY THANKSGIVING

DEC. 1 SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

DEC. 1 GOOD STANDING PAPERWORK DUE!

DEC. 1 MOPTA HUDDLE! - 9A & 7P

DEC. 15 LOOK FOR DECEMBER CONTACT

DEC. 19 REFLECTIONS SUBMISSIONS DUE

MEMBERSHIP TIPS

ZOOM into Membership!
Missouri PTA • Follow

Join Missouri PTA as we partner with National PTA to hold a series of special events called Zoom into Membership (ZIM).
These events will focus the spotlight on Local Units across Missouri, to share ideas on retaining & increasing PTA membership.

JOIN IN!

- Ask anyone! Anyone can join and share their voice.
- Make sure to have an elevator speech ready to share.
- Talk about membership all the time, at every meeting, every encounter.
- Offer discounts to events, incentives for kiddos, and classrooms.

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Tips to Make Your PTA VIRTUAL

- *Build a community online - start with your facebook page or instagram and share it with your families!*
- *Move well-loved programs online - like spiritwear and family STEM nights*
- *Share resources - food pantries, low-cost internet, online learning tools*
- *Host your meetings online! - Google Meets and Zoom are great options!*

Check out National PTA's "Lead a PTA Virtually" for many more suggestions and resources! [Click here](#)

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CONSIDER JOINING US.

WE CAN SEE YOU ON OUR TEAM!



This has been such a great beginning for me and a growth opportunity in learning how big PTA is. I have learned so much and been able to serve my local community better. I encourage all current unit board members to consider applying to serve a term on the state board as a Regional Director. It is a great place to both begin and continue your service with PTA.

JESSICA BROADWAY, PROGRAMS & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CHAIR

Sides, Desserts & Snacks for your big meal

From our table to yours!

Peach Cobbler Dump Cake

- 2 - 16oz cans of sliced peaches in syrup
- 1 box of yellow cake mix
- 1/2 cup melted butter

Dump full can of peaches into 13x9 pan (with syrup) and cut into quarters. Top evenly with cake mix and pat flat. Drizzle melted butter on top. Bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes until golden brown on top.

Easy 5 cup salad (great for kids to do)

- 1 cup drained from a can Mandarin Orange sections
- 1 cup drained from a can Pineapple chunks
- 1 cup Mini Marshmallows
- 1 cup coconut shreds (sweet or unsweet)
- 1 cup regular sour cream

Mix together in a bowl and serve or keep refrigerated for a few hours to blend flavors

Click the photo for a fun recipe using leftover mashed potatoes!

EASY CHEESY Chicken and Noodles

- 2 large container of chicken broth
- 1 family size cream of chicken soup
- 1lb of chicken, canned, rotisserie, baked (seriously they all work well)
- 1 bag of wide noodles
- 8oz sour cream
- 1 can of riccis nacho cheese (small velveeta works too)

Boil noodles in chicken broth, then add everything else. Can be done in a crock pot or on the stove.

Kid-friendly food craft

- Celery stalks, cut into 2in pieces
- Cake decorating bag with tip of your choice (star tip #18 works great)
- Creamy Peanut Butter or cream cheese (or anything with an icing like consistency)

Make stars, zig-zags or any design that comes to mind. Just have some fun with it and enjoy the fancy presentation. This same fun food decorating can be applied for mashed potatoes or deviled eggs.



Help Curb the Spread of Germs During the Colder Months

by Lysol

As we enter into cold and flu season, it is more important this year than ever before to teach children about healthy habits at home and in the classroom. When children are healthy, it means that they can be present both physically and mentally to experience the magic of learning.

This year, flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading during the colder months. With flu symptoms similar to those of COVID-19, it is especially important for children to practice healthy habits to avoid getting sick. Lysol and National PTA encourage parents, teachers, and schools to take the necessary precautions during the fall and winter seasons:

- **Get vaccinated:** The best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated every year. The CDC recommends anyone 6 months of age or older should get a vaccine every flu season. At this time, vaccines for COVID-19 is under development.
- **Wash your hands often:** Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself from getting sick. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and remember to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails. Always wash your hands before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes:** Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Use the inside of your elbow if you do not have a tissue available. It is also important to wash your hands right after your cough, sneeze, or blow your nose.
- **Download Lysol Welcome Back Packs:** Lysol created Welcome Back Packs to help promote healthy habits for in-person learning as part of its HERE for Healthy Schools initiative to help curb the spread of illness in classrooms. Welcome Back Packs are available for teachers nationwide to download and print. They include fun and educational materials, posters, mirror clings, floor decals, and more help support school in-person learning and educate students on healthy habits. Encourage your school administrators to download and use the Welcome Back Packs in classrooms.

For more information on Lysol HERE for Healthy Schools and the Welcome Back Packs, please visit [Lysol.com/Here](https://www.lysol.com/Here).





HERE

For Healthy Schools

**Dedicated to Helping Curb the
Spread of Illness in Classrooms**



**Germ prevention lesson plans from Lysol and NEA
available at www.lysol.com/healthy-classroom**