



Christian Social Services of Illinois

Strengthening Families and Building Community

GOOD NEWS

November 2012

CSS Mission Statement

"As a visible expression of God's loving community and consistent with the example of Jesus Christ, Christian Social Services of Illinois provides direct services to persons of all backgrounds with social and emotional needs across the continuum of life."

CSS Programs

- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Counseling
- Day Care / Preschool
- Residential Treatment for Children
- Senior Employment
- Senior Assisted Living

CSS Service Areas

- Belleville/Metro East
- Mt. Vernon
- Carbondale
- East Alton
- Effingham
- Olney
- Mt. Carmel

CSS: Same Mission for over 65 years

In February 2012, Catholic Social Services officially changed its name to Christian Social Services of Illinois (CSS). In an agreement with the Diocese of Belleville, the agency became independent of the Catholic Diocese to adhere to the new State of Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act and to avoid closing the agency.

"It was all about the kids," explained Executive Director Gary Huelmann. "We are the safety net for more than 930 foster kids – kids who have been victims of abuse or neglect and need our services to help them have a more fulfilling life."

If CSS had not separated from the church, we would have had to close the Foster Care program. "Those kids' lives would have been dramatically disrupted," Huelmann continued.

Since its founding as Catholic Charities in 1947, CSS has provided services "for the least of these," Huelmann said. "In addition to Foster Care, our programs include St. John Bosco Residential Treatment Children's Center, St. John's Day

Care and Preschool, Adoption and Pregnancy Care programs, Counseling, Senior Aides Employment Program and our Senior Assisted Living Center.

"Even with all the people we are helping, we still hear daily from more people in our communities who need our assistance," Huelmann explained. "In our effort to meet those needs, we will be sending out our first Annual Fund Drive in the next few weeks. We will depend on the generosity of our supporters to help us continue to meet the growing critical needs in our communities.

"Even though our name has changed," Huelmann explained, "our mission of helping those who are the most vulnerable is still the same."



Serving More: Life Saving Services to More than 4,400

Did you know that CSS is the largest foster care agency in southern Illinois? That's right. CSS provides more life-saving interventions for children than any other agency. In addition, with the closing of foster care facilities run by the

Catholic Diocese of Springfield because of the Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act, CSS has been able to hire some of those displaced workers and open our own offices in East Alton and Effing-

ham to serve many of the children in those regions. We are now in 40 counties of southern Illinois and reports show that we served more than 4,400 individuals in all program areas in 2011.

Matt
RakersElla
YorkJohn
BeckerFather Ray
Cook, OMI

Make the World A Better Place – Make CSS Part of Your Estate Plan

Please consider naming Christian Social Services of Illinois in your estate plan. Whether it is a will or living trust, your gift will make a positive difference in the lives of the more than 4,400 people served by CSS annually.

CSS Welcomes Four New Board Members

Christian Social Services recently welcomed four new Board members.

Matt Rakers is Assistant Vice President AT&T IT Division in St. Louis. Matt and his wife, Mary, adopted their two sons, who are now teenagers, from CSS when they were newborn infants.

Ella York is the Community Outreach Liaison

for the Office of the Illinois Attorney General. York, an attorney, has served as a volunteer member of the Regional Advisory Council for CSS's Carbondale Region for the past year.

John Becker has been the Executive Director of Senior Services Plus in Alton, IL for seven years. Becker, who lives with his wife and two boys in

Grafton, has worked in the social services field for 27 years.

Father Ray Cook, OMI, is the Resident Director at Kings House Retreat Center in Belleville. He was ordained in 2012 and is doing outreach at the Family Center in East St. Louis.

Adopted Woman Gives Back to Complete the Circle

Courtney Hagen was three days old when her parents adopted her. "That was in 1988," Courtney explained. "My parents got married in 1980 and decided to adopt a baby through Catholic Social Services once they learned they were unable to have a child on their own. They waited eight years until they were able to adopt me."

Courtney's adoptive parents lived in Smithton, Illinois, where they raised her in the Catholic faith. They attended St. John's Parish, where she attended St. John the Baptist Grade school.

Courtney graduated with an undergraduate degree in psychology in May 2012. While she was going to school, she worked as a director for Laugh and Learn Day Care in Smithton. In June, after she completed her degree, she started working as a

foster care case worker at the same agency where her parents had adopted her in 1980 – Christian Social Services, which was formerly known as Catholic Social Services.

"Since CSS had helped my parents adopt me, I wanted to give back, to help parents do a better job at raising their children," Courtney explained. "I knew when I was very young that I was adopted. CSS had given my parents a book with basic information about my birthparents, which they had shared with me. I knew their first names and other information like their hobbies, their occupations and even their aspirations. "I knew that my birthmother had made a conscious decision, with the help and counseling work of CSS, to put me in the adoption program," she said. "I knew that for whatever the reason, my

birthmother knew there was a family who could give me a chance for a better life.

"My husband and I have a daughter now," she continued. "Having a child has helped me see how much she must have loved me to be able to give me up. She knew it would be best for me."

When Courtney applied for her position at CSS, she had to get her social security card. She stumbled across her adoption paperwork when looking for her birth certificate and it just so happened to have her birthmother's last name. "With a little research on the internet, I found my birthmother," she said with a smile. "I have been talking with her for about two months and in August we met for dinner. I just wanted to get to know her. I found out that we look just alike and have very similar personalities.

(continued on page 3)

“Baby Bella” Celebrates Miraculous First Birthday

Permission was given to take Baby Bella off the ventilator. The hospital chaplain, doctors and nurses all gathered in the room. The family was told that after she was taken off the ventilator, she would take three or four breaths and “then go peacefully,” according to Tim Reynolds, her adoptive father.

The tube was removed. However, she continued breathing. “Three hours later she was still breathing,” her father said. Tim and his wife, MeLissa, took Bella home the next morning.

A friend of the family’s had T-shirts printed with the inscription “I Believe in Miracles” on the front and “Baby Bella” on the back.

You see, when Bella was born, her mother gave her up for adoption. The newborn was taken to Car-

dinal Glennon Children’s Medical Center in St. Louis. The diagnosis was that she was blind and deaf and the prognosis was that she would never walk. She had to be resuscitated when she was born. She could not swallow and had to be fed through a tube.

Four families passed on adopting the 4-pound baby. The Adoption program staff at Christian Social Services contacted the Reynolds family to see if they would be interested in adopting the baby. The Reynolds family already included three adopted sons. The couple thought they were through adding children to their family. However, Tim said that he looked at Bella and fell in love. On Sept. 22, 2011, they went home with their new daughter.

The physician had told them they were to give

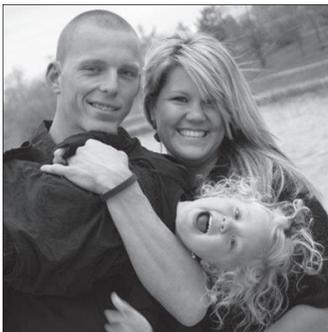
Bella “comfort care.” In other words, make what little time on Earth she has as comfortable as possible. “He gave her a year at the outside to live,” Tim said. Tim explained that they have nurses in their home 70 hours a week. In addition to the nurses, Bella has a team of therapists who also work with her – a vision therapist, an occupational therapist, a development therapist and a physical therapist.

Tim Reynolds is the principal of Mount Vernon Christian School, co-pastor of Mt. Vernon Baptist Temple and pastor of Waltonville Community Church. MeLissa is a teacher at MVCS.

Reynolds said the family has received countless prayers and gestures of support and encouragement over the past year. The therapists are amazed

at her progress,” said Toni Young, one of Bella’s nurses. She said the original prognosis was that she would never roll over or sit up. She can now roll over on her own and is working on sitting up on her own. The latest report was that the baby that weighed 4 pounds at birth is now weighing in at 14 pounds. The family celebrated Bella’s first birthday on August 31st.

This story was produced from excerpts of the Morning Sentinel of Mount Vernon.



Courtney Hagen, a foster care case worker at Christian Social Services, with her husband, Richard, and her 4-year-old daughter Aubree.

Adopted Woman Gives Back *(continued from page 2)*

“At dinner, we looked at my wedding pictures and shared stories about our families,” she continued. “My birthmother and I are getting closer every day. It has really just clicked between us. It is really awesome to see how that connection is there even though we have missed 24 years! We look forward to getting together soon again and I can’t wait for her to meet my daughter, Aubree. I tease her by reminding her she is officially a grandma now and she looks forward to being able to be a part of my life and watch me and my family grow.

“This has been a great experience and adoption isn’t something a lot of people think about as an option,” Courtney explained. “My parents loved me and gave me a wonderful life that my birthmother felt she couldn’t provide. She made that sacrifice for me and thanks to her I have the life that I have: a beautiful daughter, an amazing husband, a loving family, and now a great relationship with my birthmother which I am sure will continue to grow over the years to come.

“This is why my job is so important to me,” Courtney concluded. “I want to help parents through my work at CSS, to show their children in the end, how much they love them.”

November 2012

CSS Board of Directors

Barbara Calandro, *Chair*
John Hudspeth, *Vice-Chair*
Erin Prest, *Treasurer*
Beverly McCormick, *Sec'y*
Jonathan Becker
Fr. Ray Cook, OMI
Robert Lynch
Kenneth Nance, Sr.
JoAnn Pisel
Matt Rakers
John Sloser
Ella York

Executive Director
Gary Huelsmann

Look for these events in SPRING 2013:

23rd Annual
Christian Service Awards
and Benefit Dinner
Metro East

9th Annual
Charity Breakfast
Carbondale

5th Annual CSS
"Tee Off for Kids' Sake"
Charity Golf Scramble
Mt. Vernon

For more information
visit www.cssil.org



November is National Adoption Month: CSS Celebrates COA and Hague Accreditations



Christian Social Services has proven its excellence in receiving both Council on Accreditation (COA) for domestic adoptions and Hague Accreditation for international adoptions. "November is National Adoption Month," explained CSS Executive Director Gary Huelsmann. "We are happy that we can make it possible for Illinois residents to adopt infants and children who need good, nurturing homes. In fiscal year 2012, there were 120 infants and children adopted through CSS programs.

"The COA and Hague accreditations show that Christian Social Services meets the highest standards in providing adoption services," continued Huelsmann. "As part of our mission to provide direct services to persons of all backgrounds with social and emotional needs, we assist families in adopting children for them to love and nurture into adulthood.

"CSS first achieved Hague accreditation three years ago," he continued. "Now, because of our excellent record and adherence to the Hague criteria, we have been approved for another three years. CSS works with many other international adoption agencies in connecting children from many countries around the world to loving homes in Illinois."

For people who are interested in adopting a child, they can contact Denise Brown, CSS's Director of Adoption. "Denise will work with interested parties to determine if they will provide a strong family unit for a child they would seek to adopt," said Huelsmann.

"In September, CSS was also approved once again for COA accreditation for domestic adoptions to help families locally," Huelsmann added. "We see adoption as a three-way approach to help the child have the best that life can offer. We help prospective parents determine their needs, help the birthmother make decisions that are appropriate for her and give the child the chance to have a fulfilled life."

"Adoption is a selfless decision made by birthparents in the hopes that their child will have the best that life can offer," Brown added. "We support birthparents during this difficult time and prepare prospective parents to be a family built by adoption. Our focus is the best interest of the child."

Secret Santa Program



You can help more than 930 foster children in Southern Illinois to learn the true meaning of Christmas by participating in our Secret Santa program. For more information, visit www.cssil.org and click on "Events" or call the participating CSS office in your area:

Belleville (618) 394-5900 Carbondale (618) 351-0743 Mt. Vernon (618) 244-0344 East Alton (618) 258-8750



Christian Social Services of Illinois
8601 W. Main St., Suite 201
Belleville, Illinois 62223
618-394-5900



Proud member of

