



# Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections

FALL 2013

ISSUE 34

APAC is a collaborative effort between Children's Aid Society and the Alabama Department of Human Resources to provide education and supportive services to strengthen and empower Alabama's adoptive families.

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## Changing Lives Through Adoption

We had spent many years debating whether or not we should adopt a child, as there was always a longing in us to help orphans and children in foster care. For many years we let the fears and anxieties stop us from answering the call. A few years ago the pull got so great that we could not ignore it. We contacted A.P.A.C. and went through their G.P.S. classes. The staff answered the many questions we had. We were able to separate the truths and myths of adoption and were much better equipped to begin the journey.

Last year we adopted a wonderful little girl. She has blessed our family in more ways than we can even begin to count. She has been so brave and resilient throughout the transition. The day that her social worker brought her to our house she "informed" us that we were her Mommy and Daddy, that this is her new house, and she is never ever leaving.

Being five years old it is sometimes tough discussing the adoption with her, so we neither force nor ignore conversations about it, but rather discuss it on her terms and as she is ready. She will tell us "we are Family, FOREVER," and will name each member of our extended family and tell us that they too are her family forever. At

bedtime she will name things that she is thankful for and while her list always changes, she never fails to say she is thankful for her home, her family and her things. Our favorite was the night we were having playtime and out of nowhere she said "know what, I'm so glad I adopted y'all."



We tried to get her perspective on our adoption process and she told us "I just remember waiting and waiting for my Mommy and Daddy and you came, you came and got me and we made a family."

We never could answer why we waited so long to adopt, but now we know it is because we were waiting for her just like she was waiting for us.

Adopting our daughter is by far the best thing we have ever done. There are challenging times just as there are raising any child but when the day closes it is all well worth it. All it takes is hearing her say "I Love You" to make the days problems distant. While we have been a family for less than two years we cannot imagine our lives without her. It sometime seems as if she has been with us all along. We would never hesitate to do it all over again.

*Scott, Angela, and Brianna Deberry*

# Note from the Director

## Adoption Challenges

**1 X 4 X 2 X 4 X 4 = 128 True or False?**

One child adopted by a family of four (2 parents and 2 siblings), with two adoptive aunts and uncles, with four adoptive cousins, with four adoptive grandparents equals 128 new interactive relationships. These new relationships result in role changes for all. This is just a sampling, as friends, neighbors, church members, and school and community relationships are impacted and changed. The challenges that adoption may bring need to be recognized and supported.

**Services provided by APAC help address these challenges.**

**Need information about adoption issues?**

Call the APAC statewide toll-free line to talk to an adoption specialist (866-803-2722) or visit the library website ([childrensaid.org/apaclibrary](http://childrensaid.org/apaclibrary)) to check out a book, CD, or DVD.

**Want to be paired with an experienced adoptive parent for ongoing phone support?**

Call 205-943-5353 or email [jdouglass@childrensaid.org](mailto:jdouglass@childrensaid.org) and ask for a volunteer adoptive family mentor.

**Want to meet and socialize with other adoptive families in a group setting?**

Check the Adoptive Family Group listing in this newsletter and find the one nearest you.

**Desire individual adoptive family counseling? Having an adoptive family crisis?**

Call 866-803-2722 to be linked up with an APAC counselor near you.

**Want to be educated more about specific adoption issues?**

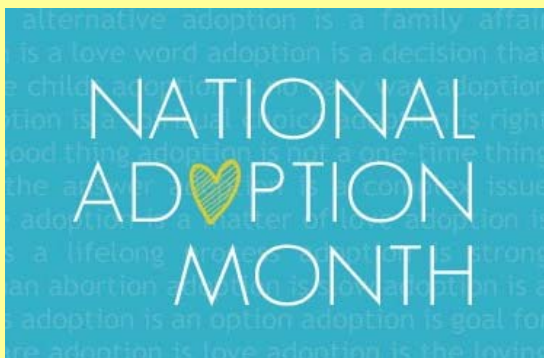
Visit the CAS website at ([childrensaid.org/apac](http://childrensaid.org/apac)) to see listings of monthly webinars or workshops related to adoption topics.

Adoptive family members need and deserve support as they face challenges throughout their adoption journeys. All of these services are free to Alabama adoptive families. If you or someone you know could benefit from these services, we hope to hear from you!

*Debra Hawk Finley, LCSW, PIP  
APAC Program Director*



**Join us as we celebrate National Adoption Month in November!**



### Mini-Conferences

November 7: Montgomery

November 8: Mobile

November 16: Birmingham

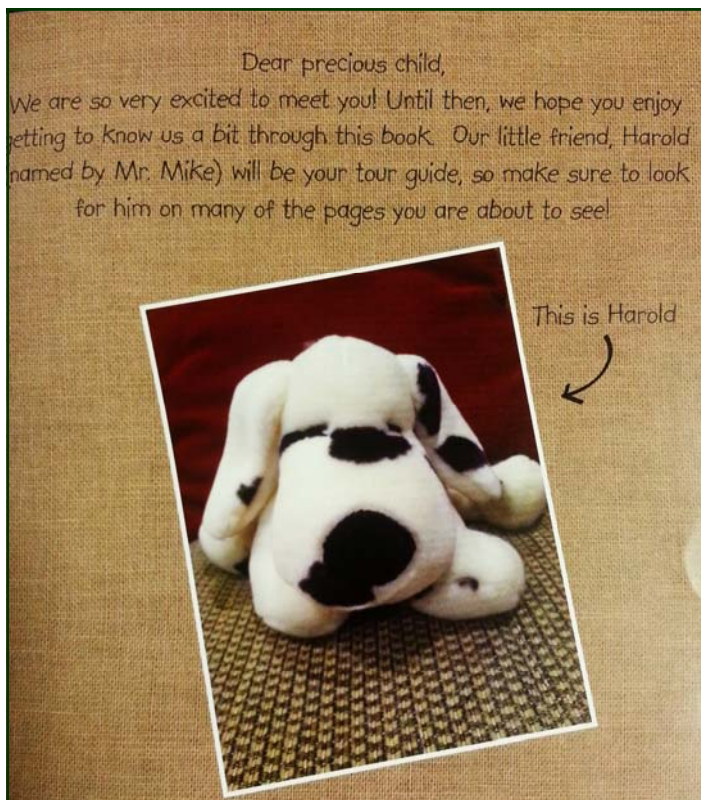
Open House: November 23: Mobile

*Visit [www.childrensaid.org/apac](http://www.childrensaid.org/apac) for more information.*



# Easing Transition with a Familiar Face

"Doggy!" our son, Jerry exclaimed, as he reached forward and grasped Harold, the stuffed dog from my hand. Jerry recognized Harold from the pre-adoption book we made him and was very excited to call him "mine." Jerry hardly let Harold go for the few hours we had together that day, kept Harold with him around the facility where he lived prior to moving in with us, and still sleeps with him nine months later.



The idea to give Jerry a stuffed animal came from a friend of a friend who had done the same thing when meeting their older adopted child. It was a priceless piece of advice! And we thank God for the idea to have Harold be the tour guide for the pre-adoption book we were required to make before meeting Jerry.

The pre-adoption book is required by DHR as a means to introduce prospective adoptive parents to

"waiting children." Knowing this would be our child's first impression of us and our home, I wanted to make it a fun and meaningful one. I took pictures of Harold throughout our house and compiled other pictures of our families, vacation activities, and church. I then chose Shutterfly.com to create our book. It took a few hours to get it just right, putting the pictures in order and coming up with child-friendly captions. Jerry loved finding Harold in the pages and laughed at some of the spots he was hiding, like in the washing machine.

Since Harold was the tour guide and was in many of the pictures, I referred to him in a lot of the text. For instance, on the page of pictures of our church the first caption reads, *Harold was ready to hop in the car and drive about 5 minutes down the road to show you our church (don't worry, we didn't let him drive).* Jerry's imagination took off when he heard that and we had a whole conversation about the idea of a little doggy driving the car!



We praise God for the ideas to give Jerry Harold and to use Harold in our pre-adoption book! Harold was a familiar face to Jerry when we first met and was a huge help in Jerry's long, back-and-forth-transition to our home.



# Adoptive Family Mentoring

## Relationship, support, information

A good way to anticipate what changes may happen after adoption...

Anytime a new member joins the family, whether that may be an infant or a 13 year old, learning how other adoptive parents have managed their new additions is a great way to gain information.

The **APAC Mentor Program** has been developed to meet those needs of adoptive parents as a support, information sharing, and network building effort.

Change is a reality but there can be aspects of change we do not anticipate or that take us totally off our family routine. This is not the fault of the new addition to the family. The entire family system simply needs to make adjustments. Many veteran adoptive families are quite familiar with this and their perspectives may be useful to families in the process of the adjustments.

The expectation that the family does not change is unrealistic. The expectation that the family should change is realistic. Family structure, parents being in charge and children responding to the leaders' directions does not necessarily require significant change in leadership but there is a change in how direction may be given and the type of responses the parents (leadership) are expecting. Why is this type of change to be expected? Because adopted children come from an experience of several if not many parents or foster parents directing them, in a

variety of appropriate and perhaps inappropriate manners.

A similar phenomena may occur in the sibling aspect of the family system. Birth siblings have been together since the beginning. An adoptive child may have birth sibling interaction and foster sibling interaction in a variety of settings and in a variety of appropriate or inappropriate experiences.

The accommodation for the adopted child's

unfamiliarity with the newly adopted parents' way of running a family is unique to every child and the experiences he brings with him. Social scientists say there are two types of changes, first and second order changes. First order changes are superficial changes and have very little integrity in the change. Second order change is substantive change and has great meaning attached to it.

But second order change need not be overwhelming or contradictory to the beliefs of the family. Changes should be genuine, well thought out, and in the best interest of all the family members.

Other adoptive families are a wonderful resource for support and ideas they have utilized in their families. Please consider contacting your local APAC office to be partnered with an adoptive family to hear their experiences and share ideas.



*Kathy Hummel, LCSW, PIP  
APAC Regional Coordinator*





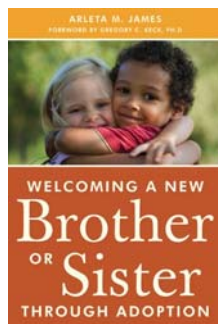
# Camp APAC 2013



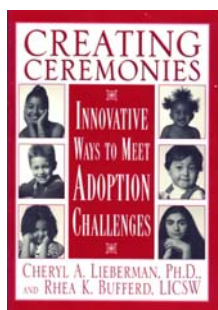




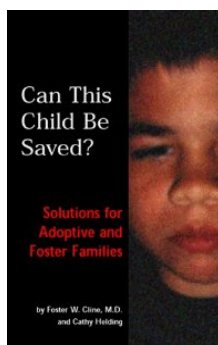
# APAC Library



Adoption is a big step which can change the whole dynamics of the family. It is crucial that parents understand the impact it has when new sibling relationships are forged and an adoptee becomes a part of the family. ***Welcoming a New Brother or Sister through Adoption*** is a comprehensive yet accessible guide that describes the adoption process and the impact of adoption on every member of the family, including the adopted child. It prepares families to have realistic expectations and equips them with knowledge to deal with a host of situations that may arise, addressing difficult questions head-on: "Did we make the right choice by adopting?", "How is this affecting our 'typical' children?", "Will our adopted son or daughter heal?" are explored and solutions discussed in detail. All this is accompanied with real life stories and direct quotes from children, which make it a realistic and insightful resource. This book is vital reading for adoptive families and professionals who work with them including social workers, counselors and psychologists.

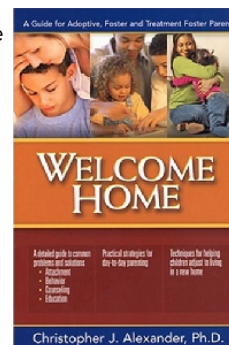


All families, no matter how they are brought together, struggle against enormous odds to thrive. However, for adoptive families, where the history is not a shared one, the rites and traditions commonly relied upon to negotiate transitions and to withstand internal or external stressors do not exist. This is where ***Creating Ceremonies: Innovative Ways to Meet Adoption Challenges*** comes in. The authors, a single mother with two adopted children and a social worker specializing in adoption, have joined forces to create a rich and vital resource to help adoptive families better cope with the day-to-day changes and challenges of life together. Carefully written to reach out to the range of families - two-parent, single-parent, foster-parent, as well as families with gay or lesbian parents and those of multiracial, multiethnic, or multicultural origin - the ceremonies presented here cover the spectrum of life-cycle phases, from preadoptive to moving in, from adjustment to reinforcement and beyond.



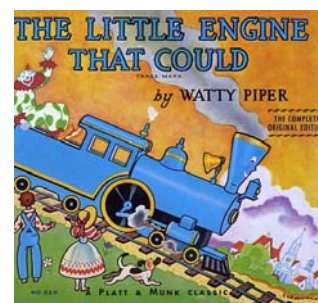
***Can This Child Be Saved? Solutions for Adoptive and Foster Families*** offers parents help and hope, encouragement and support. It examines what causes children to act and react the way they do, and why conventional strategies and approaches often fail to reach them. It explores and validates parents feelings and offers struggling families clearly detailed and easy to understand parenting techniques and therapeutic approaches that DO succeed with disturbed children.

***Welcome Home*** is a practical guide for adoptive, foster, and treatment foster parents. Written by a child psychologist who specializes in adoption, foster care, and attachment. There is extensive coverage of mental health, counseling, and attachment issues.



In asking her parents to tell her again about the night of her birth, a young girl shows that it is a cherished tale she knows by heart. ***Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born*** is a unique, exuberant story about adoption and about the importance of a loving family.

"I think I can! I think I can!" This well-loved classic tale of ***The Little Engine That Could*** who isn't afraid to try has and will continue to inspire and entertain generations of children.



## Our Library is Online!

You can view a complete list of your local resources, search by topic or keyword, and easily reserve your favorite items through our new convenient website! For more details, visit [www.childrensaid.org/apaclibrary](http://www.childrensaid.org/apaclibrary)

# Juggling All Your Hats

Adoptive parenting is much like a colorful hat rack, with a myriad of expectations and responsibilities. Many of us play multiple roles throughout our lifetime, adding new hats to the rack or removing them. For me, I wear the hat of wife, mother, sister, daughter, aunt, counselor, and the list goes on! Each of these roles can be exciting and somewhat challenging. For those who add to their family through adoption, they add two hats simultaneously, one for parenting and another for adoptive parenting.

Adoptive parenting is a life-long journey that doesn't end at finalization. The ongoing journey may consist of answering questions the child has about why he was adopted, or helping her understand that she did nothing wrong to cause her adoption. Another facet may be one day supporting his decision in searching for his birth parents.

Managing all of the roles one plays in life can be a challenging experience. It may seem there is not enough time in the day to accomplish everything. I often hear adoptive families say they find it difficult to meet the demands expected of them. Unfortunately for married couples, the husband or wife usually becomes the one whose needs are left unmet. This may affect the stress level for both parents but can also diminish the overall sense of happiness for the family unit. Several ways to help manage all of the roles and expectations is to first of all become educated about adoption and the core struggles that adoption may bring to the child/family. There are many webinars, trainings, and books available in our APAC Resource Library to aid in this first step and address the unique challenges that adoptees as well as the parents may face.

If our expectations are not met it can become frustrating and challenging. Therefore, it is crucial to keep expectations realistic. One family with an adopted teenager daughter naturally expected she would be defiant. Thankfully, that expectation never happened! Another family adopted a female child

expecting her to have a difficult time warming up to her new dad since this was her first time living in a home with a male parent. Ironically, they discovered the child had a much more difficult time warming up to her mother.

Here are a few tips to help in managing expectations:



1. Don't just to set expectations about happy things, but set expectations of things that are already happening that you may not be so thrilled about. For example, your child hates waking up in the morning and is very grouchy. Set that expectation in your mind that my child is going to wake up today angry. By doing this you are already expecting the negative outcome, but by already expecting you will be able to manage it better and create strategies to help.

2. Don't be hard on yourself if something you expected to happen doesn't indeed turn out that way.

3. Don't feel guilty and blame yourself (or others) when expectations are not met.

Lastly, in managing the changing nature of adoptive parenting, find a good support system. It is very important to be able to share your

joys and hardships with others that understand it. They will be able to validate what you are feeling as well as help with suggestions. APAC has many adoptive family groups throughout the state to help families develop a support network. It is also important that if you are part of a two parent home to have time alone with your significant other to process the events of the week or to just enjoy some quiet time together.

No matter how many roles you are playing in life, being a parent is one of the most important roles you will ever have. Take time to enjoy every moment!

*Jill Sexton, M.Ed, ALC  
APAC Family Counselor*



# We Equip You Where You Are!

No need to leave your home or office!  
If you have internet access, you can join our live webinars  
and receive Social Work, Counseling, and  
Foster Parent continuing education credits!



- **October:** Bullying
- **November:** Impact of the Holidays: Grief & Loss
- **December:** Internet Safety

*View our  
webinars  
on your  
smartphone  
or tablet!*

*\* For further details and registration information, go to [www.childrensaid.org](http://www.childrensaid.org).\**

## Adoptive Family Groups

APAC offers support groups that meet throughout the state,  
providing education and social interaction for adoptive parents and their children.

### Northern Region

**Calhoun County**-2nd Thursday  
6:30-8pm @ Greenbrier Church of Christ, Anniston

**DeKalb County**-4th Tuesday  
6-7:30pm @ Fellowship Christian Center, Rainsville

**Etowah County**-3rd Monday  
6-7:30pm @ Christ Central United Methodist, Rainbow City

**Jefferson County East**-1st Thursday  
6-7:30pm @ Huffman United Methodist, Birmingham

**Jefferson County Multi-Cultural**-2nd Tuesday  
6:30-8pm @ Bluff Park United Methodist, Birmingham

**Jefferson County West**-4th Thursday  
6:30-8pm @ Pleasant Hill United Methodist, Bessemer

**Lauderdale County**-1st Tuesday  
6-7:30pm @ Cross Pointe COC (ED Bldg), Florence

**Madison County**-2nd Monday  
6-7:30pm @ First United Methodist, Huntsville

**Marion County**-2nd Monday  
6-7:30pm @ First United Methodist, Winfield

**Morgan County**-2nd Tuesday  
6-7:30pm @ Calvary Assembly Church, Decatur

**Shelby County**-1st Tuesday  
6:30-8pm @ First United Methodist, Alabaster

### Southern Region

**Autauga/Elmore County**-4th Tuesday  
6-7:30pm @ Glynwood Baptist Church, Prattville

**Barbour County**-3rd Monday  
5:30-7pm @ First United Methodist, Eufaula

**Henry County**-1st Tuesday  
6-7:30pm @ Headland First Baptist, Headland

**Houston County**-3rd Friday  
6:30-8:00 @ Dothan Christian Fellowship, Dothan

**Geneva County**-2nd Monday  
6:30-8pm @ Trinity Baptist, Geneva

**Lee County**-1st Thursday  
6-7:30pm @ The Big House Foundation, Opelika, AL

**Montgomery County**-3rd Thursday  
6-7:30pm @ Frazer United Methodist, Montgomery

**Baldwin County**-3rd Thursday  
6-7:30pm @ Eastern Shore Church of Christ, Daphne

**Mobile County**-4th Friday  
6-7:30pm @ Regency Church of Christ, Mobile

All groups have parent sessions,  
child groups, and childcare  
unless otherwise indicated.



— open —  
YOUR HEART.

— open —  
YOUR HOME.

**CHANGE A LIFE THROUGH ADOPTION.**

Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections  
866-4-AL-KIDS | [www.childrensaid.org](http://www.childrensaid.org)



Alabama is home to approximately 260 children who are available for adoption and waiting for a forever family. APAC will host adoption orientations in the Birmingham and Huntsville areas in December. If you or someone you know would like to learn more about adoption and attend classes to be approved as an adoptive family for Alabama's Waiting children, please call 866-4-AL-KIDS.

**Pre- Adoption Services would like your help recruiting families for Alabama's "Waiting Children."**

- Making a request to your church, small group, civic organization etc. for the APAC Pre-Adoption Services staff to lead an informational session on our services.
- Taking flyers to display at your church, civic organization, place of employment, or other location you frequent.
- Hosting an adoption information session of your own with a speaker from APAC Pre-Adoption Services.

*If you would be willing to partner in any of these ways , please contact Caitlin Licata at [clicata@childrensaid.org](mailto:clicata@childrensaid.org) for more information on how you can help with the recruitment of adoptive families.*



APAC Pre-Adoptions Services would like to give special thanks to our AmeriCorps Member Agee Baldwin for his year of service to our program which was made possible by our partnership with Heart Gallery Alabama.



# Alabama's Waiting Children



**Phillip**, born August 2001, needs a permanent, structured home with a one or two parent family who can help him work through his past history, focus on his strengths, and love him unconditionally. Phillip needs a parent or parents who will provide love and nurturing, and be involved with activities and sports. Phillip is an inquisitive child who asks numerous questions about things with which he is unfamiliar. He is also very thoughtful. Once personal information is shared with him, he demonstrates concern and expresses interest and sensitivity, remembering to inquire about shared information.

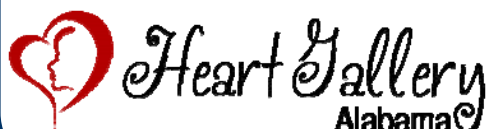
Academically, he needs guidance and structure to improve reading and study skills. He interacts well with other children and enjoys playing basketball, baseball, riding bikes, and playing outdoors. He enjoys playing video games, loves movies, and enjoys dressing up for church. He is not shy about having his picture taken and is quite a "ham."

He was born prematurely with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and was not expected to live. He has a diagnosis of ADHD, which is managed with medication.

Phillip desires an adoptive family and would like to be a "regular" kid. He looks up to older males and would benefit from a mentoring relationship or an older brother. He is eager to please and loves to stay active. He needs a home with a strong male role model and a nurturing mother who will love him unconditionally and help him to achieve his potential.

**Eleri** was born April, 1999. She is in need of a nurturing and loving home. She has spent most of her life alternating living with various maternal relatives and foster care. Eleri has been in several different placements while in foster care. She struggles with issues from her past but she responds well in a nurturing environment where she feels safe and secure.

Eleri has a beautiful smile and a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. She is definitely a teenager and she enjoys all the things that a teenage girl enjoys, i.e. clothes, music, friends, and boys! She also enjoys swimming, reading and pizza. She has a good sense of humor and is very loving. Eleri is a hugger and needs a family to hug her back. Eleri is in the 8th grade. Her grades are mainly B's. She enjoys reading and reads above her grade level.



Visit [www.heartgalleryalabama.com](http://www.heartgalleryalabama.com)  
to meet more kids waiting to be adopted or  
to inquire about any of the kids you see here.



**Antonio**, born January 2002, lives in a foster family home and has adjusted well. Antonio is a very bright young man and at times can be very engaging. He is very talented and has a beautiful voice. He sings in the choir at church. Antonio is a smart child with an exceptional vocabulary who likes to plan ahead, and states that he would like to join the US military upon graduating high school. He enjoys riding his bicycle and playing video games with friends.

Antonio has a great appetite and enjoys cooking and assisting others with preparing meals. Antonio is also musically talented, playing various instruments. Antonio responds better to men and he will do much better in a two-parent home. He does well in school.



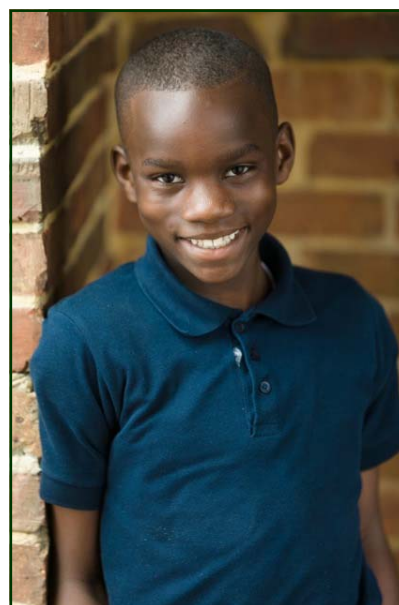
**Shyann** was born January 2000 and is in the 6th grade. She receives special education services for Math and Reading. She is a cute, active, and vibrant young lady. She enjoys taking etiquette classes to learn how a lady should act. Her ideal birthday party would be at a skating rink. Shyann loves to sing and be in the choir at church. She likes basketball and animals. She is very talkative and enjoys the company of others. Shyann enjoys playing with her friends and going bowling and skating.

Shyann would prefer a two parent family (mother/father) but she would also do well in a single female household. Because of her love for animals, she would like for her new family to have pets. Shyann forms strong attachments to her care givers and is a team player.

**Darryl** is a happy child with a great smile. He has many friends and enjoys being around older kids, as he says they are more fun. He enjoys playing video games and being outside with friends playing basketball and football. He seems proud when he talks about being a greeter at church and assisting with the offering. His favorite foods are pancakes, pizza, and French fries.

Darryl receives special education services and needs additional help in math and reading. He enjoys school but can be disruptive at times. He receives medication to help control his behavior. During times of change in his life he will regress until he adjusts to the changes in routine. He has made progress and continues to reside in the same foster home he has been in for many years.

Darryl wants a family that will keep him safe and will play games with him. He would like to have other children in the home and wants a family that is active. He enjoys being around animals and says that he would love to have a pet.





CHILDREN'S AID  
SOCIETY

2141 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue South

Birmingham, AL 35205

P: 866.803.2722

F: 205.933.8152

E: [cas@childrensaid.org](mailto:cas@childrensaid.org)

W: [www.childrensaid.org](http://www.childrensaid.org)

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## Connect With APAC

### Central Office & Northern Region Birmingham

2141 14th Avenue South  
Birmingham, AL 35205  
P: 205.949.2722  
F: 205.933.8152  
TF: 866.803.2722

### Huntsville Contact

P: 256.539.5828  
F: 256.536.9497  
TF: 888.539.5828

### Southern Region Montgomery

400 Interstate Park  
Suite 425  
Montgomery, AL 36109  
P: 334.409.9477  
F: 334.409.9474  
TF: 866.944.1044

### Wiregrass Contact

P: 334.409.9477  
F: 334.409.9474  
TF: 866.944.1044

### Mobile Contact

857-B Downtowner Blvd.  
Mobile, AL 36609  
P: 251.460.2727  
F: 251.460.2729  
TF: 800.489.1886



phone

866.803.2722



website

[www.childrensaid.org/apac](http://www.childrensaid.org/apac)



[www.childrensaidblog.org](http://www.childrensaidblog.org)