



# Willie's Voice

Providing Services to Maintain, Support, and Strengthen Families Created Through Adoption

Volume III, Issue I

March 2009

**Call for more information on these services:**

- Camps for children (ages 8-17) who have been adopted
- Camps for parents & families created through adoption
- Crisis Services to help preserve the adoptive family unit
- Educational Workshops for adoptive parents
- Community Resource referrals
- Lending Library
- Respite Services

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## Teen Suicide: Warning Signs, Risk Factors and Resources

By :Ashley Hacker

It can be hard to remember how it felt to be a teen, caught in that gray area between childhood and adulthood. Teen years can be a time of great possibility but it can also be a period of immense confusion and anxiety. There is pressure to fit in socially, to perform academically, and to act responsibly. There is the beginning of sexual feelings, a growing self-identity, and a need for independence that often conflicts with the rules and expectations set by others. When a teen commits suicide, everyone is affected. Family members, friends, teammates, neighbors, and sometimes even those who didn't know the teen well might experience feelings of grief, confusion, guilt — and the sense that if only they had done something different the suicide could have been prevented. So it's important to understand the forces that can lead teens to suicide and to know how to help.

**Teen Depression Warning Signs:**

- Frequent headaches, muscle aches, stomach aches or tiredness, without a medical cause
- Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school
- Talk of or efforts to run away from home
- Being bored, sulking
- Lack of interest in spending time with friends or family
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Social isolation, poor communication
- Fear of death
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Increased irritability, anger, hostility, or crying
- Reckless behavior
- Neglect of clothes and appearance
- Difficulty with relationships
- Changes in mood

**Risk factors for suicide include:**

- **Previous suicide attempts** - Approximately a third of teen suicide victims have made a previous suicide attempt.

- **Depression and/or alcohol or substance abuse** - Over 90% of teen suicide victims have a mental disorder, such as depression, and/or a history of alcohol or drug abuse.
- **Family history of mental disorders, substance abuse, or suicide** - Teens who kill themselves have often had a close family member who attempted or committed suicide.
- **Stressful situation or loss** - Such stressful situations include: getting into trouble at school or with the police; fighting or breaking up with a boyfriend or a girlfriend; and fighting with friends.
- **Exposure to other teenagers who have died by suicide** - Teens are more likely to kill themselves if they have recently read, seen, or heard about other suicide attempts

**Getting Help!**

If your teen is in a crisis situation, your local emergency room can conduct a comprehensive psychiatric evaluation and refer you to the appropriate resources. If you're unsure about whether you should bring your child to the emergency room, contact your doctor or call (800) SUICIDE for help.

- Aiken: (803) 648-9900
- Anderson: (864) 226-0297 (864) 868-4878
- Columbia (Serving Calhoun, Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry, Orangeburg, and Richland Counties): (803) 790-4357 (803) 733-5408
- Gaffney: (864) 487-4357
- Greenville: (864) 271-8888
- Spartanburg: (864) 582-1100
- Teen Line: (864) 467-8336
- Hilton Head: (843) 686-4357
- Bluffton: (843) 757-4357
- Beaufort: (843) 524-4357
- North Charleston: (843) 744-4357
- Teen line: (843) 747-TEEN

**Information Obtained From:** <http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/suicide.html>

## Self-Care: Barriers and Basics for Foster/Adoptive Parents Fall 2005 *Adoptalk* by Deena McMahon

When a foster or adopted child has special needs, parents must juggle appointments with mental health therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, psychiatrists, ophthalmologists, allergists, and asthma specialists. They must attend IEP meetings, keep in touch with the school principal and their child's teacher, check in with the social worker, and establish a schedule for personal care attendants (PCAs). Ongoing appointments and emergencies keep parents so busy that attending to their own feelings and needs may be put on hold.

Self-care, however, is crucial for foster and adoptive parents. The physical and emotional toll of caring for traumatized children can be overwhelming. Children can project hurt onto parents and, at the same time, blame parents for feelings of loss and despair. Parents must understand both the complexities of foster care and adoption, and their child's unique needs. With that knowledge and an ongoing commitment to self-care, parents can more easily remain effective and balanced.

### Barriers to Good Self-Care

Unfortunately, adoptive and foster parents face many barriers to taking care of themselves.

To start, the phrase—"Take care of yourself!"—has become so trite that, for many, it has lost all meaning. When someone casually tells an adoptive mom whose kids have special needs to take care of herself, she may feel frustrated and angry. It's easy to say. It's not easy to do.

Second, many who choose to foster and adopt are natural caregivers. They have pets, partners, children, and aging parents who all require care and attention. Most days, the amount of energy they devote to others' needs far exceeds any energy directed to their well-being. In fact, many

caregivers are uncomfortable being on the receiving end of others' attention and assistance. They don't want to be too needy, or seem like they are not up to the challenges they have taken on.

Third, many adoptive and foster parents really want to be there for their families. They want to remember birthdays with a homemade cake. They want to be the cheerful volunteer at their child's school. They want to deliver a meal to a sick friend, help out at church, and serve on task forces that address children's needs. So, they work longer and try harder to meet their families' needs.

Fourth, too many parents simply do not know what would help them. They know something is missing, but can't put their finger on just what might make them feel better. Parents are often told, "Call if there is anything you need," but it is hard to call and ask for help, especially when you cannot even articulate what you need. This leaves many parents vulnerable and exhausted.

Even more significantly, too many foster and adoptive parents believe they somehow shouldn't need support. Many times I have heard parents say that they are in no position to complain or ask for help since they chose to foster or adopt their children. But even when parents know what challenges the child faces, it is often impossible to predict how living with a certain child will change a family.

Compounding matters, recent disasters—9/11, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the earthquake in Pakistan, and the prolonged conflict in Iraq—remind us all that there are always other people who are worse off. We are taught as children to be happy with what we have since other people have it much harder. It is little wonder we sometimes feel guilty because our ongoing trauma pales in comparison to these catastrophic tragedies.

### The Road to Good Self-Care

From working with parents, I know that to over-

come social, mental, and emotional barriers to self-care, you must first come to understand the importance of taking care of yourself, and then build self-care into your daily routine. You must believe that you are worth taking care of, and that your happiness and well-being are not peripheral to, but essential for good parenting. Once you can accept that:

- **Give yourself permission to need something.** It is okay to ask for help. Having needs and trying to meet them is not a sign of incompetence or weakness. It is part of healthy family life. Thirst is your body's signal to drink and prevent dehydration. In the same way, when you feel stressed out, it is time to take a break so you can regain perspective and deal with the issue at hand more constructively.
- **Keep it simple.** Make life choices that fit your family. Develop consistent routines. Create a safe environment. Understand and respect both your limits and those of your children. Resist the impulse to over-commit what little time you have. Prioritize. Save energy for things that really matter, and seek outside help as soon as you need it. When possible, take advantage of respite opportunities and PCAs to relieve some of the stress during really rough times.
- **Stop comparing yourself to other adults and families.** They do not live your life, and they are not raising your children. Get comfortable with compromising and being different. Your child may talk, think, achieve, behave, and live differently than other children. Instead of measuring your family's worth by other people's standards, set expectations for your family based on your children's capabilities and your family's reality.
- **Know which part of the day is the hard-**

Continued on Page 4

## PARENT SUPPORT WEEKEND: APRIL 18-19, 2009

Children Unlimited will once again host a Parent Support Weekend at scenic Camp Kinard in Leesville, SC.

This is a weekend getaway for parents who adopted children from foster care. Parents must still have an adopted child, ages 17 and under, still in the home.



Saturday parents can participate in several workshops, go fishing, relax in the camps many

rocking chairs, take a nap, go for a walk, and so much more. In the evening parents are able to join in a parent discussion group and game & social night.

Come see why family return year after year! There is no charge to attend; however, space is limited.

Registration will be open March 2 - April 10, 2009.

For more information contact Debra Beecken,

ph: 803-217-3161 or email: dbeecken@children-unlimited.org

## Upcoming Events In 2009

Call 803-217-3161 or email [dbeecken@children-unlimited.org](mailto:dbeecken@children-unlimited.org) to add your children & family to the mailing list or to ask about registering for an event!

**Love & Logic:** "Parenting a Challenging Child." A 2-day class offered at no charge to DSS Adoptive Families (all other adoptive families call for class opportunities)

### March 2009 \*\*

- 21 & 28: Midlands Region

### September 2009 \*\*

- 19 & 26: Upstate Region

**\*\* Day camps offered for participant's children ages 12 and under!**

### April 2009

- 18-19: Parent Support Weekend Camp Kinard, Leesville, SC



### June 2009

- 19-21: Youth Adoption Camp (ages 8-12)/ Camp Bob Cooper, Summerton, SC



### July 2009

- 24-26: Teen Adoption Retreat (ages 13-17)/ Camp Bob Cooper, Summerton, SC



### August 2009

- 15-16: Adoptive Family Retreat (camp for everyone living within the adoptive home) Camp Kinard, Leesville, SC



### October 2009

- TBA: Adoptive Parent Conference

If you adopted a child in 2008 don't forget to call and add him/her to the camp mailing list.

## SC State Resources for Adoptive Families: Post Legal

[www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/index.html](http://www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/index.html)

### State Adoption Subsidy & Medical Subsidy:

Thomas Roberts  
1535 Confederate Avenue  
PO Box 1520  
Columbia, SC 29202  
803-898-7405

- Contact to utilize medical subsidy or for subsidy questions

### SC State Reunion Registry and State Search Information:

Bernadette Rogers  
1535 Confederate Avenue  
PO Box 1520  
Columbia, SC 29202  
803-898-7561  
800-922-2504

- Email: [brogers@dss.state.sc.us](mailto:brogers@dss.state.sc.us)
- Adoptees can add name to registry and search after age 21

### SC Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA):

1535 Confederate Avenue  
PO Box 1520  
Columbia, SC 29202  
803-898-7566

- Contact to transfer subsidy if moving out of state

## Adoption Support Groups in SC



### The SC Foster Parents Association:

- 42 support groups for foster/adoptive families
- Contact: Carl Brown, Ex. Dir.  
Ph & Fax: 803-865-2020  
800-475-7650  
e-mail: [cbrown39@aol.com](mailto:cbrown39@aol.com)  
Web: [www.SCFPA.com](http://www.SCFPA.com)

### SC Council on Adoptable Children:

- Contact: Gail Groomster
- Ph: 803-256-2622

### Children Unlimited of FSC:

- Parent Support Weekend-meets once a year over a weekend
- Contact: Debra Beecken  
Ph: 803-217-3161  
Email: [dbeecken@children-unlimited.org](mailto:dbeecken@children-unlimited.org)

### Adoptive Families Group:

Meets 10 times a year in the midlands  
Contact: Sunny Jewell, President  
Ph: (803) 808-6315  
Email: [jewellsunny@gmail.com](mailto:jewellsunny@gmail.com)

Contact Debra Beecken at 803-217-3161 or email: [dbeecken@children-unlimited.org](mailto:dbeecken@children-unlimited.org) to add your support group to the listing or to locate the nearest support group.

## Self-Care: Barriers and Basics for Foster/Adoptive Parents (continued from Page 2)

**est and have a plan to make it go more smoothly.** If getting ready for school is rough, prepare as much as you can the night before. If bedtime is hard, start early and set a predictable routine. Decide beforehand how you will respond to behaviors that make that time of day so trying. Accept that you won't get anything else done, and do only what you must to get through the hard parts.

- **Join a parent support group.** Meeting with other parents who have similar experiences and feelings is one of the most powerful and renewing activities for anyone raising children who have special needs. Just knowing that you are with people who "get it" is affirming. Group members may also be able to trade respite care with you. If a group is not an option, find at least one person outside your immediate family with whom you can be real, and whom you can trust to understand.
- **Have down time every day.** Maybe it's a morning walk. It might be 10 minutes with the paper and a good cup of coffee. It can be writing in your journal before bed. It could be the drive into work, or times of silent prayer in church. Your mind, body, and soul need time to regenerate from life's stresses. If you have no down time—a time without distractions and demands—you can-

not benefit from moments of reflection and calm that may help you to center and stay balanced.

- **Routinely have something to which you can look forward.** Maybe it's coffee with a neighbor after the kids are at school. Or a glass of wine Friday night. Or date night with your partner. It could be going alone to the grocery store Saturday morning or having an uninterrupted bath. Remember, waiting too long to reward yourself for a job well done is not an effective way to shape your behavior. Immediate positive reinforcement works for adults too.
- **Accentuate the positive.** It may not be easy, but as you step back to evaluate how you and the family are doing, find time to laugh at the silly situations that come up. Recognize the good in yourself and your children. Celebrate every step forward, no matter how small. Stay connected with your partner. Eat something you really enjoy. (Nutrition is important. Indulgence is wonderful.) Find affirmation in the process of raising an adopted child.

Caring for children who have special needs is a matter of the heart. Self-care is a mind-set and a positive choice. If you can find a balance between caring for your children and meeting your own needs, you will ultimately be much better equipped to do both.

## Internet Resources for Adoptive Families

### Adoption Coalition for Education and Support (ACES) -

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

South Carolina based website dedicated to identifying resources for adoptive families

### Adoption Support for Children with Special Needs: <http://adopting.com/special.html>

### North American Council on Adoptable Children:

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

**Adoptuskids:** [www.adoptuskids.org/](http://www.adoptuskids.org/)  
National photo listing of waiting children

**Adopting.com:** [www.adopting.com](http://www.adopting.com)  
Resources for Children with Special Needs

### Adopt America Network:

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

**Older Child Adoption On-line Magazine:** [www.olderchildadoption.com](http://www.olderchildadoption.com)

### The Dave Thomas Foundation:

[www.davethomasfoundation.org/html/home](http://www.davethomasfoundation.org/html/home)

This organization plays a significant role inspiring people to action and positively affects the image of adoption and the children who wait.

## Internet Highway to More Resources: check out these websites!

### Special Education Law & Advocacy:

- [www.proparents.org/](http://www.proparents.org/)
- [www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com)
- [www.reedmartin.com/](http://www.reedmartin.com/)

### Children with Disabilities:

- NICHCY Kids: [www.kidsource.com/NICHCY](http://www.kidsource.com/NICHCY)
- NICHCY: [www.nichev.org](http://www.nichev.org)
- Medical University of SC: <http://www.musckids.com/depts/>
- Family Connection South Carolina: <http://www.familyconnectionsc.org/>
- Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN): <http://www.state.sc.us/ddsn/index.html>
- Easter Seals: [www.sc.easterseals.com](http://www.sc.easterseals.com)
- Sensory Processing Disorder Network: <http://www.idfoundation.org/>

- Children and Adults with Attention Disorders (CHADD): [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org)
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder links: <http://www.fasdnorthwest.org/facts/>  
<http://www.come-over.to>  
<http://fasalaska.com/brochures/Characteristics.doc>  
[www.ggc.org](http://www.ggc.org) (Greenwood Genetics Center)  
[www.nofas.org/resource/](http://www.nofas.org/resource/)

### Mental Health/Mental Illness:

- SC Department of Mental Health: [www.state.sc.us/dmh/](http://www.state.sc.us/dmh/)
- Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health of SC: [www.fedfamsc.org/](http://www.fedfamsc.org/)

- NAMI: [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)  
National Alliance on Mental Illness
- Nancy Thomas: [www.nancythomasparenting.com](http://www.nancythomasparenting.com)
- National Mental Health Info Center: <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/>
- [www.mentalhelp.net](http://www.mentalhelp.net)
- ATTACH: [www.ATTACH.org](http://www.ATTACH.org)
- <http://www.instituteforattachment.org/>
- Continuum of Care for Emotionally Disturbed Children: <http://www.coc.state.sc.us/>
- Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation: [www.bpkids.org/site/PageServer](http://www.bpkids.org/site/PageServer)
- Child Trauma Institute: [child-trauma.com](http://child-trauma.com)
- YouthNet: [www.scyouthnet.net](http://www.scyouthnet.net)

## Referrals for Adoption Preservation Services By: Monica Anderson

In order to obtain adoption preservation services, finalized adoptive families can refer themselves or can be referred to Children Unlimited by their adoption worker, therapist, or other involved party to assist them with maintaining the adoptive placement. Once a referral is received, a staff member will talk with the referral source and the adoptive family to determine if the adoptive family is in need of in-home adoption preservation services versus basic post adoption supportive services. If it is determined the family is in need of in-home services, the worker will schedule the initial home visit and begin to gather information to assess appropriate treatment planning for the child and family.

The worker will meet with the family to identify the primary issues affecting the stability of the adoptive placement; including but not limited to the safety of the child and family, support services (mental health counseling, extended family support, school and community involvement), and educational needs. Once these issues are assessed, the worker will assist the family in completing a treatment plan that is workable for the child and family to promote success in decreasing stressors in the home and community. The worker will also complete visits in the home at least twice per month (more if the family is in crisis) to assist in strengthening of the family unit.

When the family begins to exhibit consistent progress with the treatment plan, the worker begins to assess case closure and offer the family opportunities to continue accessing support services, including respite, specialized parent education, and retreats to help them maintain their progress and keep the family unit intact. If the family is no longer able to safely maintain the adoptive child in the home and is in need of an out-of-home placement, the worker will also assist them with making referrals to an appropriate agency for the child and still allow them to access support services as they are needed.

## With Heartfelt Gratitude...thanks for making a difference in the life of a child

### Grantors

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption  
SC Department of Social Services

### Financial Donors

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority  
Carol Barner Bible Class  
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First Northeast Baptist Church  
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Syrian Lebanon American Society of SC  
Mr. & Mrs. James Williams  
Carolina Children's Fund Inc.

### In Kind Donors

Bethany Group of Saint David  
CU Volunteer Corp  
Family Service Center Staff & Interns  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
McDonalds  
SC Commission on Education  
Mt. Moriah Baptist Church/Charleston

## Join the CU Volunteer Corps!

We are looking for individuals with time and heart to spare! Whether you have an hour, a weekend, or more time to give we can use your help!

Projects currently needing volunteers include:

- Summer Camps (Fri-Sun) for children who have been adopted (Volunteers must be at least 21 years old)
- Day Camps for children who have been adopted (Volunteers must be at

least 16 years old)

- Recruitment Team Member for a *specific child* to recruit potential families for adoption.
- Other: maybe you are not able to donate your time with one of the other opportunities, but would still like to help: preparing crafts for camps, donating snacks/drinks for camps, sponsor a child's birthday or Christmas, provide door prizes for parent support groups, donate



services (ex: be a workshop presenter, etc.) Current needs include: craft items for camps and school supplies.

Call 803-217-3161 for more information or to receive an application! You can also download an application from our website: [www.children-unlimited.org](http://www.children-unlimited.org)



Rebecca

Age: 16



Read any good books lately? This avid reader could suggest a few titles. When she's not reading, Rebecca likes to listen to music, write poetry, and talk on the phone. She enjoys talking and loves to make new friends. She is also a talented keyboard player, and attends church regularly.

Rebecca desires a family that is loving, supportive, and able to provide her with stability. She would do well with a family that is able to motivate and encourage her, as well as allow her to maintain contact with her biological brother and sister. Her adoptive family will need to be patient and serve as advocates for her in the school system. Rebecca's family will also need to be respectful and accepting of her close ties to the African-American community.

Rebecca is legally free for adoption and subsidies are negotiable.

For Rebecca call: Nicole Buie, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Adoption Recruiter, at 803-733-5457 or 800-922-5651, x. 3168. Email: [nbuie@children-unlimited.org](mailto:nbuie@children-unlimited.org).

## Creating Families Through Adoption: A Child is Waiting to Come Home



Luis

DOB:  
11/19/94

Wait until you meet this handsome energetic young man! Luis is very friendly and sociable. He enjoys playing outdoors and likes to play with Hot Wheels and Match Box cars. He loves to play football and basketball and wants to try out for his school football team; he has his own collection of trophies. His favorite foods are pizza, fried chicken with ranch dressing, macaroni, and pork chops. He likes for things to be neat and clean and enjoys helping with house cleaning.

Luis needs the structure of a self-contained classroom to succeed in middle school. When asked if he could have one wish what would it be; his wishes included being rich, living in a mansion, having a lot of cars and being with a family. Luis would do best placed in a family as the only child or youngest child.

Luis is legally free for adoption.

For Luis call: LaFawn Hughes, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Adoption Recruiter, at 800-467-6882, x 3326. Email: [LaFawn@children-unlimited.org](mailto:LaFawn@children-unlimited.org)

### CHILDREN UNLIMITED OF FAMILY SERVICE CENTER

PO Box 7876  
Columbia, SC 29202

Phone: 803-733-5450  
Fax: 803-922-5651

E-mail: [dbeecken@children-unlimited.org](mailto:dbeecken@children-unlimited.org)



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[www.children-unlimited.org](http://www.children-unlimited.org)