

Of Such
Is The
Kingdom

God's Legacy of Love

The Story of Christian Family Care Agency

Kay K. Ekstrom

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*Jesus called them to Him and said,
"Let the little children come to me,
and do not forbid them;
for of such is the kingdom of God."
Luke 18:16 NKJV*

*This book is dedicated to:
The thousands of children placed with
loving families through CFCA.*

*The thousands of children and their families
served through counseling at CFCA.*

*The hundreds of Godly people (named and
unnamed) who have come alongside me
in the development and growth of CFCA.*

*My children: Deborah, Laura and David,
Daniel and Peggy, Eric and Michele,
Minda and Jim, Russell, and Jennifer.*

*My grandchildren: Ryan, Jeffrey, Stephanie,
Megan, Joanna, Carolyn, Michael, and Samuel.*

My great-granddaughter Destiny.

My life partner; Chuck.

To God be the glory!

CONTENTS

Introduction:The Seed of A Dream	5
Prologue:The Beginning	9
Chapter One:The Family Tree	13
Chapter Two:A Family Begins	37
Chapter Three: Out On A Limb	73
Chapter Four: Seasons of Growth	89
Chapter Five: Friends of the Family	109
Chapter Six: Christ's Hand Extended	129
Chapter Seven A Close-Knit Family	165
Chapter Eight: Lessons In Life	181
Chapter Nine: Leaving A Legacy	195
CFCA Board Members	203
Proposal	205

INTRODUCTION

THE SEED OF A DREAM

If you really had a dream, a dream that wouldn't go away, that kept coming back to haunt you, a dream that you recognized as a need crying to be heard if someone would just listen, ask yourself if it is you who should listen. Sometimes God's voice is a whisper in a mulberry bush, sometimes it is like the blinding light that struck Saul on the road to Damascus, or it could be an unbelievable sight of a burning bush, blazing but not consumed. Then, of course, there was a Voice that thundered from heaven, "This is My only begotten Son, hear ye Him!" All these episodes caught the attention of someone who recognized that these were God inspired dreams and He needed that person's help to bring it to pass.

Kay Ekstrom had such a dream. It wasn't enough that she and her husband, Chuck, had reared seven children and been foster parents to others. Her maternal instinct was shouting to her... "There are thousands of hurting children out there - abused, abandoned, unwanted children that need Christian families to care for them, Christian social workers to find the right home. Kay wanted to make a difference and she has with the hundreds, perhaps thousands of hurting children that Christian Family Care Agency

has helped over these past 20 years.

I first met Kay in the middle 1980's when a mutual friend, Mary Tell, invited me to join her table at CFCA's Spring Brunch. I was immediately impressed with this fascinating lady because she was dealing so competently with an issue very close to my own heart. I was myself a motherless child. My mother died of complications of scarlet fever when I was just 34 days old. My father struggled with caring for me while teaching and coaching in Washington State schools. Not being able to find a caregiver that could take proper care of me, he reluctantly accepted his sister's offer to add me to her family of four girls. I was two years younger than their youngest. She and her husband had a large farm in southern Texas on the Gulf Coast. It was a wonderful place to grow up and I lived there until I was 10 when my father came and took me back to Washington. I have realized in later years how very fortunate I was to have those years as part of a loving family and I thank God for it.

Now I was hearing Kay Ekstrom's story of her dream of having a Christian-based organization to help meet the needs of children by finding nurturing Christian homes, providing counseling and instructions for parenting or adoption to pregnant teenagers unable to cope and unsure what path to follow, and their families. Beyond these far-reaching goals, acquire the funding to make it all possible.

You will read how God helped Kay prepare for this work by gently nudging her into volunteer work with National Action for Foster Children, by part-time work in social research studies with the University of Chicago, and also in accounting helping her husband with his business. The volunteer work with National Action for Foster Children led to the attention of the national association and she was asked to be a paid consultant, albeit part-time. That led to other opportunities, and meeting caring people interested and active in Child Welfare programs on a national level.

Kay Ekstrom has been gifted to recognize God's leading and helping hand in so many ways as her dream is being fulfilled, but she will be the first to say, "This is just the beginning. The need today is greater than ever."

I am proud to call her my friend.

Louise C. Solheim
Chairman of the Board
Emeritus
Karsten Manufacturing

PROLOGUE

THE BEGINNING

Over the years, Chuck and I have been used by the Lord to start many things. Some are still going strong, like FISH in Scottsdale. Others, like the coffee house in Park Ridge, closed its doors long ago. Some things work for a season, others are to last. Some have changed their shape and intent like National Action for Foster Children.

In 1982, in my role as executive director of Arizona Foundation for Children, I wrote a factual book entitled, *On Behalf of Arizona's Children*. The book was written out of frustration and the need to share the plight of Arizona's children with our citizens and elected and appointed decision-makers. It was the first such publication in Arizona identifying some of the critical needs of Arizona children. Subsequent publication of "Kids Count" published by the Annie B. Casey Foundation has provided ongoing statistical information.

Some of the subjects we addressed in that book in 1982 were that 89-percent of families involved in child abuse also reported other family violence; 15 children under the age of 10 died as a result of abuse in 1980 in Arizona while in the same period 11,987 children were reported victims of child abuse and

neglect; the average cost to provide a child with daily foster care was less than the daily cost to kennel a dog; 113 children were waiting for adoptive families; 8236 babies were born to Arizona teenagers in 1981 and 1095 of Arizona's Native American children were in foster care in other states.

With these statistics we included pictures, but it was the compelling stories of real children that caused our hearts to be broken. Children like Steve who was living in a truck; Gerry who ran away and took refuge in a bar; Billy who was locked out of his house by his alcoholic mother; Sally whose mother had a psychotic breakdown and Sally and her sister were in foster care with no help for mom; Shawn, a teenager and the oldest of six who couldn't accept the adoption of his younger siblings because he was afraid he would lose his family; Candy who was just one of so many sexually abused by her mom's boyfriend; Margy whose mother died and whose Dad was a truck driver who couldn't work and take care of Margy; Tina, just 15 years old and pregnant... not ready to care for herself, let alone her soon to be born infant.

As I developed this book based on real faces of real children and real facts, I asked myself again, "Where is the church?" Are these not the precious little ones our Lord said would make up His Kingdom? If every church would take one child or sibling group, there would not be any waiting children. Do

we really believe what James says about “pure religion being to care for orphans?”

Years of changing laws on behalf of children wasn't enough. Only Christ can change a life and that would happen only as children were loved and cared for by those who loved Christ. Could we stimulate believers to do good works on behalf of children?

That was the burden behind the formation of CFCA. And although many of the same challenges still exist in our state today, the church is present and accounted for through the ministry of CFCA.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FAMILY TREE

"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Ephesians 2:10



The Ekstrom Family, 2001

The story of Christian Family Care Agency (CFCA) is a story of the faithfulness of God and His people. It is impossible for me to tell the story except in the first person, but I am only the instrument blessed by God to be used in the establishing of this ministry. I have been privileged to be His servant.

It has been incredible to see God's provision of

His people uniquely equipped to do the tasks required. With the songwriter, I can say, "Our God is a Faithful God."

Some of my earliest memories are of organizing all the neighborhood children for "school." I was two or three years older, so I became the designated teacher or program director. In eighth grade I was the student assigned to assist with the kindergarten classes. As a teenager, I taught Sunday School and directed club programs in my church, so I guess its fair to say, children have always been a major part of my life, even when I was still one myself.

My husband, Chuck, and I met in church and would "hang out" at the church nursery. Our dating days included taking on the sponsorship of the Jet Cadets primary school children. Babysitting for friends was also part of our dating pattern. Even then, children were important to both of us.

How I got to church in the first place is evidence of God's sovereignty. When I was five years old I was playing out in front of my house when Bud and Ethel Kinney stopped and invited me to Sunday School. The church was at the end of my street and they promised me a pencil if I came. Well, even at five, "free" sounded good, so I went to Sunday School the next Sunday. I don't remember what happened to the pencil but, excited about the stories I was hearing, I went back to Sunday School every week and later on took my younger sister, Lois, with me. My

parents were infrequent visitors at the church.

The church was a solid biblical, evangelistic fellowship in a growth phase during my childhood and teen years. I was taught the scriptures well, loved the church, found most of my friends there and accepted the salvation afforded through Christ's death when I was an early adolescent. As I grew in my faith I made a full commitment to Christ during my high school years. When the church doors were open, I was there, not always with the blessing of my father. The form of rebellion my teen years took was that of being "religious." I praise God for my forgiving and understanding parents.

Many of my contemporaries in this denominational church were young people whose parents also were not a part of the congregation. One of those young people was Barbara Parmentier Polk. Barb and I were such close friends and then she moved to California, married and settled in Prescott, Arizona with her husband, Gene, where they have been zealous advocates for Arizona's children. What a blessing it has been to have Barb's friendship and shared passion all these years. Out of this close knit group came lasting relationships and some marriages. Though Chuck and I had very dissimilar family backgrounds, our faith, our verbal dexterity and our already mentioned love of children were sufficient attractions to bring us to see God's choice for us to have a life together.

Certainly a determining factor in the course our family took was Chuck's childhood experiences. Though they could be a book by themselves, let me share with you the condensed version.

Chuck was born in Guatemala to missionary parents. A sickly baby, he was in the hospital for most of the first six months of his life. Shortly after his release, his family went to Chicago on furlough. While on furlough his mother died of complications after minor surgery. His father left Chuck and his four siblings with their maternal aunt and grandmother and went back to Guatemala and remarried. One at a time, the children went down to join their father and stepmother. Just before Chuck's scheduled departure his father died in a typhus epidemic. His stepmother, widowed, pregnant and with a toddler and four stepchildren never parented Chuck.

Chuck's primary caretaker was his grandmother because his aunt worked to support them. On the same day that his father died, his grandmother passed away as well. That began a succession of moves to various relatives at the bottom of the depression, and then into three different institutions. From age six to sixteen, Chuck lived in three different children's homes. He was a bright child, not a conformist, challenging and in trouble a lot. Though his aunt tried hard to be a mother to him, his emotional needs were never really met.

Chuck and I were married by our Pastor, Larry

Pearson. Our home was soon blessed by our first daughter, Deborah, and soon after a little sister, Laura. How we enjoyed being a family, but being a parent came a lot easier to me than to Chuck. The lack of a role model was one more obstacle for him to overcome. Being young and enthusiastic about parenting we didn't spend much time assessing whether we were doing it right. Dr. Spock was our only guide so we followed him and the teachings of the church.

Some of our friends, Glenn and Jean Jorian, had adopted and were parenting a foster child as well. Enjoying our little girls, but missing a baby in the house, we began fostering infants who were identified for adoption. We also sometimes cared for young pregnant gals while they waited to deliver. Many opportunities for compassion and ministry were ours.

We were still in this church that had nurtured my young life as a Christian. I was an avid student of the Word and when the Williams translation and later the Living Bible became available, I devoured them. The teachings of Christ and the example of His life became so very real to me. The better I came to know Him, the more I questioned some of the spoken and unspoken attitudes and teachings in our church and began questioning what it was God was asking of me.

I mentioned that my folks seldom attended the church. What I didn't mention was what incredibly

wonderful people they were. Charlie and Miriam Kramer had a delightful sense of humor and would do anything for anybody. They taught me early in life to respond to a need when I saw it and to expect nothing in return. My Dad was very generous in his care for his family and my mother's siblings and parents. My only sister, Lois, was mentally retarded. Mom and Dad left no option unexplored in seeking help for her, in a day when help was not readily available. My dad and mom formed the Illinois Association for Retarded Children and Dad was the first state president. He also was President of the Board of the Orchard School in Skokie as it developed, was built and expanded.

Dad was also a 32nd degree Mason and a Shriner. Mom was a stay-at-home mom who put herself out on behalf of my sister and me. As a young adult I took a hard look at the difference between my parents and many of the people in my church. My parents' compassion and concern for other people was unprecedented, yet no one in the church even talked to them when they met them on the street. The church folks didn't acknowledge the problems they had in their own lives, so there was very little opportunity for caring or ministering to one another or to others in the community with very real needs.

As I was struggling with these inconsistencies, the *Book of James* hit me squarely in the face. Like the author of that book, I began to question whether

faith without the evidence of works was real faith. I began to ask some hard questions within the various circles of the church, and several of our contemporaries began questioning too. Unfortunately, the leadership of the church was set in their ways. Slowly there was a migration of young families to other evangelical churches. Our family fought the fight the longest, but eventually we migrated too, after being challenged by a secular psychologist to “influence the playground” of our children if we were going to continue to have any influence on our adolescent children.

Yes, by now we had adolescent children. Over the years we steadily increased our family. When our third child, Eric, was born to us, five years after our second daughter, we were in the process of seeking to adopt one of the many babies we had fostered. Dan had come to us as an infant and due to many problems with him and the agency, including suspension of licensure, he stayed for a long time. We believed God wanted him to be a permanent part of our family and, thankfully, so did the agency. The boys were two years and four days apart in age, but they became part of our family within a week of each other.

That was not the end. In time, Mindy, Russell and Jennifer joined the group. The Scriptures teach that seven is the number of perfection, but the children were not perfect. They were fun, though, and

God blessed us richly as a family. In addition to our seven, we fostered about twenty infants, three ten-year-olds, and numerous teenagers.

Cancer claimed my mother too soon, just after Eric was born. Dad looked for a smaller place to live and deliberated what to do for my sister. Chuck and I volunteered to make her a part of our family, and Lois, who was 25-years-old, moved in with us when Mindy was three weeks old and stayed with us for five years. Caring for an adult, retarded sibling is a different kind of a challenge, especially for someone as impatient as I am, but that's another story!

When my sister came to live with us we didn't have sufficient space for her. We went through a long and deliberate process of determining whether to buy a new house or remodel the one we were in. My father had sold his house and was moving into an apartment. He wanted to be close to us, so the decision was to stay in our community and remodel our home. We lived in a 60-year-old bungalow style house in the center of Park Ridge, a bedroom community adjacent to the Chicago city limits. The house had one bathroom and two bedrooms when we moved into it. Some remodeling had been done, a lot hadn't. It still had an old ceramic sink on pedestal legs and an electric cord from the kitchen ceiling with a light bulb and bulb cover on it. The pantry bulb was bare.

Lois' arrival resulted in an additional bedroom and bath upstairs. We added a staircase and closed in

part of the porch. The remodeling continued the entire time we lived there. It was a good decision to stay.

Shortly before Lois moved in, new neighbors moved in right across the alley. It was winter but I bundled up the kids and went for a walk to welcome them. I knocked on her door and she, who I later learned was Juele Blankenburg, very politely explained that she was in labor and asked me to come back another time. I asked if I could help with anything. It seemed that they had everything under control, and her Eric was born later that day. They had a Laura and an Eric and we had a Laura and an Eric, so it made life interesting. Between us, our kids were nine or 10 months apart, so they could have been one family. Mindy, Russ, and Jen were born after that and added to the passel of kids in our neighborhood.

Juele and I became good friends after that interesting beginning. She was an intellectual lady, often coming to my door looking for adult company. I greeted her warmly because I, too, was looking for adult company. We had many visits over coffee, usually at my house since I had more kids. We talked about everything known to women. I learned recipes and how to decorate our home for “a song.” This creative woman was an interior designer by training. She had an upbringing similar to Chuck’s, raised by her grandparents, brought back to her par-

ents' home as a teenager to serve her mother, then lost her mother to cancer. Her father was a union organizer, a rough and tumble Irishman. Energetic and interesting, he liked to spend his time at the race track.

Juele had set aside her career to raise her kids although she still dabbled in design work, decorating some apartments in the city. Art and Juele were Presbyterians and made a decision to go minister in the inner city. Although they didn't sell their home, they made a move. It didn't last long. They found they couldn't subject their kids to the situations they found in the inner city, so they came back with more life experiences to share.

God brought Juele into my life to expand my world. My Christian experience was confined to the teachings of the conservative church we'd grown up in. Juele had attended the Second Presbyterian Church in downtown Chicago. She was a university graduate and brought stimulating, educated thinking into my life. We had many wonderful conversations. During the years we were neighbors, we participated in several Bible studies together.

When our young boys were starting school, new neighbors with five children moved in right next door to us. They had lived there only a few months when the father was diagnosed with Leukemia. He passed away within weeks of the diagnosis. Now we had a widow neighbor with her own

passel of kids to raise. It extended our relationship and Mabel became a friend. She taught at the school our kids attended and tutored our oldest son. Her kids became our kids. She, too, became part of our Bible study group and we shared fellowship over the years.

It was no accident that our involvement in fostering was with a Christian agency. The Evangelical Child Welfare Agency, now Evangelical Child and Family Agency (ECFA), was founded in response to an infant abandoned on the steps of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago in 1945. The need for an evangelical child welfare agency became clear as the baby was placed in a Catholic foundling home. Eventually that youngster was adopted by a pastor and his wife, Corrie and Fern Kerr. The Kerr family moved to Arizona in retirement and helped in one of CFCA's Thrift stores. What a small circle in God's family.

ECFA was the proving ground for CFCA. Little did we know what He was preparing us to do. Because I have a big mouth and am not afraid to open it, (actually, God's plan included three years of elocution lessons as a child), I was recruited to take some speaking engagements on behalf of ECFA and found myself traveling all over the Chicago area speaking in churches, to Women's groups — anyone who would listen, sharing the ministry of ECFA and the biblical basis for being involved. An interesting footnote: the message was better received in other churches than

in my own, from my perspective. I also volunteered in other ways, helping with the bulk mailings and as an area officer of the Women's Auxiliary. I became an Auxiliary member at the cost of \$1 a month, and though our income was modest, we became faithful financial supporters of ECFA.

One of my closest friends, Lee Anne Clark, (Lloyd and Lee Anne and their family have remained close friends, supporters and encouragers in the ministry of CFCA) became President of the Auxiliary and recruited me to head up our opportunity to participate as an agency in the Children's Benefit League Tag Day. ECFA had tried for years to join the League to "tag" one day of the year, but they only allowed membership to 50 agencies, so we had to wait for another agency to drop out. Well, that happened in 1967 and we had our big chance. Every tagger had to have a bag of clearly defined four- by six-inch dimensions. I recruited my friend, Jean Jorian — the one who had gotten me into all this in the first place — to sew the bags, which she did and we were all set. Jeanie had found good strong material for a real bargain, to make the bags. It was just a day or two before the actual tag day when we discovered the bags had to be white! Ours were turquoise. What a rush to make the 50 new bags. I still have a turquoise bag or two around. They were good for lots of things like clothespins, etc.

"Tag Day" the next year became an opportunity

for God to teach me a profound lesson about His provision for His work. As so many of us who are involved in life-changing ministries acknowledge, money would never be an issue if all of God's people tithed. But we haven't all caught that vision yet so, ECFA always struggled for funds. Chuck and I struggled with a balance between, "Just let God know and wait" or "Just let God know and do something." We usually came down on the latter, but always wondered, if this was God's plan.

Well, Tag Day 1968 resolved that issue for me. Tag Day was a designated day for solicitation for children's agencies. Just like membership, locations for tagging were available only as given up by another agency. It was my responsibility to call the Locations Chairman and request new locations. This was our second year of ECFA's membership in the League.

Now, you know how easy it is to make phone calls with a bunch of kids in the house. Well, I called the number for almost three weeks and kept getting a busy signal. Finally someone answered the phone and I found out I had the wrong number - it was a local radio station. Was I upset, embarrassed, frustrated!! I mean, the first shall get the best, and all that. I found the right number and when I told the Chairman what had happened, she said, "Well, I just got some new locations this morning from an agency that dropped out, they didn't have enough volunteers." The locations assigned to ECFA that day

included the Northwestern railroad station — no doubt one of the heaviest foot traffic areas in the whole city. We raised more there than in all our locations the prior year and were next to the top of those 50 agencies in what we raised our second year. No one believed we could, but we did. We have a great God who provides for His work in mysterious ways.

Whatever He puts before you, do it!

What an honor to be chosen to serve the agency by leading the 2,500-member Auxiliary, first as their President and then as Liaison between the Agency and the Auxiliary, also serving on the Board of Directors. Bob Murfin, Executive Director of ECFA, was a great teacher and mentor. What an exciting time of learning and doing.

But God was doing other things in our lives. Chuck and I had become a part of the fellowship of South Park Church (the church that fostered the birth of Willow Creek Church) in our community of Park Ridge, Illinois. Chuck and our oldest daughter, Deb, were active in the development of a Christian coffee house, called “The Threshold.” Through that ministry we met wonderful folks like Char Meredith and her son, Rick, and Bob and Bonnie Pike and their family. Together we watched God do miracles in the lives of young people.

In the summer of 1969, along with some of our neighbors, our family participated in a program of providing a week or two in the suburbs for some

inner city children of color. Our family had siblings, Willie and Sister, and there were about four other children with four neighbor families. After having the youngsters with us for two weeks and then some weekend visits we thought maybe God was calling our family to adopt a biracial child. When we discussed the possibility with our very wise caseworker, Eleanor Hill, she mentioned the need for a foster home for a sixteen-year-old girl who was living in a boarding school in our town. Well it had been a few years since we had cared for infants, so we had to get licensed again, met Gerry (not her real name), and had her over to go to church with us and stay for Sunday dinner, then the weekend. She was the same age as our oldest daughter, Deb.

When it was time for Gerry to come and join our family she didn't want to leave a good friend at the school and no amount of persuading would change her mind. After a month or so, our worker asked us if we would be willing to take care of a ten year old boy. I wasn't sure as our middle son was that age and a handful! But Chuck thought we should do it so Scotty joined our family in May.

That summer Gerry came along on some camping weekends and our vacation trip and we all had so much fun. She decided she wanted to join our family after all, but now we had eight children (seven of them our own) under the age of sixteen and the State of Illinois "rules" said we couldn't take another child.

We pleaded and begged as did our agency, but to no avail. Moving Scotty wasn't a solution, so Gerry stayed where she was for a month or so, then ran away out of her frustration.

It was several weeks before her whereabouts were discovered. She was living in the back of a bar on the north side of Chicago... so much better than being the ninth child in our home!

That situation was probably the beginning of my advocacy efforts. It was clear that children need to be protected and regulations need to be in place, but when they result in abusing and/or neglecting a child, they are no better than the errant parent.

* * * * *

It was a restless time in our lives. I began to question whether I should continue my involvement with ECFA. After all, there were many opportunities to join other ministries building God's kingdom here on earth. I must be thick headed because God's answer to my questions came in a very unusual and direct way. I had headed up a project to purchase a car for ECFA with green stamps. My children and I licked them all. I can still remember the task that was, but my own kids were learning to "serve." The day came to present the car to the Agency on behalf of the Auxiliary. I was asked to do it, "... if your tongue is still moist enough to talk." The morning of

the Luncheon I ran to the beauty parlor (vanity) and was running late. I called home where Chuck was working and asked him to call the ladies I was to pick up and tell them I was delayed.

“Just get home,” he urged.

When I got home Chuck was standing at the door holding a baby who had been abandoned at our house. He had come by cab. The driver had even tried to collect the fare from Chuck. A baby had never been abandoned in our town so the Police didn’t know what to do with him. They wanted to keep him at the station, but we insisted they leave him with us. He stayed with us for a week. We called him “Abernathy.” I got the message. “OK, God. You want me caring for the ‘fatherless’ — your orphans.” Soon the agency found an adoptive home for “Abernathy.”

The winter of 1970-71 was bitter cold and wet. My sister-in-law, Helen, on furlough from missionary work in Guatemala, reminded me every day of how cold it was. As Helen and Dave traveled around the U.S. through Texas, Georgia, Florida, etc., she would come back to us in Chicago and tell us about the warm weather in other places. She was definitely “getting to me.”

When spring finally came, so did my smile and I was content. But God wasn’t through with us. A series of events, including the anticipated move to Phoenix of my cousin, Eleanor Erickson and her family, and Russ’ first grade teacher, Ruth Swanson, got us

to thinking. Such a move didn't sound like such a bad idea, but it did seem unlikely, if not impossible.

One evening late in May as we talked, excitedly making plans, Chuck, always more practical than I, pointed out that to give up our carpet cleaning business and move to the desert with seven kids to support, would not be *faith* but *foolishness*. I had to agree. But God...

We decided we would take a vacation to Phoenix in August and see what the job possibilities were. Maybe we'd move the following summer. Great, but why did I still have that unsettled feeling? When I'm involved in something I can't do it half way. How could we keep on with all our various commitments, knowing we might leave the next year? What did God have to say?

I had been reading in the Gospels. On a Wednesday morning in June, I read how the disciples just followed Jesus when He called them. I was impressed by the fact that they didn't ask where He was going, what they were to do, or how they would support themselves — all those "practical" things. I couldn't wait for Chuck to get home so I could share this "revelation" with him. He listened. "Yeah, interesting," he said, and took a nap. While he was napping, Jim Roden called for him. Jim was the only person we knew in Phoenix and he had a job opportunity that he thought would fit Chuck. Would he be interested? Chuck and I were on a plane to Phoenix

by the next Saturday.

On the flight to Phoenix we recognized that we could probably get information on the business, housing, churches, neighborhoods and all that important stuff, but how would we ever, over one weekend, find out about “child welfare issues” in Arizona? Well, our God is a God of detail. Jim met us at the airport and drove us around a bit. We went to a Coco’s for lunch. While waiting in line for a table, Jim asked us about the feasibility of selling our house in Park Ridge. The man standing next to us wanted to know, “Who is from Park Ridge”? This man turned out to be Joe Davis, a former student at Wheaton, and now an associate of Gordon Jaeck’s at a home for girls. So, big deal — except that Gordon had been the interim Executive Director of ECFA, during the time we adopted Dan, and we knew him well, but had lost touch. Well Gordon was “just down the road” according to Joe, so we met with him. Though discouraged about the state of child welfare in Arizona, Gordon encouraged us to come and work with him.

By Monday, everything in Arizona looked good. The business surely had potential, so we boarded a plane for home with great excitement. On the flight home we acknowledged that there were a number of walls to be knocked down if we were to take advantage of this opportunity and move soon... walls like selling both a business and a house that we lived in and were still remodeling (that’s never finished, you

know). And then there was Scott, our foster son who had been with us for just over a year. Could we take him along? We would never ask for him to leave our family.

The walls came down quickly. The business sold in just 24 hours. The house was ready for the market in two weeks and sold in two days for more than the realtor wanted to advertise. And our social worker told us that the family who had Scott's two sisters wanted him to come and be a part of their family.

July 4th found us house hunting in Phoenix with all the kids! Such excitement when we found a big house with a pool. Maybe moving wouldn't be so bad after all. Our oldest daughter was entering her senior year of high school that summer in 1971, a hard move for Deb. We were leaving a block in our neighborhood of Park Ridge that boasted (most days) 55 kids and friendly, caring parents — all good friends. A hard environment to leave, but we were confident God had a plan for us.

We were never able to replicate our Chicago-area neighborhood — a community of extended family that existed in that small circle of friendships. What we found in Scottsdale was a different sociological mix. Our neighbors were slow to be friendly. They could be cordial, but friendships were not forthcoming. For some neighbors, we were the new people on the block and probably wouldn't be around

long. Others, like us, had moved from other places and left lifelong friendships. They were not willing to start new ones because the pain from losing the old ones was still too great. There was just a wariness. Although there was great surface friendliness and cordiality, the deepening of friendships seemed much harder to achieve. Missing that, I made it my job and worked hard at it.

Fortunately God gave me a fine friend in my pastor's wife, Carol Fairley, and we enjoyed doing things together. Then God brought a neighbor only a few blocks away — a kindred spirit in terms of caring for children. Jan and Ken Carleno became good friends, sharing our commitment to foster care and adoption. They were involved in National Action for Foster Children with us and we shared Thanksgivings and camping trips together. We shared many rich experiences of family life as we raised our kids together. Today, Ken serves as a Board member of Christian Family Care Agency. Jan is busy at home raising two grandchildren — the children of one of their adopted sons whom they now have adopted.

My dear friend, Jeanie, was sure God was taking us to Phoenix to start an agency like ECFA, but I told her no. "Maybe a group home for teens." We had bought a big house with an acre of land so we could do that.

Moving ourselves across country, we got to Scottsdale the first Friday of August. Before the next

Friday rolled around, all of the problems with the new business had surfaced, like IRS obligations, etc. So, here we were with seven kids, very little money, no job and a good opportunity to exercise trust!

By Labor Day, Chuck had purchased another business, a camper manufacturing factory and sales room, that provided support for our family for the next 15 years. By Thanksgiving we were in the process of being licensed as foster parents for the state of Arizona (DES). The process went quickly. We were willing to take teens, so we had our first foster child early in February. She brought our first inkling of just how short the foster care system in Arizona fell in its responsibility to serve children and families. We also realized the high quality of service ECFA had provided to its clients and foster families and how very much God had taught us through our experience with them.

By the next spring Chuck and I had gotten acquainted with a number of other foster parents, adoptive parents, social workers, and private agency folks who shared our frustration about “the system of providing care for children.” We formed an Arizona chapter of National Action for Foster Children (NAFC). I became the chairman, and we started our efforts to overhaul “the system.” Promotion comes quickly in volunteerism and we found ourselves serving as consultants on a number of local, then national, advisory committees.

We continued to care for a number of foster children, served on various committees, and did some lobbying. For the first time, I worked part time to help with the financial demands of our growing family. When I looked for a job, I always prayed and asked the Lord to put me where He wanted me and to give me something to do that would be helpful or useful to others. I surely had some interesting jobs. As I look back, I see how each one prepared me in a very particular way for what God wanted me to do at CFCA.

Finding a church home was not easy, but God led us, through some other Chicago transplants, to a small and friendly church in Scottsdale. We worshipped there for nearly four years and made some lasting friendships. God used a number of events to cause us to join Scottsdale Bible Church — another God-directed move.

I developed a strong friendship with Lois Tuchler, the Director of Jewish Family Services. She was another one of those people who put Christians to shame in her compassion and caring for others. I'll tell you more about her in the next chapter.

About this time Lois persuaded us to foster a little Indian/Mexican infant until she found an adoptive home for him. When I was in my local grocery store one day the manager came up to me and asked about "Joey." When I told him Joey was our foster child, he said, "You must be a Christian, for it says in *James*, 'Pure religion is to care for widows and orphans.'"

What an encouragement and indictment. How many in our churches were opening their homes to adopt or foster “orphans” in our day. At the turn of the century care for children was done by the church. These children in our generation are often “orphans of the living.”

By the late seventies NAFC had been instrumental in changing many laws impacting children in Arizona. We wrote the law that requires foster parents to be trained. Arizona was the first state to require both pre- and in-service training. The concept for the Arizona Foster Care Review Boards was hatched in our living room. We also lobbied for the child abuse reporting requirements and helped write the adoption consent legislation.

While all the legislative and regulatory changes were designed to help kids, it became increasingly clear to us that *we could change laws, but only Christ could change lives*. There was a harvest ready to be gleaned if Christians could be challenged to open their hearts and homes to vulnerable children.

What did that mean to our lives... our future? Based on our life experience, how was God calling us to respond? It would not be long until answers began to emerge.

CHAPTER TWO

A FAMILY BEGINS

"Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us." James 1:27



Joan Malouf, with son Jason, was instrumental in the formation of CFCA.

Bob and Pam Anderson were some of the first members of the CFCA family. They were early transition parents, caring for infants from the time they were released from the hospital until their adoption, a procedure not used much these days.

Pam told me the first baby they fostered was born to a young adult who didn't know she was preg-

nant. Although people often wonder at these stories, I've heard enough of them to know your body and mind can trick you. This young woman gave birth in the shower, so the baby was slightly bruised on its shoulder.

After taking the baby home, Pam and Bob struggled – like all foster parents – with the pain of letting the baby go when it was time for the adoption. At that time, foster parents brought the baby to the Agency and placed the child in the hands of the adoptive parents. Soon it was time for that fact to become a reality for Bob and Pam.

When the baby was placed in the hands of the adoptive dad, he looked at the baby and said, "I love you more than I'll ever be able to tell you. But there's one who loves you more than me. His name is Jesus."

Pam told me that when she heard those words, she broke into tears and knew that what they were doing was the right thing – a good thing God wanted them to do.

That dad expressed so eloquently the message we want to give every child served by CFCA. There is one who loves you more than we. His name is Jesus.

Early in the summer of 1981, ten years after our move to Arizona, Chuck and I were having coffee with Harvey and Doreen McElhanon, chatting as we normally did, until something made us consider: If we really had a dream, what would it be? We shared the burden that we felt for having a Christian agency and for being able to care for children within the context of Christian families by Christian social workers. Harv, a generous man, asked me what it would cost. I hadn't thought about that but I ventured, "For a year you could certainly do it for twenty thousand dollars."

Encouraging me, Harv prodded, "Put it on paper."

Within a week our new pastor, Darryl DelHousaye, who had been with the church probably just a year, announced on Sunday morning that he was going to preach on abortion in the evening. Afterward there would be a meeting for those who were interested in doing something specific around the issue of abortion. Chuck and I both knew that we needed to make that Sunday night a priority.

After the service we stayed for the meeting and listened to the suggestions and ideas and then offered our own comment which was simply our philosophy that it was not enough to say to a young woman, 'Don't have an abortion,' but you had to be there with her through the pregnancy until the child was born. Then afterwards, you had to counsel with her and help her to make what would be a good decision for

her and her child. We said that in the group and then we elaborated on it a little bit more, one on one with Pastor Darryl and one of the couples, Wendell and Mary Jo Bennett, who eventually became one of our foster parents.

Our pastor then asked me to set up a meeting and come in and see him. I did that very quickly. The next week we talked and then he said, "It's a great idea. Why not put it on paper?"

Well, now with two challenges in less than a two-week period, I actually did go home and put it on paper. The original proposal that we wrote is in the Appendix of this book. As I look back on it now I think, *"How did anything get started out of something so simple - three pages written at our dining room table?"* God uses whatever we have at our disposal to move his kingdom forward.

That was the summer of 1981. I was eager for things to begin immediately, but not much begins in the summer in Phoenix. We went on the first of many retreats with a group of people that were later to name themselves "The Rowdy Rascals." It was a group out of our Sunday school class, and Chuck and I actually organized the retreat and got people there. That became the first place where we shared the vision of CFCA. Of course, we didn't know what its name would be or anything else at that time but we laid the foundation with many friends — people who, to this day, pray and support the ministry of the

Agency. Many have been long time volunteers. This group has been a source for many partners with the Agency.

In October, Darryl sent my proposal with a cover letter to pastors in the community, probably about a dozen or so. We had a convening meeting in October at Scottsdale Bible Church and there were about half a dozen churches represented. I met again with Joe Godal, pastor of Church of the Redeemer. He and I had met before in a hospital waiting room with some friends whose youngster was having surgery. I met the pastor from Desert Springs Bible Church, Don Tack. Bill Yarger from our church as well as Darryl and a few others. Out of that first group we formed a steering committee which quickly grew to include those pastors and folks that we thought would be interested in what we were doing. Some of the people involved were Wil and Dorothy Bloom, Toni Marie Everhart, Kirk and Cathy Calkins, Jim and Naomi Rhode, Joe Davis, Gordon Jaecks, and his son-in-law Dennis Hunter. Joe Davis had been the executive director of Planned Parenthood. Remember, I first met Joe when we came to Phoenix where he was working for Gordon Jaecks. It was sort of interesting to have Joe and Carolyn help us in forming this agency.

The steering committee met with great regularity over the next several months. The steering committee identified the name, adopted our statement of

faith, developed our logo and our letterhead, put together a brochure and ultimately created a slide presentation showing what the ministry would be doing.

In March 1982 we formed a corporation and shortly after that selected a Board of Directors. We also selected a Board of Reference because we believed that if we were really going to get this new fledgling organization off the ground, we'd need some high-profile people to give us credibility. God went before us in all our planning. We've been quick to say *we* did these things but of course they didn't happen easily. There were many meetings and deliberations. The Holy Spirit worked in all of us to bring unity about what we were doing.

When we were ready to form the Board of Directors, I drew from the information learned at the hand of Alice Udall in the spring of 1981. We had organized a Child Welfare League Conference in Scottsdale. At that conference, Alice had a full-day workshop on the role of board members. I was the executive director of Arizona Foundation for Children and most of our Board were CEOs of agencies, an interesting mix. I was eager to learn anything Alice had to teach, but one of the tools I came away with was a grid and the concept behind the grid in putting together a Board. That was simply a tool to identify characteristics of potential candidates for Board members, as well as what professional, ethnic,

and gender mix is needed. In our case, church representation and client representation were important. So we sat down and put together our grid and began to think about people who might fill those particular needs.

How exciting it was for a few of us to see God put names into our minds of people who could help us.

I particularly remember one of the folks saying to me, "Gee, it would be great if we could connect with the Colangelos." Now, this was back in the spring of 1982. Jerry's name was pretty big in town but certainly not where he is today. He wasn't yet the owner of the Suns but he was the General Manager. I commented, "Well, I know of him, Joan's best friend is a friend of mine."

When we had moved to Phoenix ten years earlier, Beth and Dick Brubaker had told us to look up the Colangelos. Beth had been part of my life since I was a kid. We went to the same church. When I led Pioneer girls, she was one of my earliest members. Then we moved over to South Park Church where we both attended. Our boys were in the nursery class together. Beth's son grew up to be Scott Brubaker, Vice-President of the Diamondbacks. When we left, we felt that was pretentious to contact them and we didn't do it. So ten years later I called Joan and introduced myself, saying, "Hi, I'm Kay Ekstrom. You don't know me. This call is ten years late, but I'm a friend of

Beth Brubaker. She told me to call and tell you what we're doing. I'd like you to help us."

Well, based on that request, Joan agreed to come on the Board and serve and help us. She stayed for several years, serving with other charter board members, including: Jon Askew, Pat Consalvo, Keith Crispin, Malcolm Cronk, Toni Marie Everhart, Joe Godal, William Harrell, Richard Malouf, Harvey McElhanon, David Mielke, James Rentz, William Retts, Walter Soderdahl, and William Thrall.

I mentioned earlier Joe Davis, who felt he was giving back to God after his experience with Planned Parenthood and his obvious realization that that was not where God wanted him. Through his media company he put together a slide presentation for us and took the pictures, but we needed some narration with it. Everyone recommended Johnny Andrews. He was a believer, had a commanding voice, and was known in the community. I'll never forget Johnny telling about how this woman called him out of nowhere and asked him if he would be willing to narrate a slide presentation for a brand new organization getting off the ground.

Praise God, he said yes! He narrated our first slide presentation for us. It would be fun to share that with you but it disappeared over the years and so we no longer have it.

That was the beginning of a relationship with John and Coleen Klecic. "Andrews" was Johnny's "air"

name and Colleen Cook was a television personality who served on our Board for several years before God moved them to Texas. They were a great blessing and encouragement to us in the early days of the Agency. Colleen went on to write a book about responding to the needs of pregnant women.

We opened the doors at the Agency in September 1982. We hired our first executive director that year and had our license on the first of November 1982. On the first of December our first CFCA baby was born.

Christian Family Care Agency needed some legitimacy in terms of our executive director so we hired Dr. Dennis Hunter. He was a psychologist, beginning a practice here in town. He had helped us on the steering committee and was interested in helping us more, so he came on for a couple of days a week.

Our first employee was Rachel Oesterle. Rachel had worked for Catholic Social Services down in Southern Arizona and had organized pregnancy programs in the Bisbee area. She was excited to come to work for us. Rachel worked part-time, always spending more hours at her desk than we paid her for. In the middle of the fall we were able to find a volunteer secretary, Sharon Williams, who later became a full-time employee with us. Sharon Carl joined CFCA shortly after that as a kind of intern. Rachel had discovered Sharon in one of her classes. I served as co-

chair of the Board with Rick Malouf, and Rick's dear wife, Joan, worked with Toni Marie Everhart who chaired the Auxiliary. We started the Auxiliary almost simultaneously with friends like these.

We started with three areas of service; counseling pregnant women, certifying and serving prospective adoptive couples and caring for children in voluntary foster care. We had a pregnant client living in a foster home. She was the gal who delivered our first adopted child, so we were off and running in the fall and grew fast. We needed a place to hang our hat because up until the time CFCA opened its doors, we were operating out of my office at home. When it was time to get our license, the Department of Economic Security denied our request at first because we didn't have any money in the bank. We hadn't needed any money, but now we made the need known and two or three people responded and soon we had \$20,000 in the bank. Remember, that was all I thought it would take to operate the Agency. In truth, it didn't take a lot more to get us off the ground.

Christian Family Care Agency had an office on Missouri Avenue, courtesy of the Malouf Brothers Builders. They gave us one office and we shared the conference room and other things they had at their headquarters. There were two other ministries already in their building so it was a nice umbrella place for us to operate.

By the spring of 1983 we were ready to step out and contract with the State to provide foster homes. They had a particular need for homes for teen moms and babies. There was no place for a teenager who got pregnant to go, and certainly no place for her to be after her baby was born. That always meant separation. Then somehow, magically they were supposed to come back together after the baby was born and the mom turned 18. She was supposed to be able to parent. Well, everybody saw that as a great need. Arlene Schwartz — one of our pre-CFCA prayer partners who had opened her home to hundreds of kids in need — was willing to help us meet this need. So we negotiated a contract with DES in the spring of 1983.

A number of things made it apparent that Dennis needed time to build his own practice. And the Agency was ready for the next level of leadership. The Board began to talk to me about taking that on but I told them I wasn't qualified. I wasn't. I'd written the law myself. The executive directors of adoption agencies were required to have a degree and five to ten years experience. I had none of that. I probably had plenty of experience but I didn't have those letters after my name.

Through the spring of 1983, with much urging and encouraging from other people, I finally got to the place of asking, "Should I really do this"? My husband, always my encourager, kept reminding me that

I was “not qualified.” Not because he didn’t think that I could do the job but because he knew what Arizona law said.

Finally I asked a long time friend, Boyd Dover, who was in a deputy position with DES, whether the state could waive those requirements in my particular case. Several days passed before he gave me a response, which was “No.” So I was ready to drop it until Dr. Haddon Robinson came to speak at a missions conference at our church. I remember so clearly his message about the shrewd servant whom Jesus commended because he knew he was going to lose his job and he began to talk to all of his employers’ tradesmen and made deals with them that made his employer happy but also made the tradesmen happy and also provided some people who would be willing to give him a job after he lost the job he had. Haddon talked about it as investing in the future and encouraged us to put our energy and time investing in God’s Kingdom, assuring that there would be people in Heaven to greet us and tell us that they were there because of us. God used that message to shake up my thinking. You see, I had a job that I enjoyed and I felt like I was doing something valid and making a difference for kids.

But I told God that if he wanted me to head up CFCFA I would do that. He’d have to figure it out but I was willing, whatever it took. I told members of the Board, who had been hassling me, that I was will-

ing... whatever it took, even if it meant going back to school.

I moved into that mindset of being willing, then had to wait until the Board made a decision. When I went to the May Board meeting the Executive Committee put in front of the Board, Dennis' resignation and the recommendation that I step into that position with the understanding that we would change the title of that position. A couple of the Board members, Walter Soderdahl and I guess Rick, had gone to see the licensing person at DES and told them about our dilemma. We were starting this new agency and they wanted me to be their director but I didn't have the qualifications.

Lee Morse, whom I had known for many years, said "Well, that's an easy dilemma. Change her title."

So I became the President of Christian Family Care Agency. Of course, the other proviso was that we would always have a qualified Director of Social Work, that is, a Masters-level person who would be overseeing our program. That, of course, was Rachel. So, at that Board meeting I was hired on a part-time basis and went home praising God, excited about the opportunity in front of me. I always felt good about my job of advocacy, and always felt that God had put me there. Now God was opening up a very exciting new chapter in my life.

One of the incredibly exciting things that I have had the privilege to observe over the years of servant-

hood at CFCA has been to see how God uses ordinary people. Clearly, that's what he did with me. I never finished college, had no formal training, had only a good dose of common sense given to me by God himself, and a heart burdened for the children he had put into my life. Now here I am, with the privilege of providing leadership and direction for this organization that He created out of nothing. I have a little plaque on my desk that reads, "God doesn't care about your ability, only your availability."

In the fall of 1983, we determined to join the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) as a provisional member because of my exposure to the League through my involvement with ECFA and my friendship with Lois Tuchler at the Jewish Family and Children's Services. CWLA held what they called a "Biennial," a meeting, primarily for CEO's and Board members. Joan Colangelo went with me to this conference up in the Twin Cities of Minnesota and we went to many sessions, most of which I have forgotten but I always remember the session "Restructuring Child Welfare Agencies." Attending that particular session and hearing the presenter talk about our need as child welfare agencies to get with it and look hard at our antiquated structure and titles, and all that sort of thing. He had many, many good things to say but what I really remember was the suggestion that we change the title of Executive Director to President/CEO. I inwardly laughed at myself because

here I was, feeling somewhat intimidated in this crowd of people — all of whom had all those letters after their name and here I was, one of the few President's in the group. That line of humor went on in the early part of 1984 when I was down at the Legislature lobbying on a particular piece of legislation. As has happened many times over the years, the Director of DES, Doug Patiño was there. He asked for my help with an appointment and I told him "Yes." He mentioned that it was Linda Moore, Assistant to the Deputy Director whom he wanted to appoint as the Deputy Director. Well, Linda had come up through the ranks and was really a compassionate, caring, committed, dedicated, and competent person. I liked her very much. I assured Doug that he would have my support for her appointment, if he really thought he needed it. Then I asked my friend, Carol Kamin, why he needed help with Linda's appointment. She told me that Linda didn't have enough college. Here Linda was being appointed into the same position that my friend Boyd Dover was in when he told me that I didn't have enough college to lead CFCA. So again, I had one of those hearty internal laughs, thinking to myself, *"Isn't it interesting what God does with ordinary people?"*

Now, in all fairness, Linda obtained her Master's degree and ultimately became the Director of DES. She served well in that capacity for several years. We still cross paths. She is a fine, fine woman.

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Some have found it hard to understand, or to really identify with, the full scope of our philosophy. What influenced me to set this direction for CFCA may be harder to understand. Certainly the scriptural teaching of serving one another, caring for widows and orphans, being a father to the fatherless, and understanding our Savior's great love for children caused me to understand that we have no choice. We have an obligation to those vulnerable people in our community, children whose parents are not providing for them adequately or who cannot provide for themselves.

The permeating philosophy of the Agency is that the child is our primary client. We are here to serve children, some have not yet been born, but the child is our primary client. Often times we find ourselves in situations where it's very difficult to make a decision. This adult looks fine, and so does that one. They are good people.

Then we are able to bring ourselves back and remind ourselves that *the child is our primary client*. We do what is the very best for the child. Granted, we don't make all the adults happy, but we are able to respond by looking at what is the very best for the child.

How wonderful it is that at those times we can

pray for wisdom from the same God who gave Solomon wisdom and to so many others who found themselves in similar predicaments. I would not be so bold as to say that our decisions were always right and that we always listened to the Holy Spirit. But I would tell you that was always our goal.

The other philosophy at CFCA that permeates what we do — is that *we find families for children, not children for families*. We look at families, whether adoptive or foster, as a resource for children and so we're looking for the very best families for a given child. That puts a different spin on how we find families and place children, but we believe that this is the way God would have us go about this task and God has honored that over the years. It is an important tenet that underscores who we are.

Our staff reflects this philosophy, both in how we structure our positions and the hearts of the individuals who fill these roles. Each staff member works in the midst of difficult circumstances – legal challenges, parents who are addicts or unstable, and children who are abused, molested, and neglected. They know their job is a difficult one, but one they fill in an effort to better the world of a child in the name of God.

The structure works well as each staff member fills his or her unique role in our Agency. Case Managers communicate with counselors. Counselors help process pain and foster healing for children and

parents. Supervisors offer insight and support to staff members. Management works collaboratively to offer a better agency to all who enter our doors. Prayer is the “grease” that keeps these wheels turning.

Prayer takes place at the beginning of each day. It continues in staff meetings, interdepartmental meetings, by individual workers, and friends of the agency who pray for us each day. *Prayer is offered for children and parents in crisis.* Prayer is also offered over the court rooms, judges, and attorneys as our families, case managers, and counselors work on behalf of children. It is this prayer – offered by dedicated men and women – that helps us meet the needs of the children we serve. Someone once said, “It is better to build children, than repair men.”

* * * * *

There are so many different ways that I could write about the Agency but for me what has been so amazing are the people God has brought to us. The stories of the children and families served are exciting, but they couldn’t have been served without the people God has brought to help us.

I’m especially remembering Walter Soderdahl. Walter was introduced to the Agency by his pastor, Malcolm Cronk. Recently retired from his position as Senior Partner at Touche Ross, he was an energetic, highly motivated, organized man looking for some-

thing worthwhile to do. I kidded Malcolm that Walter was bugging him so he sent him to me. Well, praise God, because Walter played a significant role in helping us establish CFCA and what it is from a position of financial integrity.

Walter served informally as our comptroller, was the first Board Treasurer, and as such kept our checkbook. He paid our bills, did the payroll, recorded the income — he did it all.

As we grew, he grew, grooming and teaching others how to provide accounting services for the agency. Walter was usually at the office two or three days every week, sometimes every day.

When I joined CFCA we moved out of one office at Malouf's and moved into two offices. When we grew out of that space we moved to a larger one on Thomas Road. There I had the biggest office which held the conference table. That's where Walter hung out. Often he would ask me, "Well, how many babies are we gonna have next year, Kay?"

Somehow I was supposed to know that answer.

At the end of the year we'd look back and see how close our guess had been, deciding it was a holy guess. This guess, of course, was the premise for budgeting and anticipating income — an important guess since the only earned income we had was a modest contract from DES and our adoption fees. We had to raise the rest of our money and God enabled us to do that, but that is another chapter.

Walter's energy was unsurpassed and he kept us all going. He set standards for us that raised us all to a new level. It was fun to work with Walter, although I used to say that when he went on vacation, I didn't have to take one. There were times when we were moved to tears, always because of his standard of excellence.

That standard of excellence served us well when we met Peb Jackson, then Vice President with Focus on the Family. He was impressed with not only the quality of services but also the financial excellence of CFCA. Shortly thereafter I was invited to be on Dr. Dobson's radio program and that brought us some new friends.

One particularly funny story includes Walter. Our office was right by St. Joseph's Hospital on a little side street. Although rooftop garage parking was free across the street, Walter didn't like parking on the roof, preferring to use metered street parking. Often he would arrive without any change for the meter and would ask our secretary for quarters out of petty cash.

One day after Walter left, our secretary came to me and said that she didn't know how we'd ever have any money if she kept having to give Walter quarters for the parking meter. Stifling my desire to giggle, I explained that Walter's hourly rate as a senior partner was much higher than the few quarters we gave him.

I remember when Walter came back from a visit to Chicago. We were both from Chicago and had many places and people in common. He had been to Swedish Covenant Hospital, where I was born, to visit a friend and noticed their thrift store across the street. He went over and talked to people, finding out how much money they made. He came back and told me we needed a thrift store. I agreed with him. But I told him I couldn't do it.

We had many ensuing conversations about our need for a thrift store, always with Walter urging me to "get on the stick" and get it going. I told Walter when God raised up someone to provide leadership, we would have a thrift store. I explained that I couldn't run a store and the Agency. That's probably one of the wiser things I ever decided.

When the store was finally up and running and they gave me the first check for \$5,000 I talked to Walter, telling him how excited I was. His comment was, "Just think how much we'd have if we'd done it sooner!"

That's such a true picture of my dear friend, Walter. He was never satisfied with the status quo, always pushing to go to the next level. How I miss him.

When we opened our thrift store, Walter became the banana box collector, going from one grocery store to another to retrieve boxes for us to use in organizing and storing our stock. He and his

wife, Eleanor, loved to work at the store together and he kept the books for the stores. There wasn't anything Walter wouldn't do for the Agency.

When his health began to fail with a disease of the lungs, he wasn't able to do what he had done before. He missed that, and we missed him. He moved back to Illinois for a short time, then went home to be with the Lord. I know that he's keeping the books for God today. Things are organized but, from Walter's perspective - even in Heaven - they can always be a little bit better. He was a dear saint and we were privileged to have had his participation in the conception and growth of CFCA.

* * * * *

Let me share a little bit about our Family Attics. We had the idea to begin a thrift store but as I mentioned, we were waiting for God to raise up somebody to help us do that. Marie McKellips, one of the ladies from Scottsdale Bible Church, was interested in the Agency and helping in many ways. As she dropped some things off at my house for a garage sale, I said, "You know, what we really need is a thrift store." We talked about it and I asked her if she would be interested in helping us start one. She was returning to Canada for the summer and said, "I'll pray and think about it and we'll talk in the fall."

When she came back, I talked to her right away.

She said, "Yes, I feel like this is something I can do."

I don't think Marie had ever shopped in a thrift store so it was an interesting endeavor to begin. We soon had an opportunity to address the Women's Ministry group at Scottsdale Bible Church. Marie and I planned to use that meeting to kick off the thrift store. As I shared with the women that day, I told them about the thrift store and the need for volunteers to help us. God raised up ten women who researched stores, locations, found donated store fixtures and merchandise to begin the store. Besides Marie, those women include Doreen McElhanon and Sharon Saunders, both of who faithfully still give many volunteer days to the Family Attics. We opened our first Family Attic in 1986 in a little building on 3rd Street just north of Dunlap in Sunnyslope. It was a house converted into a little store with several rooms. It took a lot of remodeling, all done by volunteers. There was a warehouse available in the back, always a mess and always hot, but it gave us a place to store things.

In December of that same year, the ladies presented the Agency with a check for \$5000 after only a few months of operation. After replacing start up costs, paying rent, and paying for supplies, we still had a profit of \$5000. It only grew. The store operated for almost a year with volunteer labor, then we hired our first part-time manager, Vivian Frazee, who served us for many years.

Eventually, we needed to move out of that building, so we moved around the corner, right on Dunlap Avenue. We were in that store for a number of years. While there that landlord came and told our volunteer, Audrey Fredstrom, the Auxiliary Chairperson, about space available on 17th Avenue, north of Camelback Road. Audrey asked me about opening another Attic there. My reaction was, "Not unless you have a core of volunteers who will help because you can't do it alone."

She went to her church, Bethany Bible, and found a group of people willing to help. We opened the third store on 17th Avenue with many of the original volunteers having served there a decade or more.

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We believed that if we were going to move the ministry of CFCA forward with community support from people who believe in who we are, we would have to gather the support of people who understand what we do and obtain their blessing and help. One of those initial people was Dr. Malcolm Cronk. He had been pastor of Winnetka Bible Church and Wheaton Bible Church in the Chicago area when we lived there, so we knew him by name. By this time, he was pastoring Camelback Bible Church and my cousin and some others friends attended there so we

approached Dr. Cronk. We told him we wanted to begin an agency that functioned a lot like ECFA in Chicago, doing the same kinds of things. He had been supportive of ECFA and was supportive of the concept. He agreed to help us. Malcolm blessed us by lending his name to our Board of Reference. It is still proudly there. Then he shared with his body of believers, most prominently, Walter Soderdahl, who played such a vital role in the Agency. The other blessing Malcolm gave to us was his secretary, Carol Beltz. She came to volunteer and eventually served in a staff position. Carol told me she came to understand CFCFA from some of the letters Malcolm wrote on our behalf. She read the content and came to know who and what we were.

Malcolm's dear wife, Edna, invited me to come and speak to the ladies at Camelback Bible Church. She was such a dear lady. My cousin, Eleanor Erickson, had told me many times how special she was and I got to learn it firsthand that evening. I shared about the ministry, a little bit about myself, but mostly about what God was doing at the Agency. Edna came to me and affirmed me. She told me I was an "Esther," a woman created for such a time as this. I was encouraged and blessed. Several times after that I received notes from Edna that were such an encouragement to me. God gifts people in so many different ways and Edna certainly used her gift for His glory and for my encouragement.

Carol Beltz, Malcolm's former secretary, came first as a volunteer. Then when we needed help, my assistant called her and asked if she would come work for us. She had just accepted a job working for a doctor so she declined. Things didn't work out there so Carol called saying she was free if the job was still open. She worked for us for a number of years, leaving because she and her husband were moving away. She eventually came back to work at our front desk.

For many years, Carol was the first voice volunteers and clients alike heard when they called CFCA. She greeted them and made sure they got to the right person. When people walked in the door, hers was the smiling face that welcomed and directed them through the maze of CFCA.

Carol and her late husband, Harlan, have been faithful volunteers and willing staff, helping at events and promoting CFCA.

* * * * *

When our youngest child started kindergarten, Chuck asked me to help him in the business. I had done a lot of different things over the years to earn extra money — child care, ironing, and even some office cleaning when my husband was working as a manager for Service Master. (Anyone who saw my house would know what an interesting and unlikely

area of expertise that was.) Still, I thought it would be fine to help Chuck in his new business.

With the help of an accountant, we set up the books. Chuck's Aunt Peggy, a life-long bookkeeper, assisted as well. I tried to be an assistant, but was a more aggressive salesman than my husband. He was a great manufacturer with good ideas about making better products, but could seldom persuade anyone to buy. In fact, he was better at persuading them *not* to buy if they really didn't need it. Sales didn't always flourish.

After awhile, it became apparent that I should earn money from another source, so I began to look for part-time jobs, asking God to show me something to do. The first job he opened for me was at the University of Chicago's social research arm, the National Opinion Research Center. I became one of those obnoxious "in-your-face" people asking questions. In fact, I was looking for people who were eligible for HUD housing allowances. God answered my prayer. I could do something to earn money and still help people. It was rewarding to identify people who had no idea they might be eligible, knowing that HUD would be contacting them.

I worked on several other social studies, learning and honing my skills of approaching strangers and asking them to do something. I became quite good at it. At one time I worked for the Triangle Research Institute of North Carolina on a medical

study. I secured a face-to-face meeting with a specific medical doctor and convinced him to keep records on patients for a week. I would come back and collect those records. Needless to say, it was a challenging task and I got to be one of the best on that project. It had value because it allowed researchers to find out what brought people to doctors in different fields and provided information back to the doctors who participated in this study. Later on this experience proved helpful as I sought appointments with busy pastors.

The research work was up and down, not always steady, so I looked for a more stable job. I answered an ad for a small company that needed someone to keep their books. With my strong accounting background — learning at the foot of an accountant how to keep books for my husband's business — I got the job. I set up and kept the books for what is now one of the larger barricade companies in the Phoenix area. It was fun to do. I worked for good people, but once I got the books set up, it became somewhat boring.

About that time my volunteer efforts with National Action for Foster Children brought me to the attention of the national association. They asked me to become a national consultant. I had already been doing that but now they wanted to pay me a huge sum, \$500 per month for part-time work. They gave me a territory including everything west of the

Mississippi. I was to establish advocacy committees in cities throughout the west. It was an ill conceived program — under funded and under staffed. In spite of that we established a dozen committees in places like San Francisco, Boise, Spokane, Santa Fe, and Fort Worth. We even helped establish a committee that worked on review boards back in the Chicago area.

All of that grounding was part of God's education for me in the broad field of child welfare. I met many people, saw many different programs, acquainted myself with many different ways of doing things, and learned skills that would serve me well for years to come.

Our National Action for Foster Children Committee was the instrument we used to write the legislation requiring pre- and in-service training for foster parents in Arizona. I was invited to go to San Francisco and talk to the local foster parent meeting about that. Although I embellished the story when I shared it, we actually just caught the ear of one of our state legislatures. Carol Kamin, Chuck, and I sat together with Diane McCarthy and wrote that legislation in her office.

Shortly after that, I received a phone call from the woman who was head of child welfare for the Children's Bureau of Health Education and Welfare, the precursor to Health and Human Services in Washington D.C. She invited me to come to Hawaii to attend a National Foster Parent Association

Conference and present our training program. I told her that my husband and I did those things as a team, so she flew us to Hawaii for a week.

I need to share how we connected with the child welfare work in Arizona. We were in a small Bible study group at First Baptist of Scottsdale. One of our friends, Dorothy Bloom, was getting her degree in Social Work at Arizona State University and had become involved with the child abuse program. She invited me to one of their luncheon meetings. I went, ate lunch, and watched pictures and slides with Dr. Kip Charlton, of children who had been abused and neglected. I couldn't finish lunch and went back to the office. At that time I was working with Chuck in our business. I went to the next meeting, similar to the first, and didn't see what I had to offer that group. When the third meeting rolled around, Chuck and I talked about whether I should even go. He told me to go one more time and see if God opened any doors. If not, drop out.

At that meeting we had a speaker, Dr. Carol Kamin, who had just moved to Arizona. She was the founding Director of the Governor's new 4 C Program. She shared the need for the community to advocate on behalf of vulnerable children. That was the focus of her office.

After her presentation, I got my sandwich and managed to sit down across from Carol. I began sharing with her about our National Action for Foster

Children group that met on Friday nights in our living room. She asked me what I was doing that weekend.

Sometimes when people ask what you're doing, you know you're supposed to say, "Why nothing, what did you have in mind?" It was one of those occasions and I said to her, "Why do you ask?"

She said, "There's an advocacy conference at ASU and I have some funding. I think you should go."

I went back to the office and told Chuck what had happened. He said, "Absolutely. Go."

I went to the conference and there I met people from DES, the presiding judge at the Juvenile Court, and my longtime friend-to-be, Lois Tuchler, who was the Director of Jewish Family Services. Carol Kamin, was there, of course, along with a number of other people. It was a good conference, but what I remember most was the opportunity to connect with people in the community who were significant in the child welfare scene.

Out of that experience, our National Action for Foster Children group grew. We recruited people to serve on our committee. My friend, Lois recognized my ability to articulate issues regarding kids and launched my career as a lobbyist. That was the first of many pots of hot water that Lois managed to push me into. Lois was one of those people God used in my life in a significant way. I praise God for her.

Lois was a maverick. She was culturally Jewish but not a woman of strong faith. I remember one

time when something happened at the Agency, she said to me, "I almost believe there might really be a higher power."

I had many opportunities to share my faith with Lois but was cautious. She constantly reminded me of her former Baptist friend – and I was a Baptist when I first met her.

Lois flew a plane and some of our most enjoyable times were flying together and spending a night or two at a conference or meeting. The first time I flew with her she was returning a baby to the Navajo Reservation. When we came in for a landing, I asked her if she often had to wait for horses to clear the runway before she could land. She said, "Yes, that happens some but usually they run away from the sound of the motor."

We put the plane down and the family climbed over the fence to retrieve their little daughter. It was a fresh, new look at social work. Lois was aggressive in her care for Native American children. She placed many of them with adoptive families and positively impacted lives of many children whose parents, due to life style issues, were not able to provide for them.

Lois trusted me enough to contract with me to help her find families for some special needs children caught in the state's child welfare system. Although that was more than 25 years ago, CFCA's newest project, Families for Kids, is focused on these same issues.

Armed with a camera, my husband and I trav-

eled around the state taking pictures of children stuck in the system. Talking to the kids, their foster families, and the social workers helped us find families for those youngsters. It was the first time I felt the sting of not having the right credentials. I wasn't a social worker; didn't have those letters after my name. But Lois was my advocate and fought through some of those issues with her own staff. It was a price she was willing to pay.

Lois was first and foremost, a child advocate. She lived it out. She had lost a son to a brain tumor when he was a teenager, a painful and difficult loss. She and her husband were separated at the time and the loss of that son brought them back together again. Her husband, Tuch, was a great guy — a forensic psychiatrist. To say he was a character would be an understatement.

Shortly after they lost their son, Inez came into their lives. This severely disabled young woman, with an illness much like muscular dystrophy, was confined to a wheelchair. Tuch and Lois took on the responsibility of this young woman, whose mother was an alcoholic and could not provide for her. Inez had no one else when she came to Lois' attention through the services of JFCS. Lois and Tuch made her a part of their home and their family. She lived with them until she went home to be with the Lord.

Inez practiced her Catholic faith faithfully and it was respected by Lois and Tuch. They put together a

room in their home with all of the needed equipment to accommodate her physical disabilities. They hired help to care for her when they were away.

What an example of Christianity in action although neither one of them expressed any real faith. They were an example to me just as my own parents were. I remember Lois advocating with the priests when Inez wanted to marry. Lois won!

Although she wanted the two of us to start an agency in Sedona dedicated solely to kids, Lois was my greatest supporter when I talked about taking on the leadership of CFCA at the urging of the Board. I reminded her of my lack of credentials. She reminded me of all the other things God had given to me and greatly encouraged me. My convictions about the need for the Christian community to respond to hurting children — the need for children to grow up in Christian homes — made me push ahead. I'm thankful for Lois' continued friendship, support, and encouragement.

When we began to get licensed as an agency, we needed forms, manuals, and other materials. Gathering and writing those was not my strength. Rachel brought some with her from Catholic Social Services and we received the rest from JFCS. We borrowed brochures and other public relations materials from the ECFA in Wheaton so we became a composite, which God has blessed.

Other agencies sharing so generously has

inspired us to always share what we have with others. We've seen that principle in action again recently as we've gone through the process of accreditation. Catholic Social Services, ECFA, Arizona Adoption of Special Kids (AASK), Florence Crittendon Society, and others have shared liberally towards a common goal of serving children with excellence.

CHAPTER THREE

OUT ON A LIMB

"I'm so grateful to Christ Jesus for making me adequate to do this work. He went out on a limb, you know, trusting me with this ministry." I Timothy 1:12-13



Ronald & Meridith Rhinehart

Sometimes a story is more powerful told in the storyteller's own words. Here is one of my favorites from dear friends Ronald and Meridith Rhinehart.

After retirement, my husband and I decided to move from Washington State to Arizona to live the "good life" of enjoyment and ease. After a few years of that good life, we found ourselves quite bored. We

decided that at the end of the day, we needed to feel accomplishments more substantial than a game of golf, a day by the pool, or eating at some good restaurant.

We saw a series of television advertisements that had begun airing about fostering children. It showed a family with various kids and would flash the telephone number at the bottom. It seemed like that commercial ran day and night.

We had fostered kids in Washington and began to discuss the option of doing that again. Although we had found fostering to be a rewarding way to “give back,” life kept getting in the way and we put off our inquiry.

One night at 2:00 a.m., I could not sleep and turned on the television. Immediately that ad was on the screen. I determined at that moment I would call first thing in the morning for information.

As a result, we became licensed for foster care in the state of Arizona. We received three wonderful children by making that call. Two eventually went to their respective families. We are so privileged to be parenting the third little boy.

After we began the process, I was explaining to my good friend how the commercial that ran constantly had prompted my call. She had a puzzled look on her face and said, “I have never seen that ad, not once.”

I can only agree with the prophet Isaiah and

say, "O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago."

December 13, 1960 is forever emblazoned upon my mind. It was overcast, dreary, and cold in Park Ridge, Illinois. The weather was really gloomy, but my spirits were pretty high. We were going to take possession that afternoon of a Buick station wagon — our first station wagon. I don't remember that we had two cars before that.

We had, at that time, two foster babies in our house — an infant, Donna, and Dan, who was about 21 months old, plus our two girls, Debbie and Laurie. Laurie was almost five and Debbie was seven. Debbie was in school and Laurie was in kindergarten.

I spent the day writing letters to missionary friends. At that time there were probably eight or ten missionaries who we corresponded with, family members and mostly friends from our church. They were to be their Christmas letters and I was afraid they were going to be tardy so I was working hard at getting personal correspondence to each one of them. When Chuck came home from his duties (I believe he was still at the dairy at that time) I was set to meet him at the dealership and sign papers. My mother was coming over to baby sit. Mom hadn't

been well but she was up to that task. Dad didn't come with her. He found our household sometimes to be a noisy place so Mom came over alone.

When she got there I went with Chuck to the dealership, which was not even a mile from the house. I came home ahead of Chuck in our old car because there was still stuff to be fiddling with and I was feeling conscious of leaving Mom alone with the kids for too long. I greeted everybody and then went into my bedroom to check on the baby. In the short time of my absence she had died. Not knowing whether she was really dead, we made every effort to revive her but her little face was contorted and blue. She had evidently, in that last gasp of breath, sucked her pacifier into her mouth so at first I thought she had choked on her pacifier.

I was mortified. How could this happen? We picked her up and tried to breathe for her. My next door neighbor at that time was a woman doctor from Hungary, who had just come over from the Hungarian rebellion and hadn't been in the states long. My mother ran next door to get her. She wasn't licensed to do anything but she helped and she said there was nothing we could do. Many times afterwards she assured me that the baby had expired sometime before I had found her. Of course, by then the ambulance had been called. After they got there I called Chuck at the dealership and he rushed home. We had lost a precious baby girl. She had been to the

doctor the day before for a mild little cough, but she was physically healthy. The doctors thought she could have developed pneumonia, but they really didn't know what was wrong. This was before SIDS was well known and attributed to a normal happening with an infant. Our baby was almost seven weeks old and we were devastated. I was pregnant with Eric who was to be born in February so everyone was worried about me. Of course, I was worried about everyone else, feeling conscience stricken over being entrusted with a baby that wasn't ours and then losing that baby.

The Agency, ECFA, was ten years old at that time and had never lost a baby. Everyone was pretty much in a state of shock. Both the Director of the Agency, whom I knew personally, and the Social Worker called us and were in contact with us. The birth-mother of the baby was in her 40's. The Social Worker told me that she had never cried all throughout her pregnancy until after this baby died. They wanted to participate in a graveside service so we had the birth-mother, birth grandmother, and the Social Worker come to our house. The Social Worker was Doris Wheeler, who also had a nursing degree. She had gone into social work and had just come to work at the Agency. Ultimately, Doris became the Director of the Agency. We became fast friends, but this was a beginning relationship for us and we shared the grief with that birthmother and birth grandmother and the

grief of our family. Our little girls were pretty devastated. Dan was really too young to remember what was going on.

Ten days before Christmas, we went shopping for a Christmas tree. We so needed something to cheer us up and to move us forward. The Agency wisely brought another baby for us to care for. We had baby Lisa through Christmas. She was a baby who turned white when she went to sleep and breathed so shallowly that I went through a lot of anxiety attacks with that baby in our home. I still think it was wise of the Agency to allow us to know that we were trusted and that they didn't feel that we were guilty.

During that night after Donna died, I couldn't sleep, really questioning God. I'm afraid I was at a very righteous point in my life. After all, I was keeping these babies for Him and doing this for Him. Besides that, I had spent the day writing letters to missionaries. Wasn't that a good thing to do? Why were all my good works not acknowledged? Where was God? What was He about? I knew enough about the scriptures to look for solice and to look for answers and so I opened my Bible and turned to the 15th Chapter of 1 Corinthians. It's a long chapter, 58 verses. I read the whole chapter, awaiting peace and comfort and some word from God. Certainly all the promises regarding the resurrection would be able to encourage me. At the very end of the chapter God

spoke to my heart with that very familiar verse, “Be not weary in well doing for in due season you will reap if you don’t faint.”

“Oh, is that what you are about God?” I reasoned. “I’m not to give up. I must recognize that there will be pitfalls, hard places, and difficult times.”

I remember being so worried about my mom and then my dad, through this experience. Of course, they were worried about me. It was a hard time, but it was part of God’s grooming of all of us. Had I known what the next six months were to hold for us, I might have buckled, but it was just the first of many hard things to come. Yet God had said, deliberately, “Don’t be weary in doing good because the harvest will come. You will reap.” So, trusting God, we did move forward. We took Lisa into our home and we went on to take other children. Our Eric was born the third week of February, healthy and happy for a little bit, but we had farmed the kids out with friends because my mom, by then, was not really able to care for the children. Dan came home from the Jorian house with measles. He was as sick as any two-year-old baby could be. Then Eric contracted them as an infant, but he was so little he wasn’t very sick. The girls, of course, both got them and we just did the measles-thing.

Before we were hardly over that, my mother had surgery that disclosed inoperable cancer. She had a recurrence of what had started many years before

with breast cancer. On Mother's Day, which I knew would be my last Mother's Day with my mother, we took Eric to the hospital for corrective surgery. This new little baby had a hernia and I wasn't anxious to have a baby in the hospital after our experience of losing Donna but the doctor assured me that it was a simple procedure and that it needed to be done. So we took Eric to the hospital and then went to visit my mother.

What a hard time! Dad had a heart condition and I was concerned for him. My sister was at home with my folks, a child herself, not understanding what was happening, frightened, of course, of losing her mother. Eric came through his surgery fine, but we lost my mom at the end of June just past my 26th birthday. Only my older girls remember my mother — a beautiful person named Miriam. Like Miriam in the scriptures, she was always ready to help, willing to assist. She took care of her brothers, just as Miriam in the scriptures did and she was a wonderful mother. I regret that I had her for such a short time.

November 22, 1963 is a day etched in the memory of our nation. Even those who weren't born yet, know the infamy of that day. My kids were watching Bozo the Clown when it was interrupted with the news of the shooting of President John Kennedy in Dallas. We were glued to the television and busy with the affairs of the day. Our family then consisted of five youngsters. Mindy was just a baby. The older girls

were in Pioneer Girls and there was to be a Pioneer Girl program the next evening so I was busy trying to sew uniforms for that event. Sewing was never my strength so it was a tedious task.

I was preparing dinner on the stove and moving between the bedroom sewing machine and the kitchen. We had steadily cared for foster infants and the little one we had now was sleeping contentedly next to the sewing machine. It was a bleak day like many winter days in Chicago — overcast, somewhere between rain and snow. Understandably, everyone's spirits were bleak. My neighbor had been over and we were commiserating and then as I recall, Chuck came home from work early. It just was that kind of gloomy day. Late afternoon I got up from the sewing machine to go back into the kitchen one more time and check on how burnt the pot roast was going to be. As I looked over at our little infant, her arm was hanging out of her crib. Something about that arm and the way she looked just sent chills down my spine. I reached down to touch her and pick her up and I realized that the angel of death had visited our home one more time. Our precious little Patty had gone.

I think I screamed. Chuck called 911. The children were already frightened, watching the television report about the President being shot down in his prime, and now this infant baby. I tried to revive the baby. We tried breathing for her, testing every tech-

nique we knew. It felt like the repetition of bad dreams. I was pregnant with Russell, due to be born in May, so I wasn't very far along. My husband was very concerned lest I miscarry. We wanted to protect the children. The boys were old enough to be really scared. It was a frightening time for all.

The police and fire departments arrived at the house. A policeman stood in my living room crying. I shall never forget that as long as I live. It was a hurtful day when we lost a President and another baby. I remember saying to God, "We did this once. I thought we learned. Why has this happened again?"

By now the agency had lost a couple of other babies. There had been other experiences but we were pretty devastated. When the social worker came out and explained the details of that baby's life, how she was conceived and all the lies and denials and untruths that surrounded her little life, they felt that was much of the reason God had taken her home. It was some comfort to us and we began to see how God had trusted our family to be the ones to care for this little one until He took her to glory.

The identified adoptive family waiting for her was devastated. We never met them, but they were part of our prayers for a long time, as we all sensed this great loss. The birthparents of the baby, who were married, claimed her little body and did the service with the grandparents and so we weren't part of that process, but that was alright. We knew what

needed to be done for them and we knew that we were simply the caretakers whom God had put in place.

We elected not to care for any babies after that but just to wait. Our house was full, my sister was still new to our family and Mindy was just a toddler. We decided just to recoup and await our own new baby.

Although I didn't know it at the time, this experience would serve me well in the future. When I took the position at CFCA I knew that God had ordained that I do that. I believed that he would prepare me for whatever I needed to do, but I felt overwhelmed most of the days. In fact, that was my kind of constant feeling with all of the challenges in front of me. Would I be able to measure up to any of them?

In September, just three months into my position as President of CFCA we had a small staff of Rachel, Sharon, and Sue Vanderlei working as an intern. I think Sharon Carl was there as an intern, too. By then I had hired Dorothy Bloom to oversee our foster care program. So we had two offices and we were stumbling over each other.

It was the middle of the month in the middle of the day when Rachel ran into my office, gathering people around her as she came and said "We have to pray, we have to pray." She said we had a baby who wasn't breathing and the foster family had taken the baby to the hospital. So we gathered and prayed.

During prayer I revealed that I knew how that

foster mother felt and that I wanted God to just undertake for her and give her courage and faith even in the midst of that pain. No one on our staff knew that we had lost a baby. It had been many years before, so when we were finished with our prayer Rachel said to me “You go and be with Barb.” Well, I knew she was right. Immediately I got in my car and drove the two miles over to the hospital. When I got there and took the foster mother in my arms, she told me that the baby had not made it. He had passed away — just a little guy, only a couple of months old. He had been with that family most of his life.

My first words to her were, “Barb, I’ve been there. I know exactly how you feel.” I shared with her that we had lost a baby and she said, “You, Kay? You? Oh, I have so much respect for you.”

I don’t know what that had to do with anything but somehow the fact that I could have been through the same experience somehow provided almost instant comfort and assurance to her. I knew what she was going through — feeling that she had been entrusted with this little one and failed. I could assure her that God could really trust her because he could trust her with even a hurting experience like that. So I stayed with them for a while, prayed with them, we shared scripture. I even shared my scripture out of Corinthians and then I had the privilege of taking Barb home.

As we drove, she told me how she had prayed

and asked God to make her strong so that she could do great and mighty things for Him. She said, "I'm sure this is part of his growing me." I assured her that I believed that too. Coming through an experience like this does "grow" you and makes you strong in your faith. Because you're so weak in that sense of loss and grief you have to throw all of your trust on God and then he becomes your strength. So we prayed together again when I got her home and I gave her another hug. Then I got into my car to go back to the office. As I went back I was overwhelmed with just the remembrances of my own experiences and the grief and found myself crying almost uncontrollably. Fortunately, it wasn't far back to my office. When I got there dear Rick Malouf was waiting for me. He knew I wasn't ready to see my staff and so he just took me into his office, this Godly young man, and let me cry. He listened to me share my pain and hurt and then as I gained composure and was able to look at the big picture, I said "You know, I think this is again God's way of saying to me, there is nothing that I'm going to bring to you that you are not prepared for, that you can't handle."

I thanked the good Lord for His strength and for His preparation of me. I recognized that probably there wasn't anything much more serious in the life of an agency than the death of one of the children in its care. Even for that God had prepared me, so I thanked Him and was encouraged in the task in front

of me.

* * * * *

The first chapter of 1 Timothy reads, “I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me because he has judged me faithful and appointed me to His service...”

It’s been four or five years now since we went through a very deep financial crisis. Cash flow was down to, well, zero. We were in a very difficult place. We’d been there before but I don’t think those times were quite as serious. I lost two significant staff people and I was searching my soul for what I was doing wrong. Did I need to get out of the way? I really felt that total lack of strength, that weakness that pushes you into full dependence on the Lord, but at the same time I felt that perhaps it was time for me to move out of the way. Perhaps I really didn’t have the skills and what was required to lead the agency. That was when I came across those verses in 1 Timothy. I was reading in The Message this translation of those same verses:

“I’m so grateful to Christ Jesus for making me adequate to do this work. He went out on a limb, you know, in trusting me with this ministry.”

Well those first words, Christ Jesus making me adequate, and then that concept that God, in Christ, went out on a limb, because of me, so whose credibil-

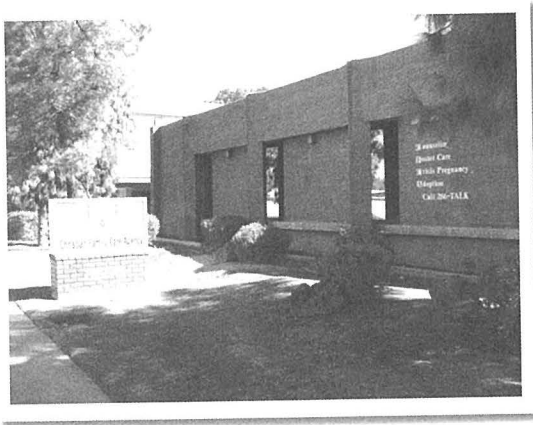
ity was at stake? God's, not mine. Did I have faith in God? Absolutely. It certainly turned me around. I found great encouragement and I have shared those verses with many people, always with a chuckle.

May you be encouraged by them, too, because God has called you for His purpose and He's gone out on a limb for you.

CHAPTER FOUR

SEASONS OF GROWTH

*"You have been faithful in handling this small amount,
so now I will give you many more responsibilities.
Let's celebrate together!" Matthew 25:23*



CFCA's current location on 7th Avenue

As I look at the faces of those who comprise our CFCA family, I am reminded of God's faithfulness. Birthmother Holly Blevins is an example of His faithful care. Her words tell her story more powerfully than I can.

"The test is positive," the doctor said. I froze. It couldn't be. I had taken precautions this time. I left

the doctor's office and headed for Planned Parenthood. All the way there, I begged God for a negative test. But that one was positive, too. "We can help you take care of this if you want," the nurse's comments interrupted my thoughts. I told her I didn't know what I wanted to do and ran out of the office.

I was scared and convinced my parents would be outraged. To my surprise, they weren't. They took me in their arms and held me as I cried. Deep down I wanted them to yell at me. I thought if they treated me as an outcast it would be easier to walk into an abortion clinic. I was looking for justification for my thoughts, but God had a different plan.

Through prayer and the compassionate response from my mom's best friend, I was introduced to CFCA. As she took me to the agency's support group, I thought, "I don't belong here. I'm not like these other girls." That was a humbling experience. I discovered I was exactly like those other girls - scared, confused, terrified, and convinced that no one in the world understood what I was going through.

But CFCA understood. They sincerely cared for me and the child growing in my womb. I listened intently to the others and to CFCA's offer to provide counseling throughout the pregnancy if I wanted help in deciding the future of my baby.

God's peace came over me in a deep way. I

wasn't particularly spiritual at that point, but His presence was undeniable. I went home that night and threw open the door, shouting, "Abortion is not an option. There will be an adoption!"

The next few months were bittersweet as I carried God's child into the world. I would not be the one, however, to raise and care for him, so I began to pray for the couple that God had predestined to be his parents. I reviewed papers from prospective families and asked God which one was the family He had chosen.

The profile that stuck out was a couple named Gerry and Sara. They were both teachers. Gerry liked to ski and was athletic. I knew this was the couple. I went to bed and again experienced that great peace.

Although I had felt that initial peace, the next two months were difficult. Great emotion swept over me. I questioned whether I was making the right decision for this child. Finally, the night before Thanksgiving, I prayed. "If adoption is your plan, Lord, it would be a blessing to give birth on Thanksgiving - the greatest gift for Gerry and Sara."

Five minutes later, I received an answer. My water broke and I was on my way to the hospital. The reality of the past nine months weighed down and I became fearful. This was the most intense moment of my life. I knew everyone was counting

on me and that this was no time to waiver in my determination.

Within hours I gave birth to the most beautiful boy I've ever seen. I held him and gave him the name Kyle Jordan. Every emotion welled up inside of me when I looked at this precious child. I was overwhelmed. How could I let go of this incredible gift? I knew God had his family picked out, but my heart was breaking. There are no words that can describe what a birthmother goes through in the hours and days between delivery and adoption. We are a chosen few who have an incredible calling, but it is such an individual experience.

In the few days that followed, Kyle was placed in foster care. I was adamant that I wanted to be in contact with him until he was placed with his family. I was the proudest mother in the world. We held an open house and invited everyone to come and see this gift from God.

When I went back into the bedroom to change his diaper, I was unable to quiet his crying. It was a moment of reality for me. The instinctual mothering nature was not there. It was then that I fully realized I was not the one chosen to be his mommy. I took Kyle back to his foster home for the last time and said my goodbyes.

The heartache a birthmother experiences is one only God can understand. I am thankful for CFCA, though, where girls can find comfort in the

midst of their pain.

A few days later, Kyle – now named Joshua James – was placed with his family. His name means “The Lord is my Salvation,” a confirmation that I had made the right decision.

Six months later, CFCA called saying the family wanted to meet me, another confirmation of God’s faithfulness. It’s a confirmation that has continued for 14 years as I have been privileged to be a part of Joshua’s life. We have spent most of the holidays together and I have been allowed to walk with him through all of life’s experiences. I can honestly say that 14 years ago, God gave Joshua a mommy and me a best friend in Sara.

God’s faithfulness amazes me. I am married and have the privilege of raising two boys of my own. I am also (at the time of this letter) expecting our first daughter. Although each story about adoption is unique, God has a purpose and plan for every person in each situation. He wants to use each of us in to bring others to a place of understanding and healing.

I mentioned elsewhere in the book that our beginnings took place in the Malouf Brothers offices at 11th and Missouri Streets — a beautiful building with a lot of space in it donated generously for our staff to use. We grew to two offices and finally three. I teased Rick and Bob when we finally moved out that if only they were willing to give up their offices we could have still stayed on.

In those offices, we had the use of their reception area, conference room, kitchen and all of the other facilities but still we outgrew the space. Dr. Hays knew we were growing and needing a place. He had some space in a medical building near St. Joseph's Hospital — 900 square feet, to be exact. It was empty and free except for the cleaning expense, which was pretty modest. So for \$300 a month we could occupy 900 sq. ft. It seemed like a great gift. Obviously, it was small but we made it work.

My husband, Chuck, and some other men went over and laid out the space for us. We put up slanted walls. Every office had a bit of an angle to it. Chuck was in the camper business at the time and he used some insulation that really helped to sound proof these six tiny offices and a waiting room. We partitioned off the back space so we kept our files back there. We also had the makings of a mini kitchen, a place to make coffee and to wash our few little dishes. It also held file cabinets, a copy machine, a little work space, and our mail room. It was about four feet

wide and twenty feet long with a doorway in the middle. Our waiting room had a door off of the main part of the building. Restrooms were down the hall. The waiting room also held our secretarial help, which was fine when we had one secretary. Then when we grew to two secretaries it became over crowded. My office had windows and fronted on a little side street. I had my own entrance off of the back end of the building. My desk spanned one end of the room. We had a conference table that had been gifted to us so my office was also the conference room. Walter Soderdahl used this as work space when he came to visit. It was the waiting room, the visiting room, the placement room, and the playroom. I had the big space so I got to share. I was still on a part-time basis so there were times when I was out of the office, although I worked most of the time. We were in that space for maybe a year and a half to two years and then we outgrew that.

The Malouf brothers told us that they might have some room for us, but not for awhile. They might have a whole big suite of offices. Where to go in the meantime? Harvey McElhanon had space in his building over on Broadway in Tempe, so we looked hard at that and decided that it would work. Over New Year's 1986 we moved from Thomas Road and Central to Price Road and Broadway in Tempe. We paid extra dollars to hold on to our same phone number because we knew it would be a temporary

move. I remember that we took the end of a hall and made an office out of it.

To say that my husband is creative in making spaces would be an understatement. It was a real small office but it held a little table and two chairs — certainly enough for a counselor to work with a pregnant woman or any one-on-one counseling. I had a very lovely office. It was a sunken office, one step down, with a big corner fireplace and lovely windows. Of course, it captured the water when the sprinkler system went kaput or when it rained. Nobody mentioned that to me when we moved in. It was a nice slump block building. There was a chiropractor in one part of it and then Harvey had his business, Southwestern Restaurants, on the other side.

The other interesting phenomena was that all the sound went through the air conditioning duct work. I'm sure that for most offices that's not a big issue but when you're counseling, it really is a big issue. We had one or two little spaces that we tried to sound proof and we did a lot of counseling offsite while we were in that space. It was just as easy to talk to someone across the hall and down a way through the air conditioning duct without raising my voice as it was to pick up the phone and do it on an intercom. Our time there was long from the perspective of how well it worked but it really was short and it was a wonderful place to be on an interim basis. We were grateful.

In the spring of 1986, we moved back to the original Malouf building where we had started out and we had about half the space in that building. We felt like we had come into our own! Everyone had offices and we had a nice little waiting room. Nothing was too extravagant but everything was comfortable.

If we had just not grown we would have been OK, but grow we did. We got a contract to do some parent training and also some abstinence work, so we had to put on more staff.

At about that time Linda Todd had joined our Board of Directors. She was energetic in her efforts to help us find new space and found the landlord in the building next door to the Malouf building. She worked with him to get us some space over there so that all we had to do was walk from our parking lot to that parking lot. Voila! We had an annex. We lived like that for about a year with our annex, back and forth. It worked pretty well. As we continued to grow, and as things changed with Malouf brothers, and as that building changed in terms of usage and ownership, we needed to move. We moved our whole operation next door to the building on Missouri that was 1121. We were in there for several years — our fifth move.

As we crowded in at 1121 E. Missouri, we used all available space: we used the playroom as an office; we shared that at one of our annual dinners and a realtor came forward and offered to help us look for

some office space. As he began to talk with Tom Wagner, our administrator, he concluded that we could probably buy our own building and pay a mortgage payment that would be no higher than what we were paying for rent and we could have more space.

We put that idea in front of the Board and with their approval, began looking for space to buy. Chuck, Tom, the realtor, Don Rodie and I, became the scouting team and Don brought us 31 potential properties. We took a ride and looked at them from the street and narrowed it down to about 13. Don scheduled the time for us to go and look at all of those offices. I guess the very first building we looked at was down the street from us on Missouri on the other side of 7th street. It was in close proximity so we thought God wanted us to be on Missouri. We'd spent most of our agency life on Missouri. It was a small place, maybe 4,000 or 5,000 sq. ft. We looked very hard at that but then Don said, "Let's look at some other space."

We began doing that and the next property we looked at was a building on 7th Avenue. We had concluded that we probably could spend up to about \$300,000, maybe \$350,000 max. but \$300,000 would be the high end to have a mortgage that would be comfortable to us and fit our budget. We looked at this building on 7th Avenue which was perfect — beautiful offices, good space, nice parking lot, covered parking, everything about it was great. We

would have to do nothing to move in, however, the asking price was just over \$500,000. So we dismissed it, although we said it was great. I just knew it was more money than the Board was going to be willing to spend.

We looked at a lot of other space and found one that, with some extensive remodeling and a lot of creativity, would work for us. It was up at the north end of Central Ave., almost to Dunlap. I invited the Board to come up and see it. That was an interesting experience and I found that while I might have creativity and caught a vision, it wasn't where the Board envisioned the office. Then we learned about a building that was two doors from us on Missouri that Valley Bank owned and wanted to give to a non-profit. Well, we really believed that non-profit should be us. We were certain that since we were two doors away and had been on Missouri, etc., that we would take our budgeted dollars for repair.

We went and looked at this two-story building. It had more space than we needed so we planned to lease out some of the space. It had been a one-story building and they had added a second story. It had flooded and everything was pretty soggy. On a Board meeting day I took the Board over there and again found out that my ideas were a little different from theirs. We also found out that Valley Bank wasn't interested at the time in considering us because we were a pro-life group and they weren't going to

touch us. Back to the drawing board.

Having exhausted what we felt were the possibilities for space in our budget, we were about to do some more remodeling in our current offices and try to get one more office. That was when Don called and said that he thought the people who owned the building that we liked might sell at a lower price. Well of course I knew what building we liked. It was that building on 7th Avenue. We asked what kind of a price and Don said "Well, they just turned down an offer of \$250,000. We got the Board over to look at it. The Board really saw the possibilities. In fact, most members were pretty excited about it so we went back to the office for a Board meeting and then the Board asked me if we really could afford to buy a building and where did I think I could get the down payment and I said that if this is what God wants, it will come. So they challenged me with raising \$60,000 for a down payment within the next four weeks. We had made an offer of \$300,000 and told the owners that we were a non-profit and they could write off some of their loss because they were selling to a non-profit.

The thing that really needed to be done to the building was to repair the air conditioners. We renovated and put new air conditioners on for another \$25,000 so we bought a building with brand new air conditioning for \$325,000. The owners were willing to give us a month to determine whether we could

raise the money and come forward with a down payment and the Board agreed if we could raise \$60,000 they would see God's hand in that and we would go forward.

We scheduled another Board meeting in four weeks to see whether we could go forward with this project. It sounded great to me. I was excited. A building of our own, a permanent home for CFCA. Here we were about permanent homes for children but now we'd have a permanent home too. \$60,000 in four weeks. No big deal.

When I got up the next morning, I realized that that meant I needed to raise \$2,000 a day for the next 30 days. That was a big deal. We'd never raised money at that level before. Where to start? I remember so well being in the office that morning, having a friend call me who had been secretary to a state senator, Senator Kolbe, when he and I had worked on the review board legislation many years before. When he had gone off to Washington, his secretary had chosen to stay in Arizona and she became the lobbyist for Planned Parenthood. She had left that position, too, and now was working for the Governor's Office for Children.

It was in that role that Bev Ogden was calling and asking me to do something. I declined and told her we were in the process of buying a building for the Agency and I couldn't take anything else on, that I needed to raise \$2,000 a day for the next 30 days.

She laughed and told me she understood and that I really didn't even have time to talk to her, let alone serve on this committee but she would send me a check to help out. When I hung up I thought, *Wow, my first commitment from a former lobbyist for Planned Parenthood.* We have an incredible God. She did send a check, it was a small check, a modest check, but it was a check and it was all the encouragement I needed that day. I called on a former Board member, Astor Stave. He met with me for breakfast and together we developed a strategy for raising the money — commitments here and now and then commitments over the next three years so that a big piece of the purchase price was promised. Astor was a big help with this project.

When we reconvened four weeks later, I brought to the Board pledges of \$120,000. Actually, it was \$121,000, just a little bit more than twice what had been required. Still, there were one or two Board members who were hesitant about the commitment of moving forward with the purchase of a building. I boldly (sometimes I wonder at how bold I was) pointed out that we had put out a fleece and it wasn't moist, it was dripping wet and I believed we needed to move ahead. The Board agreed, so we did purchase that building.

Of course, in the process of due diligence, we found some other problems. One of the problems, which I won't identify here, could have become

major, except that within that building it was a very minor issue. I talked to some attorneys who had specialties in that area and said, "If you were on my Board would you buy the building?"

"Absolutely," was their response.

Still, I had a couple of Board members who were hesitant and I again boldly said, "If you want to worry about law suits, why don't you worry about the clients we serve, because that's where we really are vulnerable. Again, I believe words of wisdom from God, not myself, guided us.

So we bought the building and we took possession on our 10th Anniversary, the first of September, 1992. What a 10th Anniversary celebration that was! We were excited to have a permanent home. It was big, 8400 sq. ft. We had been living in about 2500 square-feet and even though the offices were large, it was more space than we needed. We still had extra space, so God brought us two other Christian ministries who needed a place to live.

Law Enforcement Ministries, under the leadership of John South, first came to us and asked for space and then the Southwest Leadership Foundation. So Bill Starr, who later became one of our Board of Directors, was at that time the CEO of Southwest Leadership Foundation, was in the office adjacent to mine and at the end of the hall was Law Enforcement Ministries. We were all one big, happy family, sharing the kitchen and the conference rooms

and all of our work facilities. It was what we wanted because God had blessed us as we began by gifting us space in other buildings and now we were able to gift other ministries. Law Enforcement stayed with us for about three years and Southwest Leadership maybe four or five. Both of them outgrew the space they had, of course we were growing and needing the space so now we occupy all of the space and then some.

We did very little initially to get into the building. Mary Wade came and helped us with design and color determination. We painted some walls, took down one and put up another. We polished the floor and cleaned the carpet and in we moved. The burnt orange carpet didn't sit well with everyone but I assured them that God would provide and after about eight and one-half years he did and we replaced that orange carpet.

At the time we started the Agency we simultaneously began an auxiliary. Actually, I was probably more familiar with how to run an auxiliary than I was about how to run an agency, because I had been President of ECFA's auxiliary and worked on their council for many years. I can't tell you how many discussions we had over whether or not to have membership, i.e. asking members to pay X number of dollars to become a member. We never did go that direction. Whether that's good or bad, the vote is still out. We did establish an Auxiliary Council and the council

met with great regularity. They drew up bylaws, and under their bylaws and those of the Agency, the Chairman of the Auxiliary served on the Board of Directors in an ex-officio capacity.

Toni Marie Everhart was the very first Chairman of our Auxiliary followed quickly by Joan Malouf and then Betty Hirshberg, Kathy Biederbeck, Audrey Fredstrom, Cindi Dozier, Annabelle Burns, and Mandy Asmus. Every one of those ladies used the strengths and skills that God gave to them to provide leadership to the Auxiliary.

Some of them really stand out in my mind like Audrey. She didn't know anything about us but her husband leased space from Malouf Brothers in the 1101 building on Missouri so they were our neighbors. Audrey worked part-time with her husband, Mark, in his architectural business. When they found out who we were and what we did they became very interested. Their youngest daughter was a child that they had adopted from Korea so they had a personal interest in what we were about. Audrey became very involved in helping in a number of ways. She came to serve on our Auxiliary Council and helped with the thrift stores. She helped us open two stores in Mesa on McDonald and then helped us move that store and open a second one over on University Drive. She participated in the store on Sunnyslope, and then helped us open a third store on 17th Avenue and masterminded the combining of Sunnyslope and 17th

Ave. stores into one store that now exists on Glendale at 27th Avenue.

Audrey had some retail experience in her background so the stores really excited her. She took leadership in the Auxiliary for a couple of years and did a wonderful job with that, but her passion was always the stores. It gave us a good solid base. Audrey served as a volunteer coordinator for the store on Glendale until just a few years ago when she took time out to devote to Kim's high school years and being there for Kim and all her activities. We're looking forward to the day when Audrey comes back to help us.

She was succeeded by the very able Annabelle Burns who provided three years of leadership, as did her successor, Mandy Asmus. Annabelle became the consummate volunteer as well as leader. She was involved in every Agency activity and helped us in every way imaginable. She directed our first auction under her leadership as President of the Auxiliary. The auction was held in her daughter's back yard in conjunction with our boutique. Under Annabelle's leadership, funds were raised for our play therapy room. (When we look for test names that would show up on lots of lists, Bob and Annabelle Burns were it.) How they have gifted the Agency over the years.

Under Mandy's leadership of the Auxiliary we raised funds for some needed maintenance on our building. Dollars were raised to buy the new carpet

at the Agency, repair windows, renovate and buy some new furniture and generally upgrade our facilities on 7th Avenue. More than \$20,000 was raised for that and all those projects have been beautifully done. We're so grateful.

For the first time in many, many years, we did not have a boutique as a separate event but instead added that as an extra to the Christmas event held at Scottsdale Bible Church, and to our Auxiliary Brunch and other activities. Finding leadership and people who were willing to participate in the Council on a monthly basis became a real challenge. Looking at other ways to achieve what the Auxiliary was doing, especially given the complete management of the Attics under the Managing Director within the Agency, a decision was made to suspend the activities of the Auxiliary for a year or so and determine if there was perhaps a better way to achieve that end. It was a hard decision after nearly 19 years of many successful events and the participation of so many people. It ended on a high with our Heroes Brunch in February where foster parents, adoptive parents and volunteers were honored.

As we have continued to find locations to house our agency, people like the ones I've just mentioned have given the agency its lifeblood. Continuing to find individuals who infuse us with their creativity and energy has been key in our success.



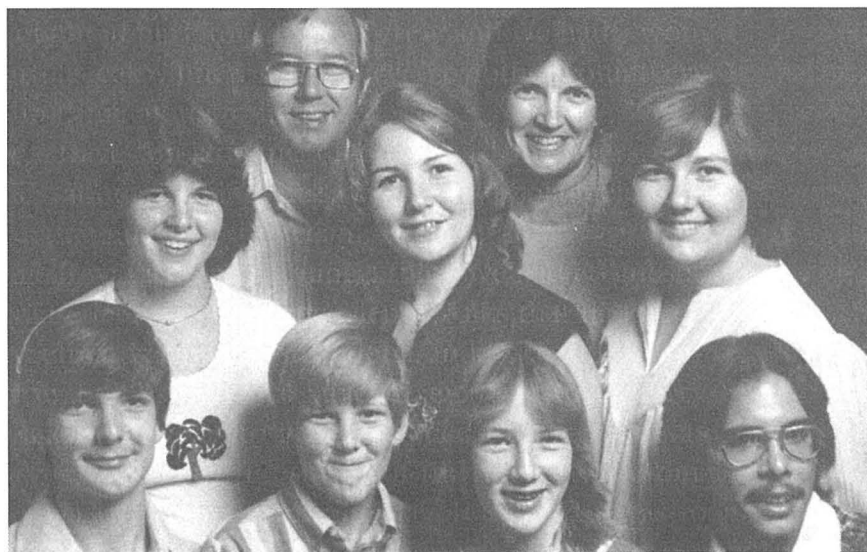
The Ekstrom Family home in Park Ridge, Ill.



Kay & Chuck during their dating days, 1952.



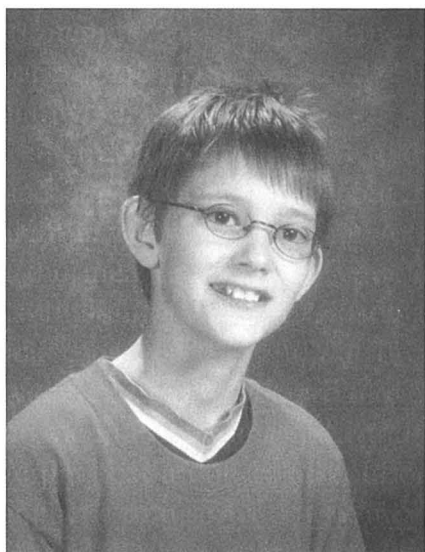
Kay's parents and sister—Miriam, Lois and Charlie Kramer



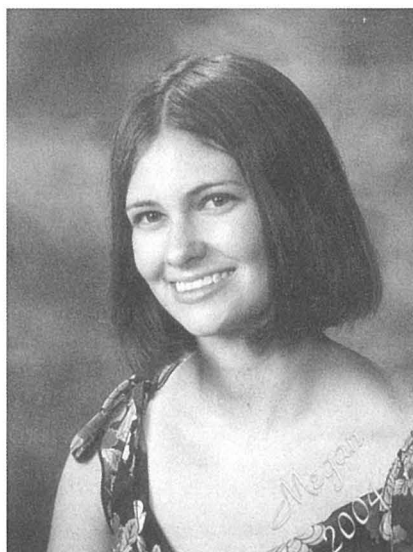
The Ekstrom Family, 1971



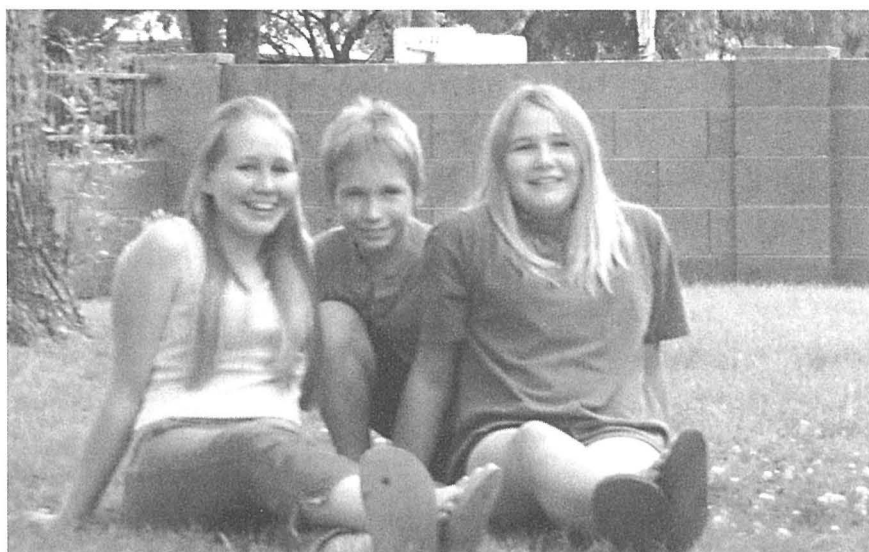
The Ekstrom Family, 1987



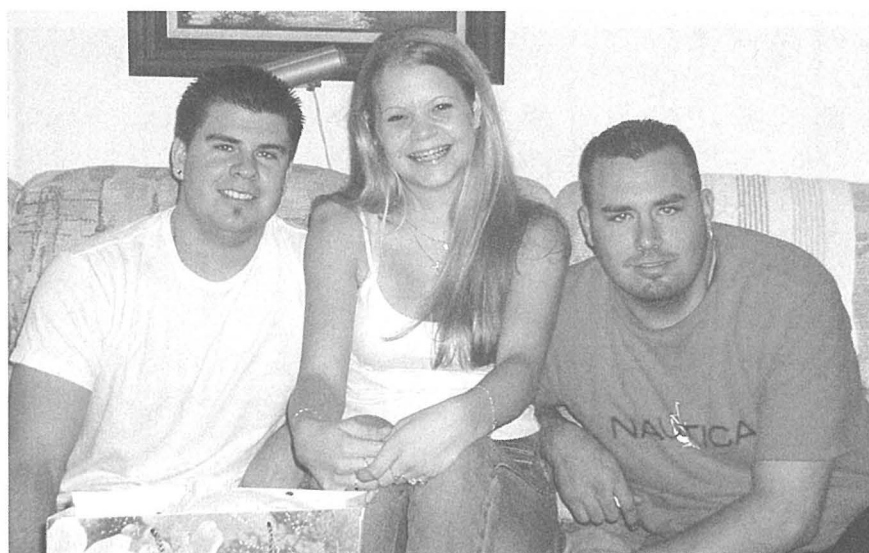
Grandson Michael Ekstrom



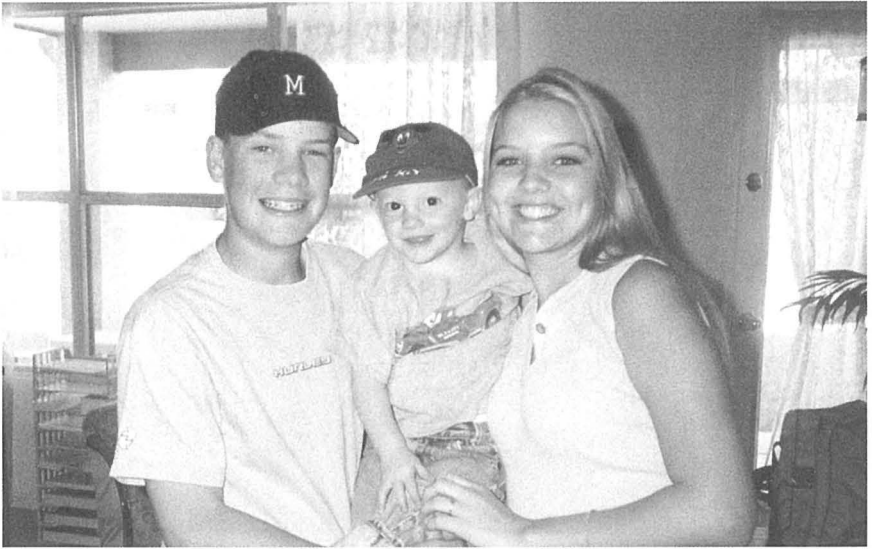
Granddaughter Megan Ekstrom



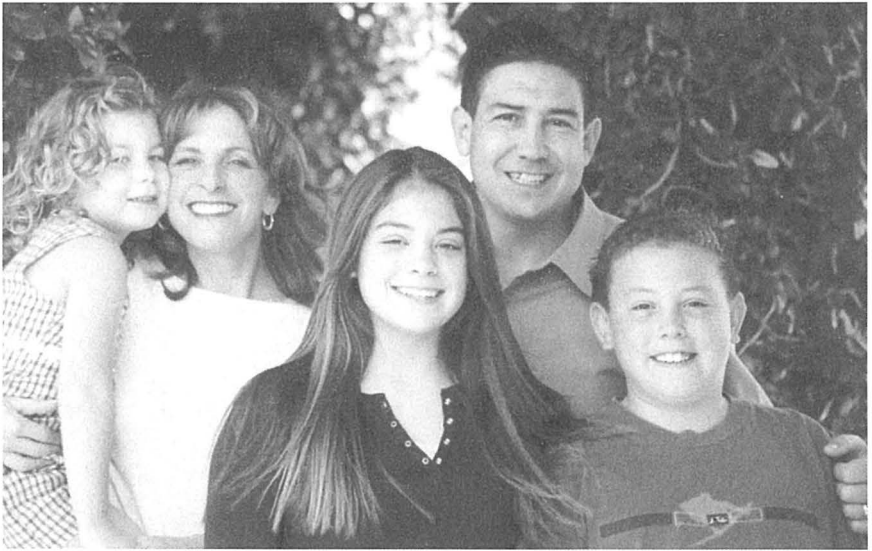
Grandchildren Joanna, Sam & Carolyn Strate



Grandchildren Jeffrey, Stephanie & Ryan Ekstrom



CFCA helped make Scott, Shane and Danielle Pryor brothers and sister.



Happy CFCA clients, the Haragan Family—Julia, Donna, Randy, Brennan & Riley



Walt Ekstrom



Vicki D'Atri



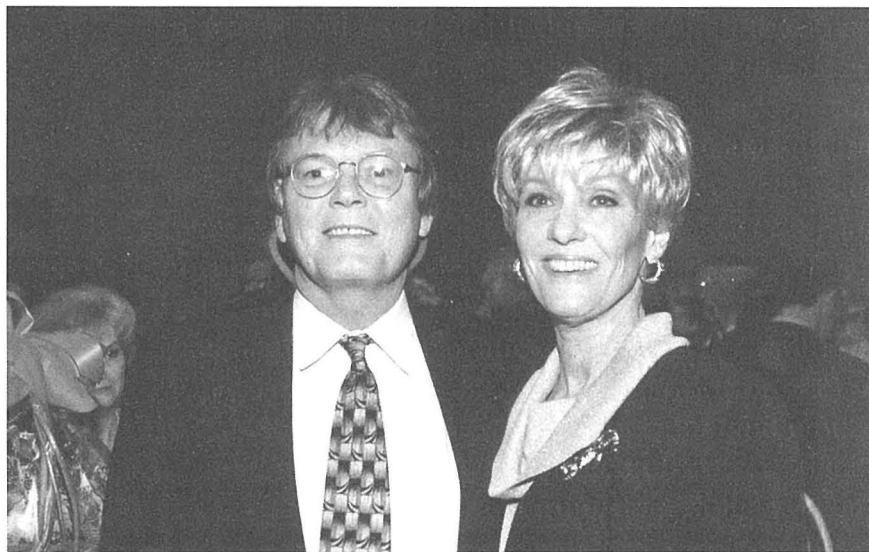
Carol Beltz



Nancy Goehring



Susan Dudley and Christine Gray



David & Gloria Holden



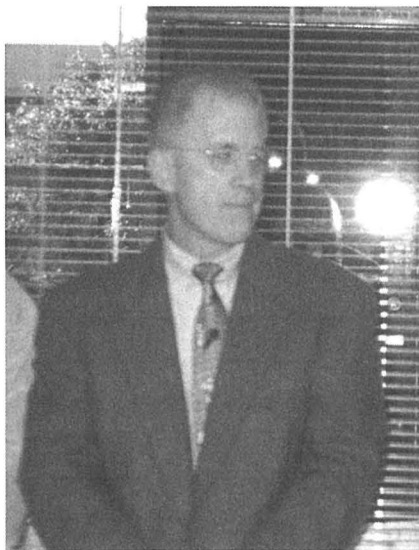
Al Smith with congratulatory letter from President George W. Bush.



Faithful volunteer Pauline Peters



Toni Marie Everhart



Wayne Ettenborough



Kay with Louise Solheim



Bob & Sharon Semple with Dave & Mary Beth Koon



Volunteer Coordinator Ruth Flack and Board Member Dan Bloom



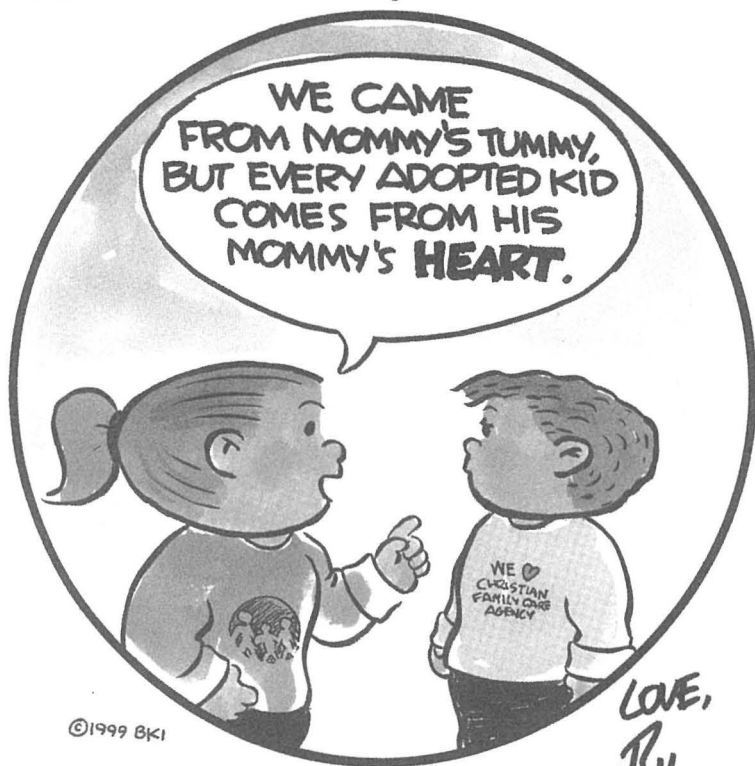
Deborah Pettitt works with a young client.



Doreen McElhanon, Marie McKellips and Walter Soderdahl at the Family Attic Thrift.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS_®

By Bil Keane



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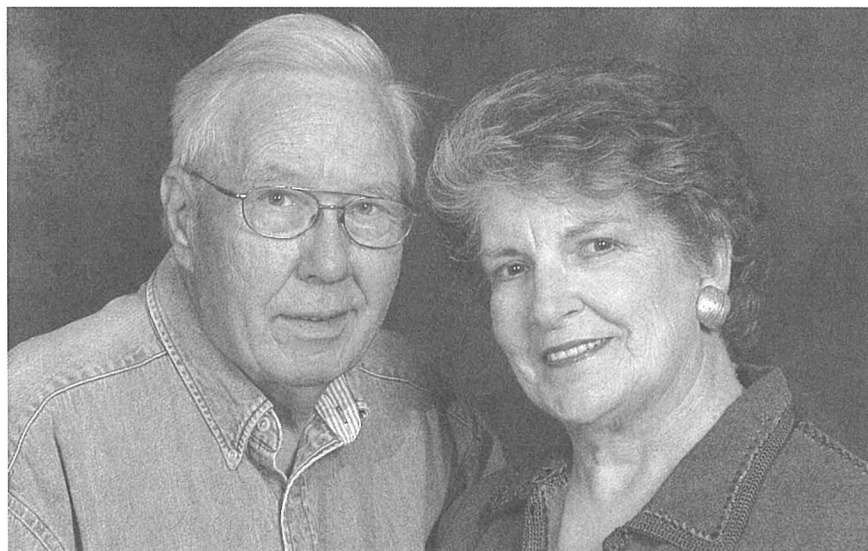
LOVE,
BIL
KEANE



Kay & Deloris Jordan,
mother of Michael Jordan



Kay & Antwone Fisher



Chuck & Kay Ekstrom

CHAPTER FIVE

FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY

"You and your families will feast in the presence of the Lord your God and you will rejoice in all you have accomplished because the Lord your God has blessed you."

Deuteronomy 12:7



Walter & Eleanor Soderdahl

Like all families, we take great joy in keeping in touch with letters, pictures, and phone calls. Here's one of my favorites.

Dear Kay - Is it really 20 years since CFCA became a reality?! Oh, how it's grown! How it has been blessed in its many directions.

I recall the retreats, the Auxiliary, the Thrift Shop, and the day a Suns player brought in a big box of Suns shoes! Great memories - I'm glad Walt and I had a share in CFCA.

God bless you real good! - Eleanor Soderdahl

From the very beginning, raising dollars for the ministry was a challenge. Where would the dollars come from? How would we sustain this work that we believed in? Clear recognition was that it was not something we could do humanly, nor was it something that the body of Christ was going to jump up excitedly and say, "Oh let us help you." At best what we were doing was "nice," certainly not perceived as evangelical. Some people even questioned the spiritual mandate for what we were about. Thankfully my church was involved in the very beginning of the ministry and so pledged, from day one, generous support and still, to this day, gives generously every month since the beginning of the Agency. What a significant dollar contribution that is and what a significant contribution it is when I go to other churches or talk to other churches to be able to say that I have had, from day one, the ongoing support of my own church.

Now if every one of my staff and every one of my Board members could garner this kind of support, what a blessing that would be. We would truly

be in a different place. Unfortunately, even some Board members, at the outset, could not raise money. Partnering with us faithfully, over the years, with maybe some time off, have been churches like Trinity Bible, Bethany Bible, Faith Bible, Grace Church, Bethany Community Church, The Valley Cathedral. Bethany Community Church, like Scottsdale Bible, has stood with us right from the beginning and never faltered. Bethany Bible has been with us, too, for many, many years. And we've had other churches who have joined the ranks for a time (too many to name them all), like Central Christian, which just this past year, adopted us with a very significant Christmas offering and the Rio Verde Church which gave significantly for several years. So we've been blessed. The mission's directors of every one of those churches that I have just mentioned would tell you that their gifts to us alone will not support this work.

What has really sustained the ministry of CFCA over the years has been individual friends. So, when I talk about friend raising I'm talking about people who love the Lord and love the work of CFCA and believe in it and put their beliefs into actual prayers and their financial gifts.

Let me go back to our very first year when we were struggling with how to get the word out. We looked at other ministries and had seen that a dinner was a good way to present the ministry. So, let's hold a dinner and invite our friends. Let's invite some peo-

ple who have a capacity to give and who we know are generous.

Bill Thrall was the Vice-Chairman of our Executive Committee on our Board of Directors. He knew Mel Shultz, who at that time owned the abandoned McCune Mansion. Let's see if Mel will let us use it. Mel and Beth were very agreeable to allowing us to use that beautiful facility up on the mountain overlooking the Valley. All we had to do was wash the windows, clean the floor, rent furniture, and park cars. It was a wonderful place for a dinner but it wasn't ready for a dinner so our wonderful Board took on the task. Joan Colangelo took responsibility for all the decorating. Walter Soderdahl took responsibility for tables and chairs and we rented table cloths and silverware. Harvey McElhanon provided food. He brought in his Pinnacle Peak crew and we had a wonderful steak dinner. It was served by other volunteers who came along to help.

Dave Mielke, one of our Board members, still talks about parking cars with Jerry Colangelo and greeting guests as they came.

It was a grand evening. I think we had 78 guests. I invited a number of my friends, folks that had been on retreat with us up in Sedona, and I was able to say "Now here we are. We have an agency." At that very first dinner I was to be introduced to our guests as the newly chosen President of the Agency. The dinner was to be held early in May, 1983, and I was to

take over my position on June 1st.

I attended a White House briefing on adoption as it related to pregnancy centers. Dr. C. Everett Coop, the Surgeon General, had invited a number of Crisis Pregnancy Centers and similar groups across the country. As often happens with White House invitations, they come with very little notice so I had quickly gotten things together to attend. It was on the same day as our dinner. Fortunately, we had a three hour time difference so I was able to fly to Washington, DC on Wednesday and participate in the briefing Thursday morning then be home in time for our dinner on Thursday evening. You know, I wasn't one of the people who was washing windows but I did get there in time to admire the beautiful job everyone had done. I still remember Joan having Bird of Paradise flowers in a beautiful arrangement on the table and votive candles. We turned that unfinished mansion into a glorious sight and we raised about \$20,000 out of those 78 people that evening and felt wealthy. Several people offered help after that evening and right then we began to build a crew of volunteers, in addition to prayer and financial supporters.

Joan and Jerry Colangelo went on a vacation trip to Hawaii that summer after the basketball season was over. When Joan came back she said they ran into Nancy and John Teets in Hawaii. John commented to them about CFCA's need for help. He wasn't

sure that we were going to be able to raise the money we needed.

At first my pride was hurt. I was taken back by the comment but then I felt, "Well, maybe he'll help us."

Sure enough, not long after that, Harvey received a call from John Teets announcing that Greyhound Dial was going to host a Corporate Challenge, that is a fun run, between corporations in the Phoenix area. The proceeds of that event would be given to CFCA. It was the first Corporate Challenge that Greyhound Dial held, so we were the first recipients of those dollars.

What a blessing. We worked with Mike Walker who was retained by Dial for the Run. Mike and Mary are such faithful friends of CFCA. It was exciting to plan it for the following January or February. We were to have volunteers early in the morning to help with registration, to serve hot dogs, to provide drinks and to staff the event. Volunteers turned out en masse. We still have our Greyhound Corporation Challenge yellow shirts and my husband wears them with great frequency. We were given a check that day for about \$9,000, a significant gift and we were ecstatic.

On our 10th Anniversary, when we were looking for ways to express ourselves to the community and express our celebration over 10 years, we went to both Jerry Colangelo and John Teets and video taped them saying some kind words on our behalf.

When we visited John up in the library in the new Dial building on Central Avenue and video taped him up there, he remembered one of our adoptive parents he had met at one of our golf tournaments. Chuck Feenstra had shared with him about adopting Christopher, who had come to them as a foster child, and the blessing that little guy was in their life. Chuck and his wife Barb were one of our first foster families and have been faithful supporters and encouragers over the years. Barb serves faithfully on our Board and chairs our Social Services Advisory Committee. John remembered that and asked about them and then I told him how grateful we were for the participation that Dial had with the Agency over the years. We talked about the corporate challenge and he thought that maybe it was time to do that again. Out of that visit we were again identified for the next Corporate Challenge to be the recipient of those dollars. I'm not sure whether or not that was the last one so we might have been the first and last recipients. That time the Corporate Challenge netted close to \$20,000. Again we rallied the troops and were out in force as volunteers and had some gray shirts to prove it. What a great event! Our next visit that day with Jerry brought a nice gift from the Phoenix Suns as well.

That first dinner gave us a number of folks who made monthly commitments and became our regular monthly financial partners. Many of those folks are

still a part of our financial partnership. Although the dollars were not big at first, they met our needs for that year.

The next year we felt like we needed to have a similar event. We wanted to go back to the Mansion but the ownership had changed hands, so it was tricky. The new owners, when told about how we had done the event and who we were and what we were doing, were empathetic with our efforts. Because they hadn't yet moved into the home and it was still in the process of being finished, they agreed to let us use it one more time. It didn't need quite as much work because the floors had been put in and there was a crew in there to do some of the cleaning. We had to be a little more careful because some things had been finished, but again it was a wonderful setting. This time, we had a little over 100 people come and raised a little more money.

That set us in motion to think about an annual dinner. The following year we sponsored a western dinner out at Pinnacle Peak. They had catered to us, now we were going to go to them. Johnny Andrews and Coleen Klecic co-hosted that evening. It was an informal event and God blessed it.

The following year we held our dinner at North Phoenix Baptist Church. I still remember my youngest son at that dinner. Afterwards he said, "Mom, I thought I was coming to a dinner for the Agency with you and a few of your friends. I walked

in and the room was full." I think we had nearly 700 people there that evening. What a blessing.

That evening I met Ray Swanson. Jerry and Carolyn Leatherwood had invited Ray and Bev as their guests and as I was walking around the room and greeting people, they introduced me to Ray. Chuck and I had first seen Ray's work in the Hussberg Gallery in Sedona. We had gone up there early in our tenure in Arizona for an anniversary and we were just doing the galleries. We saw this beautiful, beautiful painting and looked at each other and said, "If only we had the resources, that would hang in our house."

We shared the love of that artist with our dear friend, Joan Campbell, now Reitveld and she gifted us one year with a print of Ray's. How excited we were over that. So we knew and loved his work and said to each other, "If some day we had an agency, wouldn't it be nice to have an artist like Ray Swanson to help us." So when I met Ray at the dinner that evening I was ecstatic. He and the Leatherwoods explained that they were both adoptive parents and that was one of the binding elements of their friendship.

Within the next year we were talking again about how to raise the level of financial participation in the Agency. By now, Astor Stave had joined our Board. He asked me if I knew Ray Swanson. "Yes, we had met," I explained. "He had been at our dinner."

He told me that Ray's children had attended Scottsdale Christian Academy and that he had helped them with a piece of artwork and maybe he would help us. I told him that would be wonderful if he might do that.

We set up a visit and went to Ray's home before he moved into his beautiful home up in Carefree. Ray and Bev were in the process of moving from Sedona to Phoenix, down here to the valley so their children could go to school. Ray offered a painting to us with a limited edition of 500 signed and numbered prints. Astor told Ray he was interested in buying the original and we had a wonderful time together. I went away absolutely ecstatic that we were going to have the privilege of having 500 of Ray's prints. We determined, as an Agency, with Ray's agreement, that anyone who gave us \$600 or more in a year (a \$50 per month pledge) would receive one of these prints. The thinking was that I would go and deliver those prints to our donors and it would give me an opportunity to go and say thank you and meet people personally.

That first year we made the presentation at our dinner at the Biltmore Resort. We presented Ray and his painting, "Little One and Her Friends," a charming picture of a little Navajo child in a deep, deep maroon dress surrounded by three lambs. It is a beautiful picture. We made the challenge to our donors and in that year moved from 18 or so donors who gave \$500

or more to 118 donors who gave at that level. So obviously, people were appreciative of a way to have a fine piece of art and still bless the Agency.

Ray went on to bless us over the next four years for a total of five prints. The next year he did "Hopi Innocence" and then "The Cabbage Patch Doll." We wanted a little boy so he did "Navajo Pals" which was a little boy in blue with lambs. The final print was "Navajo Playmates." What fun it was later on when Ray's book came out and our name was in it and the names of the prints that he had gifted to us. Ray shared the book with CFCA and our donors, too. Ray and Bev held a beautiful reception one year up at their home at Christmastime to which we invited all of our donors who had received some of Ray's work. What a lovely event that was.

We have been blessed in incredible ways. That particular concept has worked for us over the years.

As I noted earlier, I met Ray at our dinner at North Phoenix Baptist Church. From there we decided to move into a different setting for our dinners so we began going to hotels. The next dinner at Paradise Valley County Club was with Bob Murfin, ECFA former Director and Steve and Annie Chapman. The following year, Ann Kimmel Anderson, herself an adoptive parent, was our speaker. Ann came full of enthusiasm and spoke to our audience that evening. We moved our dinners to the lovely Ritz Carlton where we were for many years. For our 20th year we had to

move some place larger, but it has been a great place to celebrate God's goodness.

Over the years we've had a variety of CFCA programs featuring dramas and videos about our ministry. We've had one of the Gaither Trio sing for us. We've had Steve and Annie Chapman. They came and did a little mini concert for us. We had The Melody Four and The Hawaiians come and sing as well. One of our early events was a concert with trombonist Bill Pierce. We've been blessed with speakers like Delores Jordan, mother of Michael Jordan. His sister Roslyn blessed us with her gift of music.

Dr. Bob Petterson was with us to share his story of adoption, along with "Soapie Dollar" who gave us his incredible story of God's provision in a group home situation and how God touched his life even though orphaned. Most recently Antwone Fisher shared his personal story of growing up in foster care. Many others have come and challenged and blessed us over the years.

More recently our second artist shared his heart at our dinner. Steve Hanks made himself so vulnerable to our audience as he talked about the pain of a broken marriage and the difficulty and hurt and loss for his children in that situation. Steve has gifted us with a series of seven of his beautiful paintings of children. We discovered him in a Scottsdale gallery.

We began to look for someone else who could speak to our audience through the gift of art and

through his portrayal of children. Steve does that in a marvelous way and has gifted us first with "Sea Urchin," then "Watching and Reflecting," "New Discoveries," "A Path To Follow," "Sleeping Newborn," "Father and Son," and most recently, "Among Friends." Each one portrays Steve's own heart for his family and allows viewers to get in touch with that area of sensitivity and remembrance from our own childhood.

How we thank both Ray and Steve for blessing us in such incredible ways. How we thank those donors who have their walls adorned with the work of Ray Swanson and Steve Hanks and who, as a result, are our prayer warriors. We give away the biggest prayer reminders of anyone around!

Over the years God has used our dinners as an annual event to thank those who partner with us and as an opportunity to bring new people to learn about the ministry and hopefully make a decision to join us as partners as well.

Frank and Ruth Flack have been personal friends of mine for over 40 years. We met when Frank came to work as Vice-President of Service Master for Marion Wade, who I always think of as one of my spiritual dads. Marion was part of our little church back in Chicago so when Frank joined Service Master and he and Ruth came down from Canada, they moved into Park Ridge and came to our little church. The church was small but we had an

active group of married couples. We called ourselves “New Lifers.” There were a lot of reasons for that name. Most of them were little so we began raising our families together. Over the years, even though we’ve lived in different places together, our friendship has grown. For nearly 10 years now they have lived here in the Valley with us. Ruth has been a faithful, incredible volunteer with CFCA and is now part of the CFCA staff.

A number of years ago, about 12 or 13 now, Frank was out here on a business call by himself and came to stay at the “Ekstrom Hotel” at the time we were holding our annual spring dinner. I don’t remember the details of the dinner, but I remember Steve Jones was there. When we went home, Frank said to me, “Well, if you have Steve Jones as one of your friends, why don’t you do a pro-am golf tournament? I would pay a thousand dollars to come and play with Steve Jones.”

Other people had suggested a golf tournament but it seemed like too many people were doing tournaments. We hadn’t tried the pro-am route. I thought it would be a good idea if Frank flew out every week, paid me \$1,000 and played with Steve Jones but I wasn’t sure I could get Steve every week. I think Frank thought he’d run out of thousand dollar bills real soon. So we began to think about a tournament. We talked to Steve about his willingness to do that and he was very willing and open.

We then put together a committee of folks, mostly new to the Agency, with consultation from our dear friend, Astor Stave, who was again in Hawaii. We consulted by long distance but we put together our first annual pro-am event on December 10, 1988. The manager of the Infiniti dealership in Scottsdale, Louis Cowort, gave us an Infiniti, a beautiful car for our hole in one. We held that first tournament at the Phoenician. A grand event it was.

I can remember visiting with one of our donors, Al Grimm, shortly before the tournament. Knowing of his fondness for golf, I asked him if he was going to play. "No," he said, preferring just to give me a check. He didn't think he wanted to play. I said "You know, we have most of the event underwritten so your entry fee really comes to the Agency. Why don't you come and play, Al?"

He was a retired World War II pilot and an avid golfer. So he came and he played. I think his wife, Marylou, helped with registration. Steve was there, Billy Mayfair, Robin Yount, and Glen Campbell came and played that day and we had a good field of celebrities and lots of golfers.

It was a great day for a first tournament and when our dear friend Al Grimm hit a hole in one on the right hole, and took home the Infiniti, it made it one of those first class events. My, what fun! When Al took delivery of his Infiniti, he came down to the office so I got the first ride. In fact, he even let me

drive it. What fun! We've never given away another car but we'll always remember giving away that one.

We have had a pro-am event every year under the leadership of many capable people, but for the last five or six years, Warren Soberg, a former Board member and foster parent, and Al Smith have provided incredible leadership. They've sought out the pros to play with us and have made it a great time. We've had John Daly, Billy Mayfair, Tom Lehman, Steve Jones, Mark Calcavecchio, Brandel Chamblee and others.

When Astor Stave retired from the Board, he replaced himself with Bob Taylor who was then the Division Manager for Safeway Stores. Bob never met a person he didn't like. What an incredible gift of people skills he has. He started as a produce boy in the Safeway store in California and worked himself right up to top leadership. He retired while he was on our Board and is enjoying an active retirement with his dear wife, Ina, today.

While he was a Board member he wanted to do a summer golf tournament for us. He took on that event with Safeway as a primary sponsor, along with help from Safeway's staff. We ran that event for four or five years, raising as much as \$42,000 at our biggest tournament. We made many friends within the food service industry over the years.

Steve Burnell offered yet another way to raise funds. He wanted to do something unique to celebrate his birthday, so he decided to host a golf tour-

nament, The Burndog, to benefit some charitable organization. The question was, "What agency?" Then he heard the message of CFCA shared at his church and knew he had his organization.

For more than a dozen years, Steve has been celebrating his birthday with a Burndog Tournament and gifting all the proceeds to help CFCA's children. Now he's willing to help others do the same. What a blessing!

Of course, we can't talk about raising money without talking about our Family Fiesta. Our dinners were great, but they didn't reach everyone within our constituency. We had adoptive families and foster families and families of friends and Board members. We tried to do something that would appeal to everyone, so we hit upon the idea of a celebration, a Family Fiesta, a walk-a-thon, a bike-a-thon and other "a-thons." So, we started that the year after the first Dial Run.

Early in the life of our Agency we held our first Family Fiesta at Chaparral Park in Scottsdale and held every Family Fiesta since in the same location. I guess we don't move easily. The event grew. We eventually had a volleyball-a-thon with competing teams from different churches. The high point, of course, was the pastor's dunk tank. Balls were purchased and you got to dunk the pastor. Again, at the peak, our Fiesta raised nearly \$22,000, but like many things, it ran its course. I remember how the Chairman of the Board and I went around and around when it was

time to give the Fiesta a Siesta. We replaced that event with our annual auction when Annabelle started that under her leadership as the Auxiliary Chairman.

Then Dick Rounds came along. He joined our Board of Directors and took on the leadership role with the auction. Dick provided leadership for several years, followed by Bill Bynum and then David Koon with Sharon Semple joining him most recently in a Co-Chair role. The auction has grown from a \$10,000 event to over a \$100,000 event, more like a \$120,000 event net and it's still growing. It's become a gala held at the Biltmore with a beautiful sit down dinner. We've auctioned things like a 1956 Corvette, 1957 Thunderbird, brand new Ford Mustang, electric golf cars, Harley Motorcycles, and beautiful diamond jewelry. God has blessed us with gifts that our friends have purchased. So the auction has been an incredible way for us to raise dollars. Of course, we couldn't miss with auctioneer extraordinaire, Farrel Rasner and his helper, Liz!

We've done a lot of other things over the years. The Auxiliary, along with the ladies at Scottsdale Bible, initiated our Family Attic Thrift stores so that now we have three in the Phoenix area and one in the Tucson area. They have also, over the years, sold entertainment books, circle the world with love mugs, and mugs that have 101 ways to praise a child inscribed on them. They wrote and printed their own cookbooks, greeting cards, Christmas card and other

things through the years that have helped provide dollars for the Agency.

Other fund raising efforts include grants, corporate gifts, and other special gifts. In 2000 we received our first bequest and the dollars to establish an endowment. How we praise God for that affirmation and the security that it gives to us as we look ahead to the future of CFCA.

CHAPTER SIX

CHRIST'S HAND EXTENDED

*"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart...
and love your neighbor as yourself...
Do this and you will live!" Luke 10:27-28*



Nathan Sebeny

The waiting period during an adoption can be both stressful and insightful for everyone involved. Joe and Deann Sebeny discovered just how much God teaches us when we seek His will in creating Godly families for children.

We had finally finished all the steps required

in adoption – the paperwork, physicals, classes, fingerprinting, home study visits, and “Dear Birthparent” letter for CFCA. There was nothing more we could do. Now, we simply had to wait.

There is a difference in waiting with confident trust in the Lord’s plan vs. waiting with anxiety. For the most part, we were confident in God’s timing, but there were a few weeks when I faltered.

Two months had passed without bearing from the agency. I started doubting that we would be chosen. I began thinking that no birthmother would consider us a satisfactory choice.

God’s answer to my anxiety came from an unexpected scripture, Genesis 7, the account of Noah and the flood. Noah, his family, and the animals entered the ark, but the rain did not come for another seven days.

I used my imagination to try and understand what that must have been like. They were locked inside the ark, waiting, not knowing when something would happen. Even though God had been dramatic in bringing the animals to them and shutting the door Himself, they must have still had moments when they questioned what was happening.

Their week of waiting became symbolic of my own wait. A “week” of adoption might well be six months or a year, but this was my time to wait in trust for God to work.

God's wonderful sense of humor was quickly seen. He turned my symbolic week of waiting into a literal seven days. On the seventh day, we received a call from the agency telling us a birthmother had chosen us. Let the "shower" begin!

We chose an open adoption and began a relationship with our son's birthmother that has extended to include an entire clan of family. Our son's dedication service included his birth family and was performed by my dad, a missionary and pastor. Afterward, we all went out to dinner. His birth-grandparents are also believers and have stated they hope to live long enough to see our son preach at least one time.

We feel fortunate for the relationship God has given us. We trust we will continue to have a close, loving, supportive relationship as our families blend in a special friendship.

The child is our primary client at CFCA, so there are times when we rankle adults. Certainly there are times when a child's best interest can be in opposition to an adult's best interest. In our pregnancy program, however we have preached a philosophy (and believe it to be true) that while the pregnancy may not be wanted, the baby that results from that pregnancy *is* wanted, loved, and desired. If the young woman doesn't have the capacity to parent that

child, there is someone who can do that and is eagerly waiting to carry out this responsibility.

With that philosophy, we help young women make decisions that are good for themselves and for their baby. We do not believe that those decisions are in conflict. If an adoption placement is the best thing for an infant or a child, then that's ultimately going to be a good thing for the birthparents as well. That's not to say that it won't bring a certain amount of grief and pain and hurt in the choosing. Nobody says that decision will be easy, but the issue is that it will be the *right* decision and time will confirm for that birthmother as well as for the folks around that child. Believing that, we struggle sometimes when we see young women who probably ought to be making an adoption decision, make a parenting decision. The decisions are the adults to make and only under very extenuating circumstances do we, as an agency, intervene. We act if we feel the child is really at risk, if there is a danger to the child or if the situation is so extreme that we need to intervene and pull the reins in. When that's the case, we do it.

Besides our philosophy and our belief that the child is our primary client, we also believe in taking risks. Not just willy nilly, but calculated risks that have a purpose to them that serve the child, that maybe put us at risk but would keep the child from risk.

Over the years CFCA certainly has become

embroiled in some difficult situations. If you talk to the people involved, in most all situations, we would say we did the right thing. Sometimes hindsight gives us a little different view but as I say to parents all the time, "You did what you believed what was right at the time. You didn't mean it for disaster, you meant it for good and if your child doesn't see it that way, trust God." That's been CFCA's philosophy as we worked with birthparents, whether it be around the pregnancy and the birth of an infant or whether it would be in our CARE (Children At Risk Emphasis) program.

Our CARE program is one that is modeled after something that I saw my friend, Lois, do at Jewish Family Services. She took a lot of flack for doing it but we modeled it anyway. The program is one of providing voluntary, private, foster care. It is totally legal within the State of Arizona. We are able as a licensed, child placing agency to certify our own foster families and to accept children into foster care and place them with certified families.

CFCA only ascribes to the highest standards. Remember we wrote the legislation requiring training for foster parents, and encourage every one of our foster parents to become licensed. However, not everyone chooses to go that route. In some situations, where families are caring only for infants or are providing respite or are doing a very specialized kind of foster care for CFCA, we have families who are only certified. However, let me emphasize, we really

do encourage all of our families to become licensed. That is, we do the home study, we do all the prep work and then we submit studies to the state agency, the Arizona Department of Economic Security, for their licensing. They provide the license; we provide the study.

Under state law, the placement of an unrelated child with a family can happen through a licensed agency and so we have, from the day we opened our doors, taken voluntary placement of children into foster care. Those children are placed with a certified or licensed foster family. CFCA assumes responsibility for the child. Occasionally we involve the courts and make the child a ward of the court because we believe we need the safety the court provides. In most instances, the birthparents sign an agreement for foster care which gives notice that if they want the child returned, they must give CFCA two or three days. That gives us time for court intervention if we feel that the child is at risk. In most situations, we're able to work with the birthparents without dissension.

Often the people bringing children to CFCA for voluntary foster care are not birthparents but rather grandparents, other relatives, neighbors or friends who have had children left with them by their birthparents and who either have exhausted their own resources and cannot care for the children any longer or need some professional assistance, and maybe

even financial assistance.

In our voluntary foster care program, which we call Children At Risk Emphasis (CARE), the title is what it is all about. We put emphasis on children who are at risk, trying to keep them out of the state system, trying to bring resolution on behalf of the child. So CFCA places them in a certified, licensed home and CFCA provides whatever support that child and family need. CFCA provides financial support to the family in terms of financial reimbursement, medical care, clothing, whatever that youngster needs. We also endeavor to provide a full range of services to the birthparents if they are available and willing to work with us. That might include counseling. It might also include helping them deal with an addiction, getting help with that kind of problem or getting into a rehabilitation program. We might help them find resources for employment or other kinds of services.

Sometimes, through our counseling program, CFCA works with the mom or dad directly. We'll also work with other family members and friends who are directly involved with children.

It is CFCA's goal not to have children in this program more than 90 days, certainly never more than 180 days, but often times they are there longer because of the circumstances around each individual situation. We work hard at restoring the original family but there does come a time when we're looking at

the child's best interest, so CFCA works with birth-parents to help them look realistically at whether they are ever going to be able to parent or not.

That's the new model court project that swept across the country and is now, I think, operative, throughout our state. Up front, when the child comes into CARE, we bring the family members together, gather the folks involved together so they can look realistically at what is going to happen for this child and develop a plan to restore that mom and the family or, to move towards an adoptive placement, or to give mom time. If mom doesn't cooperate, we must change the plan. Sometimes we call it a concurrent plan.

Our CARE program is unique and costly. We estimate that it costs us somewhere between \$5,000 and \$7,500 per year for each child in our program because we do it all with private dollars. We have limited the number of children in the program. Usually we have one worker and up to about 15 youngsters. We operate a program in Tucson, as well, and have similar numbers of children in our program there.

We have steadily increased our contract with the State of Arizona, the Department of Economic Security, over the years to provide Christian foster families to take children who are wards of the court. We have held to our position that our goal is to place children in Christian homes, and we've had conversa-

tions with the State over the years about that, but that is our conviction and philosophy.

We started with one home and we've grown. The most we've ever had is 180. That has fluctuated some. We went through a period in the very late 90's of a great surge of adoption by foster parents and we lost a number of our foster families as they adopted the children in their care. Of course, that's a wonderful problem to have because we want that permanence for the children. Financially, it certainly is not good for the Agency and from the standpoint of having foster families, it's hard to recruit new ones. It takes great commitment to become a foster family, so the challenge of finding new families is ever present.

Having been a foster parent myself, I say often that being a foster parent is a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week volunteer commitment. Anyone who thinks they shouldn't get paid isn't realistic. All that you receive in terms of payment is reimbursement for the actual cost of the care of that child. Foster parenting is probably one of the most challenging things that we have ever done as a family. It's also one of the most rewarding.

I often think about the little girl we had only for six weeks in our home many years ago. She came from a home where her step-father had abused her. She was really quite happy in our family. She had been socially deprived. At ten, she had never been in a Walgreens store. She had never been to church —

just many things were new experiences. The idea of living in a home where there was a pool in the backyard was just quite a new thing to her.

Even though she was with us for only six weeks, we went through the ups and downs of visits with mom and coming back from those visits with mom having planted in her mind that she was with strangers and it was a bad place to be. Even though she, herself, thought our home was a good home, mom told her it was bad so she was very conflicted in her thinking. Fortunately, her grandmother on the East coast was willing to assume parenting responsibilities for her since her mother would not separate herself from her husband. She didn't believe that the husband had really harmed her little girl and so the only alternative was to find her another place. Grandma stepped into the gap, took the youngster and raised her.

Many years later, in fact, at an Agency event, she came back to Arizona and visited us with her two little boys. She came up to me and said, "Thank you for being a family for me when I needed one." Those were her exact words to me. That is, to me, the essence of foster care — having a family for a child when the child needs a temporary family, a substitute family. That is our goal at CFCA.

I might interject here my belief that a needed qualification for foster parents is a sense of humor. It helps maintain perspective.

For a number of years in our voluntary program we had a working, hand-shake relationship with DES. When we had children for six months or more in care and it appeared that they were not going to be able to go back home quickly (these were the kind of cases that Child Protective Services (CPS) would have picked up) we could call DES, establish an agreement with them and DES would pick up the cost of the foster care. This took some burden off CFCA. We would continue to provide the social services at no cost. It was a helpful arrangement because, clearly, these were cases that would have been CPS cases and DES would have had all the cost. Unfortunately in recent years, DES has not been willing to cooperate. Because of our commitment to the youngsters and their families in our program, we haven't pushed it. It limits the number of children that we can care for.

CFCA has had a contract with the State of Arizona's DES, almost since our beginning. It actually dates back to 1983. That contract has grown steadily. In 1999 we had our first contract with Pima County DES, District 2. Our contracts have been providing foster homes for children. I know some people have questioned our contracting with the State and taking State dollars, but if you are going to serve the children who are in the State system, that is what is required. We believe that God has called CFCA to serve those children and to have the opportunity to

place them in Christian homes.

* * * * *

Over the years of CFCA's ministry we have interfaced with many, many groups in the community. One of those groups was a privately established organization whose purpose was to help young women, teenagers, who were still in high school, to be able to care for their children and still get their education. Early in the year 1989, two of their board members approached CFCA about taking the organization on, making it a part of the ministry of the Agency. It was different from what we were doing in providing child care but we met and talked with them, went over and visited the facility and looked at the possibility. We had a number of conversations. The two people who had approached me were both Christians but the organization itself was not a Christian organization so there were some hurdles to overcome to see whether this was the direction to go.

As we moved further along into the year and I talked to the Board about this possibility, there were many questions. At the same time Susan Dudley had come to work for us almost out of college, joining our staff before she was married. Some years after her marriage to Willie, he took a job down in Tucson with the University of Arizona as a coach. We lost Susan.

She was moving to the southern part of the state, looking for a job down there. She asked me about who might hire her. This set some wheels going in our heads. Maybe this was an opportunity to begin some work down in Tucson. We thought about it and talked about it but we weren't sure how that would come together.

Later, as things progressed, we put in front of the Board both of these options — one of absorbing the organization and the other of establishing an office in Tucson beginning a work down there with Susan Dudley in charge of it. The wisdom of the Board prevailed and we determined that we should do what we knew how to do and not branch off at that point in time. To expand the ministry by moving into Southern Arizona and utilizing Susan who knew us and could replicate who we were down there seemed to be the best way to go.

So it was that in the Fall of 1989, we established Christian Family Care Agency in Southern Arizona. Susan and I did a "needs assessment." We went down and visited a number of churches and talked to pastors and people. That was, of course, part of what persuaded the Board to move forward. We found an office right on the University campus where Young Life and some other Christian groups were and we started out there.

John Tabor, now CEO of Crisis Pregnancy Center, had been on our Board and one of our adop-

tive parents up in Phoenix. He helped us with our advisory board and Rick Drost, another one of our adoptive parents joined us along with a number of other folks in the Tucson area.

Patty Bailey, an aunt of one of our birth moms joined our Board and God just told His people who He wanted to help us move that effort forward and they came and joined the CFCA volunteer ranks. Susan labored as the only staff person for a long time, working with birthmothers doing a little bit of foster care, working with adoptive couples and primarily doing adoptive services.

The work struggled. There was very little funding, so Tucson was really like a mission effort for the Agency. It continued that way for a long time. Tucson has been an up and down challenge since its inception. We've never lacked for clients. We've done lots of adoptions and a fair amount of foster care, but it has been hard to develop a support base in Tucson.

After a couple of years, Willie decided to go up to the northern part of the State. It would have been natural to try and start an agency up in Flagstaff and use Susan's skills again. We did toy with that a little bit, but we were having enough of a challenge getting our Southern Arizona Branch established. We didn't feel that it was right to stretch ourselves any more than that.

Who would step in and do the job that Susan had been doing? How would we keep things afloat?

Susan had met a young woman who was looking to get back into the work force. She had good counseling skills and a heart for what we were about, so we met with Marti Ross and sensed her deep desire to be part of the Agency. She became our Director of Social Services in Southern Arizona.

Marti worked hard to build the Agency. By then Donna McCauley had come to help us as a secretary. When she left, God brought us Penny Pretti. What a blessing she has been in managing our Tucson office.

There came a day when we had to move out of our University offices and God gave us offices out at the edge of town in a building right above the local Crisis Pregnancy Center. We were there for a couple of years with modest rent, with modest responsibilities, but still we struggled. Clients were down, everything was down. I remember going to Tucson with a heavy heart to tell our staff that I felt we would have to close the office. By now, Susan had moved back to the Tucson area from Flagstaff. She was working with Marti on a part-time basis. We had financial obligations for three part-time staff people as well as rent. We just weren't making it. The Board was unhappy with Tucson not even close to covering expenses and I felt like I was between a rock and a hard place.

First I talked to Susan who, with tears in her eyes, just couldn't believe that was what God wanted us to do. She was hurting over it. Marti was more stoic and could see that they weren't making it, but

didn't want to see that happen. Patty Bailey, our Board member said, "You know, once you close the office down, you never start it up again. How do you ever begin the work again? You've got something going. Make every effort to *keep* it going."

Then I went to meet with another Board member, Tom Tilton, who had been our attorney and had been doing all of our legal work for us pro bono. I shared my dilemma with him. He said that if we would give it until the end of the year(and this was in August) he would pay the rent for the rest of the year. He didn't want to see the office closed either. He believed we belonged there and we should stretch it out a little bit. I said, that would help and that I would put the matter in front of my Board.

That afternoon we had a meeting of the Advisory Board of the Southern Branch and a pastor joined us. I think the plan was that he become a Board member but he never did. He was just with us for that one day. He talked to us about the ratio of believers to non-believers in Tucson which was pretty revealing to me and, I think, to others there. He talked about the fact that Tucson really was a mission field and that if we were evangelistic in nature at all, that here was a ministry opportunity and that we must not shut the Agency down.

Armed with all those admonitions, and some financial commitments, I went back to our Board of Directors. The deciding factor for them was seeing

Tucson as a ministry opportunity. There were children in Tucson and Southern Arizona who needed us. Whether folks in Tucson picked up the tab or not, those children needed to be ministered to. Based on that, the Board agreed we should go forward.

Within a month of that decision, I got a call from the Director at "House of Samuel" in Tucson asking to meet with us. My first meeting with them was when I was down there looking to shut us down. By then CFCFA had begun the National Association of Christian Child and Family Agencies. I'll talk more about that in another section. I invited the CEO of the House of Samuel to join us. We talked a little bit about what we did and they talked a little bit about what they did. And then, within approximately 30 days, they called and asked to come and see me. Jenny Wood and Sandra Levenson came to the Agency and told how they wanted to expand what they did into a national ministry. They were going to close down in Southern Arizona and wanted to know if we would be willing to merge with House of Samuel. It became clear to me that a merger wasn't what was called for but rather an acquisition — that we could acquire them and carry on the work that they were doing, especially with the children they had in foster care.

There were many positive aspects of this, such as their long history in Tucson. Some of the community dollars that they had been receiving could be re-

directed to CFCA — an opportunity to serve some children who had been in their care that we thought maybe could be moved into adoption. There were a number of things that we saw as being positive about it.

Probably the most positive thing in reflection was that it affirmed our presence in Tucson. It gave us purpose and meaning for being there and we had an opportunity to impact the lives of the 13 children who were in their foster care program. Several of those children have been placed with permanent adoptive families and then we simply facilitated some of the other placements that were already in progress.

Financially, I think the venture was more of a loss than a gain for a number of reasons. It was just one more example to us of not counting on doing services for money but rather to be available to God to care for his children and trust him to provide the means to do that.

Not too long after that we learned that the space we were in had been sold and we would have to move. What a struggle to find another place with such modest rent. God opened up some space in a strip mall at Pantano and 22nd St. As we looked at the space there, the Board caught a vision for not only putting in offices but perhaps being able to replicate the success that we had had in Phoenix in our thrift store and to open a thrift store there. So we took the

2700 sq. ft. space that was available, split it in two, put offices in one side and a small thrift store on the other. Patty took responsibility for opening that store. She just "lived" down at the store and got some other people to help with some of the design and construction. We opened a beautiful thrift store just shortly after we moved into our offices. Our offices were small but they were ours. There was a great feeling of getting established.

Within the year we needed more office space and the store needed to be bigger. As another space opened up in that strip mall, we moved the store so that it became larger and we had all that space for our offices.

While that was happening, God was growing our staff. We identified the need for a full time pregnancy worker and God brought Stephanie Jakes to us. She was fresh out of college and ready to work in a Christian setting. What a blessing Stephanie has been to us. She has since gone back to school and gotten her Master's degree. God has added others to the ministry down there. We have held anniversary dinners every spring, and have used some of the same speakers that we had for our dinners in Phoenix. God has blessed the efforts. At this point, the Agency is well established.

Early in 1999, Marti expressed her desire to be able to stay at home full time. She felt like the Agency needed a full time Director. She wasn't ready or able

to make that commitment. In fact, she wanted a break from working.

Susan, who was also trying to raise her family of three, took on the added responsibility of being the interim Director and working more hours than she had ever intended to.

After a nine month search for a Director, God brought us a brand new Board member who was head of the search committee. God laid it on Don's heart to apply for the job. Fortunately, the selection committee had the wisdom and discernment to select him to be our new Director. So Don Marshall joined us in the fall of 1999 and has brought enthusiasm, excitement, energy, and a passionate heart to the leadership and direction of the ministry in Tucson. It has grown under his leadership.

The last thing Marti did before she left, was to work with Susan to develop a proposal to DES which then was accepted. We now have a contract in Tucson. Early in 2000 Don brought his burden and his desire for an assessment home to the Board of Directors and even brought a beautiful facility that was available to be purchased. We did, in fact, purchase what had been a nursing home, just south of Miracle Mile on 15th Avenue — a beautiful facility with six large bedrooms, eight baths, large living areas and kitchen areas and a beautiful yard. It is licensed for up to ten children and God has blessed us with an incredible set of house parents. This was

a brave, bold move for our ministry down there but they raised \$50,000 for a down payment on a home, and we've seen God provide.

At one of our Tucson dinners in 1994, I had the pleasure of meeting Warren and Joan Braun. They had been foster parents for ECFA in Chicago and I knew their name but I didn't know that I knew them. Warren had served as Vice-President on the Board of Directors for ECFA and through mutual friends there had found CFCA. We were so pleased to meet Warren and Joan and encouraged them to get involved, which they did. They served on our Advisory Board and very quickly Warren stepped into the role of Chairman of that Advisory Board. Warren is a committed follower of Christ, concerned for the needs of children, has a deep heart for children and teens and has provided steady, faithful, conscientious service to the Agency. He has provided stability in moving the ministry forward. Warren has been a blessing both in Southern Arizona and in his role on the Executive Committee for the Board of CFCA.

* * * * *

The driving force behind the establishment of CFCA was our firm conviction that Christians should be involved in caring for vulnerable children. A biblical mandate warns that we not prohibit them from coming into the kingdom of God. I saw that as a need

to facilitate their being able to come into the kingdom. If children were hurting and needed families, who better to care for them than loving, nurturing, Christian families. We believe that pure religion for the believer is to care for children, so we preached that. We preached about the good Samaritan from the 10th Chapter of Luke, one of my favorite stories.

Let me share my perception of that story, which is one of, I believe, an attorney coming to Christ and asking for clarification of the law. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" he asked. The answer came back, "Love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and all your might and your neighbor as yourself."

That assumes that you love yourself. It just assumes that we are, by nature, selfish people and we look out for ourselves. Of course, as we work in the field of social work and counseling, we find a lot of people who don't really love themselves. They have low self-esteem, and they struggle with self worth. That's not natural. It is there because people in their lives have put them down, have dismissed them, have neglected them, have abandoned them, and have given them negative messages. They have accepted those attitudes and made them their own. God made us with a certain amount of understanding and recognition of self-worth. It's part of who we are. Christ tells us to love our neighbor as ourself.

I don't know about you, but I take pretty good

care of myself, and I don't get the short end of the stick very often unless I'm working at loving my neighbor and putting my neighbor before myself. So here's this challenge to this young man. It's not totally comfortable to him. "Well, who is my neighbor?" he asks. "Who is it that I have to love and take care of?" he questions.

Christ tells that beautiful story of the fellow that probably chose the wrong path and got beat up. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time, that's for sure. He got beat up and was left to die. The first person that comes down the road was a religious rich person. Could have been the preacher hurrying to a meeting. Could have been any preacher or the chairman of the board or who knows, maybe the head of the women's mission society, although it was a man and he just went right by him.

Then came another religious person. He might have been going to the same meeting. Maybe the Board of Elders was meeting. Whatever it was, it took precedent over stopping to help this poor fellow and off they went. Then here came the Samaritan - the person who was not respected by the godly people. Not held in high esteem by those who understood the scriptures and knew the word. No, this was just a common, ordinary man. He held a different set of values and faith and he believed differently and so therefore, was not a part of the "in" crowd. Maybe because he wasn't part of the "in" crowd, he didn't

have a meeting to attend. Maybe he didn't have 27 obligations. More than likely, he just had a heart of compassion, and he saw this needy fellow so he helped him. He took his own handkerchief, his own shirt and bound up his wounds and he put him on his donkey. He didn't worry about whether he was going to bleed on the donkey. He didn't worry about whether he'd be too heavy for his critter. He didn't think anything about himself, he just thought about this person who needed some care and attention and he went to the closest inn. It might have been Motel 6, or The Hyatt. It was the closest place. He found him a room and told the person in charge there to be sure that he was taken care of. He'd come back and settle up the bill. Today, we'd just give him our charge card and say, "Just put it on my account. Whatever he needs, just give it to him, breakfast, lunch, dinner, whatever." Making sure that this fellow was taken care of, he went on his way. That's the end of the story.

Of course, Jesus then takes the story and makes his point. Who, he asks the attorney, was the neighbor? Of course, the one who saw the need and did something about it. You go and do likewise. So when we see a need and have a capacity to meet it, God is saying to us "Do it." Don't wait for someone else, don't wait for the person down the road. If you let someone else do it, they get the blessing instead of you. I've learned that. I really believe that when you

participate in what God is about, there is great blessing and delight and joy in that.

Some of us, however, put an end on that story. We have the fellow going back and saying to the poor beat up guy, "Now, I helped you along the road, wouldn't you like to know why I did that? Let me share the gospel. Here, I have this little tract with the four spiritual laws. By the way, we're having a great speaker at our church on Sunday. Would you come to church with me? Would you come to these meetings that we're having? Would you come to Bible study?"

Now there's nothing wrong with any of that, in my opinion. But if the help is offered with conditions on doing any of that, we misconstrue this story that our Lord told. He said, "Here's a man in need. Meet the need. Don't look for any particular outcome. Just do what needs to be done."

At CFCA we believe that we need to serve children who need a nurturing family. We help that family deal with some of the issues that prohibit them from nurturing this child. Maybe it's the child's behavior or the child's background that hasn't been dealt with. The youngster hasn't been helped to heal from some of the hurt, whatever the presenting problem is. At CFCA, we deal with that and then leave the outcome with Christ. Sometimes we have a wonderful opportunity to share because people ask us questions and they want an answer. Other times we serve simply because the need is there.

Years ago I took a girl into our home. She was a teenager who appeared at the doorstep of someone in our church. As often happens, because we were the people known for taking in strangers, especially strange kids, we were called and asked to help her. She wasn't feeling good, hemorrhaging and in a lot of pain. I thought perhaps she was miscarrying or having some other female problem but we took her to the doctor and that wasn't the case. They sent her back with us and we cared for her.

A number of things happened while she was in our care. She was only with us for a matter of weeks. We sent her up to church camp with our daughters. They went up on Friday night and on Saturday morning we got a call that she was in a hospital in Payson, a little tiny hospital at that time. We had another foster child in our home but we dashed up there. The nurse told us that the doctor said he didn't know what was wrong but he was going to operate in the morning, no matter what.

That wasn't exactly what we wanted to hear. We didn't have a social worker and we didn't know anything about this youngster or her parents. She didn't want her parents called. Chuck and I took a break and went out to get something to eat. We talked about what to do. We decided that we would treat her as we would treat one of our children. If it had been our daughter who was in that hospital, and that was the message that the doctor gave us, we would

have loaded her up in the car and taken her back to Scottsdale to our family physician.

So that's what we did. We decided we would treat her like our daughter and we signed her out of the hospital with the medical people protesting and drove her the one and one-half hour journey back to Scottsdale. We took her right to the hospital and to the emergency room.

They could find nothing wrong with her. They did a thorough exam and sent her home again. That evening she was in excruciating pain so we took her back to the hospital and they decided, based on her white blood count, that she was probably having appendicitis. We called CPS to get a court order to have surgery but we have a good Samaritan law in Arizona that says when two doctors agree a medical procedure needs to happen, they are protected. We had more than two doctors who agreed so the surgery occurred. They found out that what she really had was kidney stones. For anyone who has been through that, they know the pain but they don't look for that in a 16 year old girl.

After that, her father and grandmother surfaced and wanted to sue us, the doctor, the hospital, and everyone else. But the Good Samaritan law prevailed and there was, in fact, no basis for a suit.

We found out that this young woman did have a social worker and did have some contact with the juvenile court. When her probation officer came out

and talked to us, she said the young woman had asked her why we opened our home, why we were willing to take care of her, why we were interested in her at all. The social worker told me that she told this young woman we were earning brownie points.

What an interesting explanation. I think it just tells us how little the world understands true compassion and obedience. We didn't go out and look for this young woman, but when God put her on our doorstep, there was nothing for us to do but to respond to her. She was with us until there was a family situation that opened up that was appropriate for her to return home.

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Our philosophies when we began the Agency were based on our need to respond to children. We also wanted the Agency to be a witness to the child welfare community that the body of Christ could do things well — properly and in order. Our third, unspoken goal was to bring the body of Christ together on behalf of hurting children, enlisting and encouraging the participation of many of our local churches on their behalf.

Perhaps the third goal has been the hardest to achieve. We have some churches that have participated and worked together. But we have not seen that happen to the degree we would like. Maybe we

haven't worked hard enough at it; maybe it's an unrealistic goal. But we still keep trying.

Our second goal is one that sometimes makes us say, "Oh wow, we've made real headway." At other times we feel like we're just not making any headway at all. Over the years, we've seen a number of organizations name the name of Christ, then do things on behalf of children that are not Christ-like. Sometimes even abuse or neglect occurs within some of these settings.

Some organizations start by thumbing their nose at state and federal requirements. They claim that God's law is higher than man's, forgetting the scripture's admonition to honor Caesar and recognize that what is Caesar's belongs to Caesar. God puts governments in place. Coming from my own background of advocacy, legislative change, and lobbying, I firmly believe that when laws are unjust and inappropriate, they need to be changed. Along with so many believers throughout the country, I want the Roe vs. Wade decision overturned and abortion identified by our country as immoral and illegal.

God's law sets the standards for us. It is our responsibility as citizens of our country to work towards bringing the law of the land in line with God's law. The freedom we have in our country gives us the freedom to worship God and do things in a way that honors Him. That is why we believe everything we do at CFCA should be done with excellence

and in order.

This desire is what initiated the process of becoming accredited. We've always been licensed by the State, and we've kept our license current. When we began our counseling services, we were licensed by the Department of Health Services. We hold three licenses, one for adoption, one for child placement, and one for our counseling program.

Now we have achieved accreditation from the Council on Accreditation through our membership in the Child Welfare League of America. We have been used by God to encourage other Christian agencies to take that path. Being licensed and acknowledging the value of doing things appropriately in the eyes of the government, we've also been able to encourage people to strive towards excellence and validate that through accreditation.

This commitment allowed CFCA to fill a major role a number of years ago in establishing the National Association of Christian Child and Family Agencies. That is our name because that is who we are. We started with eight or ten similar agencies that saw the need and wanted to be part of its establishment. Once again, being available put me in a place of providing leadership to that group for five years. I still serve on their Board of Directors. The organization has grown to some 60 or 70 members, many of whom are small, residential treatment centers. Each one holds to that principle of coming under the

authority of state licensing and under the authority of God's word.

There are some organizations that question our acceptance of state or federal dollars, believing we compromise ourselves in doing that. There are several reasons why we do it. Most importantly, these funds enable us to serve vulnerable children. Most of the children in the State of Arizona's foster care system are under the care of the Department of Economic Security. To serve those children, our agency must contract with the State.

Experience proves that the State does not provide for the full expense of this care. We have to subsidize. From a financial perspective, it doesn't seem like a wise move. From a ministry stand point, however, it gives us an opportunity to care for hurting children. I believe God brings us the children He does because they need prayer. Without being in our homes and a part of our Agency, specific prayer might not happen on behalf of those youngsters.

As an agency, CFCA has not had to compromise who we are in contracting with our state. We place children in Christian homes, and license and certify Christian homes. Although there have been a few justified exceptions, our goal has been to place children in Christian homes.

Back when Ronald Reagan was our President, there was an Office of Abstinence set up under the White House to promote abstinence among

teenagers. The belief was that the best way to prevent abortion was to prevent a pregnancy. There were some federal dollars available to organizations throughout the country for the purpose of promoting abstinence among teenagers. We wrote a proposal to the government and received a grant. We received a years' worth of funding with the promise of two more years. It was enough to allow us to hire a young woman to become an abstinence educator.

There were some restrictions with the dollars. We were not to promote Christianity, but the dollars allowed us to promote abstinence. We felt this would give us an opportunity to work in churches, with others who would be free to share their faith. We would promote the abstinence message. We were very careful how we used those dollars although we did not feel they restricted us from our mission in any way.

Shortly after we received our first check from the federal government, we were named in a lawsuit that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) brought against the federal government. They claimed that abstinence was a religious issue, not a moral issue. They attempted to demonstrate their claim by identifying those organizations that had received funding to promote abstinence. They identified 38 organizations, mostly on the basis of their name. Our name, Christian Family Care Agency, made us easily identifiable. One of the others they named, which always made me chuckle, was St. Paul

Hennepin County. Perhaps named after St. Paul, St. Paul Hennepin County is not exactly a religious organization.

The ACLU engaged in some investigative work. We had strangers visit our office, unbeknown to us. They took photographs of the pictures on our wall, some of which are depictions of Christ with children. They also took our literature, some of which had scripture in it. However, they never visited our classes which were paid for by the federal dollars. It was very interesting to receive this funding one month, then be named in this suit the next.

It took almost a year before there was settlement. We got our funding in September and it was May or June the following year when the case was decided. The court decided in favor of the government, saying the ACLU had not proved its point. In fact, abstinence was a moral issue, not a religious issue, so the ACLU lost the case.

But it was a case for us of winning the battle but losing the war. As a result of that lawsuit, the federal government became more selective in their review of funded organizations. I remember a person who shared our faith and worked within the federal government telling us we were "pervasively religious." One of their workers came and met with us. It was true. We were pervasively religious.

The day the court decision was announced, there was a story on ABC's "Night Line" about it.

Producers from the show came and photographed our office and our name, although they never interviewed anyone in our office. A staff member's sister in Florida saw us on Night Line and called and alerted us. No one else ever mentioned seeing the story. It was an interesting experience.

We didn't fight for our right to federal funding. We felt that if they were going to breathe down our back, we would find other ways to achieve our ends. We continued to do some abstinence training in other ways and gained materials that had been developed for the original program that were ours to use.

It has not always been easy to maintain our position of placing children *only* with Christian families. We have been challenged many times over the last five or six years. That challenge was the strongest in the summer of 2002. When our proposal to ADES to provide foster care services was challenged with many questions, all pertaining to our faith, CFCA's Board remained firm in its commitment to place children in Christian homes. So we sought and received help from The Christian Legal Society's Religious Freedom arm, Nathan Adams in particular; and their Board Chair, local attorney Wallace Erickson, long time friend of CFCA; Cathi Herrod at the Center for Arizona Policy, and Gary McCaleb at the Alliance Defense Fund.

Christian Legal Society and the Attorney General's office of DES started writing letters and

shortly after President Bush's signing of the Faith-Based Initiative in December 2003, we had a contract without any amendments or special clauses. God is faithful. *"The One who called you is completely dependable. If He said it, He'll do it..."* I Thessalonians 5:24, The Message.

Because the ministry of CFCA is for hurting people, there have been many times that clients or extended family members have threatened us with a lawsuit or civil damages. At this writing, we have had only one instance of having to defend ourselves in court. Because it is public record, I'll briefly tell you the story.

A young Catholic school teacher from out of state (who was born out of the country) was pregnant and the father of her child was the priest (born in the Middle East) serving her small Catholic community. He denied paternity and left the country. She delivered a little boy and chose a Catholic family from a mid-western state to be his adoptive parents.

The birthmother signed relinquishment papers and assured us that the priest would as well, since he didn't want anyone to know of his indiscretion. Well, he returned to the states and promised to marry her so that she could get her baby back.

We went to court seeking a severance. It was denied. The priest and the mother sued to have the child returned, which the court ordered.

The adoptive couple sued CFCA and the jury

found us to be eighty-percent in error and the adoptive couple to be twenty-percent in error. We all believed the error was the judge's; but a judge is immune. It was a difficult time for CFCA, but God was present with us and protected the Agency. We always learn from our mistakes and have made several changes as a result of this case.

"If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves, but when they attend to what He reveals, they are most blessed..."
Proverbs 29:18, The Message.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A CLOSE-KNIT FAMILY

*"Let the children come to me. Don't stop them!
For the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these."
Mark 10:14*



Darby Mahon (far right) with CFCA staff members Patrick Young, Kelly Lewis, Cherie Brooks and Michelle Hutchinson.

Without question, family is the lifeblood of CFCA. Our board, staff, and friends make us who we are. Through each of our lives, we are able to see a little more of God's character. Darby Mahon is an example.

In March 1999, I was blessed to join the CFCA staff as a CARE Case Manager. In my position, I

often experience the difficult aspects of our work - legal challenges, parents who are addicts or abusers, and children who have been abused, molested, and neglected.

In these circumstances, I have experienced the power of prayer. God constantly reveals Himself to me in this position. God has provided children with families, safety for team members, and legal victories and decisions on behalf of children. Through prayer, God has allowed birthparents to come to know Him and restored homes for children.

The prayers of the staff - collectively and privately - and the prayers of agency friends have demonstrated the power of our Almighty God. He is in control and shows Himself constantly as we lift our requests to Him. My heart is humbled and grateful for the opportunity of experiencing the power of prayer through the family of CFCA.

Like all of those who have become part of the CFCA family, God has brought us Board members in such interesting ways. Colleen Cook came as a result of my contacting her husband to help us. Pat Consalvo came as a charter Board member. She originally showed interest in our foster baby when we went to church together, and became interested in what we were doing as foster parents. Based on that,

I recruited her to serve on the Board. Pat was such a faithful member and she and Frank were encouragers to the Agency.

Pat resigned from the Board when they began traveling and moved to Oregon. I was so pleased when they moved back to the Phoenix area and she was willing to rejoin the Board.

Our dear friends Glenn and Jean Jorian were at an insurance conference in Hawaii. They met another couple one night and began talking about being adoptive and foster parents. This couple shared with Glenn and Jean that they were interested in perhaps being foster parents and told them they lived in Phoenix. Jean gave Art and Lisa my name and phone number and they called shortly after that.

Lisa and I had lunch together and talked a couple of times. Then Lisa and Art became foster parents for the Agency. After awhile, Lisa Camarena joined our Board of Directors as a foster parent representative and served us for several years. The Lord eventually called them to Guatemala where they have been ministering for some time.

One of the things I did before becoming the Agency's President was training foster parents. After writing the legislation requiring foster parents to be trained, we went on to become trainers. I enjoyed it. It was rewarding to meet foster parents and help them prepare for the exciting adventure that their families were embarking on.

In the process of doing that, I met Dave and Penny Mielke. Dave was a young pastor, and he and his wife were in the process of fostering two girls through the state with the hope of eventually adopting. We were kindred spirits and I shared with them the vision of the Agency. Dave quickly became a Board member, one I could rely on to talk through and weigh issues with. We had similar backgrounds and biases. He was a great asset. Their girls are adults now, living in the mountains of Southern California where God has opened up other ministry opportunities for the family.

Toni Marie Everhart was pregnant with her second child when she served on our steering committee. She always knows how old the Agency is by looking at her daughter. Toni Marie's first involvement was with the Steering Committee. Then she took on the challenge of starting the Auxiliary, which put her on the Board. She was then elected to the Board of Directors, became the Chairperson of the Board and served in that capacity for ten years. Toni Marie saw the Agency through many of its early growth challenges. What a gift she has been to CFCA. Thanks to her family, David, Lisa, and Diane, for sharing her with CFCA.

Early on, someone suggested I work with a development consultant. I worked with Ed Seaburg for a while. Ed helped me put together our first Board planning retreat and our first strategic plan for

the Agency. He helped me develop a strategy for contacting people who could help the Agency. It was through Ed that I made my first contact with Louise Solheim who has become both a personal and continuing friend to me and the Agency. It was Ed's prodding to give her a call that moved us into a deeper relationship.

Through Ed I also heard about a man named Walt Ekstrom who was active at Bethany Bible Church. He told me that he thought he would be a good asset to the Agency. With a name like Ekstrom I thought, "How could we miss?" Several years later I approached him. Walt was an executive with Arizona Public Service Corporation, our local utility company. When I called him he told me he was over committed and couldn't serve.

The next time I called him, the situation was the same. He was also very involved with his church. Then someone told me he had retired. I thought, "Now is the time to nab him." I called him again and he had just assumed a position of Chairman of the Board at his church.

He encouraged me to call him again, so I followed up a few years later and he joined our Board of Directors. Several years later he assumed responsibility as Chairman of the Board and gave leadership for a couple of years. He served two full terms on the Board and then resigned, only to come back eight months later as a volunteer. He filled the position of

Managing Director within the Agency — a full time volunteer helping us with the day-to-day operation of the Agency. At this writing, Walt is serving us as Vice President. What a blessing!

When God puts a name in front of you, hold on to it. He has a plan.

Our household has a lot of favorite family songs and we sang together often. Some of that came out of many years of sitting around camp fires together as a family and singing old camp songs and church choruses — music we all knew. One of the songs we sang a lot was “Jesus Loves You, Mrs. Robinson.” We sang it more out of necessity than pleasure because God had brought a Mrs. Robinson into our lives.

One of the first things that we did when we moved to Scottsdale was start a FISH Chapter. FISH is an acronym for “Friends Involved In Serving and Helping.” We began it at the little Baptist church we attended in Scottsdale, but we urged other churches to help us. We recruited people who would be willing to deliver meals or take people to the doctor or go and sit and read to someone or send some mail or just be involved in serving and helping in whatever way people might need.

Through FISH we found Mrs. Robinson or “T” as she was called by some. She had been a nurse during World War II, interned in the Philippine Islands for a time — an interesting lady. To say she was demanding would probably be an understatement. This frail

lady in her little apartment had needs and we were here to serve.

Our second daughter, who has a gift of helping and serving in an incredible way, took on Mrs. Robinson. She adopted her, so T and Laurie became a pair. Laurie would drop by after school and help T with cleaning. She'd run errands and do things for her. Did I mention that T was a little hard of hearing? We always knew when she called because Laurie would yell into the phone. Our daughter was very soft-spoken so it was a little out of character for her. But she ran her errands, took her places, transported her to the doctor and did all manner of things for Tee, for a long time, until Laurie was ready to go away to school. At 22, Laurie decided to attend Whitworth College in the state of Washington. By now she was worshipping at Scottsdale Bible Church along with us. She put out a plea at church for someone who would be willing to help Mrs. Robinson. A lady came forward, who we didn't know. She expressed a willingness to fill an incredible need, so that Laurie could go away to school with a clear conscience.

A number of years later when we were recruiting help at the Agency, this lady – Linda Todd Samuel — resurfaced. She was going through a divorce and was looking for a place to serve. I didn't know who she was but my daughter reminded me that she was Laurie's savior as well as T's. She had, in fact, been "Jesus" to Mrs. Robinson. How exciting it was when

Linda came alongside to help us, first with the Fiesta and then service on our Board of Directors. Linda was a great advocate for us in helping us with a space search and so many other things. She moved away but is now back helping us again at the Agency.

Linda is typical of the people who comprise our Board. CFCA was seeking an adoptive parent to serve on our Board and God put Tony Muller's name in front of us. He and Joyce had welcomed Abby (and later, Matt) into their family. Tony has served faithfully for many years. Similarly, Wayne Ettenborough brought many interests to his long and faithful service on CFCA's Board. I wish I could tell you about the uniqueness of each Board member and God's special way of bringing them to CFCA, but this book would be too long.

God's leading and preparation of staff has been clear, too. Those God has brought us have been an interesting mix as we have sought to hire people who love the Lord, who love children, who have the right training and credentials, and who are committed to the philosophy and ministry of CFCA. Chuck and I had a social worker we especially liked. She was a DES person and committed Christian. When she heard about the creation of the Agency, she applied for a position with us. We were approaching our first anniversary, looking for someone to run our growing foster care program.

This young lady had some family constraints, so

we hired her conditioned on her coming about mid-summer. In the meantime, my friend, Dorothy Bloom, who originally sent me to those child abuse luncheons, got her Master's degree in Social Work Administration. She eagerly wanted to come to work for us. We didn't have the resources to hire more than one person and had promised the job to the young woman. This young woman finally started and worked for only two days, then called and said she didn't want to work at CFCA, that she didn't want to get back into doing social work again. Well, it opened up the door for us to hire Dorothy to head up our foster care program. Dorothy brought to CFCA excellent experience as an adoptive mother of three.

By now, Rachel was full-time and so was Dorothy. A couple of interns signed on — Sue Vanderlei, who had been interning with us and who was soon to become a full time employee, and Sharon Carl. Rachel had met Sharon at training sessions. Sharon, a birthmother, had made an adoption plan for her first child, was never able to have any more children, and became an adoptive mother. She was also a counselor in the process of getting her counseling degree. Sharon volunteered to intern with us and eventually joined our staff.

Rachel's marriage was experiencing difficulty so she asked for some time off to work on her family. As a Christian agency, we quickly gave her a leave of absence for a little over a year. Sharon stepped into

her role as Director for a short period but could not make the commitment of time required so the Directorship was assumed by Dorothy Bloom. Dorothy, with all the credentials and training, cared about people. She took a “mother hen” approach to administering our social work staff and stayed for a number of years.

Rachel came back but never into a full time position. She did some grant writing and some consulting so I recommended her to the volunteer Board at Aid to Adoption of Special Kids (AASK). She wrote a grant and then helped them with some consulting, finally becoming their Executive Director. That was either an awful failure or an awful success on my part, but Rachel was lost to CFCA.

Before Rachel took her leave of absence, we hired a number of people. In July, 1985, we hired two young women – Christine Gray Clouse, right out of school, and Vicki D’Atri, a social worker with a Bachelor’s degree, who had done a lot of different things in her life. As a single mom, Vicki wanted to work in the social work arena but didn’t want to do social work. She started as my assistant. Vicki moved into the role of our Agency’s first Administrator. We didn’t have an office for Christine so we gave her a box, which was hers to carry around. Christine officed wherever there was an open space and did her casework. We hired her to study prospective, adoptive families and she worked at that for quite a

while. Christian Family Care Agency was her first full time job. Christine had worked at other things in the counseling arena while she was in school, having graduated from Talbot Theological Seminary with a Master's in Family Ministries.

Christine was bright, pretty, young and energetic. She questioned everything, which sometimes created a sense of frustration, but caused us to perfect what we did. She had so many ideas our challenge was to sift them out and implement the ones with practical value.

Christine, with us for several years, left to take a position in a residential treatment center as a child care worker. When Dorothy and her husband, Wil, decided to move up to the state of Washington, we needed a Director of Social Services. By then, we had ten or twelve people on staff and the operation was growing and needed good, solid direction.

I began a nation-wide search for a Director of Social Services. We talked to Rachel about possibly coming back. Aid to Adoption of Special Kids was young and struggling. We talked with other people, even flew in someone from the State of Maine. Howard Hovatter, who had joined our staff as one of our adoption workers, served as our interim director while we were doing the search.

Through a number of people, Christine's name kept surfacing. She expressed an interest in the job. We talked long and hard about how it would be for

her to work in that position. God made it clear to me that he had prepared this young woman for this incredible task, so Christine become one of our early revolving door employees. She came back to work for CFCA as Director of Social Services and served in that position for 12 years, leaving to take the Executive Director position at a child crisis center.

Christine's story would fill another book. When she came back to the Agency, she had read and studied open adoption. Until that time we had encouraged letters and pictures, even had some limited meetings between adoptive parents and birth parents. Christine helped the staff and me look at the positive aspects of open adoption. Jim Gritter from Michigan helped us understand the philosophy behind open adoption, so we made one of our early, bold changes within the Agency — a significant risk as we moved to open adoption.

I believe that was a positive decision, a good step for the Agency, although not without some hassles and explaining, starting with our Board and working through our constituency. This became a good step for the children we serve. Open adoption is of primary benefit to children as well as all members of the adoption triad.

Christine's innovative, creative and questioning mind, along with her wealth of ideas, were a real gift to CFCA. She moved us forward in a positive way, compassionate towards her staff and a true model of

servant leadership within the Agency. She could laugh with everyone and never took herself too seriously. This young lady sought God's will in all that she did and directed others to do the same.

I mentioned that Vicki came to us at the same time that Christine did. Vicki stayed with us for about five years. She married and moved to California with her husband. Vicki continued to be a supporter of the Agency as so many of the employees have, giving financially, helping where they can. When Vicki moved back to the Valley, she was on our Auction Committee and volunteered at the thrift store. She brought a friend, Marilyn, to volunteer at the thrift store and she helped in many other ways. When Christine left the Agency in the midst of our accreditation process, it became apparent that my assistant Cindi Rice was the most logical person to take over accreditation which left me short an assistant. Here came Vicki, back through the revolving door, to work for the Agency. I was so blessed to have her assisting me, a staff person committed to the ministry making decisions with a heart of stewardship and true conviction.

Not so many years ago, when money was tight and staff were leaving and several significant staff had resigned, I was hitting one of those low points and thinking, it must be the top leadership. It's time to move away. I was hit by the revolving door phenomena. Nine employees had left the Agency and then

returned to work for us. I don't think I counted the multiple moves that Alice had made because I think she's come back three times. Alice Nuckols is one of our counselors. She holds the record for the number of times that someone has come back to CFCA.

Sharon Carl came on early as a counselor, then as Director of Social Services. She resigned for a while and went to work for Rachel at AASK. First she became a pre-school teacher at her church, then she worked for Rachel. When we had an opening in our counseling department and needed a coordinator, Sharon filled the bill. She has given leadership to our clinical services arm of the Agency, and now serves as Senior Director of Program Services. We are blessed to have her.

Pam Giardina came to work for us at a point in her families' life when they were changing direction and she was ready to go to work. Pam had been at home raising her family, but she had a Master's degree in Social Work and we were glad to have her come on our staff. Pam's love for the Lord and her walk with the Lord were so evident in the work that she did with people. She worked for us for about seven years, first doing home studies and then working in our crisis pregnancy program, counseling young women about choices for them and for their child. Pam and Sal felt called to ministry so Pam resigned from the Agency and did a number of other things. The ministry opportunity that seemed to be in front

of them did not work out. She did lots of different things. We were glad when she came back just a couple of years ago to assume the role of Director of Social Services. Pam, too, is a revolving door person.

I've spoken about Carol Beltz, a volunteer who came to work for us and then left to work somewhere else. She worked at our front desk for a very long time.

Sue Vanderlei worked for us for 14 years, returning as a volunteer supervisor in our pregnancy program. Candy Sayler came back to work so many times, first as a support person and then as our intake worker. She left after marriage and moved up north. She has now returned to the Valley and volunteers one day a week and later helped us short-term in a support role.

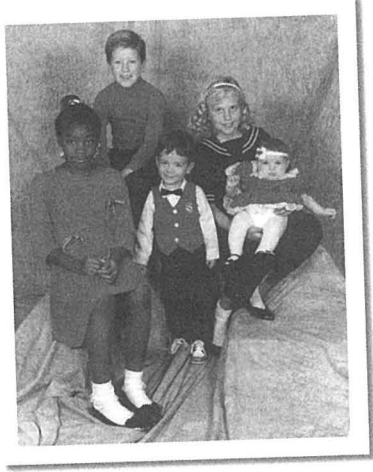
Other staff members like Howard Hovatter, Memory Seltzer, Tracy Miller, Deborah Vogt, Polly Lee, Debbie Moyer, Kathy Feters, Rusty Wood and Dan Johnson have been full time employees and then retired for one reason or another. They have come back to become contract workers to study our families or to work with us in a different arrangement.

Why do I share all this? Because I believe that is at the heart of CFCA, that sense of family and commitment to children and families, understanding that CFCA truly is a ministry. It is an opportunity to build God's kingdom one child at a time.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LESSONS IN LIFE

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6



Typical
“Nathaniels”—
children
served by
CFCA.

It’s amazing how God takes our everyday lives and uses them to reveal Biblical truths – lessons about His love, mercy, and sovereignty. The birth of Nathaniel was an opportunity for us to learn more about the heart of God in sending us His son, Jesus. Nathaniel’s mother recently shared with me this story.

The phrase, “the gift of God’s Son,” is a cliché we often hear in sermons. But I discovered one Christmas Eve just how limited my understanding of this phrase had been. Our son, Nathaniel, had just joined our family in mid-November. Like all adoptive families, we were thankful for him.

But this joyful experience had not come without some bittersweet moments. A few weeks earlier, we had gone to the birthmother’s home for the exchange of physical custody. Our jubilation of seeing our son was dampened as we witnessed the tremendous grief expressed by his birthmother. She had given birth to this baby – her only son – then courageously offered him to us. It was a decision that was best for him, but caused her enormous pain. If one can bleed emotionally, this young woman was hemorrhaging. Many prayers were offered on her behalf.

Christmas Eve found me standing in our morning worship service. I tried concentrating on the sermon, but my mind was thinking of other things. Memories of our birthmother’s pain flooded my mind and my burden for her intensified.

“Oh Lord,” I silently prayed, “what is she feeling today? Can she even begin to enjoy the holidays? She’s in so much pain. Please hold her especially close today and give her comfort.”

A quiet voice inside seemed to reply, “I know all about how she feels, I once offered my only son,

too.”

“That’s right,” I offered in surprised response. “Did you feel like that?” I asked God. “Did it hurt You like it hurt her?”

The answer exploded like a bomb in my soul. “On the night I sent my Son, my heart bled too!”

I always assumed Christ’s death had been a source of tremendous grief for both He and God the Father. I never realized how horrible Christ’s earthly birth must have also felt. But God knew His Son’s birth would be a source of everlasting rejoicing for His creation, so He graciously entered into the celebration with us, giving a “grand party” of sorts. He filled the sky with heralding angels proclaiming His peace and goodwill. That glorious display was for our benefit. It certainly didn’t reflect His own feelings of loss.

In an adoption, a birthparent carefully chooses the family for their child. Studies are done, financial records evaluated, and an interview conducted. A selection is made based on the birthparent’s certainty that this will be the family that provides the most love and care possible. Never is a child placed with a family that will mistreat the child.

Yet God took a different approach. He chose an impoverished couple for His son. The All-knowing One was well aware that Jesus would grow up to be ridiculed, mocked, and scorned. He sent His son to people who would torture and crucify Him.

How great is His love for us - choosing our best interests instead of His own! Through the adoption of our own son, I more deeply understand the phrase, "the gift of God's Son."

Before CFCA existed, I was the sole employee of the Arizona Foundation for Children. I oversaw their work from a borrowed office at Jewish Family and Children's Services, then ran the Foundation from my own home. My primary job was that of lobbyist influencing decision makers at all levels — the legislature, the Department of Economic Security, and others in the community who impacted the lives of children.

We began where NAFC ended. They had been advocating primarily for foster children. When the review boards were created in 1978, we, as a committee, agreed that the review board members would become the advocates. NAFC's job was done.

We gave the NAFC name to Bev Crawford. She used it to provide foster parent education and eventually adoptive parent education. Now, they are also a licensing agency.

As the Director of Arizona Foundation for Children, I wrote some bills. One of them required licensure for adoption agencies, putting adoption services into the hands of professional social service agencies and taking it out of the hands of private attorneys. We were unsuccessful, and one of the pri-

vate attorneys started an agency.

Discretion prevents me from naming the man, but I remember attending a meeting in the 1970's that included him and a number of other people, notably Carol Kamin. As we were disbanding, this man said that he had to leave because he had a 16-year-old suicidal birthmother that he had to go and counsel. I exchanged questioning looks with Carol. After he left, both of us questioned his ability to counsel with a suicidal 16-year-old girl.

That was just one reason we were uncomfortable with this agency calling itself a social services agency. For a long time he didn't have any social workers. He finally did hire some, but the whole motivation was to make money out of placing children for adoption. They operated for a number of years, collected fees up front, and did a lot of things that were questionable.

One particular baby born to them had a heart problem. They had no family to take the baby so they called us. We did take the baby and placed it with the Athertons, a couple well known to us. They had taken some other special needs children from us and other agencies in the community. They had adopted a number of children and worked with children who were medically fragile. They willingly fostered this baby and might have gone on to adopt her. They were so compassionate towards the birthmother and really met her needs. God used them to minister to

that birthmother and to that infant.

I remember the night Sue called me. The Athertons, the foster family, were at the hospital. The baby had passed away. Sue called the birthmother and asked her to come to the hospital. When she got there the foster family was standing in the hall with the baby in their arms. The birthmother became hysterical. It took everyone to calm and quiet her. It was a situation where this attorney was clearly unwilling to serve this birthmother. All they wanted was a healthy baby who brought a fee.

In a Board meeting I expressed frustration about this agency. I told them I was contacted by a birthmother who had been deceived into signing her children over for adoption when she thought she was consenting to foster care. The children had been moved across country to the east coast and placed with first one family, then another. The agency charged big bucks for these youngsters.

We met with the mother and worked with her. Rachel went out a number of times and we helped her by going through DES to put pressure on the agency. The children were eventually returned to their mother. Although she may not deserve the mother-of-the-year award, the children were essentially stolen from this birthmother.

Once again, my Board heard my frustration with this agency. I could hardly talk about them without everyone knowing how irritated I was. One of my

dear director members came to me afterward and commented on the amount of energy I was putting into my anger and frustration with that organization. It was a real moment of truth and conviction for me. I let go of it, saying, "Lord, if you want them to be there, then they'll be there. If you don't, then you'll do something to make them go away. But this is not what you have called me to do anymore."

A year later, I was at a Child Welfare League meeting in Washington, D.C. and learned that this for profit agency had been shut down. The State had closed their doors. The agency knew it was coming and the principal had fled the State. There were never any convictions, they all got away with the money, and there were 71 families who had paid sizeable fees without children. We formed a temporary collaboration with Catholic Social Services and AASK and helped those families. We made contact with them, explaining what happened. We worked with the birthmothers that were soon to deliver. We finalized some of the placements made that still needed social services. I saw what happened when I let go. God let us participate in the closure.

At that same time, we were looking for new furniture to fill our recently purchased building. Through closing that agency's offices, we acquired all their file cabinets. We also acquired some of their files. Their furniture, chairs, desks, some of their southwestern pictures and art creations all became

ours. We still have a number of them in our offices. It was God's provision for CFCA. To buy even used furnishings would have been a big expenditure. It was a blessing at that particular time for the Agency.

* * * * *

It would be easy to read some of the stories in this book and think that everything we did at CFCA was a roaring success. That isn't true. We have always endeavored to prayerfully consider new programs, but there has been a certain element of trial and error in our growth. Sometimes God lets us do things, I believe, that are really not part of his plan just to teach us how dependent we really are on him — how messed up we can get if we are not careful.

One of our frustrations through the years has been our inability to offer a good parent training program. We are centrally located, and trying to attract a sufficient number of people from all parts of the Valley on a weekly basis has been difficult. Our young moms, just giving birth, haven't yet figured out their need for that kind of support and help. By the time they are looking for it they have wandered away from CFCA.

There have also been programs we have discontinued. Our SIFT groups (Support Information Fellowship and Training) were helpful, but they ran their course due, in part, to changes in staff. As staff

members come and go they bring with them commitments to specific programs. The programs we offer have reflected these unique commitments.

Most recently we initiated an intervention program for welfare moms, helping them transition off of welfare. The program was to work in partnership with local churches providing mentoring, support, and encouragement. We invested energy and resources into this effort. But we encountered so many closed doors, that we realized this was not what God wanted us to do.

Closed doors seem to be an indication of whether we are on the right track or not. Sometimes we work hard to push down closed doors when we would be better off to look for the open ones.

We try to look at our community as Christ would to see where the opportunities are, where God is at work, where God is inviting us to, "Come, participate here with me." That is always an exciting challenge. Our eyes are not always in focus, but we try to keep them fixed on our Lord. When we do, our efforts result in great success and a sense of real accomplishment.

From the day we opened our doors, I felt a burden for the counseling aspect of social services. It seemed that many of our clients — and many people in our Christian community — were struggling with kid issues. These needed a strong counseling approach.

When we opened the doors of Christian Family Care Agency, we provided pregnancy and foster care services. Each of these services included a certain level of counseling, but more in-depth counseling by degreed professionals was needed.

In the mid-1980's I was making a presentation at the Orangewood Nazarene Church. While there, I talked with Alan and Joan Cook. Al was the station Director for KFLR Radio and they were strong advocates of CFCA, encouraging us in the ministry. Joan shared that she would soon be getting her counseling degree. I shared with her our hope of opening a counseling program at CFCA.

We took our Board on a planning retreat to the San Marcos Hotel in Mesa in 1986. Out of that retreat came the decision to expand our program to include family counseling. Shortly after that, we hired Joan Cook to head that program. Under her direction we began offering group therapy sessions as well as individual counseling.

Joan and Al were adoptive parents, so Joan was particularly in tune with issues regarding adoption. Working with adoptive parents, we found many opportunities for cross over between our other programs and counseling program.

As God grew that program, it became very clear that our special gift and calling is that of serving children. By the early 1990's, our counseling program became 90-percent child-focused. We do some mar-

riage and individual adult counseling, but it is because there is a child directly impacted by what is happening in the adult's life.

Our counseling services offer trained specialists in attachment and bonding therapy programs. We address grief issues with children. Our staff is trained in play therapy and we have a waiting list of young clients. Because of the trauma in their young lives, they need the special care and help provided through our counselors.

Sometime people ask me, "Why does a child need therapy? Don't kids get over things by themselves?"

One letter we received from a mother answers this question. She had taken her daughter to several counselors with no results. Finally, someone recommended Christian Family Care Agency to her. Her nine-year-old daughter had been held at gun point. As a result, she was severely traumatized, experiencing nightmares, and withdrawing from her friends. She was failing in her subjects at school and avoiding social contacts.

After several months of working with one of our therapists, her mother wrote that she was sleeping well and beginning to make some friends, inviting kids over to the house. She was excelling in school and, amazingly, she was also going to be able to testify in court against her assailant.

Sometimes letters like that cross my desk. More

often than not, people are just able to go on with their lives in a normal, healthy way.

Let me share another situation. My nephew, Ken, was Director with Food for the Hungry in Nicaragua. Some time ago, his home was burned to the ground. His wife and two little boys, ages four and two at the time, were in the house with their mom and a servant. They all managed to get out of the home but lost everything they owned in the fire. The four-year-old had already gone through Hurricane Mitch, seeing its effects and how it impacted his dad's work. But the burning of his home left him emotionally scared. He wouldn't let mom out of his sight. He had terrible nightmares and was afraid of almost everything — certainly anything that resembled fire.

When my nephew came home on furlough in October, one of the first places they came was Christian Family Care Agency. Our counselor worked with little Josh for four months. When they were ready to go back to Nicaragua, he was able to let mom walk down the hall out of sight. He was playing again, sleeping again, and back to his normal, jolly little self. His parents were thrilled with the turn around in his life. They spent time with the counselor and gained skills and materials to take with them to Nicaragua to help traumatized youngsters there.

In the ninth chapter of John we read this account (The Message), "Walking down the street,

Jesus saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked, 'Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?' Jesus said, 'You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines. When night falls, the workday is over. For as long as I am in the world, there is plenty of light. I am the world's Light.'

I was so struck by the message of this story. It's a long story about Jesus healing the blind man, but notice the point He makes... not fixing blame, but rather noting that here is an opportunity to see God at work. So often when children come to CFCA, so damaged, I think of this story and offer up a prayer that we may see God's miracle in the life of yet another one – so precious to Him in His Kingdom here on earth.

CHAPTER NINE

LEAVING A LEGACY

*"For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord.
They are plans for good and not disaster, to give you a future
and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11*



Sue Vanderlei

With time comes perspective. As we continue to do what God puts in front of us, we are often blessed to see the unfolding purpose of events that have sometimes been years in the making. That is certainly true for CFCA. It is also true for many who have worked alongside me in ministering to children and families in crisis. Sue Vanderlei is one of those people

who saw God's deeper purpose unfold as a result of her work with us.

My work with the birthmothers at CFCA made me a real advocate on their behalf. I believe adoptive couples sometimes questioned my role as their advocate. Having worked with these young women for nine months, I had a special empathy for them in the adoption process.

Years later, I got to see the other side of the picture as my own children struggled with the pain of infertility. I saw firsthand the loss adoptive couples face as they realize they can never give birth to their own child.

I was proud of my children for choosing open adoption. They had seen my husband and I take in birthmothers to live with us - been a part of driving girls to appointments and taking care of newly born infants. Because of this experience, they were not threatened by the role a birthmother plays in the adoption process.

My grandchildren are a result of my work with CFCA. I now understand why God moved us from Wheaton, Illinois - a place we loved - to Arizona. I didn't want to go, at the time. But if I hadn't come to CFCA, my kids probably would not have felt as comfortable in pursuing adoption. God truly guides and directs every detail of our life.

It is amazing to me that we are approaching the 21st year anniversary of Christian Family Care's ministry. It's even more amazing to me that I have been associated with it for two decades. I'm a person who likes change and challenge. Making this ministry new and challenging each day is a real gift from God and a blessing for me.

It is easy in some ways to write about the past. It is more difficult to look at the future, especially after something has been good for 20-plus years. Significant change and growth requires risk, stepping out in faith. I believe that is what God has for CFCA in the future — growth, new programs, new ways of serving children and their families. With that growth comes new risks. How long God will continue to use me is known only to Him. But along with everyone else who has chosen to serve God, building His kingdom through this ministry, I want to be welcomed into His kingdom someday with a most sought after greeting. I want to hear our Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I also want to be welcomed by those who are there because of the ministry of CFCA.

What about you? When you read this book you may see yourself fitting in somewhere — literally or figuratively. You may be challenged to become more involved in this ministry. There are many different ways to help. If you put the book down and quickly forget about it, you'll be able to forget about the prodding of the Holy Spirit, too. However, if you listen to

His voice and ask God what it is He wants you to do, you'll discover a real blessing as you partner with us. I pray the latter for you. I pray, too, that God will put a burden on your heart to pray for the ministry, pray for the children we serve, and pray for our staff as they face the daily challenges of helping heal hurting hearts.

As you pray, you'll find yourself looking for doors God opens. Like me, you may discover that one open door usually leads to another. My unofficial role as an advocate and lobbyist came about that way.

After seeing the inflexibility and inconsistency of state regulations in Illinois, we came face to face with similar problems in the State of Arizona. We spoke our mind. We were willing and ready to advocate for the children in our care and for other children and foster families. That led to a ten-year season of all kinds of advocacy, writing laws on an individual basis and with many different groups — some we formed, some we were part of, and some we led. We wrote many pieces of legislation, worked on regulations and budgets, helped develop and formulate the foster care review boards, and lobbied for the Court Appointed Special Advocated (CASA) program, although it was several years before that came into being.

We don't have an advocacy department at CFCA, but advocacy is a vital role that we fill, whether it is with the legislature, the state agencies, or on

behalf of an individual child.

Christians have been active in advocating for changes to the abortion law and have rallied to that cause in many ways. We applaud that effort, but have been called by God to put our energy into advocating for vulnerable children. This group is too-often short-changed within the Christian community. It's an area of concern and advocacy we encourage you to consider.

We pray this book encourages you to become aware of issues facing children in our community and nation. We pray you will discover ways to make your voice heard on behalf of these vulnerable children.

One of my favorite quotes by Gabriela Mistral says, "Many things we need we can wait for... but not the child. Now is the moment in which his bones are formed, his blood constituted, and his brain developed. We cannot answer him 'Tomorrow.' His name is 'Today.'"

As you finish this book, I pray these words will challenge you to find your place among the new generation of CFCA's family, as we serve those Christ called "the least of these."

* * * * *

Now that CFCA has reached "adulthood," what does the future hold? As has been true of the past, only God knows. What we do know is that there are

more children needing foster care than there are families. We have a waiting list for children needing counseling services. There are many siblings and other children with special needs with no adoptive families to nurture them.

Our Agency needs permanent offices in Tucson and we need to extend our Phoenix services into branch offices throughout the Valley. We have also been exploring the possibility of serving hurting children and their families through a mobile office, bringing a therapeutic play environment to a neighborhood location or even to a private home.

Our Agency has been applauded for “doing it right and doing it well.” This is just one reason why we are examining the challenge of replicating the concept of CFCA in communities throughout the country. Helping others provide similar services would be yet another way to fulfill God’s command to minister to the little ones who make up His Kingdom.

Financial sustainability through adequate endowment funds is another desired goal. While we recognize our continued dependence on God and the faithfulness of His people, our energies can be better used in service if we can move beyond the need for special events and continual appeals.

Those who follow in our footsteps will write the next “chapter” in the book of CFCA. Pray with us for God’s continual provision for every aspect of the

ministry. Join with us in making the next chapter of CFCA a reality as God lays it on your heart.

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Proposal
The Formation of a Christian Social Service
Agency to Serve Children and Families

July 1981

The Problem

In our country today we are seeing a tremendous increase in family problems such as violence, abuse, neglect and many more. Nationally, one-fifth of all families are headed by a single parent.

Phoenix has the highest divorce rate in the country and the largest ratio of single parent homes. Families move here thinking their problems are related to in-laws, job, community or whatever and believe life in "the sun" will solve everything. All that move accomplishes is a transplanting of the problems without the support of extended family and friends.

The Christian community, unfortunately, is not exempt. Families in our churches break up, too. Crises occur - many even turn to the church when their problems get to be more than they can deal with. Are we able to respond to this need?

Where do Christians turn when there is a crisis in their lives? We hope the answer is, "to the church" -

and where do churches turn? Pastoral counseling staff and many Christian counseling agencies are called upon and are very effective in counseling folks with problems from The Word and encouraging them that life in "The Son" is the answer to their problems. But what do these counselors do when a Christian couple is barren and wants to adopt a baby, or a family cannot cope with a child and needs substitute child care (or is sick or needs to leave town due to illness in the family in another state and on and on), or a family needs respite care for a handicapped child, or help for a pregnant teenager (not just counseling – but what to do when the baby is born)? These are just a few of the family problems that cannot be resolved with counseling alone. When Christian counselors and pastors provide people with direction from the Word but the family needs direct services from an agency, the counselor must then refer them to a secular agency.

Currently there is not social service agency to meet the specific needs of the evangelical community in Arizona. There are some denominational agencies that serve a small segment of the Christian community, but none that crosses theology. There is not a way to assure the placement of children in evangelical homes.

Proposal

We propose the formation of a Christ-centered evangelical agency to meet the needs of children and their families. It is hoped that Scottsdale Bible Church would initiate the formation of such an agency, but that it would be done in cooperation with other evangelical churches throughout the valley and that leadership, support, and services would be broadly based in the greater evangelical community.

Name: The name should reflect the services provided and could be EVANGELICAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES or any number of other names that would identify its purpose.

Program: Initially, the agency would have a three-fold focus:

I. FAMILY SERVICES

A. Crisis intervention for families

1. counseling
2. family therapy
3. in-home support services
 - a. homemaker
 - b. parent aid

B. Foster Care

1. shelter
2. long term care

- 3. respite care
- 4. adoption

II. UNMARRIED PARENT PROGRAM

- A. Counseling
- B. Medical services
- C. Shelter
- D. Adoption services

III. ADOPTION PROGRAM

- A. Recruitment
 - 1. screening
 - 2. preparation via parent groups
- B. Pre and post placement services
 - 1. legal
 - 2. counseling

Procedure

A Board of Directors (perhaps an interim organizing board) would be selected. This Board would establish policy for the agency and hire an Executive Director. The Board and Executive Director would be responsible for: incorporation; obtaining a license to place children within Arizona; securing tax-exempt status; raising necessary operating funds; hiring staff; and other procedures necessary for the formation of a new social service agency.

Staff

Initial staff requirements would probably call for a half-time executive director; one and one-half social workers; and one general office person to carry secretarial, reception and bookkeeping responsibilities. The half-time executive director and half-time social worker might be the same person.

Budget

Any figure proposed at this time is an estimate. It is anticipated that the first year of operation could be accomplished for \$60,000.00 but about 80% of that would be salaries and hard data has not been accumulated on other operating costs.

Support

It is anticipated that financial support will be accomplished through many means:

I. Contributions

A. Churches

B. Organizations

C. Individuals

II. Fees for services

A. Adoption*

B. Counseling

C. Foster care

III. Contract for services

i.e. providing foster care for child who is ward of the court or referral from other agency who is being reimbursed for care of child.

IV. United Way

V. Private foundation

*all fees would be on a sliding scale based on ability to pay except for a set fee for infant adoptions.

Public Relations

Already existing resources in the evangelical community such as: churches, Christian schools, radio stations, etc. will be utilized in promoting the use of the agency as well as encouraging prayer and financial support and encouraging Christians to open their hearts and homes to needy children and families.

Model

The Evangelical Child and Family Agency in Chicago is an agency that has been serving the evangelical community of metropolitan Chicago for over thirty years. Many of their operational procedures would be helpful in the formation of a similar agency in Phoenix.

Conclusion

In the Book of James, we read that “true religion is to care for widows and orphans.” It is no distortion of the intent of that text to recognize and respond to the needs of children who are “orphans of the living” – the neglected and abused children who are victims of non-functioning families. Women, too, who have been “widowed” through the “death of a marriage” are as much or more in need of our loving care than those widowed through death. The story of the “Good Samaritan” as recorded in the Book of Luke so vividly tells us that we have a responsibility to meet the needs of hurting people without any thought as to the results of meeting that need.

What we have proposed on the preceding pages is an idea, — a skeleton, if you please. If the skeleton looks like it could be a vehicle for a ministry in Christ’s name, then we’ll flesh it out – covering it and filling it with the life-giving details, but for now, here is a skeleton to look at.

More of what people are saying about *Of Such Is the Kingdom*

“There is nothing more important than the investment into the life of a child. From early on, Kay Ekstrom was called to be an advocate for children. In this warm account, she shares the story of God’s direction for her life through the birth of Christian Family Care Agency. Kay and CFCA have consistently shown the love of Christ in their work in foster care, counseling, and adoption. This is truly a story of inspiration, dedication and obedience.”

*Jerry Colangelo, Past CEO and Chairman,
Phoenix Suns & Arizona Diamondbacks*

“If there ever was a person who ‘goes through the doors God opens’ it is Kay Ekstrom. A woman with the passion of a disciple of Christ, an unrelenting, tireless leadership style, a vivacious, attractive personality, and a loving heart for children literally created a miracle in the desert: Christian Family Care Agency. This exciting book is about the hundreds of hurdles faced and stood down by the people of a gracious God who heard the pleas of needy, vulnerable children.

You will be enriched by reading this story, and many of you will be encouraged to make sure that it does not end.”

*Dr. Barry Asmus, Senior Economist,
National Center for Policy Analysis*

"In her direct, engaging style, Kay Ekstrom tells of her exciting journey in the genesis and growth of Christian Family Care Agency. The reader will find insight and encouragement as she chronicles the development of this excellent organization. Kay's endearing qualities: her boldness, humility, humor, and integrity resonate from her writing making this a delightful, edifying read."

*Stephen M. Yabnig, MSSW, Executive Director,
National Association of Christian Child and
Family Agencies*

"CFCA can only be explained in terms of God's sovereignty and power. In the solving of problems - removing obstacles - doing the impossible - one can see the evidence of a divine hand. What has been accomplished in this ministry is God's doing. It is, as I once wrote in a song, "...a miracle of love and grace." Kay Ekstrom's beautiful story will bless and inspire you."

John W. Peterson, Composer

"As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!' Kay Ekstrom is truly blessed, not only in word, but in deed. *Of Such Is the Kingdom* embodies the words of Christ when He said: 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to

such as these.'

Of Such Is the Kingdom is a must read... a journey by which we have been afforded a rare glimpse into how God plants a seed into one of His humble servants, and that servant allows God to be God, and to direct her in how to care for that seed, resulting in a Tree of Life for those whom society would have otherwise cast away. May the Lord continue to bless this ministry.

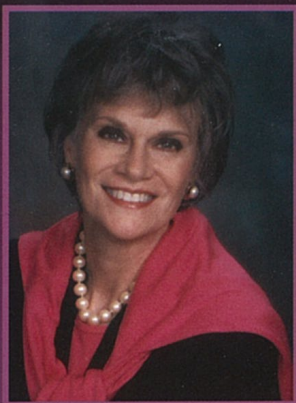
*Vernon Parker, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights,
U.S. Department of Agriculture*

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Thanks to my many friends who have inspired me along the way. I beg the forgiveness of those who don’t find their name in this manuscript. My memory and recall are just that, mine. This book was not researched. To tell of all the wonderful things God has done through the ministry of CFCA would require many more volumes. Above all else I want to give praise, honor, thanks and Glory to God . . . this is His work.

“Kay Ekstrom is a woman of vision and passion! Read this exciting modern-day story of faith in action. Through her obedience and commitment, God used Kay to develop the Christian Family Care Agency – a ministry that I believe should be replicated around the country.” — *Ruth Graham*



“Kay Ekstrom has written a book that is as important as it is uplifting. With only her faith and an idea, she has succeeded in creating the Christian Family Care Agency, which has changed the lives of countless children and families. This book is testament to her tenacity and faith. Please read it.” — *Congressman J.D. Hayworth*

“Christian Family Care Agency has been putting smiles on the faces, and joy in the hearts, of countless children over its long and thriving history. Finally, you can read the victory story for yourself. This book is not just an account of a great adoption agency; it’s a first class love story too. Of Such Is the Kingdom...is all about God’s amazing grace and the people He used over the years to transmit it.” — *Dr. Tim Kimmel, author of Grace Based Parenting*



Gordon Murray / superheropro.com

Compelling and persuasive, *Of Such Is the Kingdom* is the captivating story of the birth of a “family.” This family is comprised of hundreds of birth and foster parents, adoptive families, and the children they love. And at the center of it all is Kay Ekstrom, the woman who founded this family, known as the Christian Family Care Agency. Her courage to imagine – and follow – a God-inspired dream has resulted in a legacy of love for hurting and helpless children – the ones Christ called “the least of these.”

People Are Talking About *Of Such Is the Kingdom...*

“Kay Ekstrom has given birth and nurtured CFCA for many years. She brings the wisdom and understanding needed to care for many who have come wounded and have left feeling loved.”

Dr. Darryl DelHousaye, Senior Pastor,
Scottsdale Bible Church

“The plight of children has never been particularly good. They are the victims of adult confusion, misbehavior and

continued on back flap

immaturity. Neglect, abuse and abandonment are the result imposed on our children, so when an organization whose primary client is the child comes along, you must give that group special consideration. Such is Christian Family Care Agency.

God raised up Kay Ekstrom, a wife, mother, and grandmother; gave her a huge heart; filled her with compassion and a lot of good old horse sense. He then supplied a strong, understanding husband and gave her a compelling vision.

She has put together a competent staff and an effective board. Their track record is filled with impressive success stories of foster children and young, unmarried pregnant women finding a loving home and help during a crisis period of their lives.

I highly recommend you reading *Of Such is the Kingdom*.”

William S. Starr, D.D.

“Kay has taken us on a warm adventure in watching God perform a miracle for children right here in Phoenix. Courage, commitment and creativity mark this colorful record of God’s careful direction for the Christian Family Care Agency. Hurray! And may the Lord use it as an inspiring model for others who have a compassionate vision for serving children.”

Daisy Hepburn, speaker and author

“Each generation must reach out to the next, for there are many who do not use their blessings wisely due to the choices they make. I pray as God continues the transformation within your life, the journey ahead will be an exciting one.”

Deloris Jordan, mother of Michael Jordan