



### The Power of an Encouraging Word

Following is a story by Mary Ann Bird called “The Whisper Test.” It is a wonderful illustration of the power of the spoken word, and can be an inspiration for us in understanding the difference we can make in the life of a child.

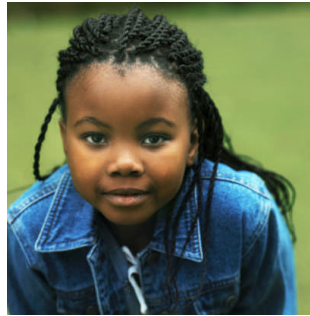
*“I grew up knowing I was different, and I hated it. I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others: a little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, and garbled speech.*

*“When schoolmates asked, ‘What happened to your lip?’ I’d tell them I’d fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more ac-*

*ceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different. I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me.*

*“There was, however, a teacher in the second grade whom we all adored—Mrs. Leonard by name.*

*“Annually we had a hearing test...Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone in the class, and finally it*



*was my turn. I knew from past years that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher sitting at her desk would whisper something, and we would repeat it back—things like ‘The sky is blue’ or ‘Do you have new shoes?’ I waited there for those words that God must have put into her mouth, those seven words that changed my life. Mrs. Leonard said, in her whisper: ‘I wish you were my little girl.’”*

What an amazing story! You will never know the difference you can make in a child’s life—until you try! Thank you for being interested in the most vulnerable members of our community—foster children.

### We Believe in Our Foster Parents!

As a future foster parent of Parents by Choice, you are very important to us. After all, you are the reason we exist—to find loving homes for children in foster care.

We believe that value should be more than words, so we demonstrate how much we value our foster parents in the following ways:

1. We provide **foster parent liability insurance** at no cost to you. Sometimes the future is uncertain, but you can be sure that you won’t be alone.
2. We cover the cost involved in becoming a foster parent. Once you are certified, Parents by Choice will **reimburse** you for out-of-pocket expenses such as fingerprinting, health screening, and CPR and First Aid certification.
3. When you join Parents by Choice, you are joining a team of caring, committed professionals. **We exist to support you** and help you in your ministry to children. You will be treated with respect—as a member of our team.

There are many other things that could be mentioned here, but please know that you are valuable to us! Let us know how we can help you complete the process of becoming a foster parent—a Parent by Choice.

# Training and Support at Parents by Choice



Hava White leads a recent support group meeting at Parents by Choice. These meetings include dinner, childcare, and training on

www.parentsbychoice.net

Training is critical in any field, but especially in foster care. Ours is a field filled with ever-changing rules and regulations, along with the difficult task of parenting children and teenagers in crisis. This is why we take training so seriously at Parents by Choice!

In a day when many organizations are cutting training events, we have increased the frequency and focus of our own. We continue to offer monthly foster parent support meetings, complete with dinner and childcare, in spite of difficult financial times. Our commitment to these events is simple: we believe that well-trained parents provide a more secure, prepared, and loving environment for the children and youth we serve.

Our foster families aren't perfect, but they are passionate and eager to learn. And we're looking for more people like them—people who are willing to sacrifice for the sake of children and youth. If this sounds like you, please give us a call at **(209) 478-4554**. We would love to help you become a great foster parent—someone who is ready and able to serve children and youth in need.

## “I Believe in Parents by Choice!”

by Andy Prokop, President, United Way of San Joaquin County

I'm writing you this letter to express my appreciation for the Life Changing and sometime Life Saving Service the staff and families of **Parents By Choice** are providing to our Community.

To be very specific I'm so very grateful to the Foster Families that have opened their hearts and their homes to our young people in need of love and shelter. If it were not for the Foster Families being there for me in my childhood I would have ended up a problem to society or dead. It was Foster Families that taught me invaluable life lessons and to see the difference between doing what's right and what's wrong. I'm so happy I choose to learn **what to do** instead of modeling **what not to do**.

I will be forever in debt to and always grateful for the positive influence each of the **9** different Foster Families have made in my life. Because these Foster Families choose to go the extra mile and to take the time to properly raise me I now can look back and see all of their work has allowed me to become a very successful Parent, Father, Business and Community Leader. I'm especially proud that through the love and life lessons I've been given by the Foster Families have been able to maintain my wonderful marriage for over

**35** years and raise my two children in a such a positive way that the Cycles of Violence, Alcoholism, Drug abuse, and Dishonesty have never been a part of our home.

I am a believer in the service Parents by Choice provides to Foster Families...please let me help **you** and **“Parents By Choice”** make a **positive difference** in the lives of our Children!



Andy Prokop (right) presents an award to Austin, a foster youth. Andy is a former foster child himself.