



Remembrances

of an adoptive mother



The Tilstra family in 1998: Clockwise (l.-r.): Gus, Ron, Joyce, and Elsie.

Elsie and Gus Tilstra were married in the years immediately following World War II, and dreamed of having children to love and nurture. In 1954 and 1957, they adopted their son, Ron, and daughter, Joyce, respectively, through Children's Aid and Family Services.

Incredibly, Mrs. Tilstra has stayed in touch with the agency during the last 52 years, sending donations along with poignant notes about her deep gratitude for her children. She was kind enough to share her happy memories with us:

What an honor to be asked to tell our story of adoption of our son and daughter. Thank you for making us parents.

It all began as a lifelong dream I had as a child. Coming from a loving family, I wanted to grow up and be a wife and mother. In 1947, the first half of that dream came true when Gus and I were married.

Having 26 nieces and nephews, and enjoying family gatherings and holidays, really encouraged us to have our own children all the more. After six childless years, we approached our doctor about adoption. He gave us 12 applications, and in October 1952, we corresponded with each agency and received five responses.

There was no doubt in our mind which agency would "fit the request" – Children's Aid and Adoption Society in East Orange, NJ, now known as Children's Aid and Family Services. The counseling, love and concerns of Miss Miriam Gemmel, our caseworker, and Barbara Smith, the office executive, were so appreciated and helped us to relax.

The second half of our dream came true in August 1953 when our son, Ronnie, was presented to us at 6 weeks old, asleep on his tummy in his antique cradle. Tears of joy filled our hearts, and he was accepted by all.

When Ronnie turned 2, we reapplied for a baby girl, as this would be the ideal American family. There was a shortage of girls to fit our background. So, Children's Aid and Adoption Society contacted another agency to help find us a daughter.

In March 1957, our precious daughter Joyce Eileen arrived. She was born in December, and was 11 weeks old when she was put into my arms, a day to cherish!

Ronnie went with us to "pick out" his baby sister, and to this day reminds her, "Joyce, if it wasn't for me, you wouldn't be here." They bonded immediately, and have lots of love for each other.

The children were told daily, from infancy, they were our chosen babies. We read adoption books to them, including *The Chosen Babies*, *Peter and Penny* and recited *The Adopted Mother's Poem* to them.

Both Ronnie and Joyce are married now. Ron is an electrical engineer and has a daughter, son and new granddaughter. Joyce has been married for 21 years and is a special services school teacher in Cape May County.

If someone wants to make their lives complete, I truly suggest adopting a child of any age. You'll find joy, love and fulfillment. I promise you!

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Agency Friends Make

Similar to last year, 2007 will have its share of challenges and rewards as we strive to meet the needs of the most vulnerable among us. One of the top priorities remains the agency's recruitment effort to find more foster parents. Many of the agency's foster parents have adopted their children. While this is terrific news, it means we have less families available. We've implemented a campaign to raise public awareness and attract potential foster parents. We're already seeing results; there's been a marked increase in people calling the agency to find out more about fostering. We'll maintain a sharp focus on this effort in 2007.

The agency will also seek to increase its commitment to the young adults as they leave foster care and embark on independent lives. Many face serious challenges in finding affordable housing and viable careers, and we're hoping to put more resources into helping them.

These are just two of the priorities for 2007. The agency has an ambitious agenda to help even more of the area's most vulnerable children and families.

As always, I thank you for all you do, and am confident that working together, we will continue to provide high quality, vital services to those we serve.

Robert B. Jones, Ph.D.
President & CEO

After joining Children's Aid and Family Services, the vast majority of children in the agency's care experience a dramatic improvement in their lives. They can count on the support and guidance of the agency's staff, who ensure they get to school on time every day, as well as drive them to their doctors' appointments, make sure they have a nice house to live in, clean clothes to wear, toys to play with, books to read, and nutritious meals. They thrive in this type of family environment, and feel accepted and loved.

Even though things have improved for these children, the holidays can still be a lonely time. But thanks to the kindness of agency friends, they are able to find enjoyment during this time of the year.

The Bergen Volunteer Center, Medco Health Solutions, The Paramus Chamber of Commerce, and United Water are just a few of the many organizations that donate their time and effort to the agency, year after year. One particular group, The Adoptive Parents Committee (APC), is a shining example of such an organization, and has been supportive for years.

The APC, a New York-based non-profit parent support group comprised of volunteers dedicated to improving all aspects of adoption and foster care, established a New Jersey chapter 10 years ago with a sharp focus on encouraging the adoption of older children. After discovering that Children's Aid and Family Services had a similar mission, a bond was forged.

“Children living in group homes don't have access to a parent on a daily basis. They can't ask for something on the regular Saturday mall run, or wheedle a new pair of must-have jeans out of Mom, or shovel snow at Grandpa's in exchange for the latest video game.”

~ Jackie Poritz
Children's Relief Coordinator
Adoptive Parents Committee

For the past 10 years, the APC, led by children's relief coordinator Jackie Poritz, has bought gifts for all the children residing in the agency's six group homes, where approximately 50 children live at any given time. The group is supplied with each child's information: their name, age, group home residence, and what gift they would like. The APC then buys gifts that each child specifically requests. They strive to make sure the process is fair, and every child receives presents of relatively equal value.

APC members purchase about 95 percent of the gifts themselves. Occasionally, if a particular gift is popular, the company that manufactures it will donate several items. In the past, The North Face has donated jackets and Timberland has donated boots.

The Depot Store Hours

This wonderful boutique store features stunning, one-of-a-kind items for the home and garden. Staffed entirely by volunteers, all proceeds benefit the agency.

Open Monday through Saturday,
9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (Thurs. to 7:30 p.m.)
22 Prospect Street,
Midland Park, NJ 07432
Tel. 201-444-6120

Holidays Special for Children



Quashone, 17, has lived at Park Ridge-based Children’s Haven for the past three years. He is one of several children whose dreams came true this holiday season because of the generosity of the agency’s friends. Quashone started practicing the guitar last year, and always wished he could have his own instrument to play. To his great surprise, this holiday season, the Adoptive Parents Committee arranged for him to get his dream gift. He said he was thrilled when he got the guitar, because now he can practice regularly.

While Quashone’s holiday wish was fulfilled, he still has another dream – to find a family to call his own. Known to his friends as “Q,” this fun-loving and sweet-natured young man enjoys playing basketball and football, and his favorite hobbies are video games and practicing guitar. For more information about opening your heart and home to a terrific young man like Quashone, please call our adoption specialist at 201-226-0300.

“Often, older children tend to want more expensive gifts,” says Ms. Poritz. “To the greater community, there is sometimes a feeling these gifts are too expensive. However, our group knows what they’re asking for is what most children their age usually get. We give them exactly what they want, and it makes a difference.”

The gifts are collected, wrapped, and labeled at Ms. Poritz’s house. Staff from Children's Aid and Family Services then comes with a van to pick the gifts up, and distributes them to the group home locations in Bogota, Paramus, Park Ridge, Ridgewood, and Newark.

“The children in the agency’s care sometimes feel

abandoned after the holidays,” says Ms. Poritz. Recognizing this, the APC raises funds for the children to have a special evening out, such as going to the movies, seeing an ice skating show, or going out to dinner.

“So many organizations, churches, synagogues, groups, and individuals have all been wonderful friends to the agency,” says Rose Zeltser, senior vice president of professional services. “Thanks to them, these children have something to look forward to as the holidays come around. It shows them someone cares about them, and makes them feel special. And that spirit of generosity is a lesson that stays with them – and they then share with others.”

Together, we helped more than 16,000 people last year in our shared community



With your help, the most vulnerable citizens in our community are getting the support and assistance they need. Our children are finally experiencing the simple joys of childhood, such as attending summer camp. Our families are receiving guidance to navigate the challenges and transitions in life. Our seniors are getting the help they need to understand their benefits, and saving money on prescription medications, allowing many of them to continue to live in their homes and stay close to their family and friends.

How Your Donation Transforms Lives

- \$30 Will buy a case of formula for a hungry baby.
- \$60 Will buy one month's worth of diapers for the working poor family of an infant.
- \$100 Will help buy school clothes for a child in a group home.
- \$150 Will provide a low-income senior with counseling and help navigating the new Medicare prescription benefits.
- \$175 Will provide a child in a group home with a year's worth of school supplies.
- \$315 Will pay for a shy, self-conscious adolescent to attend social skills training, and learn to make new friends.
- \$500 Will pay for an ad seeking desperately needed foster and adoptive families.
- \$1,000 Will provide a college student, who has aged out of foster care and has no place to go for the summer, with rent for an apartment.
- \$1,500 Will pay for a developmentally challenged child's campership.
- \$3,800 Will pay for a scholarship for a child of a low-income family to attend Turrell Child Care & Early Learning Center.

For more information on how you can help, whether by volunteering, adopting/fostering or making a gift, call 201.261.2800. Thank you.



Healthy Children Make Healthy Choices

Step into one of the classrooms at the Turrell Child Care & Early Learning Center, and chances are you'll see some innovative methods to encourage healthy habits in young children. For instance, you might see a child wearing a suit of body organs attached by Velcro, listening to his friend's heartbeat with a stethoscope, looking at a chart to identify different parts of the skeletal system, or using a puppet to express his feelings.

These are some of the unique, hands-on approaches to learning about the importance of healthy choices that are part of the HALO (Healthy Alternatives for Little Ones) program, being offered at the Center. The HALO program, developed by Heartland Family Services of Nebraska, is a series of develop-

“I'm profoundly grateful to the William Randolph Hearst Foundations for funding the HALO program. It provides vulnerable children in our care with the resources they need to make healthy choices now, and for years to come.”

~ Bob Jones, Ph.D.
President & CEO

located. Another lesson, “I Feel (Happy and Sad),” helps children begin to recognize, label, and express their feelings. In 2005, five teachers from the Center were trained in the HALO program by Heartland Family Services of Nebraska. They are now the first HALO-certified teachers in the northeast region of the United States. As such, they have instructed teachers from several other child care centers in Bergen County that are now incorporating HALO into their curricula.

The HALO program has shown promising results. Post-testing of children who participated in the program indicated 67 percent could identify three examples of “healthy choices.” Additionally, 100 percent of six-year-olds could identify and describe the functions of body organs.

Turrell, a fully licensed, accredited, nonprofit child care center in Paramus, serves children 8 weeks to kindergarten. It features large sunny classrooms, an age-appropriate comprehensive curriculum, and freshly prepared nutritional meals and snacks. For more information, contact Sandy Richards, director of childcare services, at 201-261-5970.



mentally appropriate lessons emphasizing the importance of growing in healthy ways. At the Center, the preschool and kindergarten classes have started incorporating HALO lessons into their weekly curricula, focusing on a particular lesson each month. For example, one of the lessons, “Healthy Bodies/Healthy Choices,” focuses on taking care of the body, and is reinforced by teaching children where their vital organs are



A wealth of talent shared

Year after year, Children's Aid and Family Services attracts a loyal group of enthusiastic volunteers, and 2006 was no exception. A variety of community members donated their time and talents to the agency, including individuals, church groups, employees of corporations, and Girl Scouts.

"I can't say enough about these dedicated individuals and the substantial difference they make in the lives of others, whether it's reading to children, or teaching the adolescents in our group home how to handle credit wisely," says Bob Jones, Ph.D., president & CEO. "Our volunteers make the work the agency does possible."



A group of employees from UPS donated their time on a Saturday afternoon and cleaned up the Healing Garden at the agency's Ridgewood office.



(l.-r.): Pearson PLC employees Gary Frank and Tom Magaldi read to the enthusiastic children at Turrell Child Care & Early Learning Center.

Many thanks also to:
Banana Republic · BD · Hudson
City Savings Bank · The Junior
League of Bergen County · Medco ·
National Council of Jewish Women ·



Carol Lorenzo with the award she received at the 2006 Volunteer Recognition Event.



A volunteer from BMW Group of North America, LLC paints a therapy room at the agency's 240 Frisch Court location. The volunteers painted a total of four rooms.



(l. - r.): Ridgewood Girl Scout Rachel Kerner and Cyndy Mitchell, manager of volunteer and community services. Ms. Kerner received a Girl Scout Gold Award for collecting and delivering two carloads of camp supplies for the children residing in the agency's treatment homes.

with the agency



(l.-r.): Eve van den Bol, Marcy Wimbish, Katherine Lucas, and Barbara Ricciardi were members of the Special Event Committee that planned the 2006 April Fool's Gala.



Special Event Committee members with Bob Jones, Ph.D., president & CEO of the agency. (l.-r.): Jennifer Contrucci, Marcy Wimbish, Eve van den Bol, Karen Hofstetter, and Carol Whaley.



Community-minded teens from Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Ridgewood spent a Saturday cleaning up the children's garden at the agency's flagship location at 200 Robin Road in Paramus. They also donated 50 pounds of sand to fill the sandboxes at Turrell Child Care & Early Learning Center, as well as toys.



(l.-r.): Denise Durham Williams, national director of community relations, Citibank; Peter Dugas, Manager of Public and Legislative Affairs, CCFI Fund of U.S. Treasury; and Liz Mason, executive vice president, Children's Aid and Family Services, at the third annual Get Smart About Credit day. This educational seminar was presented to the adolescents in the agency's group homes.

Many thanks also to:
Papillion · Paramus Chamber of Commerce · Paramus Park/General Growth Properties, Inc. · Paramus Rotary · United Water · Verizon Pioneers · Wells Fargo · Woodcliff Lake Hilton · and the many others who volunteered their time!



Long-time volunteer Rusty Goldberg helps care for the babies at the Turrell Child Care & Early Learning Center.

Place Your Bids!

It's hard being a New Jersey sports fan. Giants' and Yankees' tickets are almost impossible to find. In fact, some people spend years on waiting lists just to see their team play. But what if you could see each team a few times next season? While this might sound too good to be true, these and other great opportunities will be available to bid on during the silent and live auctions at Children's Aid and Family Services' fourth annual gala, **"A Sparkling Evening of Magic, Marvel, and a touch of March Madness."**

This fundraiser will be held on March 16, 2007, at The Hackensack Golf Club in Oradell.

But don't worry; if sports aren't your thing, there are plenty of other once-in-a-lifetime experiences to bid on, such as a two-week stay in Amsterdam with two round-trip plane tickets, rounds of golf with celebrity players or club member hosts at prestigious local and far flung courses, and two orchestra seats at



the New York City Opera, to name a few. And as a special treat, Arthur Groom & Co. has generously donated an exquisite emerald necklace worth \$10,000 to the event, which will be raffled. Raffle tickets will be sold for \$20 apiece or six for \$100.

This special evening, sponsored by Applebee's, Arthur Groom & Co., BD, Hudson City Savings Bank, Irwin Franchise Capital, Mutual of America, Nextwave Web, TD Banknorth, Toys 'R' Us, Inc., United Water, and Wyeth will also feature a cocktail hour and sumptuous buffet dinner.

Additionally, basketball fanatics can count down to the Final Four by taking part in basketball pools, with the chance to win all kinds of prizes.

Tickets for the 2007 gala start at \$150. More sponsors are needed for this event, which will directly benefit the vulnerable children and families the agency serves. For more information, call Lyn Rumage at 201-261-2800.

You can give a lasting gift to Children's Aid and Family Services. You can ensure that the mission of Children's Aid and Family Services continues for years to come by making a planned gift through a bequest or trust. If you would like more information on this special form of giving, call 201.261.2800.



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