



you have not lived  
today until you  
have done  
something for  
someone who can  
never repay you

~John Bunyan



please help us prevent  
the abuse and neglect  
of infants, children  
and teens

Photography by Bailey Carter, 17 years old

# Thank you for Opening Windows of Hope

*Children's Service Society of Utah empowers families and caregivers through services that support the safety and well-being of children.*



**Children's Service Society**

Safe Children · Caring Families  
Strong Communities · Since 1884

## A message from our Executive Director, Encarni Gallardo

Giving comes from the heart. Giving is also learned at a very young age, when our brains are growing and our souls are innocent. It is then when we really understand what giving means not only to us, but to those who receive.

When I was a little girl, maybe nine or ten, I never thought I was poor. My mother, a single mom of four, struggled every day to feed us and make sure we had enough for our basic needs. As I remember, she worked three jobs. From dawn to dusk, my mother worked every day of her adult life and part of her childhood. Our dinner consisted of toasted bread with butter and a glass of milk almost every day, but to me that was a great dinner. I thought we were rich.

I was raised in Spain, in a small 500 square feet apartment at the bottom of the building. My mother, like any good Spaniard woman, puts a lot of care and pride in her windows. They are always full of blooming and colorful geraniums, and she keeps the windows open to enjoy her flowers, her neighbors passing by, and anything or anyone that comes around. I used to sit by the window and, since I was a quiet child, I enjoyed watching as well. Almost every day my mother was home, and mostly at lunch time, we would receive the visit of a homeless man or woman. They knew my mother by her name.

They knocked on the windowsill, and they would call, "Señora Isabel! Señora Isabel!" My mother would come to the window and greet them with a smile and a warm "How are you today? How is life today for you?" They would tell her details and stories that I was too young to understand, but then my mom would go to the kitchen and bring back a cup of soup, a piece of fruit or a slice of bread. No one ever left her window without something to eat. Then she would turn to me and say "If you can feed five, you can always feed six!" My mother made me feel like I had it all and I was fortunate. Many of those individuals came to her window looking for help, love and care, and she always gave. She gave without having.

We have many opportunities to give. There are many out there looking for a window of hope, where someone will answer with love and care. It is because you give that we can provide. It is because of your generosity that many knock on our windowsill and we give. Children's Service Society thanks you for your constant support and for being part of our family. We wish you the best this year and always.



## Your Contribution to Children's Service Society Will Make a Difference in a Child's Life

- |  |    |   |
|--|----|---|
| \$50 buys a night at a movie for two   | OR | An in-home visit to promote a safe and healthy beginning for an infant in a high-risk and low income family by a certified parent educator (includes diapers and a board book to encourage reading to a child).   |
| \$100 buys entry to Lagoon for two     | OR | Assistance for a relative caregiver with the guardianship process for a child (includes crisis intervention, support with paperwork, court hearings, and referrals for community resources).  |
| \$150 buys a pair of running shoes     | OR | Enrollment in a children's group for children in kinship care who have suffered trauma to learn appropriate social skills, substance abuse prevention, and healthy coping skills by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and children's worker (includes curriculum supplies). |
| \$200 buys you a year of weekly lattes | OR | Three sessions of clinical counseling provided by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for children who have suffered maltreatment to help them understand there was nothing they did to justify or cause their abuse.   |

*"I know (my birth mother) must have had a lot of love for me to want to give (me) what she felt was a better chance." Faith Hill*

## A Birthmother's Story

I found out I was pregnant a whole three weeks in, unfortunately with a man whom I was just barely getting to know. We had a rocky start given the situation, but we were able to work things out to co-parent, and both be there equally for the baby. At 22 weeks pregnant, I was told my baby had an A/V canal defect. At 26 weeks, it was confirmed. She also more than likely had Down Syndrome. To top it all off, at 27 weeks I was told termination was still one of my options, if that was what I felt was the right thing to do. I will never say a woman doesn't have the right to decide what is best for her situation, but hearing them offer that to me made me feel like my baby didn't matter.

All of a sudden, we weren't just bringing home a cute bundle of joy, we were going to be bringing home a cute bundle of joy who we knew would need so much more than we could ever provide. So at 30 weeks, we made an adoption plan to ensure that our baby would have the best chance at being as high functioning as possible. Some may think placing a baby with special needs is easier than placing a typical child. I beg to differ.

Placing your baby in the arms of someone else to love and cherish is the hardest thing anyone will ever do, but when you make the decision to place your baby with special needs, you are putting even more faith into their family that they will advocate and fight for that child in every way you would want. You are trusting they will make sure to be a part of early intervention and do everything they can to make sure the child gets all the therapies they may need, many not covered by insurance.

At 39 weeks and six days, I finally got to hold my baby. Even with all the extra challenges I knew we would face, giving into our love for her and having what they call a "change of heart" and deciding to parent her would have been the easy thing to do. The day after I came home from the hospital, I already missed her more than anything in this world. In moments where I try to tell myself I should have raised my baby, I stop myself and remember how good it was to see her family holding her themselves for the first time. They already loved her just as much as I did.

I may be sad, I may wish she could have come at a different time in my life where embracing her special needs would have been something I could do. But at the end of it all, I am proud I made the decision to give her the best life possible, even if it means watching her grow in the arms of someone else.

Note: A/V canal defect is an atrioventricular canal defect that is present at birth and occurs when there is a hole between the heart's chambers and problems with the valves that regulate blood flow in the heart.



*"There are two different kinds of strength. There's the strength to make a parenting plan and then there's the strength to give that plan to another."* Unknown

## Respecting Birthfather Rights

With tears in his eyes, a recent birthfather who was working with our agency on an adoption plan for his unborn child stated, "I feel like you actually respect me and that makes me feel like you care about my child as much as I do."

Notifying a father of an adoption plan being made for his child is not a legal requirement in Utah. At CSS we are different from other adoption agencies in Utah because we strive to notify all potential fathers before a woman makes a plan of adoption for their baby. We do this so the child can have the father's medical and social information as well as the option of an open adoption.

Research shows that adoptees have an easier time forming their identity when they have this invaluable information (Donaldson Adoption Institute). Notifying the father also ensures a more legally secure adoption for the adoptive parents. At CSS, we proudly continue to be the leading ethical adoption provider in the state of Utah.

This year we provided adoption education to the community by presenting at the United for Adoption conference as well as the Adoption Exchange annual conference. We continue to offer a support group for birthmothers and we are planning to offer adoptive parent support groups.



## The All Things Kids Expo

Our first annual All Things Expo on November 5, 2016 was a heart-warming success. Over 2000 individuals attended and enjoyed entertainment, activities, community resources, giveaways, costumed characters and shopping for gifts.

This free event was made possible with the help of our staff, sponsors, volunteers, vendors, entertainers and community partners, making it a fun event for families.



## Grandfamilies and Volunteerism

For many years Questar Corporation and UPS have been sole sponsors of our Grandfamilies Salt Lake Summer Barbeque and yearly Halloween parties respectively. Kinship care families look forward to these fun social events with great anticipation.

Community volunteers assist our staff in activities that help to further our mission and promote positive relationships in families. In the past year, volunteers in Salt Lake, Davis, and Weber Counties donated 2,985 hours of service.



## Utah Parents in Action: Home Visitation Program

Parent educators are not only trained in early childhood education to help families with parenting skills and to provide health and safety for children ages prenatal to five, they also are familiar with community resources that help teen parents stay in high school, find employment, and go on to earn a secondary education.

Kiara started receiving visits from her parent educator when she had just turned 17 and her baby was 2 months old. She is now a high school graduate with an 8-month old child, living in a small trailer with 5 other family members. Her baby's father is absent from her life, and she has limited medical and financial assistance due to her immigration status. But Kiara has ambitions for a better life for herself and her child. She confided to her parent educator that she had a strong desire to go to college, but she didn't know how that could possibly happen given her current circumstances.

Her parent educator talked to her about options and benefits that are available by enrolling in PATHWAYS – BYU-Idaho. Together they reviewed the cost and flexibility of paying for her education. The benefits were that she could stay at home with her baby while earning her education. Her parent educator helped her with goals so that within a year she can earn 15 college credits as an ESL student teen parent with an opportunity to pay in installments.

Now she needed a job to pay for the installments. She and her parent educator talked about employment opportunities becoming available with the approaching holiday season. She needed a job close to her home since she had to rely on taking the bus. To prepare her for an interview, Kiara relied on her parent educator to review questions with her that would prepare her to be confident in an interview. Positive attributes included being young, bilingual, healthy and willing to learn, plus an outgoing personality and excellent people skills. Kiara was elated when she told her parent educator the interview went very well and she was hired.

Now Kiara studies, does her homework, and takes care of her baby during the day. When her mother comes home from work, Kiara goes to work while mom provides child care. Kiara is doing well with school and work, and her baby is healthy and developing right on schedule.

***Family isn't always blood. It's the people in your life who want you in theirs; the ones who accept you for who you are. The ones who would do anything to see you smile, and who love you no matter what.*** Unknown

## Kinship Family Story

Ava, age 6, and Mia, age 4, lived in a home of violence and fear where they had suffered horrific abuse. Their father was arrested and incarcerated for domestic violence, and their mother felt she was unable to care for the young girls.

Mason and Emma, the uncle and aunt of Ava and Mia, had always hoped to have children of their own, and willingly stepped in to embrace the children and care for them. When Mason and Emma saw a flyer for Grandfamilies posted in a courthouse, they contacted Grandfamilies.

Our Grandfamilies parent advocates met with them to assist with the guardianship process and walk them through all of the necessary steps to help provide Ava and Mia with a safe and secure home. By the time their court date arrived, they had received consent from both the mother and father of the girls and guardianship was granted.

During the guardianship process, the newly formed kinship family started attending Grandfamilies 10-week support groups. Mason and Emma said they felt overwhelming gratitude for the help they were receiving. Both girls showed signs of severe trauma, and Grandfamilies clinicians worked with the children to help them express and manage their emotions and learn healthy coping skills.

Mason and Emma used Grandfamilies deep breathing exercise with the girls which involved blowing bubbles to help the children become calm when they had fits of anger. They also used the Grandfamilies emotions chart to help the girls recognize which emotions they were feeling and to talk openly about them.

By the end of the 10-week groups, the children showed marked improvement in their behaviors and moods. The consistency and love these children received from their aunt and uncle provided the stability they needed to begin healing.

Six months after completing the groups, the family went to adoption court. They invited Grandfamilies staff to attend the hearing. The children were ecstatic to call their aunt and uncle "Mom and Dad." Mason and Emma were overwhelmed with joy and the children were smiling from ear-to-ear when the judge told them they were adopted. Mason and Emma told Grandfamilies staff they are thrilled to be a family with two children they love deeply. The love that Ava and Mia feel for their adopted parents is evident to all who see them.

***"(24/7) once you sign on to be a mother, that's the only shift they offer."*** Jodi Picoult, *My Sister's Keeper*

## Progress in National quest to help those raising the child of a relative

As Utah faces off against a growing opioid epidemic, a chronic homelessness crisis, and a range of other issues threatening families, protecting the welfare of children in the state's child care network has never been more important. As part of these efforts, Senator Orrin Hatch hosted an event along with Encarni Gallardo, executive director of Children's Service Society on October 17, 2016. Several kinship families who participate in Grandfamilies Kinship Care at Children's Service Society were invited to attend Senator Hatch's discussion on the long-term efforts to respond to the needs of Utah families. These efforts most recently include fighting for the Family First Act, legislation to keep children safely in their homes and reduce over-reliance on group foster care homes, as well as long-term efforts to champion kinship placements as the best outcome for children.



***“Strength does not come from physical capacity, it comes from the indomitable will.” Mahatma Ghandi***

## **Her Name is Leila**

### **Refugee Child Care Program**

By Tina Kofford, Refugee Specialist, Care About Childcare at Children’s Service Society

In December 2015, Care About Childcare received a referral to assist a refugee woman from Iran with the child care licensing process.

When Leila first walked into my office she brought a smile to my face. She seemed to be such a happy person, full of energy with a grin from ear-to-ear. After getting to know her, I explained the Refugee Child Care program, detailing what the process was and how long it could take to complete. She said “I want to get it done as fast as I can because I am so excited to start my own business.” During her visit, she told me she would schedule all of her appointments herself if I could just tell her step-by-step what she had to do. I was so impressed that she wanted to do this herself with limited guidance from me. I thought to myself, “She is going to be a wonderful provider.”



Over the next few weeks, Leila completed everything she needed, and came to my office to submit her application and all the required documents to Child Care Licensing. I called her several times over the next few weeks to see if she had her inspection scheduled, but I never heard back from her.

Several months later, Leila did call me, saying she had been very sick, and had not been able to deal with the application and inspection process. Leila was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and doctors were having difficulties finding the right medication for her. I asked if I could help her with anything. She said she was feeling a little better now and wanted to continue the licensing process. I told her we could wait a little longer, but she responded, “No, I have waited long enough.”

Leila needed to complete a Health and Safety Plan that Licensing was now requesting as part of the approval process. She completed it and returned it to me within a matter of days. Again, I was impressed with how quickly she was working her way through the process, especially while not feeling well. Leila had her inspection and was approved for her Residential Certificate which means she can provide for the care, health, and safety of children in her home. This is important to refugees who need to enter the workforce with the confidence that their children are being cared for by an individual possessing the appropriate cultural competency.

Even with an illness that has diminished Leila’s physical capacity, she shows strength, resilience and determination for helping children and families her community. She has an indomitable will.

Note: Care About Childcare at Children’s Service Society is funded by the Utah Department of Workforce Services/Utah Office of Childcare and not by fundraising or individual donations).

## **Upcoming events to support Children’s Service Society**

### **Swinging on a Star, Shining a Light on Children’s Service Society, February 10th, 2017**

Salt Lake Marriott, City Center. More information and tickets at <https://swinging-on-a-star.eventbrite.com>

### **The 3rd Annual Keep Children Safe Fun Run/Walk, April 8th, 2017**

Draper Park and the Porter Rockwell Trail, 5K and 10K, 1K for children 4 and under

### **The All Things Kids Expo, Fall of 2017**

The Show Barn at Thanksgiving Point

**Keep up on all Children’s Service Society happenings at [www.cssutah.org](http://www.cssutah.org)**

## **Other ways to give to CSS now, and throughout the year**

**AmazonSmile** - A percentage of your purchase price will be donated to Children’s Service Society. Click on the AmazonSmile banner on the CSS website ([cssutah.org](http://cssutah.org)) and follow the instructions.

**Smith’s** - Year-round donations from a percentage of your Smith’s purchases will be sent to CSS. Sign up once by applying for a Smith’s rewards card at your local store. Then go to <http://smithscommunityrewards.com> to register and sign up for a Rewards Account. When editing Community Rewards, the NPO number for CSS is 15510

**Visit our website [www.cssutah.org](http://www.cssutah.org) for a description of services. Our fiscal year 2015-2016 Annual Report includes a complete list of contributors as well as statistics for July 2015 through June of 2016. Find us on Facebook too.**