

# How Fostering Redefined Family

*Erin Kim talks about how adopting two children and fostering eight has transformed her nuclear family into a beautifully woven tapestry.*

By Roylyn Burton, Community Program Specialist  
Resource Family Approval Program

**L**ike many families, Tony and Erin Kim lead a very busy and active life. In between shuttling the kids to school, sports and other activities, work and assisting Tony in establishing a new business, Erin makes time to train and mentor new resource families as well as support biological parents. Tony and Erin’s passion to help families in crisis and the many educational and advocacy contributions over the years were acknowledged during an Orange County Board of Supervisor’s meeting in November. The Board proclaimed November 2017 as Adoption Awareness Month in Orange County and presented a resolution to both Tony and Erin and the Social Services Agency.

Tony and Erin’s partnership with Children and Family Services began after the birth of their second child. Their desire to adopt was amplified after speaking with a friend who worked with a private agency dedicated to recruiting and supporting resource families. After researching foster care and learning about the great need for resource parents in Orange County, Tony and Erin embarked on a journey of a lifetime building their family through the foster care system. That was almost ten years ago. Two adopted and eight foster children later, Tony and Erin’s commitment to support families of all types is stronger than ever.

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**TL:** In the beginning, your desire was to only adopt. But now you have fostered eight children and currently caring for a little one. Where did your zeal for fostering come from?

**Erin Kim (EK):** We fostered four little ones, two sets of twins, and experienced the reunification process. Building great relationships with the biological parents is where our love and passion grew for these families. We really saw the greater picture of foster care which includes embracing their family and supporting those family connections. We decided we didn't need to adopt again and wanted to just foster and be part of the reunification process.

**TL:** How has your foster care journey affected your biological son and daughter?

**EK:** Our son was 7 weeks old and so tiny when he was placed with us. The kids immediately fell in love with him which made the transition into the family very easy. I think the hardest part was not knowing how long he would stay which was especially hard considering our daughter and son were 6 and 4. Immediately loving and embracing him and knowing it would be a long journey was difficult. His adoption wasn't finalized for two years and there was a period where we really didn't know if he would be staying with us. But we decided we were going to love him as our own and as our brother despite not knowing the outcome.

**TL:** What led you and Tony to your second adoption?

**EK:** We always thought if we adopted again we would adopt a girl since we had two boys. We updated our application and felt we needed to up the age as we know older children are vulnerable in the system. My heart is for the older kiddos as they have been through so much. We welcomed our 8-year-old daughter to our family. Our girl experienced multiple placements, but we were determined to let her know we were committed to her. This June we will celebrate five years with her. We have all grown so much and she has grown right along with us. We absolutely adore her.

**TL:** What have been some of the challenges you and Tony faced as you welcomed each child into the family?

**EK:** Tony and I had to learn how to parent very differently while being on the same page. Our commitment to family is what kept us tighter through the challenging times. Family sticks together...through the good and the bad, through the hard times. That's the biggest message we tell our kids, 'I know this is really hard for you at times and it is hard for us, too... but we will get through it because we are a family.' You really have to find a new normal with every child that comes into your home. You have to create a new family dynamic. It's not fair to expect a child to come in and mold into the existing family.

**TL:** How important is it to have a support system within your family, friends and faith community?

**EK:** Our faith, our family and friends have gotten us through when things got hard. My family has been super supportive and loved each of our kids as if they were their own. My other foster-adoptive friends were my lifeline. My best friend is also an adoptive mom and understands as she lived something very similar. She would let me vent and cry and let me do whatever I needed to do. We have three other foster families in our neighborhood that have been lifelines, too.

**TL:** What is the one thing that keeps you going during the challenging times?

**EK:** We have learned to laugh. That sounds so simple, but when you face so many challenges, you need to learn how to laugh and not take life or things too seriously. When you are dealing with so much brokenness on a daily basis, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. We need to learn how to laugh for our own well-being.

**TL:** In light of your years of experience, how do you see fostering now?

**EK:** Our family represents multiple families and I feel that has been the most beautiful thing about being a resource family...our kids' biological families are a part of us. The kids that we have fostered are a part of us. We are one big, messy, complex family unit and we wouldn't want it any other way. Foster care has become an extension of our family. Foster care has redefined what family truly is.



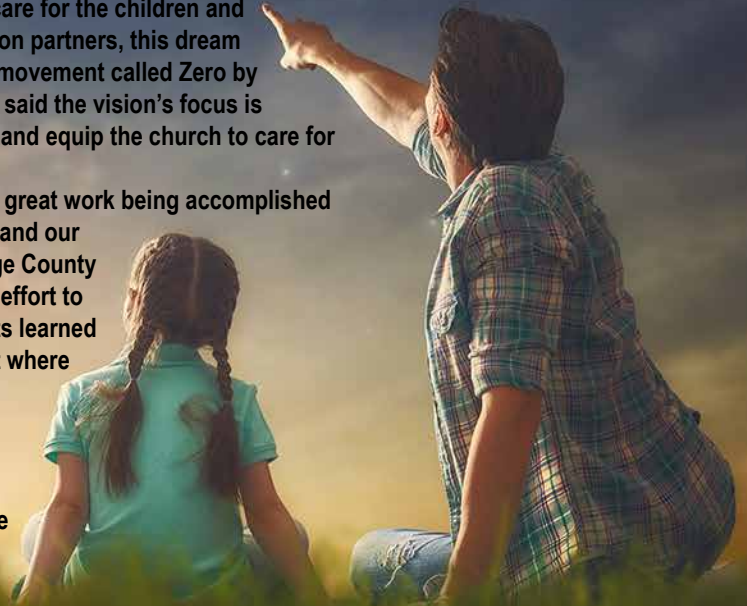
# OC Faith Community United to Achieve the Impossible Zero by 2020

By Helen Lindsey, Senior Social Worker  
Resource Family Approval Program

**W**hat is the impossible dream for children in out-of-home care? Is it that one day Orange County will have enough approved resource families to care for the children and youth currently waiting for a home? For our Faith in Motion partners, this dream can be made into a reality. It is, in fact, their motivation for a new movement called Zero by 2020. Max McGhee, Orphan Care Pastor with Saddleback Church, said the vision's focus is "to find a family [home] for every child in Orange County by 2020 and equip the church to care for them."

The Zero by 2020 vision is another tremendous example of the great work being accomplished through the collaborative efforts of Children and Family Services and our Faith in Motion partners. Throughout November, numerous Orange County churches hosted informational seminars for the community in an effort to provide relevant foster care and adoption information. Participants learned about the needs of our children in a safe, supportive environment where they were free to ask questions and speak with others about the different care options for their family.

Join the movement to ensure no child in out-of-home care is forced to live without the love and support of a family. Visit [www.zero2020vision.com](http://www.zero2020vision.com) to learn how you can help achieve the impossible. What will your commitment be?



## THANK YOU

A special thank you is extended to our amazing partners who made the first annual Holiday Extravaganza possible!

**Foster Care Auxiliary of Orange County  
Graceworks  
Olive Crest Kinship Support Services Program  
St. John's Lutheran Church of Orange  
Sole to Soul Ministries  
Young Life**

In addition, our gratitude goes out to all who donated raffle prizes. You made the day extra special.

Thank you to all the families who took the time out of their busy schedules to attend this special event. We recognize the work you do year-round and hope you and the children enjoyed the day.

We wish everyone good health and happiness in 2018.



## Full House

A couple welcomes teen boys into their lives

By Elizabeth Torres, Relative Caregiver Advocate  
Olive Crest Kinship Support Services Program

**M**eet Noah; a 15-year-old boy who loves to play sports, attends youth group and has a knack for repairing broken objects. Although Noah is just like other teen boys, his story is not. Unlike most youth his age, Noah has been in foster care. In fact, according to his social worker, Noah has been in care for 10 years. He endured 13 placements as well as several failed adoptive placements.

Meet Chris; a 13-year-old boy who loves video games, movies and spending time with his family. Like Noah, Chris also has been in foster care. He grew up in a household with domestic violence and his father left the family when Chris was 4 years old. His mother struggled with alcoholism which resulted in Chris coming into care and staying for seven years.

Meet Jose and Elvia Nieto. Both are passionate about teens, especially foster teens, and are resource parents who were willing to look beyond the boys' case histories and see them for who they really are. The Nietos were contacted by the boys' social workers as both boys are distantly related to them. Despite the challenges, Jose and Elvia joyfully welcomed Noah and Chris into their home. They also welcomed three other foster, teen boys for a total of five boys between the ages of 13 and 16. The other boys also brought traumatic histories of their own, including witnessing the murder of a father, abandonment by a mother, time spent living on the streets, and a variety of diagnoses. At first, the boys' social workers were hesitant to place all five boys in one home, but Jose and Elvia relieved any fears.

The Nietos have been involved with Olive Crest's Kinship Support Services Program (KSSP) for four years and are very appreciative of the support given by the staff during the difficult transition. Jose and Elvia worked closely with the case manager and got involved with support groups, youth groups and family events. Elvia said they continue to face challenges, but she understands they must write over the boys' traumatic histories with a story of love. Even though there are some exhausting days, her faith keeps her going.

This past summer, the Nietos adopted Chris and Noah. They also hope to adopt the three other boys soon. On the day of his adoption, Noah's social worker said she never thought she would see that day. This family is an inspiration to all who know them and many have witnessed the positive changes in the boys since being with Jose and Elvia. This family's transformation is a testament to what a loving family can do for children in foster care; no matter their age.

# Foster Care Auxiliary Orange County

**T**he Foster Care Auxiliary always strives to provide needed services, opportunities, events, and products to our resource families. Presently, we offer the following from our resource and distribution center:

- Lending library of foster and childcare related materials
- Baby Gear Lending program
- Computers for students in foster care
- Family fun events
- Educational scholarships
- Birthday corner
- Luggage program
- Academic mentor tutoring (available for qualified youth)
- Monthly distribution days
- Free tickets (plays, sporting events, ballets, concerts, comedy clubs, etc.)
- Thrift store (deeply discounted used donations)
- Resource family network (support)

Please contact us for information on how to become a member of the Foster Care Auxiliary! A one year trial membership to the Auxiliary (a \$75 value) is offered to new resource families living in Orange County. Contact Joanna Hussey, Resource Family Liaison, at (714) 704-8255 or e-mail her at [Joanna.Hussey@ssa.ocgov.com](mailto:Joanna.Hussey@ssa.ocgov.com).

[FosterCareAux@yahoo.com](mailto:FosterCareAux@yahoo.com)  
(714) 778-3383  
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## Services Expanded

Homeless youth and those at-risk for homelessness to receive additional support

Orangewood Foundation's onsite Orangewood Resource Center (ORC) is expanding! The Foundation was the only agency in Orange County to receive a five-year Homeless Youth Emergency Services Pilot Program grant from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES). The grant will enable the Foundation to expand its outreach and services to transitional age youth (18 to 24) who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. The expansion includes:

- The addition of two outreach coordinators
- Formal outreach to youth, starting with the Courtyard (at the former Santa Ana Transit Terminal) and the Santa Ana Civic Center, to provide items such as snacks, water, hygiene, socks, condoms, information, and referrals
- A new, four-door pickup truck to transport these youth to our ORC to receive more comprehensive services
- Expanded hours in the ORC of 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, increasing to 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. after the first of the year, with potential weekend hours in the future
- Breakfast served Monday through Friday in the ORC, in addition to lunch

- Financial support for emergency housing
- The Hurtt Family Health Clinic motorhome on-site at Orangewood Foundation twice each month on the first and third Wednesdays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Full clothing closet
- On-site shower
- Therapist on site on Fridays
- Expanded space for classes, computer access and other needs

Additionally, ORC staff will engage youth in the full range of programs in the Foundation's four core areas of health and wellness, housing, life skills and employment, and education. This will allow youth to take advantage of Orangewood's weekly ILP workshops, mentors, financial support, weekly bags of groceries, monthly bags of toiletries, and transitional housing program. Orangewood Foundation will also increase its outreach to other trusted partners to serve these youth.

"We are excited for this opportunity to expand our services to youth in the community and support them on their journey to independent adulthood," says Lawren Ramos, Orangewood's Director of Youth Transition Services.

For questions or more information, please contact Lawren Ramos at [lramos@orangewoodfoundation.org](mailto:lramos@orangewoodfoundation.org) or (714) 619-0222.

The Orangewood Foundation is a private, non-profit agency located in Santa Ana and provides support services for current and former foster youth in Orange County. Orangewood Foundation offers programs designed to help youth become independent and successful adults. To learn more about Orangewood Foundation's programs, visit [www.orangewood4you.org](http://www.orangewood4you.org).

Orangewood Foundation  
1575 E. 17th Street  
Santa Ana, CA 92705  
Main Line: (714) 619-0200  
[www.orangewood4you.org](http://www.orangewood4you.org)



WE'RE ON SOCIAL MEDIA



## Share Your Foster Care Story of Our Time Together With Others!





# DIRECTORY

**FOSTER CARE INFORMATION LINE**  
(888) 871-KIDS (5437)

**CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES RECEPTION**  
(714) 704-8000  
(714) 935-7171 (emergencies & after hours)

## ADMINISTRATION

Mike Ryan  
Social Services Director

Anne Bloxom  
Children & Family Services Director

Scott Burdick  
CFS Deputy Director

Denise Churchill  
CFS Deputy Director

Ken Santini  
CFS Deputy Director

Christine Smith Snapper  
CFS Deputy Director

## RFA & SERVICES PROGRAM

Norean Lubchenko, Administrative Manager II

Victor Chavez, Administrative Manager I

Susan Collins-Rogers, Administrative Manager I

Sylvia Cordova, Administrative Manager I

Marlene Telegadas, Administrative Manager I

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Roylyn Burton, Community Program Specialist  
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\*Elizabeth Hutchinson Cervantes, Recruiter/Trainer  
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Geeta Karir, Recruiter/Trainer  
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\*Lorena Rodriguez, Information Processing Technician  
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Andres Torres, Information Processing Technician  
(714) 704-8921

Diemmy Tran, Recruiter/Trainer  
(714) 380-8361

\*Angelica Zikoor, Recruiter/Trainer  
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## RESOURCE FAMILY LIAISON

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## LICENSING

Brent Payne, Supervisor  
(714) 704-8887

Stephanie Aspgren, Analyst  
(714) 746-6038

\*Paul Sanchez, Analyst  
(714) 697-2895

## FOSTER CARE ELIGIBILITY

Manuel Roa (714) 704-8441

## BIRTHDAY GIFTS FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

(714) 679-2438  
Call for an appointment

## TRANSITIONAL PLANNING SERVICES

Jaime Muñoz, Administrative Manager II

\*Lourdes Chavez, Supervisor (714) 704-8058

Robert Kelekian, Supervisor (714) 940-5704

Leslie Gould, Supervisor (714) 940-3936

Guadalupe Juarez-Castillo, Supervisor (714) 940-5609

## TREATMENT FOSTER CARE OREGON OC

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(714) 704-8238

Terry Maher, Program Supervisor  
(714) 704-4122

Michelle Medina, Recruiter/Trainer  
(714) 746-1774

## SPECIAL MEDICAL PROGRAM

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Mary Ewart, Medical Intake Coordinator  
(714) 704-8531

Cindy Hutchison, Medical Intake Coordinator  
(714) 704-8531

## TIME OUT FOR PARENTS (TOPS)

Pat Reese, Program Coordinator  
New Alternatives, Inc. (714) 245-0045

## WORKING CAREGIVER CHILDCARE

\*Karen Pinkerton (714) 704-6145

## FOSTER & KINSHIP CARE EDUCATION

Saddleback College  
Martine Wehr, Program Director  
(949) 582-4217

Gail Janisch, Program Assistant  
(949) 582-4884

## RESOURCE FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS

Open Arms Adoption Resource Group  
Meets at Keller Williams Realty in Tustin  
Darren & Guiselle Scott (714) 599-4473

Spanish-Speaking Resource Parent Support  
Meets at OCSSA Eckhoff Office in Orange  
\*Joanna Hussey (714) 704-8255

## THE LINK

**the link** is published quarterly by Orange County Social Services Agency, Children and Family Services. We invite your news items. Any correspondence becomes the property of Children and Family Services and may be used in any media. We reserve the right to edit. Editor:  
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## ORGANIZATIONS

California Children's Services (CCS)  
(714) 347-0300

CalOPTIMA  
Cydney Weber, Liaison  
(714) 796-6132  
Member Services (714) 246-8500  
Claims Department (714) 246-8885

Child Health & Disability Program (CHDP)  
(800) 564-8448

Denti-Cal (800) 322-6384

Foster Care Auxiliary of Orange County  
Kathy Harvey  
(714) 778-3383  
www.fostercareaux.com

Kinship Center  
(714) 957-1004

Olive Crest Kinship Support Program  
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Orange County Mental Health  
(714) 834-5015

Orangewood Foundation  
Linda Levshin, Director Youth Transition Services  
(714) 619-0239

Vision Services Plan  
(800) 877-7195

\*Spanish Speaking  
\*\*Vietnamese Speaking

## CONGRATULATIONS

Rick Bazant, Community Program Specialist with the Resource Family Approval Program, Recruitment and Training Unit, retired in November after 30 years of dedicated service. Thank you, Rick, for the many ways you served our children and families throughout the years.

*We will keep you updated as we welcome new team members.*