



Celebrating Foster Care Month May 2009

Dear Friends of the Village,

My name is Jackie and I am the Program Director at The Children's Village of Sonoma County. Like many children who have lived in chaos, I experienced physical and emotional abuse from my caregivers. Unlike many kids who live on the edge of society, I was not poor, but lived in a beautiful, tree-lined suburb of San Francisco.

From the outside we looked like a "normal" family, however inside our home was anything but normal. My adoptive mother (my Dad's wife) raised me from the age of five to thirteen years. Even at the age of five, I knew this was not quite right but I didn't know what to do. My adoptive mother was the only parent I had and I didn't know why I couldn't be with my biological mother and father. I yearned for my Mom and Dad and a happy family.

The physical scars have healed but the emotional impact has left lifelong scars.

My story, unfortunately, is not unique --- thousands of children experience the horror of child abuse.

Here is my story...

My biological mother, who married my father at age 16, abandoned the family very early on and my father remarried instantly. His new wife insisted on adopting all of us, hence my biological mother lost all rights. At age five my Dad lost his rights to all his children, we kids lived in our home with my adoptive mother. My older sister and brother and I were emotionally and physically abused for years by our adoptive mother. We were terrified, anxious and confused by this treatment, and we did the best we could to survive. When I was ten, my sister was placed in foster care and soon after my brother was shipped off to military school. I was all alone and could not communicate with either of my siblings. The abuse at the hands of my adoptive mother continued.



Jackie 1967

At the age of thirteen my adoptive mother finally gave me up and I went into the foster care system. My sister had been placed in foster care years before me and I had no idea where she was and I dearly missed her after she was torn from my life.

I was sent to live at a group home where I experienced indifference and loneliness. I began to act out, choosing to be involved in risky behaviors. Despite my acting out the group home was a relief from the abusive rollercoaster I had experienced. That is why The Children's Village of Sonoma County is so important to me. The program offers siblings the chance to be together in one placement home. I think if I had had the consistency of being with my siblings during my impressionable years of childhood my life would have had less pain.

Fortunately during my high school years my Dad was able to regain custody of me and my siblings. We were so excited to see each other after all the separations and years between us. As we reunited the adjustments to be a family again was also difficult but became manageable as time progressed. However, it

was at this time, my world began to change for the better – I bonded with my new stepmother and began visiting my biological mother. I also discovered track and field in school and found this to be an excellent outlet. I excelled at this sport and received two NCAA All American Honor Awards.

After college I had a career as a corporate marketing executive. Presently I oversee the programming needs for the children at the Village. The Children’s Village, provides **safe, secure** and **supportive** programs in a **stable and nurturing home-like setting**.

Seeing the **kids thrive** gives me strength. If I can contribute to the healing of just one of these kids, then all my suffering has had a purpose.

You don’t have to have childhood like mine to want to help a child in need. You can support The Village and all the kids by sending in your tax-deductible donation today.

I appreciate how you have made a difference in the past. Your gifts have helped us build homes, provide recreational outings, provide clothes, access enriching and cultural activities, construct playgrounds and vegetable gardens, purchase computers and educational software, and purchase birthday and holiday gifts.

Please continue to invest in these deserving children. There is much at stake – the life of a child.

Sincerely,

Jackie Hardman
Program Director

For more information:
National Abuse Prevention Month (April)
www.childwelfare.gov

National Foster Care Month (May)
www.fostercaremonth.org

YES! I want to support the children at The Children’s Village of Sonoma County.

Name _____ Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

My check is enclosed or My credit card information is below

Visa or Mastercard # _____ Expiration _____ 3-v Code (on the back) _____

SIGNATURE (Required) _____ THANK YOU !

Fostering a Sense of Belonging
The Children’s Village of Sonoma County

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