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CHILD WELFARE DIVISION

1962



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"..... And looking so, across the centuries and the millenia, toward the animal man of the past, one sees a faint light, like a patch of sunlight moving over the dark shadows on a forest floor. It shifts and widens, it winks out, it comes again, but it persists. It is the human spirit, the human soul, however transient, however faulty men may claim it to be. In its coming man had no part It has followed us all the way from the age of ice, from the dark borders of the ancient forest into which our footprints vanish. It is in this that Kierkegaard glimpsed the eternal, the way of the heart, the way of love which is not of today, but is of the whole journey and may lead us at last to the end. Through this, he thought, the future may be conquered. Certainly it is true. For man may grow until he towers to the skies, but without this light he is nothing, and his place is nothing. Even as we try to deny the light, we know that it has made us, and what we are without it remains meaningless.

"..... If all knowledge is of the outside, if none is turned inward, if self-awareness fades into the blind acquiescence of the mass man, then the personal responsibility by which democracy lives will fade also."

-Loren Eiseley, The Firmament
of Time



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"PEOPLE" HELP

Child welfare services are part of the whole welfare program and, as such operate within rules, regulations, and limitations imposed on any tax supported agency. However, these services do hold a unique place in the welfare field in that the program is a strictly service program. It requires money, of course, and plenty of it, but that is secondary to the main objective.

None of the things that money can buy will foster in a child his sense of personal worth, and his belief in the inherent goodness of the gift of life; nor can material things prevent the extinction of that light which is man's sole claim to humanity - only the understanding and the active compassion of other human beings can do it.

In the Menninger Clinic, a telling precept is "People help people". It is the part of child welfare services to get "people" help for lost and bewildered children. The ability to do this presupposes specialized training in child welfare, including child psychology, and a child's needs for normal development; also, experience in applying this knowledge to actual children, in varied circumstances, at all stages of their growing. Above all, it requires sensitivity to people as human beings - both children and adults - plus a basis for judging potential (or lack of potential) for giving in adults who would take some degree of responsibility in a child's life.

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The child may need foster parents, adoptive parents, homemaker service, casework services in his own home, protective service, or, if he has been so hurt he cannot tolerate a close relationship with adults, a small group care home; or he may need residential treatment care. In all cases the goal is the same, but the paths to it differ because the child and his needs differ.

"People" help cannot be given on a mass production basis. It takes time to think, the ability to see as a child sees - time to give before the moment for giving is lost. Especially is this true in the small things that to a child mean he is important to someone. It means never breaking a promise to a child even though keeping it turns out to be a sacrifice. It means realizing that what may seem unimportant to an adult, to a child could be a turning point - so small are the acts that can tip the scales - so instinctively does a child recognize and distrust mechanized techniques.

In child welfare there is no room for impersonal application of rules and regulations. The child is a Person, not a Social Unit, and the only eligibility requirement is that he needs "people" help.

With identifying data removed, this report tells the story of four children who needed and got "people" help, and the difference it made in their lives. There are many more such stories.

But first, a word about the Child Welfare Division and its Advisory Committee.

The program of child welfare services is county-administered, state-supervised, which means all applications or requests for service go to the county departments of public welfare, with the State supervising the child welfare programs in the 63 counties.

For the purposes of supervision and consultation, the State is divided into districts with a child welfare field supervisor assigned to each. In addition, the State Child Welfare Division provides certain other services. They are: Interstate placement of children under the juvenile compact, maintenance of a state-wide register of approved foster homes and of approved adoptive homes, in-service training program for child welfare workers. The State Child Welfare Division also has on its staff consultants on foster care, adoptions, group care, and group work (recreation).

The Child Welfare Advisory Committee concerns itself with problems encountered by the Division in strengthening and expanding child welfare services throughout the State.

Subcommittees of the Advisory Committee have been studying ways and means of interpreting need for: more foster and adoptive homes, more adequate protection for the "battered" child, broadened in-service training for operators of day care facilities, more trained child welfare staff in some counties, more psychiatric consultation to county child welfare

workers who are having to work with emotionally disturbed children for whom there is no treatment available.

The Advisory Committee also studies major amendments to federal legislation concerning child welfare; also state legislation, and budget requests for the Child Welfare Division.

This year the Committee recommended to the State Board that, because of the great increase in the number of children with problems, rise in all costs, the greater understanding of emotional disturbance in children, and the economic distress of many counties, more state funds be requested to enable Colorado to care adequately for its children who need it.

A few statistics will give a more graphic picture of the situation at the end of 1962 with its forecast for 1963:

Comparing June 1961 with June 1962 we find the following:

	<u>June 1961</u>	<u>June 1962</u>
Total Child Welfare Caseload	4,441	4,753
Protective Service Cases	1,900	2,080
Total days foster care	40,283	45,105
Average monthly cost per child	\$ 77.86	\$ 84.04
Total obligation	\$114,458.78	\$135,972.70
	(State and county funds.)	

The adoption program is facing an increasingly difficult task. It is estimated that in 1962 over 600 children were relinquished and placed with county departments of public welfare for purposes of adoption. Approximately one out of every four is in the hard-to-place category.

Of the children relinquished in 1961, 106 have not been placed, and only 30 of these have much chance of ever being adopted. 586 children were placed for adoption in 1962, as compared with 154 placed in 1954 and 187 given into the permanent custody of county departments of public welfare.

It is not only current relinquishments that concern us - each year adds to the number of children in our permanent legal care who have little chance of ever being adopted.

Also, of great concern is the growing number of emotionally disturbed children, and our inability to give all of these children the treatment and care they should have.

Now, we will go on to the story of our four children - Laurie, Bill, Tom and Johnny.



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LAURIE, BILL, TOM, and JOHNNY

The four children stood huddled together looking anxious and uncertain. Laurie, 14, Bill, 13, Tom, 11, and Johnny, 9, had been gathered up by the child welfare worker, Mr. West, after the Court had put them in the care, custody, and guardianship of the county welfare department. It was Laurie who had asked for help.

Investigation brought out that these children had for years been physically abused, and sexually manipulated by the father. Both parents drank heavily. Two other states wrote that this family had been reported to them, but before action could be taken, they moved away. Relatives of the children had been contacted but none would take responsibility.

In addition to their fears, anxieties, and warped ideas of life, these children had been exposed to raw and unnatural sex acts. They would need foster parents with a healthy and common sense view of sex, as they would surely have trouble with that aspect of life.

Mr. West immediately thought of the Stevens - a foster family that had just been approved by the county. These people had been farmers all their lives, and lived in a seven room farm house in the rural mountain area. Mr. and Mrs. Stevens had two children of their own - a son, Lee, in high school,

and a daughter, Margie, 11 years old. They agreed to take all four children on an emergency basis.

When the children were brought to the home, Mrs. Stevens talked to them easily, and then suggested Margie take them outside to see her pets. When they returned, Bill seemed uneasy and finally blurted out that he sometimes wet the bed. Mrs. Stevens replied matter-of-factly that they would take care of that.

In the days that followed, the children took to their new home and foster parents with evident satisfaction. The Stevens felt they could manage that many youngsters.

When the children first came Mr. Stevens, before starting his morning chores at 3:30 a.m., would get Bill up to go to the bathroom. When Bill did have an accident, which happened when he was emotionally upset, he and the foster mother quietly changed the bed and no one remarked on the incident. These children had physical as well as emotional problems. The foster parents stood by them in their fears and in their misbehaviors without wavering in their deep concern.

When Tom had an operation on his ear, the foster mother stayed at the hospital during the operation, and visited him every day he was there. When the doctor said Johnny couldn't go swimming, he told Mr. West it wouldn't be so bad; if he couldn't go,

the others wouldn't either, and added proudly, "That's the way it is in our family."

Money the children earned went into a common kitty to be spent for recreation. They all took great interest in seeing it grow and planning how they would spend it. Mr. West had observed with amusement how the two younger boys walked exactly like Mr. Stevens, and all three followed him around the farm helping with the work.

The children were allowed to correspond with their grandparents whom they remembered with affection. An older half-brother, who seemed sincerely fond of the children was allowed to visit them. However, after one of his visits, the children went around the house pulling down blinds and locking doors. They were afraid he would tell their parents where they were. Laurie said he told her if she didn't do what he wanted her to, he would tell Lee something bad about her.

The foster mother's respect for another's right to privacy forbade her questioning Laurie - Laurie would tell her about it when she felt she could. The children were assured that the law would not allow their parents to take them, or even to see them.

Later, Mrs. Stevens talked the situation over with the welfare department. Her report, together with additional information the department had, decided them to forbid the half-brother to see the children again.

When Laurie has to have glasses she was heart-broken because the frames she wanted cost too much. The foster mother felt for her. There was never a woman born who doesn't want becoming frames if she has to wear glasses, but to a teen-ager it is a major need. The foster mother talked to the welfare department. In turn, Mr. West talked to the Kiwanis Club, which paid for the frames Laurie yearned for. They were very becoming and Laurie and Mrs. Stevens rejoiced together.

As the children began to feel more and more the deep affection and steadfastness of their foster parents, they were able to talk freely to them. At first they were so dependent on each other they were hardly distinguishable as separate personalities. As time went on, they began to emerge as individuals with a normal, healthy interest in, and reaction to, daily living.

After three years, the foster mother was so exhausted from the physical and emotional care of so many children, she asked the welfare department to find another home for two of the boys. An adolescent problem had arisen, and in her tiredness she felt unable to cope with it. The load seemed very heavy to her.

The welfare department understood, but before another home was found, the foster mother called. So deep was her compassion for these children, she could not let them go. She told Mr. West about her

plans for handling the new problem, and said if she could have a few weeks rest, she knew she could continue to care for all the children. The two boys were sent to summer camp. By the time camping season was over, the foster mother was refreshed. Both she and the boys were glad they were home again, but she detected an unspoken anxiety on the part of the children.

Mrs. Stevens knew that direct reassurance, particularly when no anxiety had been verbally expressed, was not always convincing. She watched for an opportunity to reassure them without being obvious. Her chance came in a conversation with Mr. West when the children were present. They were talking about school, and she remarked laughingly, "I guess I'll be graduating kids for the next five years," and ticked off the grade each was in.

When Mrs. Stevens' son came home after three years in the Navy, he and Laurie became seriously interested in each other and announced their engagement.

Soon afterward, Laurie came to Mrs. Stevens and said there was something she had to tell her. Between convulsive sobs, she told her about her experience when she was ten or eleven. Her father solicited older men and allowed them to have intercourse with her, for which they paid him. This is what her half-brother had threatened to tell Lee.

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