

## 2008 NCFAPA AWARD WINNERS

How do these nominees *shine through exemplary dedication and commitment to children and families and/or how have they inspired and encouraged a child or children in their care to let their own light shine?*

### **Region 1 Adoptive Parents:**

**Alan and Betty Ward  
Henderson County**

**Nominated by: Marie Roberson, Henderson County Department of Social Services**

Beth and Alan Ward own Hendersonville School for Little Folks and Beth is the director of the day care. Beth and Alan have been foster parents for 27 years and adoptive parents for 24 years. They adopted two children. Billy, a child with special needs was adopted when he was four years old. Now 28, Billy is working at a local restaurant. Jonathan is nine and he had been with the Wards since he was four, and they adopted him last year. The Wards have been foster parents to untold number of children. The Wards have been the "last hope" for three children in particular. Two siblings lovingly called "The Twin Terrors" had been in two foster homes that ultimately disrupted. The children had mental health and behavioral issues and they knew how to test every limit. Beth and Alan helped to obtain consistent mental health services for the children and promised they would hang in there until an adoptive family for the children was found. Even though patience wore thin, they kept their word and helped the adoptive family to transition the children so that when they moved out of state with their adoptive family, the move was smooth and with little repercussion from the children.

The third child is a young boy, who is close to the age of Jonathan. The child has speech delays and cognitive disabilities that challenged his personal, social and behavioral skills. The Wards have seen the loving side of this child and with unending patience have championed his successes so that he is doing better in school and with behavioral changes.

The Wards go to bat for a child to help them reach their potential. While they don't seek recognition for their work, it is an honor to publicly acknowledge the Ward's efforts and commitments.

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### **Region 1 Foster Parents**

**Scott and Keithia Parton  
Jackson County**

**Nominated by: Christina Smith, Jackson County Department of Social Services**

Hardwood floors, expensive cars, fine jewelry, and a higher education are all things that Keitha does not have. What she does have is the capacity to be a dedicated, nurturing,

and loving mother to children who have been neglected and abused. During the last two years Keitha and her husband Scott have fostered children with some of the most challenging behaviors and medical complications. At times when most parents would call and ask for 'problem' children to be removed from their home, the Partons refuse to give up. They learned new discipline techniques that in time brought tremendous changes for one child in particular. Now that child is able to build appropriate relationships and express herself in more mature and age appropriate ways.

Recently, Keitha quit her part-time job in order to provide 24 hour around the clock care to a medically fragile foster child. Keitha and Scott are not wealthy, and the board payment she receives for this child barely covers the supplies and gasoline, for the weekly 270 miles she drives to transport him to and from doctors' appointments. She says she just does what needs to be done.

Their complete focus and commitment to foster children stems from their desire to give all children in their home the best start at a better and safer life with their birth families. It takes very special people to do what we ask foster parents to do day after day. Keitha and Scott Parton's dedication to their well being and success deserves recognition.

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## **Region 2 Adoptive Parents:**

**Bill and Debbie Mitchell**  
**Davidson County**

**Nominated by: Jane Wells, Davidson County Department of Social Services**

Bill and Debbie Mitchell have been a licensed foster home since July 2003. When signing their application they stated they "only want to foster and not adopt". Five years later they are hoping to adopt their fifth child. They have demonstrated shared parenting and believe in the importance that children should remain connected with their birth families. They have cared for medically fragile newborns, children who were traumatized, and teenagers. They strive to treat every child as equal and empower them with dignity and hope. Their goal has been to provide the love that every child deserves no matter what the situation.

This Agency is proud to have the Mitchell's as foster/adoptive parents and acknowledges the loving, caring, and flexible environment they have provided for the children who have come through their home, and for the ones who have been fortunate enough to make it their permanent home. Not to mention, Mrs. Mitchell was once herself a foster child and has taken her life experiences and made a better place for children who have and are going through similar situations as she once had to conquer. This couple is truly an inspiration and the definition of what every agency desires a foster/adoptive family to be.

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## **Region 2 Foster Parents:**

**Richard and Barbara Gabbey**  
**Davidson County**

**Nominated by: Ashley Collins, Davidson County Department of Social Services**

The Gabbey's have cared for numerous children who have special needs. Children in their care always overcome challenges and make significant progress. They cared for one child with shaken impact who had paralysis on one side, brain damage, eye injuries, and who had to learn self-care skills once again. The Gabbey's made sure he received services to help him recover. More importantly, they consistently worked with him to overcome his injuries. The progress the child made was astounding. When he left their care he had relearned much of what had been lost due to the injuries, and his mobility had greatly improved.

The Gabbey's are selfless. They keep siblings together, do shared parenting, and meet families and invite them into their home. When they cared for two brothers the father was invited over on Christmas morning so he could see his children open presents. The boys cried when he started to leave so the Gabbey's invited dad to stay. Dad is now caring for the children and the Gabbey's recently attended a ceremony where they were named godparents. They keep the boys when dad needs help.

The Gabbey's help children transition into new homes and do visits with parents, relatives and adoptive families. After the children move they maintain contact with them and the new family. They create life books for each child and document milestones.

Davidson County Department of Social Services is pleased to have this chance to honor and publicly thank the Gabbey's for all they have done to better the lives of children and families in North Carolina.

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**Region 3 Adoptive Parent:**

**Kelly Fee  
Moore County**

**Nominated by: Stacy Wilson, Moore County Department of Social Services**

Kelly Fee is both a foster and adoptive parent in Moore County. Ms. Fee has always been the kind of foster parent that we could call day or night and know that she would take a child into her home. Ms. Fee has already adopted two foster children and is now adopting a sibling group of three. She treats the children like they have always been a part of her family and they know immediately that she cares about them and will always be there for them. One example involves a child that Ms. Fee had in her home until he graduated from high school. He left and moved to attend college; now several years later, he lives in Florida but continues to stay in touch regularly.

Ms. Fee was practicing shared parenting long before MRS began. When the biological parents of the sibling group that she now has realized they could not care for their children, they relinquished them specifically to Ms. Fee and requested that she adopt

them. She still shares pictures of the children with the biological parents and speaks highly of them for making the most unselfish decision for their children.

Ms. Fee is always very positive and speaks at functions to encourage and educate others who are considering becoming foster/adoptive parents. In 2007 Ms. Fee was awarded the "Making a Difference One Child at a Time" award, and has also been honored as foster parent of the year.

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### **Region 3 Foster Parents:**

**Sharon and Randy Fields**

**Moore County**

**Nominated by: Cathy Miles, Moore County Department of Social Services**

Moore County Department of Social Services is proud to "Shine the Spotlight" on Sharon and Randy Fields. Foster parents since June 1996, they are the foster parents any agency would like to clone. Call at any hour and they respond "what time can we expect you?" They expressed no preference as to the age, race or gender of a child as they opened their home to 58 children. The Fields welcome teens and are always willing to accommodate sibling groups. Social Workers know their reputation as great partners with DSS and outside agencies.

Shared parenting comes naturally for the Fields and they were practicing this before it became a part of MAPP classes. Pictures of present and former foster children fill their home. Black, White, Hispanic, a beautiful rainbow of color that smiles back and reminds you that a family cared. They know that foster teens, like all teens, can't wait to become independent, and then comes the phone call 'I miss you, what's for dinner?'

Sharon feels being a child of the foster care system has helped her relate to foster children. Randy was a military child who moved often. Their experiences motivated them to become foster parents. They have also adopted four foster children, ages ranging from infants to 13 years. Their biological/adopted children are grown and now they are raising their two youngest adopted daughters. Recently DSS received a call from a single father who was in a car accident and he needed extensive rehabilitation. He called DSS to voluntarily place his two young children in foster care and he specifically asked for his children to be placed with the Fields. In our community, the Fields have a great reputation for being excellent foster parents. You may leave the Fields home, but you never leave their family.

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### **Region 4 Adoptive Parents:**

**Miles Herbert and Jane Ashley Purser**

**Pamlico County**

**Nominated by: Shirley R. Wells, Pamlico County Department of Social Services**

The Pursers were trained as Foster/Adoptive parents in November 2001 and their primary goal was adoption. In 2002, the Pursers received information about twin boys in Onslow County DSS custody after a kinship placement had failed. The boys, four months old, were placed in the Purser home with the biological family's intention to have them adopt. The decrees of adoption for John and Jared Purser were issued March 28, 2003.

On December 13, 2004, an infant girl was placed in the Purser's home after testing positive for cocaine. The biological mother decided her daughter would lead a better life with the Purser's, so she signed relinquishment of parental rights. Adoption for Lindsey Purser was finalized December 14, 2006.

In January 2007, Pamlico County DSS contacted the Pursers requesting placement of a four-month-old boy whose parents had tragically been killed in an automobile accident. This child happened to be the half-sibling to the Purser's daughter, Lindsey, adopted the month before. While the Pursers had three toddlers running around their house, they opened their hearts and home to him. They felt strongly that he needed connections to biological family and so Jack Purser was adopted on June 25, 2007. The Pursers encourage and facilitate visitation with the maternal grandparents for Jack and Lindsey. Jane Purser drives an SUV with four child seats and has converted the dining room into a play-room. They believe that they are truly blessed to have such beautiful little ones to love. No words can describe the mutual joy these children and the Pursers experience every day as a loving family.

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## **Region 4 Foster Parents:**

**Brent and Marcy Hoggard**  
**Nash County**

**Nominated by: Marcia Magnum and Teresa Sessoms, Nash County Department of Social Services**

The impact of Brent and Marcy Hoggard's service cannot be captured in 250 words! Regardless of race, culture or special need, their focus is always in finding what it is that each child in their home needs, and supplying that need.

The Hoggards are the 'go to' foster parents for children who may not have been successful in other placements or those with behavioral difficulties and/or multiple needs. They enhance their own knowledge of a child's issues by researching to find answers and resources to help the children. They participate in therapy sessions, medical appointments, school meetings, and conferences for the children their care.

True believers in shared parenting, they work to involve parents in the care of their children. They are always available to meet with parents and allow phone calls to their home. They participate in court hearings and CFT's, and once participated in a CFT by phone while vacationing in Florida!

The Hoggards helped all foster children in Nash County by hosting a 'Christmas Tree Auction' that raised over \$1,500 and increased public awareness of the needs of children in foster care. They hosted a Christmas party for foster families and their children that included a talent show in which the children showcased their talents. They mentor new foster families, provide respite, and participate as panel members for MAPP...the Hoggards do it all!!!

Nash County is honored to nominate Brent and Marcy Hoggrard. They face each day with the self professed belief that 'they care for the children as if they are going to be there forever, but are prepared for them to leave any day'. They deserve the recognition for their selflessness, commitment, longevity and the love they have shown to the many children who have crossed their door.