



Children's
Bureau, Inc.



Strengthening the Evolving

FAMILY

2016 ANNUAL REPORT



FAM•I•LY:

n. 1.

A SINGLE WORD
WITH MANY
DIFFERENT
MEANINGS

Dear friends,

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that 2016 was a difficult year for many Indiana families. Our state is struggling to respond quickly enough to the families being pulled apart by the addictions epidemic. Thankfully, together, we are helping the most vulnerable children and families to pick up the pieces of their broken lives and move forward.

There is a saying that without the dark, we could never see the stars. The crisis we have been responding to has definitely had its dark moments, but we have also witnessed the shining brilliance of so many stars. We have worked with many grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, teachers, volunteers, donors and community leaders who have given of themselves to care for the children who are the young victims of an epidemic without demographic boundaries. There are so many families, of virtually every type, who have gladly rearranged their lives to become foster parents, adoptive parents and supports for children in need.

With your help, Children's Bureau continues to provide much-needed services to children and families across Indiana. In 2016 we served 47,138 children in 22,747 unique families. Each family comes equipped with its own values, culture, hopes and dreams. It is our goal to embrace the families we serve and support them by providing access to education, resources and the hope they need to thrive.

In the past year, we continued to experience an outpouring of support from our community. Without that help, we could not provide the shelter, counseling services and assistance that so many families have received. This generosity is vital to helping the stars we care for to shine brightly and confidently.

I am fortunate to witness the impact of our agency's work every day, and it is truly my honor to share our accomplishments from 2016 with you. Every one of the stories and numbers shared throughout this report represents a life changed—often an entire family's trajectory changed. And through your volunteer hours, advocacy, financial support and talents, you helped make it happen. My gratitude to each of you is immeasurable.

Together, we are helping our most vulnerable children and families to recover, and in doing so we are collectively changing generations to come. Thank you for your commitment to Children's Bureau and the many families we serve.

Fondly,



President & CEO



GRAFTED TOGETHER

MARY MICHAEL CRADLED HER NEWBORN GRANDSON AND WEPT. "I love you," she whispered. "I hope you have a happy life." Fifty years would pass before she would see him again.

In 1966, Mary and her oldest daughter, Judy Keithley, then 18, lived in a one-bedroom apartment in Indianapolis, where they'd moved after Mary and her husband divorced. They had nothing. Back then, Mary said, women couldn't get credit or open their own bank accounts. They had no car, phone or TV and barely made

enough money to cover food and rent. It wasn't long before Judy confessed she was pregnant by a married man. Mary said she would support whatever decision her daughter made.

A week before she was due, Judy decided to surrender her son for adoption. That's when she pledged to her mother: "If God would give him a good loving family, I'll never interrupt his life or do anything to hurt him." Judy kept her promise. She died in 2014 after a battle with lung cancer. Huddled together in grief, Mary told her surviving daughter, Marcie Keithley, they needed to find Judy's son. "He has to know how wonderful his mother was," Mary said. "I cannot die until I know he's OK."

Back in the 1960s, Paul and Mary Kay Becher had wanted a child. And when that blessing did not come during their first eight years of marriage, they chose an adoption agency to build their family. Children's Bureau called Sept. 20, 1966. "We have a little boy," the agency told Mary Kay. "Would you like to come and see him?"

The baby—Judy's biological son—was swaddled so tightly that only his eyes and nose were



(L-R): Chris' adoptive mother, Mary Kay, biological aunt, Marcie, and biological grandmother, Mary.

visible. The Bechers laughed and Mary Kay kissed the little nose. "We were just in awe of this tiny baby," she recalled. And he became theirs. They named him Christopher Gerard Becher for the patron saints of children and expectant mothers, respectively. It was a closed adoption, meaning there was no contact between the birth and adoptive families and no information shared.

For as long as Chris can remember, he's known he was adopted. The Bechers taught him that he was special, that they chose him as their son. Over the next five decades, Chris grew up, married, raised his children and was blessed with grandchildren. He never tried to learn about his biological family.

In 2015, Marcie was cleaning out her garage when she found a box of Judy's things. Inside were a letter and a lock of hair. She had written the letter a year after giving birth to the son she never knew, detailing her regret for surrendering him. "Adoption isn't just pretty packages tied up in bows," said Marcie. "It can be. But to create a new family, there is loss first."

After her discovery, Marcie filed paperwork with the Indiana Adoption Matching Registry to seek access to records about Judy's son. When she received word that he had not registered with the state, she hired a confidential intermediary to seek permission through the court system to contact him. Chris thought the initial Facebook message was a scam or joke. An individual asked him to confirm his date of birth and if he was adopted, then told Chris his biological family wanted to contact him. After confirming that it was legitimate, Chris agreed to speak to them on the phone that night. His wife sat nearby.

Cont'd., page 16



Christopher Gerard Becher, 1966

CB filed

243

adoption
records inquiries
in 2016.

SEEING THE LIGHT OF DAY

ROBERT DAY DOESN'T HAVE AN EASY JOB. As a father engagement case manager on Children's Bureau's Connersville team, he says he has seen a lot. But it is transformations like Michael Tackett's that keep him believing that anything is possible.

Michael had just completed rehab when Robert contacted him to discuss custody of his children. Erin, 16, and Michael Jr. (Mikey), 12, were living with their aunt after being removed from their mother's care due to substance abuse.

"I was leery when I first met Robert," Michael said. "I felt like, 'Why is this my fault?'" After excessive missed appointments, Robert had no choice but to close Michael's case and move on to other more hopeful ones. But, Michael's son continued to receive counseling services through Children's Bureau. "We see the heartache children endure when parents lose themselves to addiction," Jenny McCarrell, Mikey's case worker, said. "But he never lost faith in his dad," she added.

Surrounded by officers of the court, Michael was told to step up, or his children would have no one. That's when he called Robert. "I was given a second chance, and I didn't

want to lose it," Michael said. "I finally realized I wasn't chasing my kids; I was chasing their mother, and it was destroying my life."

He and Robert got to work on a budget and scoured the town to find housing within his means. As he set up housekeeping and prepared for the kids to move in, Robert mentored him to be transparent with his children. "They need to understand that this isn't going to be a joy ride; it's life," Robert explained. Together, the family is sticking to a budget but finding joy in the little things, like new recipes for family dinners.

Michael's pride in his children shines through his reserved nature. He describes his daughter, Erin, as "16 going on 25." He says she is a typical teen but with an old soul. Even through the upheaval of the past three years, she has excelled in school. She will graduate a year early and is already working toward the resources to attend college.

Mikey is heading to middle school. According to dad, he is the loveable entertainer of the family who sees the good in everything. "We work together as a team," Michael says. "These kids keep me moving. They're my everything. I no longer have a void in my heart."



“I'm gonna do it till I can't. My job is to try to plug these dads back into being parents and give kids every opportunity to be in a healthy family.”

- Robert Day
Connersville, IN



“I wish I could have bottled up the smile on Mikey's face when I visited him at his dad's home for the first time. He was so proud and happy!”

- Jenny McCarrell
Connersville, IN

1,171

dads reconnected with
their children through
Father Engagement in 2016.



Michael Jr., Michael Sr. and Erin Tackett



Former and current foster children:
Little Man and Little Miss on a play date.



Little Miss helps Erin blow out 40 birthday candles.

DIARY OF AN #INSTAMOM

Erin Carter is a single mom who began her foster care journey in 2014. She used social media platforms to chronicle her experiences with whimsy, wonder, and at times, heartbreak. After her first foster child was successfully reunited with his family, she accepted placement of another, this time a “Little Miss.”

TODAY MARKS ONE YEAR SINCE LITTLE MAN CAME INTO MY LIFE. A few things this instamom learned: If you say “I’m going to count to 3,” but your son’s favorite Sesame Street character is The Count, you should know he’ll say “Ah-ha-hah!” as you try to count.

I learned that there is no germ like a daycare germ. That using tissues is more fun if you’re getting rid of “snot bubbles.” That sometimes you just need to fling pasta on the walls. That there is no better way to spend an evening than racing cars on the dining room floor. That it is possible to love someone so much that it breaks your heart open.

I learned that bedtime routines are important for everyone, and shouldn’t be skipped. I learned that a few bumps and bruises are par for the course with a toddler. That kids are resilient in the most amazing ways. That there is nothing more beautiful than the sound of a child’s mischievous cackle when playing hide and seek.

I have been blessed by the time I spent with Little Man’s dad and mama. It is a true gift of grace to be able to celebrate them as a family, and to feel as though they are part of mine.

I learned it takes a village, a very big one, especially as a single mom, and that I’ve got a larger village than I knew. My parents were instant grandparents to a child they’d never met and such a support in ways I did not expect.

I learned that when in doubt, choose the kids; there will always be time for work later. I learned that there’s a whole new level of exhaustion that comes with parenting. And that being a mom, especially an instamom, brings with it a certain kind of grief balanced with joy, which often cannot be put into words. That “help” and “thank you” are entirely sufficient and always-heard prayers.

I learned that being a mom doesn’t end when your son goes home. That there is more than enough love to go around. That at the end of my days, if my legacy is that I jumped head first into the lives of children and families who needed support, love and a place to call home, that’s a pretty good legacy.



“ I love hearing the stories of small victories, like if a child is able to sleep through the night for the first time. ”

-Laura Oliver
Foster Care
Case Manager
Indianapolis, IN



47,138

CHILDREN SERVED

in

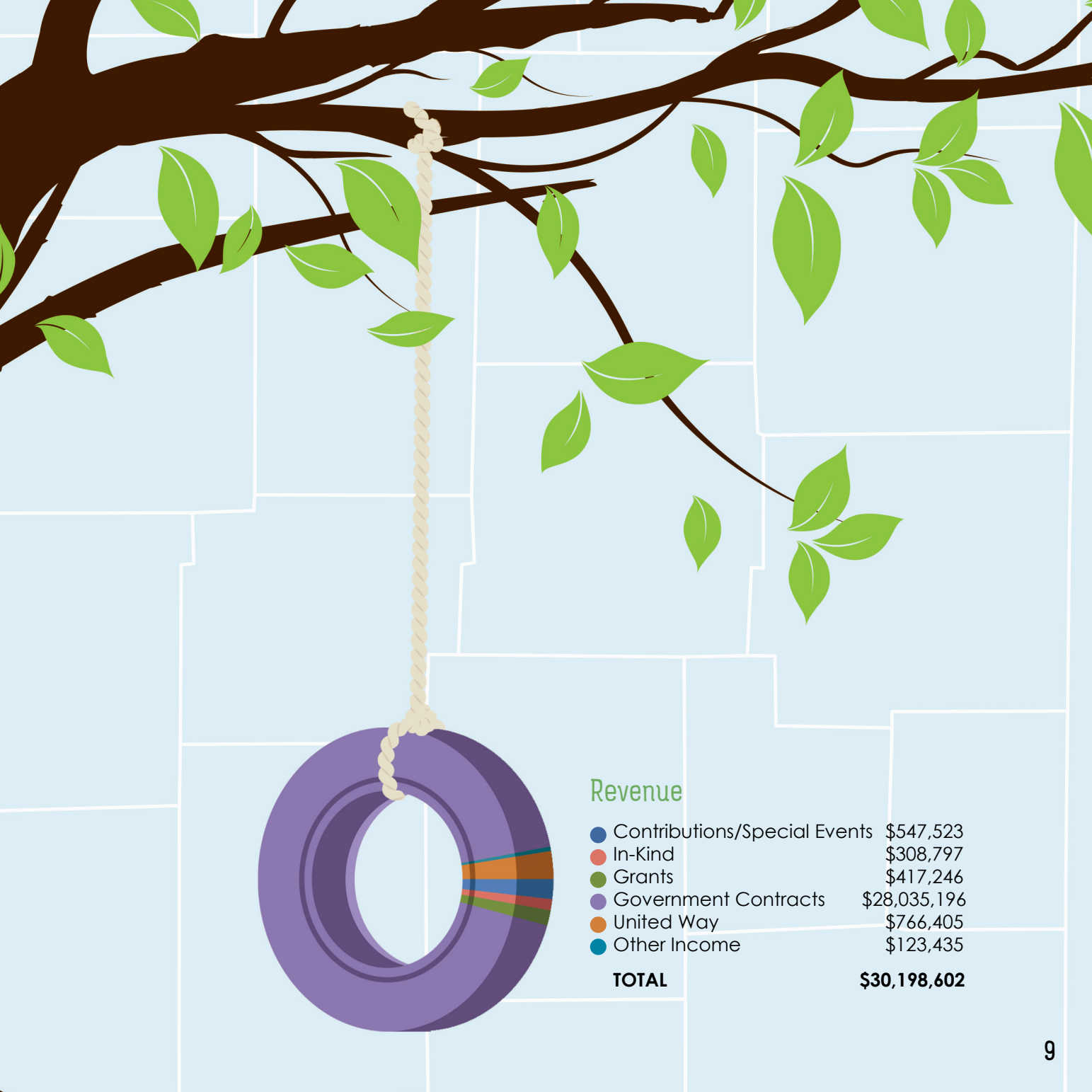
22,747

UNIQUE FAMILIES

OUR MISSION

Preserving families and
protecting the future
of Indiana's children.

Children's Bureau staffed
15 dedicated locations across
43 Indiana counties in 2016. See
childrensbureau.org/locations
for more details.



Revenue

Contributions/Special Events	\$547,523
In-Kind	\$308,797
Grants	\$417,246
Government Contracts	\$28,035,196
United Way	\$766,405
Other Income	\$123,435

TOTAL

\$30,198,602

DOING IT ALL OVER AGAIN

BOB AND JANET HARRISON WERE READY TO RETIRE AND MOVE TO FLORIDA. The hardworking couple had raised a blended family of five children and was looking forward to starting the next phase of their life. With everyone out of the nest and a new motorcycle in the garage, they were preparing their home for sale. Then, the unimaginable happened.

Indiana's Department of Child Services (DCS) showed up at the Harrison's door with news that five of their grandchildren were in custody. The

children had been removed from their mother's care as a result of substance abuse. They were shocked. "Our daughter, Ashley, had always been an attentive, loving mom," Bob explained. Her parents described her as a model mother who fed, bathed and tucked her children in with a story each night.

According to Bob and Janet, things started to change when Ashley rekindled a relationship with an old friend through Facebook. Eventually Ashley was expecting. She and the children moved in with the new boyfriend. "He seemed like an ok guy—good with the kids and eager to please Ashley," Bob said. But unbeknownst to the Harrisons, he had pulled her into

his downward spiral of opiate abuse. At age 28, she used heroin for the first time with disastrous consequences.

Having DCS show up at their door left the Harrisons feeling violated, but the more they grew to know their designated case manager, the more comfortable they felt. "You hear the horror stories, but once we found out what the true goals were, it was almost like having a monthly visit with family," Bob said.

Today Bob and Janet are foster parents to their five grandchildren. Some might have chosen the freedom of retirement, but the Harrisons held tightly to their faith and church family for perspective. As Bob puts it, "God said, 'Nope, you're going to raise five more.' So we said, 'Ok, here we go!'"

The family was referred to Children's Bureau for services when Bryan, the oldest grandchild, started expressing thoughts of self-harm. "As a therapist, I impart hope, teach coping skills, and become a trusted adult who he can tell his innermost horrible feelings," Michelle Harrison explained. According to Grandma and Grandpa, Bryan is much better at controlling his temper now. "It was almost like he was trying to be a parent to the other kids," Bob said, "but we reminded him that Grandma and Grandpa are here, and he just needs to be a kid."

Bob and Janet believe in their daughter's ability to recover, but for now their plan is to adopt the children. "They're our life," Janet says. "We'll do what we have to do to make sure they're safe."



“I'm a change agent. I want to see children thrive even in the worst of situations, because I believe people can change.”

-Michelle Harrison
Indianapolis, IN

1,297

families received services
from Children's Bureau
therapists or case managers.



Bob and Janet Harrison



Yanelyn

Children's Bureau prevented

8,801

children from entering the
child welfare system.

EXPANDING BOUNDARIES

"I LIKE THE UNITED STATES BETTER BECAUSE MY FATHER WANTED ME TO MOVE HERE," she says quietly in Spanish. Her mother buries her face in her hands as her grandmother dries her eyes. At first glance, Yanelyn is like every other 5-year-old girl, wearing a Hello Kitty shirt, carrying a doll and sporting a toothless grin. But Yanelyn's life experiences are not the same as most kids. While her story is one of sacrifice and tragic loss, it exemplifies redemption and the power of family resilience.

Yanelyn's grandmother, Aurelia, knew she had to leave rural Guatemala. Gang violence was escalating and she was forced to pay a ransom to keep her family from being kidnapped, or worse. One night all of the animals on her farm were slaughtered and a note was left warning her that her loved ones would be next. Because of the horrific conditions in her homeland, Aurelia was permitted to relocate to Indianapolis and begin the process of applying for political asylum.

Not long after arriving, Aurelia met Brigida Valerio, a bilingual Children's Bureau employee who works on the agency's child abuse and neglect prevention team. "I am not sure how she got my number but she called and asked for help," Brigida explained. "I addressed basic needs first; I wanted to make sure the children had housing, beds and food." Not long after their meeting Aurelia received word that her son, Yanelyn's father, had died. Once again, Aurelia called Brigida, who identified resources to assist the family in their time of grief.

Aurelia is employed and working hard to find "her honest place" in this country. With help from Children's Bureau, her teenage daughters are enrolled in school and Yanelyn will attend a school for children transitioning to life in the United States. Her family's wellbeing drove her to relocate and it continues to motivate her to overcome new challenges. Aurelia's family may be different economically and culturally, but like every family, it consists of people who are important to each other. Aurelia's other family members, 2,500 miles away, are always on her mind. Thanks to technology, they stay connected and Yanelyn gets to enjoy pictures of the pig she had to leave behind when she came to America.

Children's Bureau will continue to work alongside the family to ensure their transition is smooth and the children are safe. "When I close out this case, I want to know the family is strong and stable so the children can grow to be healthy," Brigida said.

In many ways Yanelyn is different than other 5-year-old girls, but like her peers, she is surrounded by family members who have sacrificed so that she can be a "normal" kid. Doll in hand, ponytail bouncing, Yanelyn walks around the playground of her new home, and that normal childhood seems within her reach.



“I close my eyes, and I picture my own family. That could be my mother. That could be my child.”

-Brigida Valerio
Indianapolis, IN

CHILDREN'S BUREAU AUXILIARY



The women of the CB Auxiliary focus on helping Children's Bureau through fundraising and volunteer service. Each year members issue a regular newsletter, hold meetings and raise money through a spring luncheon/fashion show and an angel fund patrons drive. Funds raised go toward refurbishing CB facilities, sending kids to summer camp, assisting with special client needs, and staff education and appreciation. Learn more at bit.ly/cb-aux.

FOUNDATIONS & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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New Beginnings Fellowship Church
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Tipton County Foundation
Westside Missionary Baptist Church
Whole Kids Foundation
Xerox Corporation U.S.A.
Zion Hope Baptist Church

GIFTS IN MEMORY OF

Kathryn Beigh

by Anderson Noon Exchange Club

Judy Bowen

by G. T. Black, Jr.
by Sally and Dick Brigden
by Paul & Rinda Carey
by Children's Bureau Auxiliary
by Ann S. Frick
by Gregory Goelzer
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by Pillar Group Risk Management
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by Rebekah Roth Walsh and family
by Joseph Wargel

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by Anderson Noon Exchange Club

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first, we listen...



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Each of the companies listed provides an annual, unrestricted gift to Children's Bureau. The impact of this support is felt throughout each of the services we offer. In addition to providing needed resources, our partners' employees take part in volunteer activities, special events and advocate for Indiana children.



Chris Becher with his wife, children and grandchildren today.

Cont'd. from page 3

"You don't know what it's like for a birth family to come out of nowhere and say 'Hey, by the way, you're part of us,'" Chris said, "especially when you're 50 years old. ... Mind-blowing is the best word for it." They met on Chris' 50th birthday. He had barely stepped inside when Mary reached out. "Can I hug you?" she asked. "I've just got to get a hold of you again."

Mary and Marcie talked about Judy and the circumstances that led her to place him for adoption. Mary second-guessed whether she should have said or done more. Chris also questioned why he hadn't reached out earlier, when his biological mother was still alive. And how could he explain all this to Mary Kay, the mom who raised him? His father, Paul, had died in 2015. A few weeks after the meeting, he told Mary Kay he'd met his biological family. "I was just kind of blown away," Mary Kay recalled. "But it's never too late. God has a plan, and we may not know it, but it's always good."

Chris is still navigating terminology, such as how to refer to all family members so no one gets hurt. He said meeting his biological family felt uncomfortable at times, but it always felt right. He described it as two families merging together. "It's exciting," he said. "It's scary, but at the end it's just love. I mean, it's family."

This story is an excerpt from the Indianapolis Star. Read the entire story and view video at bit.ly/cb-becher.



“On a given day you might find me in the archives looking for a birth parent for an adult adoptee; CB keeps those records for at least 99 years, so some of them are really old.”

- Terry Lovejoy
Indianapolis, IN

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YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ADVISORY BOARD

It was a busy year for the Young Professionals Advisory Board (YPAB), a group that exists to support Children's Bureau's mission to preserve families and protect Indiana children. YPAB members planned two fundraisers, volunteered with kids in CB's residential facilities, and served as ambassadors for the agency in the community. Their generosity and caring spirits make a lasting, positive impact on children's lives. We thank this group of dynamic young people for the difference they make year after year!





FAMILY

is whichever motley crew of
dysfunctional humans you
LOVE so much you would do
anything for, including being
driven **CRAZY** by them. Your
family is your blood ... or maybe not.
Your family is your breaking point
and your healing **REFUGE**.
Your family is your best chance
to be **KNOWN**.

- COURTNEY E. MARTIN
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