From Foster Teen to Filmmaker, A Success Story!

On October 4th, Selena Burks-Rentschler returned to Applewood Centers to encourage prospective foster parents at our first Foster Parent Graduation Ceremony. When Selena was only 14 years old, her parents became addicted to drugs and were no longer able to care for her and her sister. Selena’s life had become increasingly difficult; finally she had to reach out for help. Soon after, Selena and her sister were placed with one of our foster mothers, Betty Jean Massengale. Ms. Massengale gave Selena her first video camera, sparking her interest in filmmaking. Now, at the age of 33, Selena is a successful documentary film producer. We use her documentary “Saving Jackie” in our Foster parent training course. We were truly honored for her to return.

Applewood Centers Honors those with the Courage to Care at our 1st Foster Parent Graduation Ceremony.

Applewood Centers was fortunate to have found 13 individuals who had the courage to “Show they Care” by becoming foster parents. The induction ceremony was the highlight of a wonderful night of food, entertainment and encouragement.

Our center’s own Ebony Bonner performed a dance of encouragement for the new parents to a song by Forever Jones, “He Wants it All.”

Selena Burks-Rentschler’s message to the new foster parents was amazing. She spoke a strong truth expressing how through her foster mother’s intervention her life was changed. Selena spoke of the love and support she received from Ms. Massengale. She told the crowd that her Saturday morning conversations with Ms. Massengale, while listening to blues, shaped the woman she is today.

“All that I am as a woman came from my Foster Mother”

Selena Burks-Rentschler, Film Producer

New prospective foster mother Pauline and her family at Graduation Ceremony.
A Special Calling, Why I Became a Foster Mother.

Stephanie Gaines has been a Foster Mother for 10 years. She has helped many teenage girls during the most challenging times of their lives. We asked Ms. Gaines three special questions to share with our readers.

1. Why did you become a Foster Parent?

Honestly, I feel as if it is my calling in life. I was always the person in my community that people came to for help. Therefore, it was quite natural for me to continue to be there for teenagers when they need me. I feel it is the gift that God has given me to give back in this manner.

2. What is the most valuable moment of being a foster parent?

For me it is the feeling that comes from being able to help. Being able to help these young people get to where they need to be in their own lives. These moments come in many different forms. For instance, one of my foster daughters was accepted to not only one college, but several colleges. Also, I have been able to watch these young ladies grow up to become wives and mothers themselves. Moments like being in the delivery room as a teenage mother in my care gave birth to her own daughter. Furthermore, to know that I will be given the opportunity to help that baby grow into a strong confident young lady. The number of the lives that I have touched can’t outscores the number of lives I am able to touch.

3. Where do you find the most support?

My family is my greatest support system! They accept these children as my own. They accept each individual child regardless of the struggles that the child my face. They accept the good, the bad and the ugly. They show a Godly type of unconditional love with patience and understanding. They help out in so many ways. They motivate me and the children towards being our best. My pastor Larry Harris and my church family are also very important support systems for us as well. Also Applewood Centers has a culture of connection. We have a monthly support group that keeps me in touch with other foster parents that share their experiences while encouraging each other to focus on this worthy cause. Mrs. Ebony Bonner a case worker with Applewood is excellent in her craft and a major support system as well. There are many individuals such as Ms. Vickie Lynch who is a social worker for Cuyahoga County who showed her advocacy through unwavering support and dedication. These wonderful people contribute to my success as well as the children’s. We all work together to help these children through this very difficult time. I just really love being a part of it all.

Look for this symbol on signs in your neighborhood.