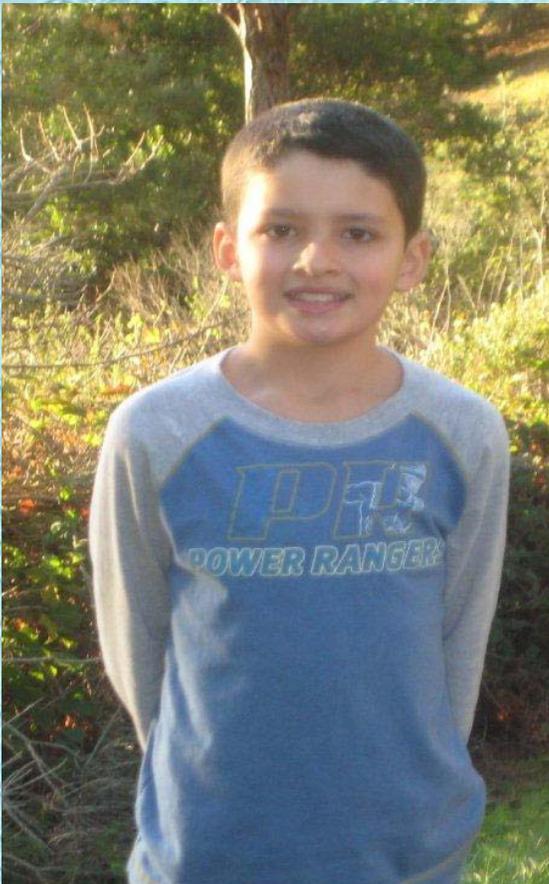




THE E-HEARTBEAT NOVEMBER 2013

FAMILY CONNECTIONS CHRISTIAN ADOPTIONS



Andrew's Adoption Journey by Lawrence Edwardson, his dad

Andrew was born in 2002 and had a traumatic childhood, resulting in his being removed from his birth parents at the age of two. He was placed in foster care and was with the same foster family for three years. They were going to adopt him, but changed their plans after the wife became pregnant. They continued to care for him while he waited for a family to adopt him. By that time, his parents' rights had been terminated.

My wife and I had been married for over ten years and were unable to have children. We believed God wanted us to be parents and contacted an agency in the Bay area. We began the adoption process in 2002, the same year as Andrew was born. We discontinued it as we did not feel comfortable with that particular agency. We waited for a few years and in 2006, when we were in our fifties, found Family Connections Christian Adoptions and started the process all over again.

Our Family Connections social worker, Veronica, and Andrew's social worker from Child Protective Services were very helpful in guiding us through the process of foster care which led to adoption. One of our Family Connections requirements that we came to appreciate over time was psychological counseling, which we continued after the adoption. In the summer of 2007, Andrew was placed in our home at the age of five, and we adopted him in April, 2008.

At first Andrew was very insecure and always wanted to know where we were. He would talk with strangers indiscriminately, which caused us to be quite concerned. Over time however, he grew to be confident and feel secure in our care. When he became part of our family in 2007, he started kindergarten and now he is in the fourth grade. He is a very active young boy, who loves playing kickball and singing. He finds making friends a challenge, but is very resilient.

We have been supported by our families, church and friends. We also have found two local support groups for adoptive families. We have learned that having a supportive team is very important in helping us face the many challenges we encounter as a family. We are grateful to God for bringing Andrew to us in His time.



It is always a joy to hear from FCCA families after many years, especially when they send pictures and news of their children. Robert and Pam Rutherford adopted their daughter, Victoria. Now she is a senior in high school preparing to attend college to study pre-med. Besides her academic interests (she has been in the gifted program since age seven), Victoria is an outstanding athlete in soccer, cross country running, track and field, and crew (rowing). With a heart for giving back to others, she also finds time for community service; she does volunteer work for Helping Hands, a food service and Girl Scouts of America. She hopes to become a doctor so she can continue to serve others.



The Modesto FCCA Office will be hosting our annual Holiday Open House Sunday November 17th from 2– 4 pm at 1120 Tully Rd. Modesto, CA. There will be refreshments, crafts and games. Hope you can join us!



Hi My name is Kyra Loretelli, I'm was adopted and I'm working on my Master in Social Work at California State University, Stanislaus. I'm working with Family Connection Christian Adoption agency to create a training tool for prospective parents. I'm looking for participants who may want to be involved with this project. If you would like to be a part of this project in my effort to give back to society, please contact me at: Loretellik@yahoo.com or (209) 499-0918.



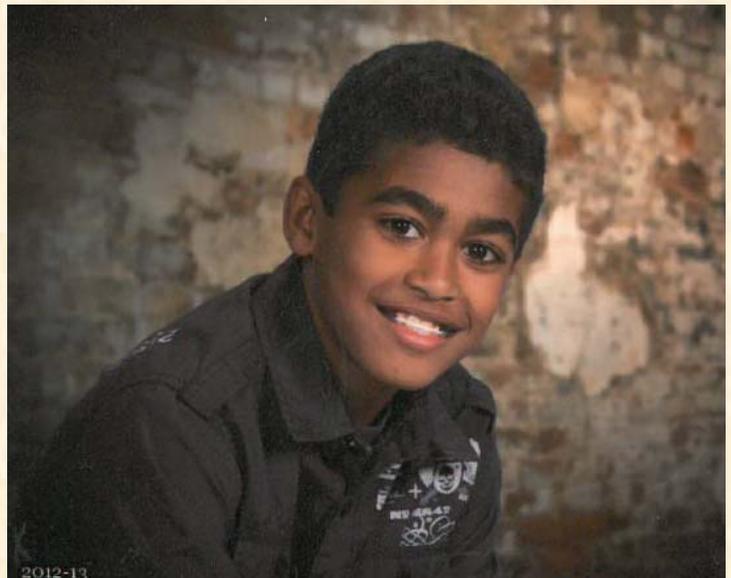
Tyler and his mother Tammy.

For the past seven years, Steve Streeter's Annual Memorial Golf Tournament has honored Steve's memory by contributing the proceeds to non-profit agencies and helping to build a college fund for Steve's young son Tyler.

Steve and Tammy Streeter adopted Tyler through Family Connections about twelve years ago when Tyler was a ten week old infant. When Tyler was five, cancer took his dad prematurely. Tyler and his mom, Tammy, continue to be a strong family unit. Tyler, now twelve, plays baseball, football and basketball with a passion and still manages to be a straight A student.



Baby Tyler



Tyler Streeter now.



Ten Lessons We Have Learned

by Matthew and Christine Essex

Before your child comes:

1. **Get Educated.** Read ahead of time about typical development as well as the issues that typically occur with foster children. Read about behavioral management and/or attend a behavior management class to learn basic behavior management strategies.
2. **Get organized**—finances, documents, filing. Finish household projects, get caught up at work.
3. **Get healthy**—exercise, eat right, sleep well. Figure out how to best manage stress.
4. **Get the support network ready**—locate and interview therapist who might be needed. Set up family and friends to provide emotional support and physical assistance (babysitting, shopping, cooking, etc.)

After your child is with you:

5. **Begin daily routines** as soon as possible and stick with what works (e.g. bedtime—music, sky night light, prayers, etc.)
6. **Adapt your life to meet the child's needs** rather than expecting the child to adapt to your life needs (e.g. hobbies, travel).
7. **Educate and advocate**—share your child's strengths, needs and some history with those who will interact with the child (e.g. teacher, babysitter, coach, extended family, neighbors) to help them to understand your child more fully.
8. **Support your spouse and your child**—realize that you will rarely be in the same place emotionally/psychologically during the first several months and do the best you can to keep communicating and understanding each other.
9. **Keep deciding to love**—express love through your actions. Love is a decision. Even when the emotion is absent, keep it in your actions until the emotion of love returns.
10. **Keep praying**—teach about God's love early and often in the journey to becoming a family. Ask others to pray for you and share the joys and challenges with them.



In September, 2011, through the good work of the staff at FCCA Oceanside (now Carlsbad), Matthew and Christine Essex became parents of two young sons. Now ages three and five, John and Michael are thriving in their new home. There is much support and love from their parents and extended family, as well as their teachers, friends, faith community and adoption social worker. When asked recently about adoption, their eldest son commented, "Adoption is the bestest thing ever!" Matthew and Christine agreed.

DENNIS' STORY by Gloria Verhoeven

Every night, as we put our children to bed, they would pray for the brother or sister who would be in our family "soon." My husband, Dennis, Sr. and I have always had it on our hearts to adopt from the time when we were very young. Both of us have read many books on adoption and parenting, but no book, except one, could have prepared us for the journey we are on now...the Bible, filled with words of wisdom, faith, suffering, encouragement and best of all, mercy.

In January, 2013, almost three years since Dennis had joined our family at the age of four, he began complaining of a sore tummy and head. His symptoms escalated and suddenly he was having a full blown seizure. Coming out of it, he stopped breathing and my husband gave him CPR as we made plans to rush to the nearest hospital. The seizures continued and each time he needed CPR to begin breathing again. At the local hospital they could not find the cause for the seizures. The doctors decided to send him to UCSF where he was put into a sedated coma because the seizures would not stop.

We were asked a million questions; with patience and a lot of tears, we answered what we could. The tests on Dennis' little body seemed unending. As a last resort, they did a brain biopsy to find out what was wrong with him. They finally diagnosed the problem as a very rare condition called F.I.R.E.S--Febrile Induced Refractory Epileptic Seizures. Only 90 children in the world have been diagnosed with this.



Dennis now.

For almost two months, Dennis was in a sedated coma, suffering seizures that would last from an hour to a whole day without stopping. Knowing the damage these seizures were causing was overwhelming. My husband and I would cling to each other as we gave our son to our Lord God saying, "He is yours, Father and we trust that your will be done."

Many doctors told us bluntly that Dennis might never wake up. If he did, he might never walk, talk, know anyone or anything. I told them, "If it is God's will for him to live, I'm grateful! If it is God's will to take him to heaven, I'm grateful for the three years I got to be his Mommy."

When Dennis opened his eyes ten weeks after the coma began he had many daunting challenges, including a tracheotomy, tube feeding, special diet, thyroid medication. But oh, what joy we had when our seven year old woke up! Dennis has no memory to speak of before the seizures. So now we get to build new memories, show him pictures, tell him stories.

Now it is many months later and Dennis has come leaps and bounds farther than everyone thought possible. We believe that God's grace and power protected him. Dennis has a seizure here and there, does physical therapy for balance and coordination and is still on heavy medication. But, he is walking, talking tons and even tries to run and play soccer with his brother!! He has to relearn everything, from how to eat properly to letters and numbers, shapes and colors. We praise God that we are blessed to teach him again and see his excitement when he gets it.

This is an ever learning experience for us and we are so thankful for all God has done for our family. We are excited to see how far Dennis will progress. We have lots of hard work ahead of us and we will have the support of many along the way. We have gotten through so far because the Lord has given us the strength we needed. The trials we are facing are nothing compared to the gifts we have received because of going through it. Our family has grown in love in compassion; my heart has grown in patience more than you could ever imagine. "I have the strength to face all conditions by the power the Christ give me." (Philippians 4:13)

