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# Project MATCH

Making Appropriate & Timely Connections for Children

## Connections

September 2010

### Congratulations, Harold and Lori Underwood!



To nominate a family or social worker email [Jessicamorris@uky.edu](mailto:Jessicamorris@uky.edu)

### Project MATCH Resource Parents of the Quarter

For Lori and Harold Underwood foster parenting runs in the family; both Lori and Harold grew up with parents who cared for foster children. Caring for children with special needs is near and dear to their hearts as their first daughter Katy Lu, was born with many challenges and died as an infant. During Katy Lu's life, the Underwoods encountered children in the hospital who were alone and later discovered these children were in foster care. It was then that the Underwoods decided to become foster parents because "no child should have to be alone with no one to advocate for and love them--especially a child with special needs in a hospital setting." Since becoming foster parents, the Underwoods have adopted six children. They recently completed their forever family, and through this experience the Underwoods have learned a lot about themselves. "No matter how limited or imperfect I think I am, I can make a difference," Lori says, "it takes people who are willing to love and be there for these children." The Underwoods are a wonderful example of the numerous loving foster and adoptive families in Kentucky. **To the Underwoods, and all of our resource families we appreciate all that you do for the children and youth of Kentucky!**

Pictured above are Lori and Harold, John Wesley age 14, Cody age 13, William 12, Jonas age 11, Lena age 9, MaKenzie age 8, Jared age 7, and Matthew age 7.



# DR Specialist Spotlight



## Meet Gerry Whalen



Gerry Whalen is Project MATCH's Diligent Recruitment Specialist for the rural section of the Southern Bluegrass Region. She recruits foster/adoptive parents for both the public and private agencies in Boyle, Clark, Estill, Garrard, Jessamine, Lincoln, Madison, Mercer and Powell Counties.

Gerry Whalen began parenting with her first foster placement in 1978. Her first two foster sons were adopted through the Special Needs Adoption Program. Birth children arrived in 1980, 1982, 1983, 1990, 1993, and 1997. Gerry and her husband, John, are also parents to a four-year old foster son and a seven-year old foster daughter. Everyday with their five sons and five daughters is an adventure. They reside in Central Kentucky.

Gerry is a Kentucky Family Peer Support Specialist, an adoptive parent liaison with Adoption Support for Kentucky, a team member of the Kentucky Foster and Adoptive Parent Training Support Network, a Special Advocate for Education mentor, a trainer for the Community Resources Attachment and Family Formation Marriage/Relationship Enhancement Prevention of Adoption Disruption, a parent mentor of the Resource Parent Mentor Program, a consultant with KY-SPIN, and a part-time faculty instructor with the Maysville Community & Technical College.

### Upcoming Mix & MATCH Meeting dates

- Bowling Green - September 13
- Lexington - September 28
- Owensboro - September 29
- Richmond - October 19
- Hopkinsville - October 28
- Prestonsburg - November 16
- Hazard - November 18

*In Our Next Edition: Bowling Green Mix & MATCH Group holds public/private recruitment activity*

## Project MATCH team attends Children's Bureau Grantee Meeting

Project MATCH team members Jessica Morris, Mike Grimes, Crystal Collins-Camargo, and Dana Sullivan attended the Children's Bureau Combined Discretionary Grantees meeting in Arlington, Virginia. The team had the opportunity to learn about the eight other Diligent Recruitment projects that are taking place across the county and to share highlights from Project MATCH.



## We can't keep quiet about Silent Angels



Above: Dianna Lawson, DR Specialist for Eastern Mountain attending the Prestonsburg Mix & MATCH meeting

*Our Diligent Recruitment Specialist for the Eastern Side of Eastern Mountain Region is Dianna Lawson. She consistently approaches recruiting foster and adoptive parents in a thoughtful manner. Dianna works well with people from all walks of life. While putting together a foster and adoptive appreciation event to help retention, Dianna worked with the Silent Angels. Project MATCH believes Silent Angels may feel the need to be silent to keep the focus off themselves and on to those they serve; but, we can't help be impressed by their character. Below is a brief description of Silent Angels from Jerrica, a member of Silent Angels*



My name is Jerrica and I'm one of the members of the group that Dianna helped out. We call our group the Silent Angels. Our group consists of 8 students from the high school -- 7 girls and 1 boy.

Last year our main focus was to ease a child's transition into foster care. We decided the best way to do this was to collect items that they might not have time to gather up before being taken from their homes. We collected suitcases, duffle bags, stuffed animals, hygiene kits, and blankets and then distributed them to local foster agencies to give to their children in need. The group also traveled to local community group meetings and some local churches to present a power point with our ideas and goals. Our community was very supportive and donated many of the items we collected. We actually gave away 102 suitcases either to the Gift Initiative or to local social workers. When we attended the Mountain Arts Center last May, some foster parents and foster children walked away with suitcases, blankets, and stuffed animals.

After doing this we then wanted to create a day that honored foster parents; they are very special people who do amazing things. That's the event Dianna helped us with last school year. County Judge Executive Tucker Daniel proclaimed May 22 Foster Parent Appreciation Day and we held a reception for foster parents at Johnson Central High School. Numerous local businesses gave away prizes during this reception. From that event we got the impression that there were more foster children needing parents than there were available. This year, even though we haven't a specific set of goals yet, our group wants to help recruit foster parents as well as make it a easier to connect with the child and really focus on them and their needs. We are hoping to create "Foster Care Packets."

*Thanks so much,  
The Silent Angels*



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BY U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT - DECEMBER 2007



# Project MARCH

Making Appropriate & Timely Connections for Children



## Strategies for Improving Customer Service



***“Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us everyday.” — Sally Koch***

***Providing outstanding customer service to birth parents, resource parents and community partners is a small way you can make a difference every day.***

- Customer Service is based on two key principles: Communication and Respect
- Our core values (service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity and competence) should influence the way we interact with our clients and community partners
- Customer service begins at the first point of contact with the agency and continues indefinitely
- A perceived lack of communication and respect is the leading cause of dissatisfaction with the agency

**Q. What if my position does not involve a caseload?**

**A.** At some point or another you will come in contact with birth parents, resource parents or community partners. How you respond to them makes a difference! Here are some things you can do to make a good impression even if you don't carry a caseload:

- Smile
- Speak in a warm and welcoming tone
- Minimize transfers or passing the person off
- Try to locate the person or information yourself, if at all possible
- Follow through if you offer to help someone
- Express your gratitude

## Support + Engagement = More Families

The process of becoming a resource parent can take up to several months and families may become frustrated and drop out along the way. It is important to keep as many resource parents engaged during the certification process as possible so that they can go on to provide quality care for children. Here are some key times in the process where families need extra support and engagement.

| Gaps Often Occur:                  |                      |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Between                            | And                  |
| The first call                     | Orientation          |
| Orientation                        | Pre-service Training |
| Application/<br>Pre-service Train- | Assessment           |
| Assessment                         | Approval             |
| Approval                           | Placement            |

## Eleven Ways to Provide Customer Service to Resource Parents

1. Be responsive
2. Return phone calls and emails promptly
3. Provide information
4. Be flexible when scheduling appointments
5. Include resource parents in permanency planning
6. Provide support and communication during CPS investigations
7. Be sensitive when a child is leaving
8. Gather information about the child from the resource parents
9. Help resource parents adopt if that is their goal
10. Promote stable placements
11. Follow up with interested families

