

Gill: Adoption positive way to join a family

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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NCHS caseworker shares book about adoption with Dudley students.

“Ever since the world began,” said the owl, “there have been times when a mother has a baby she loves, but no matter how she tries, she cannot give him the things that he needs.

“When this happens, the mother sometimes looks for another family to love and take care of her baby.”—The Mulberry Bird

“How many of you know what adoption is?” Jan Gill recently asked a class of Dudley Elementary third graders.

Most of the children raised their hands.

“Adoption is a way to become part of a family,” explained Gill who is a caseworker for the Nebraska Children’s Home Society which facilitates adoptions.

Gill told the youngsters all children are born the same way but sometimes a mom or dad cannot take care of the baby.

That’s when adoption can happen.

When asked why a mother may not be able to care for a baby, some of the students answered:

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She didn't have enough money.



She might not have had a house.

The parents could be too young to take care of a baby.

Gill then shared The Mulberry Bird about a mother bird who couldn't care for her baby.

After much anguish and finally advice from a wise owl, she picks out the kind of birds she would like to raise her baby.

After the reading, Gill said the story emphasizes that the mother loves her baby but cannot provide a safe home for him all by herself.

As part of her job, Gill visits schools to educate children about ethical adoption.

"I also want to show them that adoption is a positive way to become part of a family," she explained.

Another thing about adoption Gill emphasizes is that there's nothing wrong with a child who's placed for adoption.

"The birth parents sometimes have difficult life circumstances that lead them to choose

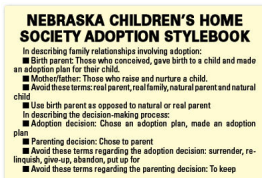
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adoption,” she said.

In addition, birth parents love their children which makes adoption a difficult choice.



“I love The Mulberry Bird because it makes it clear that the mother bird never forgot her baby,” Gill said.

The book also shows that the baby bird grows up with mixed feelings about adoption which his parents help him deal with.

During her presentations, Gill said she sometimes hears untrue things about adoption.

“I’ve had a child tell me that adoption is when ‘you don’t love your baby and give it away,’ ” she said.

Gill said she’s worked with many pregnancy clients and “that’s never been my experience.”

“They care very much about the child and want him or her to have a life they can’t give their baby,” she said.

As the mother of two adopted children, Gill has experienced adoption firsthand.

“We’ve lived it,” she said about herself and husband Larry Gill. “It’s a lifelong process that

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affects everyone all of their lives.”

Since working with NCHS for 14 years, Gill thinks perceptions about adoption have changed but not always in a positive way.

Television shows and movies don't always portray adoption as a positive option, she said.

“It's often portrayed in a secretive, unrealistic and sensationalized way that gives the message that adoption is negative,” Gill explained.

For example, a story about a 5-year-old child who was adopted at birth is returned to his birth family.

Gill also pointed to how adoption is sometimes described as “putting a child up for adoption.”

“That expression evolved from when orphans were put on trains and then on platforms in different towns so people could decide which ones they wanted,” she explained.

“Being adopted, he decided, was having two families—one far away but not forgotten, and one that greeted him each morning, surrounding him with the flutter of their warm feathered bodies and the noisy chorus of their singing.”—The Mulberry Bird

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