



Adoption, Foster Care, Family . . . How Do We Use the Internet and Social Media?

We live in a changing world. We don't do research via books – we use the Internet. We connect with our friends and family through email, Face Time, Skype, and text messages. And the world of social media changes every day. Upgrades, updates, new platforms, and other changes take effect just as soon as we learn how to navigate each platform! Or so it seems. It's no wonder that many parents find themselves confused and overwhelmed. Whether you are deciding which sites you should sign up for or monitoring your children's site usage, there is a lot to learn.

When all of these electronic opportunities land on foster and adoptive families, it becomes much more confusing. Stories have been coming out about the hazards – families choosing an agency over the Internet and experiencing fraud as they are looking for infants and expectant mothers making an adoption plan. Many people search for birth parents and siblings and have both positive and negative experiences. Recently, Illinois identified an adoption provider with a violation of state statute on its procedures. **Wisconsin currently has legislation in process that may alter who, what, and when electronic media can be used to make adoptive placement connections.**

The Donaldson Institute for Adoption recently released their second report, "Untangling the Web II." They surveyed over 2,000 people including adoptive parents, birth/first parents, and adoption professionals. The report showed clearly that the respondents all used the Internet and social media on a regular basis, but clearly identified some trends:

- The Internet has greatly increased the commercialization of adoption. It also increased risks to both expectant parents as well as prospective adoptive parents.
- Despite risks, the Internet is an important and regular part of how people live their lives in relation to adoption.
- The Internet has expanded the ability of adopted persons to search for birth/first family members.
- The Internet and social media facilitate ongoing contact between members of adoptive and birth/first families, many of whom appreciated the "contact with a distance."
- All groups sometimes use the Internet or social media to follow others in their extended family of adoption without their knowledge.
- A significant majority of professionals do not receive training on how to prepare clients to safely and effectively use this technology.

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From the Corner Office

Hi everyone,

Welcome to this issue of *Partners*, which focuses on social media. Social media is changing all our lives as we connect with friends and families in new ways. It has made our life both simpler and more complex.

Foster care and adoption is complex by its very nature. Agencies, birth families, foster families, adoptive families, extended relatives – everyone is involved and that complicates how, when, and why we utilize social media to communicate. Just as every decision in this foster care/adoption world is made based on best interests of children, we have to take a wide-lens look at this area. When does social media make things better? When do we need to limit and monitor its usage? When do we ban social media usage? How do we look at it from the vantage point of every person connected?

We hope this issue starts to get you thinking about how you as a family and you as a professional help continue the dialogue around this technology that will be with us forever.

As ever, call us with your questions, concerns, and thoughts. We are here to serve you.



Colleen M. Ellingson
Chief Executive Officer

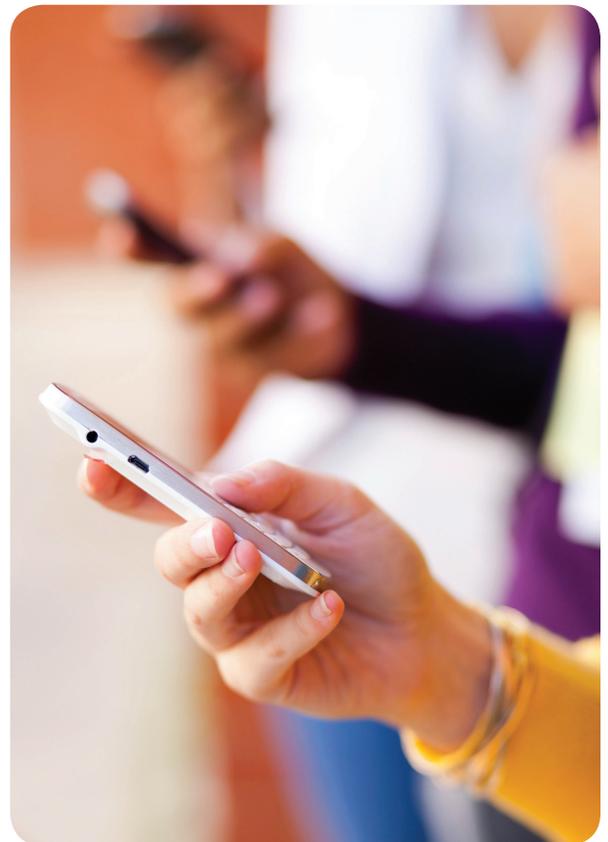
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- Despite concerns about the potential for unwarranted contact, few respondents reported that the Internet or social media had led to unwelcome intrusions.
- The Internet proves a valuable outlet for adopted people and especially for birth/first parents to express their ongoing struggles.

If we look at everyone connected to foster care, as well as adoption, many of these same issues and concerns would be reflected. So this issue of *Partners* is to help us all think about what is right for our agencies, all types of families (birth, foster, and adoptive), and children. We all have lots to learn – and we also need to keep up with all the technology out there that makes our lives both better and more difficult.

The Internet can be a lot of things: fun, exciting, educational, and also scary. Reading our tips will help you and your children navigate it with less worry and more enjoyment. With a few clicks of a button, you will be surprised how quickly you can open up your community and your world!

Read more research from [Untangling the Web II](#), the recent Donaldson Adoption Institute's research report at adoptioninstitute.org. We thank them for their diligent research on this emerging topic.



An Introduction to Social Media

There are lots of social media platforms, but these are some of the most popular ones. The examples we give are not actual updates or posts, but will help to describe how these platforms might be used for adoptive parents to share their experiences (these could also be similar for foster parents):



Twitter – I am an #adoptive parent.

Twitter uses 140 character “tweets” which tell the world news, information, or how you are doing. Using “hashtags” (#) in your tweet becomes part of a larger searchable conversation, making it easier to connect with others who share your interests.



Facebook – I like being an adoptive parent.

Facebook is probably the most well-known social media platform today and has been falling in popularity with teens because of it. (Once they found out how many moms and dads were joining Facebook, teens started leaving and going to other social networking sites!) On Facebook, people share “status updates,” which may or may not include pictures and links to tell the world what they are up to. Facebook has just recently started integrating hashtags (#), but has been less successful with making them stick than Twitter.



YouTube – Why I love being an adoptive parent.

YouTube is a video sharing platform. Users can upload a video and also include keywords in the video’s description that will allow the video to be searched by topic. Users can also comment, like, or dislike videos. In recent years, YouTube has become increasingly strict about the type of content that users are allowed to share.



LinkedIn – My skills include being a loving adoptive parent.

LinkedIn is a social network platform for professionals. You can upload your resume and connect with current and former employers and coworkers. Think of it as professional networking’s version of Facebook.



Snap Chat – Here is a picture (that you can only see for 20 seconds) of my new adoption-themed book.

Snap Chat is a new way to share pictures. Rather than having your photos immortalized on Facebook for all to see, Snap Chat allows users to share pictures which “self-destruct” after 20 seconds of viewing.



Pinterest – The kids and I do these fun crafts together.

Pinterest serves as a digital picture reference for a wide variety of subjects. Users can group and save content (recipes, hair styles, craft projects, etc.) by “pinning” photos and images on “boards” to view later.



Instagram – Look what the kids made at school today!

Instagram is a picture sharing site best known for the wide variety of filters users can put on pictures to manipulate how they look. Users post pictures using a description which sometimes includes “hashtags” (#).



Foursquare – This is where I go for post-adoption training.

Foursquare allows users to “check-in” to businesses, homes, schools, and any other locations for which a user has created a check-in spot. Some businesses offer deals or discounts for “check-ins.” Participating businesses generally display the Foursquare logo somewhere prominent for customers and clients to see.



Vine – Here is a six second video on how to become an adoptive parent.

Vine is a video sharing platform that allows users to shoot multiple segments and then create one six second video. Many vines are funny or clever, but companies are moving into using them for advertising as well.



Tumblr – What I love about being an adoptive parent.

Tumblr is a blog-like site that allows users to share their thoughts mainly through pictures. Users can “follow” each other and get notified when new content is created. If you have thought about blogging, but only have small snippets of time, Tumblr might be the better platform for you.

Safely Searching via Social Media



Social media is here to stay. Facebook and Twitter might be the most commonly recognized sites, but Instagram, Pinterest, Google+, YouTube, and scores of other sites are gaining in popularity. New sites are created regularly. It's challenging to keep up to date with the multitude of social media options.

In fact, if your child is using a particular site, you might not even recognize it as a social networking site. Many parents try to monitor what their children are doing online but the overwhelming diversity of sites makes it difficult to know exactly what they might be looking at . . . or for whom they might be looking.

Because young people are so savvy about Internet use, they may decide to search the Internet for their birth family. With just a little bit of knowledge, there are ways to find an astounding amount of information about people. And when we post something on social media, we're also revealing detailed information about ourselves, sometimes unintentionally.

The decision to search is one that takes a lot of thought and consideration before actually diving into it. But the lure of "just looking" on the Internet is often so appealing that a search might be started before considering, or even

being aware of, all the possible outcomes. And searching on the Internet can compress the timeframe so that a person doesn't have the weeks or months to reflect as you would in waiting for a response in a traditional search. You can post something and when you press Enter, the message is sent instantaneously and can't be retrieved. Someone could respond almost immediately, maybe before the searcher expects or is adequately prepared for it.

Any response, positive or negative, may open up complex emotions your child might not be ready for. And what if the person who responds is not really a birth family member? We all know there are imposters on the Internet. Being scammed by someone claiming to be a birth relative can be an emotionally devastating experience.

You may want to consider having an early safety-focused conversation with your child about using the Internet to look for birth relatives or people they once knew. You might talk about how the person being found might not welcome what could be seen as an intrusion. The person searching likely has been thinking about it for quite some time, but the person being found will get a message out of the blue.

You can also help your child understand about privacy settings. Even when something is marked “private,” others can see posts and photos. Being “a friend of a friend” may allow someone to see content that the owner of the page might think is private. If your child posts information or pictures, there’s no guarantee that it will remain private.

Keep in mind that anything posted can easily be shared outside the circle you intend. That far-reaching sharing can also open up avenues to connect with other birth family members, which may be something that you would welcome, especially if you have genetic or medical concerns. Keep in mind the safety concerns in regard to establishing connections with others who you may not know.

Here are some important facts regarding social media:

Many social media sites do not knowingly allow minors under the age of 13 to have an account. However, underage children can and do set up accounts.

Information about a person’s location may be available even if that information is not posted by the user. Geotags can be imbedded in photos taken from a smart phone, tablet, or digital camera with an online connection. This can reveal information about where users were and when they posted something, or where a photograph was taken.

Facebook’s Data Use policy says, “Some types of stories are always public stories . . . Some things (like your name, profile pictures, and cover photo) . . . are always publicly available. As a general rule, you should assume that if you do not see a sharing icon, the information will be publicly available.”

Social networking can be a useful tool for keeping in touch with birth families if you have already established some boundaries and ground rules for communication, especially if your child is a minor.

The decision to search is one that takes a lot of thought and consideration before actually diving into it. But the lure of “just looking” on the Internet is often so appealing that a search might be started before considering, or even being aware of, all the possible outcomes.

Another safety conversation you might have involves being careful in responding to someone who initiates a conversation. It’s possible that birth parents could search for a biological child on the Internet, something that would have been far more difficult before Facebook and other social media sites were so common. Your child could get a message and respond to it, opening up a conversation with a stranger. You could emphasize to your child that anyone can send a message, which could be a legitimate message but could also be a hoax, and encourage your child to let you know if a message from a stranger appears.

If you do already have contact with your child’s birth family, social media can be one way to facilitate permitted contact. If you have agreed to share photos and updates, doing that online can be a quick and efficient way to send the information, and to get photos and updates in return.



Keeping Yourself and Your Foster and Adoptive Kids Safe



Talk. There can be great value in parents being the ones to bring up the topic of social media with their kids. The first step is often taking the time to be open and honest about your expectations. You may want to identify safe Internet sites for games or research. You might want to have limits on the amount of time that can be spent on electronic media. It can be helpful to set ground rules for use early on and make sure they are age/safety appropriate. Older youth can even be included in creating and setting the rules when possible and appropriate. Consider having those rules include access to passwords and frequent monitoring. Also, be sure to discuss the need for safety and any consequences of not following the family's established ground rules.

Restrictions. Once your children are legally yours, you can make all the decisions, but you will still need to evaluate safety and openness concerns around connections to birth families/siblings. What platforms are best for your child at what age and when? Does this change for different developmental stages? What restrictions on the amount of usage will you have?

If you have foster children in your home, it becomes even more difficult. In Wisconsin, how foster children can use social media and the Internet for connections varies across the state by agencies and county Human Service Departments. It becomes much more difficult to evaluate best usage when each foster care case is unique. Are birth family connections (parents, siblings, or extended family) healthy at this time? What are the safety issues? You should make sure that you have contacted your out-of-home care social worker to determine what the restrictions are, concerns, and dialogue they want to have with you regarding each case.

Privacy. Many parents have found success in working with their children in adjusting the privacy settings on various accounts. The general rule is the more private the better, as it keeps unwanted attention away from accounts. For quick tutorials on adjusting these settings, you can search (name of social media site) + (privacy settings) in your search engine of choice. This kind of discussion can also be a welcome opportunity to talk openly about what to post and what not to post on the Internet. Internet safety professionals advise not posting your full name, address, school, phone numbers, and schedules (e.g., “We are heading on vacation for a week! Hawaii here we come!”). You might want to prohibit the posting of any pictures online due to the “tagging” of photos to locations. Prohibit responding to emails or attachments from an unknown person.

Monitor. This can be challenging when youth have access to the Internet almost everywhere. However, knowing their passwords and being connected on social media can help. You may also consider keeping the family computer in a common space and conducting random Internet searches for your child’s name.

Use. As social media gets more integrated into our everyday lives, it can be easy to forget to be hypervigilant about using it. There are a lot of benefits in reviewing tips for use with your children. Some tips might include:

- Remember to be respectful of others.
- Even with the mask of the Internet, you are still connecting with another person.
- Venting frustrations on the Internet can create hurt feelings on the part of family or friends. Sometimes it is better to think it, rather than speak it, or post it for all the cyber world to see.
- If you feel you are being cyberbullied, speak up, but not to the bully. Ask them to stop once, but do not engage further; instead, tell an adult immediately.

You may want to encourage your children to consider the following questions before posting:

- Will this hurt my chances of getting a job/into college?
- What if this were to be shared over 100 times?
- Could your words be misinterpreted and, if so, what could be the potential consequences? (Using sarcasm in person often comes across quite differently than when it is used in writing.)
- Will these words or pictures hurt someone or put them in danger?
- How would I feel if someone I admire read this?
- Would I be in danger if I shared this information?





Connecting with Birth Family

Children in foster care often want to keep connections to their birth parents, siblings, and extended families. Sometimes that is a wonderful thing – and other times, it may not be. As shared parenting becomes the norm in Wisconsin, foster parents are increasingly connecting with birth parents to help them grow their skills and reunite with their children on a permanent basis. Foster children may be connecting with their siblings through visitation, but also through Skype, texting, and Facebook pages. It is important for foster families to have a dialogue with their agency around media usage for themselves as well as for their foster children when these are connections to birth family members.

There has been a lot of talk this year about adoptees finding their birth family through social media. This could prompt your children to want to start a search of their own. You and your child may want to talk to a mental health professional who knows your family about the concerns and feelings that may crop up during this process. Your child may be concerned about your feelings, as adoptive parents, around search. You may have conflicting feelings that your child is rejecting you as the parent because they want to learn more about their birth/first family.

You may want to sit down with your child for an open, frank, and honest discussion. Make a pros and cons list for trying to search for members of their birth family this way, being certain to remind them that their safety and well-being is what is most important to you.

If your children are already connected with birth family through social media, it can be helpful for them and for you to talk about how you will monitor the relationship and if those connections remain safe and appropriate.

Resources

Coalition Tip Sheets

- **The 411 on Social Media, Networking, and Texting**
<http://wiadopt.org/Portals/WIAadopt/Tipsheets/ChildrenYouth/Social%20Media.pdf>
- **Internet Safety Tips for Caregivers**
<http://wiadopt.org/Portals/WIAadopt/Tipsheets/ChildrenYouth/Internet%20Safety%20Tips%20for%20Caregivers.pdf>
- **Cyberbullying, Social Networking, and You (tip sheet for youth)**
<http://wifostercareandadoption.org/Portals/WIAadopt/Tipsheets/Youth/cyberbullying.pdf>
- **To Search or Not to Search**
<http://wifostercareandadoption.org/Portals/WIAadopt/Tipsheets/HonoringFamily/search.pdf>

Books

- (Free e-book) *Adoption and Social Media: The Effects of Social Media and the Internet on Child Adoption*
<http://www.adoptionstar.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Social-Media-and-Adoption-Adoption-STAR.pdf>
- *Bubble Wrapped Children: How Social Networking is Transforming the Face of 21st Century Adoption*, by Helen Oakwater

Web Resources

- **The Coalition's *Partners* newsletter**
<http://www.wiadopt.org/Portals/WIAadopt/AdoptandPartners/partners-summer11.pdf>
- **Untangling the Web: The Internet's Transformative Impact on Adoption**
http://adoptioninstitute.org/research/2012_12_UntanglingtheWeb.php
- **Untangling the Web II: A Research-Based Roadmap for Reform**
http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/2013_12_UntanglingtheWeb2.php
- **Social Media Explained: Tips, tricks, links, and useful tools for some of the most popular social networks**
<http://www.nyu.edu/life/student-life/hashtagNYU/social-media-explained.html>
- **The Role of Social Media in Adoption**
<https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/publications/adoption-advocate-no-64.html>
- **Adoption and Social Media: Recommendations for Healthy Ongoing Communication**
<http://www.adoptionstar.com/child-placement/adoption-and-social-media-recommendations-for-healthy-ongoing-communication/>
- **Social Media and the Post-Adoption Experience**
<http://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/091712p22.shtml>
- **Adoption and Social Media: The Effects of Social Media and the Internet on Adoption**
<http://www.adoptionstar.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Social-Media-and-Adoption-Adoption-STAR.pdf>
- **Adopted children are searching for their birth parents through social media**
http://www.montgomerynews.com/articles/2013/06/02/parents_express/columns/doc518c1fd1d2668023649256.txt?viewmode=fullstory
- **Searching for Birth Relatives from the Child Welfare Information Gateway**
https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_search.pdf

Can Social Media Help When You're Considering Adoption?



“The best thing you can do is ask friends and family to help spread the word.”
Becky, a pre-adoptive parent, commenting on why she and her husband started using Facebook to find a birth mom

Using technology to network is not a new idea. But today, some prospective adoptive parents are turning to social networking to look for birth parents who want to make an adoption plan. And that might be a new idea for many who are hoping to adopt.

For some pre-adoptive parents, it's a logical step. You create your portfolio for your adoption agency to show to birth mothers. In it, you talk about your family, your interests, who you are, and the kind of parents you'll be. It's an opportunity to share specific information about your family. But it only gets shown to the birth parents who contact the agency. Some parents think, “Why not expand that audience and show that same information to friends and family, who will then share it with their friends and families?”

For other pre-adoptive parents, there are privacy concerns and ethical issues. *Would we really want to reveal so much about ourselves in such a public way? If it's out there on the Internet anyone could read it. Anyone could comment. It never really goes away. And isn't that like advertising for a baby or a child?*

Adam Pertman, Executive Director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, says that the Internet provides resources that have never before existed. But adoption on the Internet “is also largely unmonitored and unregulated,” which raises serious questions about ethical practices.

Those ethical concerns, and the very real possibility of getting involved in a scam, are reasons that some adoption agencies are not encouraging parents to use social networking to

connect with birth parents. Email hoaxes, identity theft, Internet fraud, and other scams are so commonplace that we have all learned to be skeptical and to guard our personal information.

Other agencies are glad to know that a pre-adoptive couple is being proactive and conducting some initial outreach on their own to find birth parents who want to connect with an adoptive family.

Some agencies tread the middle ground: A private website or blog might be preferable to using a more open platform, such as Facebook or Craigslist.

Any social media or social networking site can create a link between people. There are tens of thousands of YouTube videos featuring couples and singles who are looking to adopt. Facebook pages of people wanting to adopt have hundreds, often thousands, of “likes.” There are ads on Craigslist, boards on Pinterest, blogs on Tumblr. Even the micro-blogging site, Twitter, with its limitation of 140 characters, is used as a social media marketing tool by people wanting to adopt. All the top social media sites have millions of users. No wonder some prospective adoptive parents have turned to these sites to get the word out.

For Becky and Ben, a Wisconsin pre-adoptive couple, one of the benefits of having a Facebook page is the support they get, not only from friends and family, but from people they’ve never met. They have over 800 followers, and only 240 are people they know. Becky said, “For us it was very difficult to share something so personal in such a public way. I never thought I’d be sharing this on Facebook. The amount of encouragement and blessings are amazing. It’s easy to feel alone because your friends are having babies and to get this kind of support from people you don’t even know is really important.” She says that they started out using social media to spread the word. Now the message is also, “Hey team, thanks for cheering us on! This is what we’re doing next.” And there’s another benefit: “It’s a good way for the birth mother to see how everyone supports us.”

But what are the red flags? Becky, who is using a personal website as well as Facebook, says some scams are obvious. If a priest from Romania contacts you, it’s probably a scam. Other red flags for Becky are people placing twins or people asking for money. “It could be legitimate...birth parents do have expenses. But we have learned to be careful.”

Adoption social workers and adoption attorneys say, “There are no guarantees with social media.” People aren’t always who they say they are. Some people repeatedly reply to parents looking to adopt. The emotional pain of connecting with someone, only to find out it’s a scam, can be devastating. Adam Pertman cautions, “The risk involved is that both the birth parents and the prospective adoptive parents are vulnerable and they don’t necessarily know the laws or how they can proceed once they connect.”

That’s why it’s important to work with an adoption agency. Your agency will do your home study and help you as you go through the adoption process. In fact, Wisconsin law **requires** that you “receive a favorable recommendation” after a home

study before you can “advertise for the purpose of finding a child to adopt” (Stat. 48.825). Posting on Facebook or Craigslist could be interpreted as advertising. Check the Coalition’s list of licensed agencies in Wisconsin to select an agency to work with. Many people talk to more than one agency before deciding who will do their home study.

There are valid reasons to be cautious about using social media to find birth parents. Social media can be a helpful resource in other ways. It can create a network of people who share their hopes and frustrations, and get support from each other. Wisconsin Hopeful Adoptive Families is a Facebook group where people can share what they’ve learned in their adoption journey. This is a closed group, meaning that you have to be approved by the administrator to become a member. Nonmembers can see the main page of a closed group but can’t view any posts or photos. Social networking is also a way to ask questions of others who have adopted or are waiting to adopt. It’s a place where you can read others’ stories and apply them to your own experience.

We’re connected to others in many ways. Using online connections for support, information, and sharing your hopes and frustrations can help while you’re waiting to adopt. Certainly, social media and social networking sites make it easier and more efficient to create those connections. But it also means we need to be cautious in what we share and whom we share it with.

“For us it was very difficult to share something so personal in such a public way. I never thought I’d be sharing this on Facebook. The amount of encouragement and blessings are amazing. It’s easy to feel alone because your friends are having babies and to get this kind of support from people you don’t even know is really important.”



Home to Stay: Why Not for Forever?

Our thanks to Paulette Drankiewicz for sharing her family's story with us for this issue of Partners.

Some people find out about the need for foster parents from billboard, TV, and radio ads or from talking to families that have foster or adopted children. Paulette Drankiewicz learned about fostering when an opportunity quite literally fell into her lap. Paulette was at a meeting at a new church, and nearby sat a couple with a young boy on their lap. The child crawled down and sat on Paulette's lap for the remainder of the meeting. Paulette jokingly asked the couple, "Can I have him?" They started crying and informed Paulette that they were providing kinship care and just that day had given their 30 day notice that they would no longer be able to take care of that child. This started the Drankiewicz family on a journey into foster care and adoption from which they have never looked back.

The Drankiewicz family currently consists of Paulette, her husband Scott, their three biological children, six adopted children, and two medically needy foster babies. Paulette insists that they are just a “normal, everyday family.”

She describes being an adoptive mother as an “unnatural type of parenting” in that she has had to learn how to parent children who have been traumatized. In her experience, healing begins when children are provided with consistent care and realize that they are safe. Paulette is proud to report that all of her children have made a lot of progress in a short period of time. She strives to teach her children that just because bad things have happened to them in the past does not mean that it will define their future.

According to Paulette, one of the biggest challenges she faces as an adoptive parent is prejudice from others. Since her family is multiracial, they get a lot of attention when they are in public and it is not always positive. Paulette has faced many interesting comments and questions from strangers, from, “Your children are lucky to have you,” to, “Where are your children from?” While she likes to educate others about the joys and benefits of adoption, Paulette confesses, “Sometimes when I go out to eat, I just want to eat my eggs.”

Despite the challenges, the Drankiewiczs enjoy the sense of accomplishment of helping children through struggles, whether they are birth children, adopted children, or foster children. As someone who has experienced both, Paulette is adamant that there is no difference in the love that you have for an adoptive child versus a biological child. She revels in the joy of what she calls “every day parenting” – helping a child learn to tie their shoe or ride a bike. Paulette asserts that you do not have to be the perfect parent, claiming, “I make mistakes all the time.”

Since becoming a foster and adoptive family, the Drankiewicz’s circle of friends has changed drastically. Most people Paulette and Scott associate with have some connection to foster care or adoption, which they say is nice because they just “get it.” Paulette once invited other foster parents to her home for a barbecue and one foster mother started crying. This family had not been invited anywhere in almost a year. They were fostering young twins who had been severely traumatized and who their friends and family found “too destructive.” Having a strong community of foster and adoptive parents is essential to success. As Paulette points out, “children are better off when parents are well supported.”

In October 2009, Paulette helped form Connecting Bridges, Inc., a support group whose mission is to help foster and adoptive children by supporting foster and adoptive parents. In addition to monthly meetings, Connecting Bridges features a Facebook page in which foster parents support one another. Sometimes this means that foster parents ask for needed supplies for a new placement; other times they may be seeking advice about how to handle a difficult situation. Either way, Paulette says that support always pours in within minutes. Paulette admits that she never used to be a big

social media person, but her experience with the Connecting Bridges Facebook page has helped her recognize the benefits of this medium.

The Drankiewicz family also uses social media to maintain connections with her children’s birth families (when it is in the child’s best interest). She uploads pictures to Facebook so that the birth family can see photos of their child. She also emails, texts, and arranges visits with birth parents and extended family members.

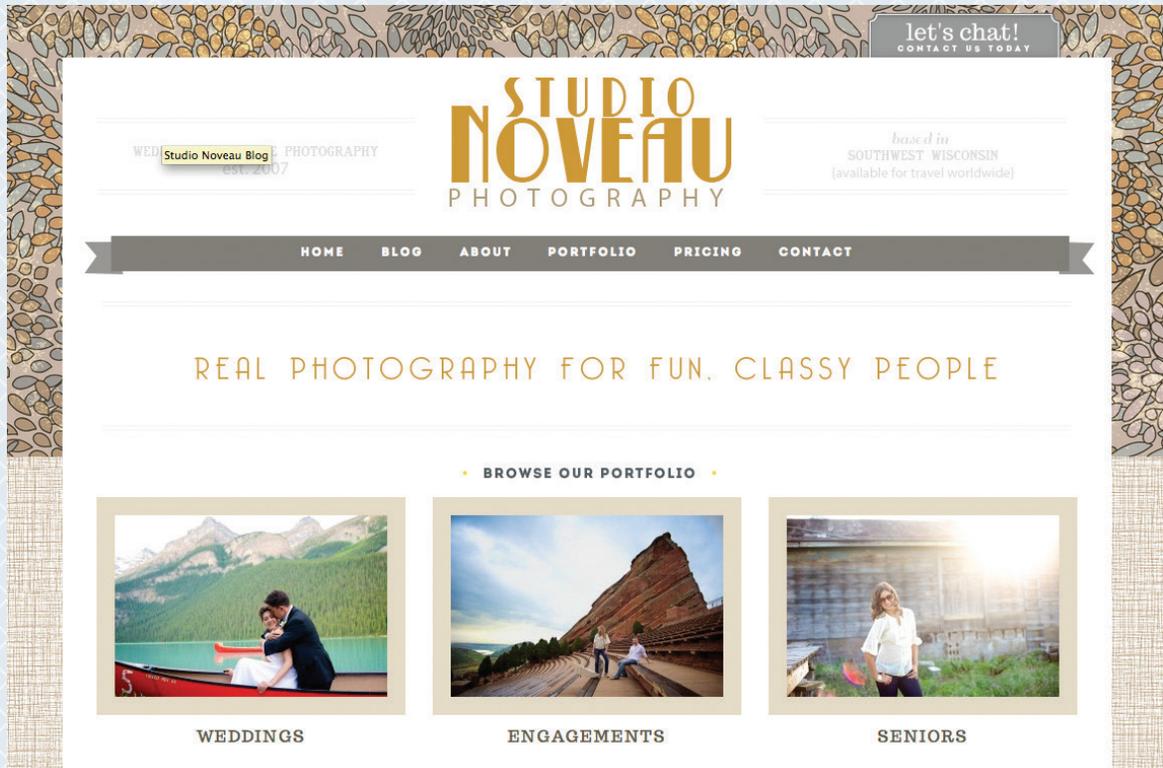
Paulette’s ability and desire to connect with birth parents is evident in her experience with daughter Kimora’s birth mother. One day after a court hearing, Paulette tried to talk to Kimora’s birth mom, but the birth mom didn’t want anything to do with her. As Paulette was driving away from the court house, she noticed Kimora’s birth mom waiting at a bus stop. Paulette was concerned because this woman was pregnant and it was a brutally hot summer day. She turned her car around and offered her a ride. Kimora’s birth mother then opened up to Paulette and even asked her if she would consider adopting the baby she was carrying. Paulette did adopt this child and even served as her labor and delivery coach and cut the cord when the baby was born.

The Coalition for Children, Youth & Families has been there to help the Drankiewicz family celebrate adoption through the Home to Stay™ program, which provides families with an opportunity to learn about the services, resources, and supports available to adoptive families. Although she admits that there have been some bumps in the road, Paulette wholeheartedly believes that adoption is a great thing. Through the years, Paulette has realized that there are many children waiting to be adopted and her feeling is, “why not be their forever family?”

The Drankiewicz’s are an example of a Jockey Home to Stay™ family. Before their Home to Stay visit, personalized backpacks were created for all of their kids, containing books, games, blankets, and other goodies to help the family further celebrate adoption finalizations. If you have recently completed an adoption from the child welfare system and would like to take part in the Home to Stay program, please contact us at 414-475-1246 or 800-762-8063.

Family Portrait Day

Saturday, May 3, 2014 | 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.



Have your family portrait taken by Becky Eby of Studio Nouveau for only \$10!

\$10/Family

Studio Nouveau
116 Sunset Ridge Street, Gays Mills, WI

Register online at <https://2014portraitdaywestern.eventbrite.com> or contact info@coalitionforcyf.org or call 414-475-1246

Join us for our annual family portrait day!

This event has become a favorite and is open to all foster and adoptive families.

Each family session is 20-30 minutes. You will receive a link via email within two-three weeks following your session inviting you to view your family's pictures on Mpix.com. You will also have the option of purchasing any photos that you would like. We have used Mpix.com for several years - they provide quality service, a wide variety of products, and very budget-friendly prices.

Be sure to reserve your time early—this is a popular event and frequently sells out!

Family Portrait Day

Saturday, May 3, 2014 | 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.


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\$10/Family

Coalition for Children, Youth & Families
6682 W. Greenfield Avenue, Suite 310, Milwaukee

Register online at <https://2014portraitdaycoalition.eventbrite.com>
or contact info@coalitionforcyf.org or call 414-475-1246

Have your family
portrait taken by
Agnieszka
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Photography for
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Upcoming Trainings & Events

Please join us for these upcoming training events! You can find these and more events on our web calendar at www.wiadopt.org. Simply click on the “Calendar” link.

March 25th – Social Media Safety

April 1st - Identity Development & Adoption

April 29th – Attachment/Bonding

May (date TBD) – Fostering teens

June (TBD) – Boundaries, limits, and parenting

Please be sure to stay connected with us! We post on our Facebook page as more details about trainings and events become available. You can also subscribe to our e-newsletter for announcements of events and other helpful information.

Where to Find the Coalition on Social Media

As an organization, we keep an eye on new and emerging social media networks. Some we jump on board and create a page or profile; other times we find that the platform isn't a fit for our mission. You can currently find the Coalition on the following sites:

 **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/coalitionforcyf

 **Twitter:** www.twitter.com/coalitionforcyf and www.twitter.com/fosterprntsrock

 **WordPress Blog:** www.strengtheningfamilieschanginglives.wordpress.com



Coalition for Children, Youth & Families

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info@coalitionforcyf.org

Family of websites:
coalitionforcyf.org
wiadopt.org
wifostercareandadoption.org
wiadoptioninfocenter.org

An umbrella of services over foster care and adoption; information and referral; recruitment; training, education and support for families and professionals.



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