

**Aviva Children's Services Volunteer and Visitation Programs
for Child Protective Services**

**KIDS AT HEART
1999-2009**

**CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF
HELPING CHILDREN IN NEED!**

Gracious, Compassionate...Anne



*Aviva
Children's
Services*
Mission Statement
*The mission of Aviva
is to enhance
services that
improve the quality
of life for children
who are victims of
neglect, abuse,
and poverty, and
who are in the care
of Child Protective
Services.*

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by Bob Heslinga
Executive Director

I was having a difficult time starting this article when the thought came to me to look up the meaning of the name Anne. To my delight, I discovered that Anne comes from Hebrew words meaning gracious, compassionate. Those words certainly capture the spirit of Anne Sankey. And it seems fitting that they be the title of an article written in tribute to Anne, the beloved founder of Aviva Children's Services.

Thirty-one years ago, meeting in a kitchen, Anne and Georgia Vancza began to put together a small, grass-roots volunteer program to help out children in CPS care. As the program grew in the first few years, more and more volunteers came forward. The first contract with CPS came in 1980—just two years after the volunteer program's inception at a kitchen table.

In 1989, CPS awarded a contract to provide Parent-Child Visit Supervision. It was at this time that paid, part-time staff persons were added. In 1999, to better serve the needs of Pima County, a new and independent agency was created: Aviva Children's Services. From then until now, Aviva

has grown in service and reputation.

While Anne would be the first to point to the committed men and women who worked with her, there is no question that she has been the gentle, persistent energy behind Aviva. This soft-spoken person faced formidable challenges with a toughness and dedication necessary to create one of the finest child welfare organizations in the state.

Thorough, professional, caring, cooperative, collaborative and thoughtful are just some of the attributes that others in child welfare circles use to describe Anne. She was instrumental in creating an organizational culture that continues in the professional staff and programs she has built. Her prudent stewardship of resources—financial and otherwise—has left Aviva in an enviable position compared to other non-profits in Pima County. Aviva is strong for the sake of abused and neglected children because of her.

When I was hired to succeed her, I admitted to some concerns. With each day, however, I realized how fortunate I was to be chosen. Here was an organization that was strong financially, that had a competent and caring

staff and that wanted to grow into a new phase of service. Beyond my professional good fortune, I feel singularly blessed in knowing Anne. Knowing that she will continue to serve as President of a newly expanded Board is comforting to me and ensures continuity in the future.

Anne has taken kindly the counsel of her years of service and has gracefully surrendered the day-to-day responsibilities of Aviva and its programs. As she discovers the richness of retirement, I know that Anne's fingerprints will continue to mark Aviva's presence in the community for many years to come. We—staff, volunteers, Board, and, most especially, countless abused and neglected children—are blessed because of her.



Anne Sankey retired at the end of May and is enjoying time with her family.

Sun Riders Give for Nearly Three Decades

by Susan Boldan

Wes (Redbird) and I were original members of the Sun Riders Motorcycle Club. In the late 1970s, workers at Anamax and Pima Copper Mines decided to form a family-oriented riding club. We had members named "Spider," "Fast Freddie," and "Sasquatch," just to name a few. Friends brought friends into the club and members did not necessarily have to ride a motorcycle. Trucks and trailers were needed for road trips and events. Everyone had a good time and that attracted people to the group. There were many local clubs, so riding activities happened almost every weekend.

Early runs lacked the foresight and accommodations that we now incorporate into the events. One of our very first poker runs, held at Toltec, Arizona on July 4 was intended to draw riders from Phoenix as well as Tucson. "Live and learn" was our experience at that event. Temperatures soared. It was possibly the worst time of year to ride out into the desert. Runs in the late 1970s and 1980s were hot, dusty adventures.

The Toy Parade was an idea that originated with our President, Jay Johnson. In 1982 he led the club in an effort to "give back" to the community. Fortunately he was directed to Friends of Child Protective Services, now Aviva Children's Services. Jay and Redbird met with the director and started planning a toy collection gathering at the Music Box Bar on 22nd Street. It had limited success that first year, but enthusiasm was



Members of the Sun Riders Motorcycle Club

high, so shortly thereafter, plans for a toy parade were in full swing. This was before computers, so flyers and letters were hand-written or typed by club members. As the Toy Parade gained in popularity, it outgrew one venue after another. Each year we tried to improve our technique, shorten sign-in lines, started giving participants a pin, door prizes and t-shirts and even raffle off a motorcycle. Riders expect a little something for showing up, but the real thrill is decorating their bike and riding in the parade, and after all it was for the KIDS. We were and still are a headache for the Tucson Police, but I think they enjoy the event also.

Over the years there has been a great desire to make this a memorable event that riders would look forward to. It has become tradition for many participants and has been called the biggest and best event of its kind in the Southwest. All annual charity events require months of planning and preparation. The larger the event becomes, the more restrictions are levied by the City and law enforcement. Club members complain a little about working every weekend leading up to the event, but still manage to focus on the families and especially the children who benefit from the proceeds of this parade. Weather plays a major role in determining turnout, however, you can bet that neither rain or snow has not and will not interfere with the annual Sun Riders Motorcycle Toy Parade.

Thank You Sun Riders for your time and donations for 27 years!!

The Sun Riders are an integral and important part of the holidays and the Abused Children's Fund. They are the largest single contributor to both and have been consistently supportive over the past 27 years. Their contributions have exceeded \$500,000 cash and over 35,000 toys.

Some years have been harder than others and last year was probably one of the most disheartening for these hard-working, dedicated volunteers. The economy had already been falling and then it rained all that weekend of the parade. That meant the number of sponsors and riders were way down and yet they were still able to give us a check for \$27,000 and hundreds of toys.

We can't thank them enough for all of their years of support and now want to ask all the readers, if you ride a motorcycle or know of someone who does, would you consider riding in this year's parade? The starting point is Mo Udall Park on Tanque Verde and the end of the parade will be Beaudry Motors on Alvernon Way.

Even if you don't ride you can still join the party at the end of the parade. Bring a toy and \$10. For everyone else, be sure to enjoy the parade along the route and wave and cheer the riders on – this is the best way to show our support and gratitude.

For the route and more information go to their website:
www.tucsonsunridersmc.com or email the 2009 parade chairperson, Robin at robinestep1@hotmail.com.

The 28th Annual Sun Riders Motorcycle Club Holiday Toy Parade will be held on Sunday, December 13th. Registration begins at 8:00 am and the parade will begin at 12 noon sharp.



The start of the 2008 Sun Riders Toy Parade.

Life Book writers help a child connect...

by Cindy Lingel, Life Book Coordinator

It's a natural thing for children to want to know about their past—stories about themselves when they were babies or stories about their moms and dads. Many children in foster care have no one to share these stories with them. They may have lived in 10 or more foster placements. They may have attended many different schools. If they were “in the system” as babies, they may have no idea who cared for them and thus no stories to fill their imaginations. They may not know how old they were when they began to walk or talk. They may not know that as a baby they looked just like their birth parents. Older children often wonder who in their birth families they are like – “Where did my curly hair come from?” “Where did I get these blue eyes?” “Did my birth mother love me?”

Life Books are a special kind of scrapbook created for children in the care of Child Protective Services. Because these children often become confused about what has happened to them, Life Books serve as a record of their lives. The Life Book process begins with research. The writers delve into the child's case files and construct a timeline of the child's journey through the foster care system. Along with the timeline, the writer constructs the story of the child's life. This is done in an age-appropriate way and the story is told in a sensitive, accurate and truthful manner. This story helps to validate the child's memories and explain how none of the abuse they suffered was their fault. The books point out how special children are and how they are supposed to be loved and protected by their parents. Life Books may speak about domestic violence, drugs, alcoholism, and mental illness, all possible reasons that a child may have come into CPS care. By understanding their past, it is hoped that the child will not make the same mistakes their birth parents made and that they will break the cycle of child abuse. Life Books are most often created for children that have been in CPS care for some time and are not going to be reunited with their birth parents.

Recently, Life Books were created for a group of four siblings. The younger three were in adoptive placements. The oldest boy, John*, a teenager, was living in a group home. He assumed the parent role for his younger brothers and sister for many years while their birth parents struggled with addiction.



Cindy Lingel, Life Book Coordinator

Aviva's Life Book Staff Writers...



Sharon Blewitt



Rachel Poe



Krista von Erik



Judy Moll



Connie Gaddle

When the courts decided that the parents had been given every chance and that they were not making the choice to change, their parental rights were legally severed — leaving the children free for adoption.

The younger children were all adopted by different families that committed to keep the children in touch with each other. The oldest boy remained in a group home. Finally a worker at his home knew that she and her family wanted to offer this young man a permanent home with them. He was scared. He had always been the caregiver and now he would be able to just be a young man. He was worried he might not fit in and that his new brothers would not accept him. He thought that it would be hard to live with a new mom and dad. The volunteer who wrote his book pointed out how strong and courageous he had always been and included a page that offered him a way to look at his situation that he may not have considered. She asked him to look inside himself to see if he had the courage to become a part of this new family. She included letters from the “new” brothers that were heartwarming, yet honest. When presented with his Life Book, John did not want to share it with anyone. He read it in private and only days later shared it with his new family.

In the end, John did decide to become a part of this family and is now flourishing. John's brothers and sisters are doing well in their homes too. The children were brought together to receive their Life Books. Each child sat down and read their book from cover to cover. They loved that the books were created just for them. A tear came to the girl's eye when she got to the pages of pictures of her birth mother. The story explained how her mother had loved her so much but that she just could not be the kind of mother that the child deserved; that her addictions were stronger than her will to change. Their stories included their new family's stories of their journey in finding them and adopting them. You could see how the children loved seeing their lives in the pages and how the books included their stories to the current day.

(*Not his real name)

Would you like to become a part of this project? Do you love to research, write and scrapbook? Life Books require a commitment of 10 hours per month and usually take about a year to complete. Please contact Cindy Lingel for information at 327.6779 ext. 14 or

Mentoring — A Special Relationship

by Susan Kelly, Volunteer Coordinator

The Mentor program matches a child in Child Protective Services with a special adult friend. Once the match is made, the Mentor spends time getting to know the child and building a relationship. Children in Child Protective Services are removed from their biological families due to some form of abuse. These children will experience many losses in their journey through the Child Welfare System. Children move from one foster home/group home to another and their case workers, therapists, Casa Volunteers, and other significant people in their lives come and go, which is extremely detrimental to their emotional well being. As the child weathers these changes, the Mentor is the safe port in this sea of uncertainty.

In training, I tell the Mentors that they have a special role in the life of a child because they are in their life simply because they want to be. They are involved with that child because they enjoy spending time with them. Take a brief second and think back to when you were growing up: who was the one adult who could always be counted on? If I were to ask a child in CPS that question they would either respond, "I didn't have anyone" or they would respond, "My Mentor."

Last March an article was written in the Tucson Citizen about the Mentor program at Aviva. A young woman, who now at 23, reflected back to when she met her Mentor, Jeanne, when she was 13 and what Jeanne brought to her life then and continues to bring to her life today. Chrystal stated, "Jeanne was my safe place. She's like a best friend to me. Without her I don't know what I'd do. She's still here for me. She'll always be here for me." Chrystal brings her own two children over to visit with Jeanne. Although Jeanne has retired from Mentoring and Chrystal has grown up and has children of her own, their special relationship continues.

It is difficult for a child in the CPS system to foster a relationship with an adult because of their fear that this adult will leave them like all of the others seem to. Once the relationship is established, it is a strong, long lasting one.

Mentors, like the children they work with, come in all ages, younger, older, married, and single. They all have one thing in common—they touch the life of a child and the child touches the life of a Mentor. When I end an e-mail to the Mentors, that I have the great honor to work with, I say, "Thank you for everything that you do...."



**Susan Kelly,
Mentor
Volunteer
Coordinator**

Recently at a Mentor Get Together, I asked the Mentors to write a little something about their role as a Mentor— what it brings to their life and the life of a child they work with. These are their words:

"When I first met Sara almost six years ago, she was a shy 9-year-old child who was unsure of herself, did poorly in school, was unpredictable and hated to read. Today she is a lovely young lady who is confident, does well in school, is reliable and actually loves to read. She has been through several placements in the past six years, but now is in a permanent home where she feels secure, happy and loved. Sara has certainly helped me to be more patient, tolerant and optimistic. Mentoring has been a wonderful opportunity for me and, hopefully, I have been a positive role model for her."

—Carole Bennett



"I have been mentoring since April 2007 and my experiences have brought me so much joy! Even the painful and difficult aspects of mentoring are ultimately rewarding and beneficial. Currently, I mentor a 9-year-old girl and we do various fun activities together, including playing games, drawing and sewing. I also help her work through her emotions and the difficult situations that she encounter. We talk about appropriate and inappropriate responses/ behaviors. She trusts me and that alone is beyond description in terms of how rewarding our relationship is to me and to her."

—Pefy Fraser



"Mentoring is a chance to stay young at heart. It is listening between the lines in a non-threatening relaxed atmosphere, gently teaching without being obvious, and hoping to make a positive difference in my little guy's life."

—Lisa Swift



"Roger and I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet, spend time with, and to develop a relationship with our mentee. It is rewarding to see her begin to ask for assistance and advice on various situations that she has encountered with her new baby and with preparations for college."

—Roger and Mary Baglien



"My mentee commented that she knows she can tell me anything and I won't yell at her like her mom does. It also gives her a chance to experience another home life of a family."

—Mona Hand



"I enjoy watching the way my child develops and grows emotionally and physically. I am also making a positive difference in a child's life and making positive memories. I like giving a child a break from their crazy life to have fun." **—Cori Byre**



The program is always looking for new Mentors. The Mentor position requires at least a year commitment of at least three hours a week. Children who need mentors are typically 5 to 18 years old. Please, if you know someone who would fit this role, have them contact Susan Kelly at 327-6779, ext. 11 or e-mail Susan.Kelly@avivatucson.org

CPS and Aviva Partnerships

by Carol Punske, Child Protective Services

For 10 years, the staff of Aviva has partnered with Child Protective Services (CPS) to meet the needs of children and families. Aviva responded when a CPS Specialist worked with a family that needed funds to keep their electricity on, allowing children to remain safely at home with their parents. They responded when a grandmother needed to have funds for a hotel room and meals so that she could come from out of state to attend a family meeting to decide the future of her grandchildren. They responded when a CPS Specialist called needing to purchase cleats for a youth to be able to play football with his school team. No matter what the need, Aviva responded with "How can we help?"

It seems that whenever a need is identified by CPS staff or there is an idea or suggestion made to improve the lives of children and families involved with Child Protective Services, Aviva has been there, working beside us. Ten years ago, a few individuals had the idea to have volunteers sew duffle bags for children so that they did not have to move their belongings in garbage bags. The Bags For Kids Project celebrated it's 10th anniversary in 2009 and no child who lives in foster care in Pima County should ever be seen with a garbage bag again.

From this project grew the Backpacks for Kids Project. Aviva now supplies backpacks filled with school supplies to children who would otherwise start school without the needed supplies. Their "closet" has grown to provide shoes and clothing for children whose families are struggling to meet basic needs.

The Life Book Project provides the missing "Baby Book" and family history for children living in foster care. Christmas would not happen for many children and families without the sponsorships and gifts provided by Aviva. Young adults have special gifts and memories of high school graduation because of the partnership between Aviva and Child Protective Services.

Aviva holds a special place in the heart of the professionals who work for CPS. Aviva staff is our true partner in the collaborative effort to bring some happiness and assistance to the families we work with. Because of Aviva, we are able to help struggling families meet their basic needs and the "little extra" everyone deserves.

Valuable partnerships that make it possible for Aviva to help so many children and families...

Assistance League of Tucson
Community Diaper Bank
Community Food Bank
Gospel Rescue Mission
Miracle Center Thrift Store
Payless Shoesource
Sun Tran
TEP
TMM Re-Store
Wal-Mart on Cortaro

If you have article contributions or ideas for our Spring 2010 issue, please contact Bonnie at 327-6779 ext. 13. All articles and photos by Aviva staff. Volunteer Editor: Kim Beck

Aviva Volunteers tell how Life Books affect their lives ...

"Since I started volunteering in Aviva's Life Book program after retiring from teaching, I've had the incredible opportunity to touch the lives of a dozen teens by researching and writing down their life stories. As a Life Book writer, it is my hope that providing the unadorned truth about the past will help these children gain acceptance of the present and provide insights that will guide them into an better future. In return, the Life Books also touch and enrich my life in ways I would not have imagined. I completed the training and was given my first assignment some nine years ago.

When I put each finished book on Cindy Lingel's desk, I experience a great sense of accomplishment. I also have acquired another layer of understanding about the complexities of the world around me. Participation in the Life Book program has helped me gain compassion, insight, acceptance, and I hope, a little wisdom. There is a real sense of shared purpose and community at Aviva. The support that Cindy and the rest of the staff provides during the rewarding, but often difficult and emotional process of writing a Life Book, makes it all possible."

Gayle Jandrey, Life Book volunteer

"I've just finished training and am working on my first assignment. The little girl I'm working with is so lively and intelligent. Knowing that, in a small way, I am going to contribute to her life is deeply satisfying."

Sandy Sugimoto, Life Book volunteer

"I've only completed one Life Book to date, but it will be the first of many. The Aviva staff is so supportive in training, matching volunteers with kids and providing structure and materials. They've made it easy to do the work necessary for creating a Life Book. There's great personal satisfaction in putting together the puzzle of a child's life and of telling their story—but the real joy is the reaction of the child who receives the Life Book." **Tami Koenig, Life Book volunteer**

If you suspect a child is being abused, abandoned or neglected, call the Child Protective Services Hotline: 888-SOS-CHILD /888-767-2445

Give Bob a Call...

Our executive director, Bob Heslinga, is always on the lookout for groups willing to hear about the mission of Aviva. If your group or club is looking for a speaker, give Bob a call. He will be happy to respond. Contact Bob at: bob.heslinga@avivatucson.org.

Volunteers Can Earn Class Credit and Valuable Experience in SWA (Social Worker's Assistant) Program

by Bonnie Demorotski, SWA Volunteer Coordinator

Social Worker Assistants (SWAs) come from a variety of walks of life. Most are college students from the U of A, ASU, University of Phoenix and Pima Community College. They earn credit while learning what being a social worker is all about. For some it confirms their desire to help children, for some it confirms they want to be a case manager, and for a few it confirms that they aren't cut out for social work. How great is it to find that out before being hired to do a job you hate? We also have folks who are retired or who have an extra 10 hours in their week who want to help the workers in Child Protective Services (CPS) and more importantly, the children in CPS care.

All volunteers are fingerprinted, screened, interviewed and attend 20 hours of training. This assures CPS workers that our volunteers understand the confidentiality laws and how to handle themselves and the children in a variety of situations. It also helps the SWA take the book knowledge they have learned and apply it to real people in real life situations. Some of the situations might include grief and loss, homelessness, mental issues, sexual abuse, testifying in court, interacting with children and families, documentation, domestic violence, drug abuse, the importance of collaboration in the community and team work. **If you or someone you know has that extra 10 hours a week and would like to help, please contact Bonnie at: bonnie.demorotski@avivatucson.org or call 520-327-6779.**

The following are quotes from current SWAs about what the experience means to them:

"Volunteering as a social worker's assistant through Aviva has truly enlightened my life. I feel that my help never goes unrecognized, and interacting with families in Tucson allows me to share my assistance with those in need. This volunteer program has become an invaluable experience to me and will give me the confidence that I need for any future opportunities."

—Darryl Gerlak



Marie Palmietto —



"I have been volunteering for Aviva/CPS for around five years. I enjoy coming down to the office and doing all the tasks that I am asked to do. I get a very good feeling when I leave that I know I have helped out someone in need for the day. I also love coming down to Aviva when asked to help them get the kids ready for school or the Christmas event. Whatever it may be, I love to volunteer for Aviva. It makes me feel so good that I have made a difference in giving back to my community, and especially to the precious kids—our future!"

"Volunteering with Aviva Children's Services has illustrated clearly the need affecting many Tucson families. Aviva's focus on helping the children from many of these needy families is absolutely outstanding, from offering the amazing supply of infants and children's clothes, books,

bags, blankets, to supplying the many volunteers, has been and is still an amazing community achievement. The careful screening and focus on the quality of their staff and the volunteers has helped make this program so successful from my perspective as a volunteer. The rewards of observing improved parenting techniques within some of these families has been great, but the sadness is so many need more time and help than society can provide for them. Having worked alongside many case workers, I now have a far greater understanding and compassion for the work they all do for so many of these families."

Linda Hershenson—



"I have always wanted a career working with people in social work. Ever since an internship in college this has always been an option I have weighed. Volunteering through Aviva has let me really explore this career choice while helping families and children. I have met a ton of great people and have come to appreciate the difficult yet rewarding work."

Seth Mackey—



Aviva Staff Are Happy to Help!



**Bonnie Demorotski, Susan Kelly and Cindy Lingel
—Volunteer Coordinators**



**Bob Heslinga, Jo Winslow, Ginny Caballero and Ron Olin
— Aviva Administration Staff**

**Pat Palmer
—Special Events Coordinator**



In July Aviva held its first ever event called **“The Big Aviva Giveaway.”** We had lots of clothes and new backpacks filled with school supplies that needed to reach the children in the care of CPS. We invited case workers, foster families, and group homes to come over to Aviva and pick out things for their children. We had our Bags for Kids out and each child or worker was able to fill their bag with as many new clothes as they wanted, adding hygiene kits for each child. We also had a bin full of stuffed animals and other toys that the children could dig through and find something to take home. We had car seats to give out, strollers, and even some quilts and afghans to give away.

Everyone at Aviva really enjoyed seeing the looks on the children’s faces when they were able to pick a backpack they wanted and find a new outfit for school. It was really rewarding to know that the stuff was going directly into the hands of the children, and that the children were apart of the selection process. This was a big step for Aviva in terms of reaching out for the children living in licensed placements. In the past, we only provided for the children who were with their parents or in unlicensed relative placements as the state didn’t provide any subsidies or clothing allowances for them. Now, with the budget cuts, we feel we need to supply clothes, shoes, backpacks or whatever the children need regardless where they live. We look forward to holding more of these giveaways in the future.



**Julia Tenen
—Donations Coordinator**

Thanks to the Pima Community College Staff Council’s annual Back-To-School Drive that collects thousands of dollars in backpacks, school supplies and gift cards - we were able to distribute the 300 filled backpacks on this special day. Thank you Pima CC for all you do to make the life of a child in CPS care happier.



Aviva’s Big Tent Giveaway.

On July 17th we distributed over 300 backpacks with school supplies as well as other items for children in foster care.

A Donation Carol

By Julia Tenen, Donations Coordinator

‘Twas the middle of the summer, when all through Tucson
Not a case worker was stirring, not even a mouse.
The shelves were filled in the donation room with care,
In hopes that case workers soon would be there.

The children were in need of clothes and quilts for their beds,
While visions of new backpacks and stuffed animals danced in their heads.
With school on its way, and us ready to give,
Aviva invented new rules for the donation gig.

When out in the Aviva parking lot there arose such a clatter,
Foster families and group homes arrived to see what was the matter.

Away to the rooms foster children flew like a flash,

To find a clothing, backpacks, and school supplies bash.

The table was stacked with backpacks to the sky.

This made it quite easy to bring a twinkle to every child’s eye.

When, what to their wondering eyes should appear,

But tables overflowing with baby items, afghans, and news clothes to wear.

With a little young child, so lively to meet,

We knew in a moment our giveaway would be sweet.

More rapid than eagles the cars kept coming,
And we hustled, and hurried, and told them what we had for giving!

“Now backpacks! Now, clothing! Now, toiletries and bags for kids!

On car seats! On strollers! On, stuffed animals and toys!

To the top of the tables! To the top of the cars!
Now find an owner! Find a home! Go make a child proud!

The children sprang to their cars, as their drivers told them to buckle,
And away they all smiled, and made us at Aviva chuckle.

But the children heard Aviva exclaim, as they left the parking lot,
“Happy fresh start for school, and to all a great year!”

Supervised Family Visitation—A Very Important Part of Reunifying Families



By **Jason Farlee**,
Coordinator
of Visit
Supervisors

Since Aviva was founded in 1999, one of the core services it has provided has been quality Supervised Family Visitation. Researchers have been studying Supervised Family Visitation since the 1970s. Some of the questions areas researched are: How does visitation impact the family member's relationships? Is visitation a factor in the reunification of families? What are the benefits/drawbacks of supervised visitation?

The findings are clear that Supervised Family Visitation is an essential part of any CPS case plan. It has even been argued that frequent, successful family visitation is one of the greatest predictors of family reunification.

I recently had the opportunity to talk with a young man who was formerly in foster care and a client of Aviva. His family did not reunify, but supervised visitation allowed him to maintain bonds with his siblings that continue to this day. The following is a bit of his story.

Emmett* is the oldest of four children. His mother was heavily addicted to drugs and involved in the drug culture. As a result, Emmett was forced to assume the role of parent in his household. That role had real consequences for his childhood, as he was forced to make decisions of immediate survival rather than decisions which would carry him into

his future. Emmett was responsible for the full care of his siblings, including, making sure the younger children got to school, making sure money was spent on rent and not drugs, making sure there was food for the children to eat, making sure his mother was taken care of, keeping people from stealing his and his siblings belongings or keeping his mother from pawning them. Responsibilities that many adults find difficult to deal with had been placed on the shoulders of this young 14-year-old boy. This continued until Christmas Eve of his freshman year in high school, when he and his siblings were placed in foster care. The children were split between three different foster/group homes, but were able to maintain contact through Supervised Family Visitation. When I spoke with Emmett about his experience, I was curious how supervised family visitation had impacted him throughout his experience with CPS. He was very candid in his responses.

Q: How did regular supervised visitation impact your relationship with your siblings while you were involved with CPS?

A: It let me know that they were doing OK and that their lives weren't completely distraught. It impacted me because it let me know they weren't miserable. Since I was the oldest, it helped me to feel at ease knowing that they were taken care of.

Q: How did you feel having someone watch you while you interacted with your siblings?

A: At first it was uncomfortable, but it got comfortable as time went on. More and more I began to focus on my siblings and it became normal that

they (Supervisors) were there.

Q: How did you feel when your mother didn't show up to visits?

A: When my mom wouldn't show up, it didn't really affect me. What bothered me was that she wasn't there to see my brothers. It mattered to me that she wasn't there to visit them, but not so much for me. After a while it became the norm that she wouldn't show and actually visits were more comfortable when she wasn't there.

Q: Do you continue to maintain contact with your siblings?

A: Yes. With my younger brothers I do, not so much with my sister because of a personality conflict.

Q: What do you think would have been different had you not had regular supervised visitation?

A: If we didn't have regular visitation we would have drifted apart. I would have worried more about how they were doing and if they were OK.

Q: Do you think it was better to remain out of your mother's care and in the foster care system?

A: If I was still with my mom I probably wouldn't have had the opportunities I have now. In middle school I was absent 56 days because of her—an entire quarter. I would not have made it through high school without the relative stability of the foster care system to get me there. I would not have had the opportunity to go to college. It gave me the opportunity to have a new life—my own life, without being held down by my mother.

Through Supervised Family Visitation, family bonds remain strong and

Continued on page 10

(*Not his real name)

Visitation Teams are Valuable to Aviva and their Clients



Visit Supervisors Southwest Team, left to right, Virginia Valencia, Danna Lopez, Bea Gonzalez (Team Leader), Judie Pradier, Violeta Lazo. Not Pictured: Jannett Castillo

—Aviva Children’s Services currently provides visitation services to about 135 families, including 299 children weekly.

—Visitation Supervisors drive enough miles monthly go around the earth 1.5 times, or annually to the moon and half way back.

—Supervised visitation is a time for uninterrupted family bonding and interaction for one to four hours a week.



Visit Supervisors East Team, left to right, Lara Mills-Knuth, Michelle Magnon (Team Leader), Linda Darnell, Linda Hawke, Lathai Ratanavongsa



Visit Supervisors Northwest Team, left to right, Virginia Espinosa, Darlene Zavada, Nikki Davis, Carroll McElroy (Team Leader), Judy Gran



Eleanor Springer, Coordinator of Visitation Office and Staff

Visit Supervisors were asked, *“What is it about being a Visit Supervisor that keeps you going to work each day?”*

These are their responses:

“I love working with the children...Their strength to overcome imperfect situations inspires me to concentrate on what matters most in life. I am grateful to get up every day and be a witness for these young people.” —Lara Mills-Knuth

“It’s knowing that what we do is one big step in the process of reuniting parents and children.” —Linda Darnell

“The little hands that reach up and take my hand.” —Linda Hawke

Aviva Children’s Services is now partnered with Safe Kids Tucson as a car-seat installation station in Tucson.

This is a public service provided to ensure that children of all ages are transported in a safe manner.



Visit Supervisors Central Team, left to right, Maribel Perez, Yvette Hart (Team Leader), Lourdes Peacock

“I love picking up my kids daily to see their parents. They’re always so excited and anxious to leave because they know they’re going to see mommy and daddy.”—Lathai Ratanavongsa

“I love working with children. Knowing that the children and the parents are counting on you during a difficult time in their life keeps me going each day.”

—Carroll McElroy

“Spending time with all of the beautiful children. And of course, the ultimate is when you see parents achieve all of the tasks set out in their case plan and their child is returned to them.”

—Darlene Zavada

“The pleasure of being able to guide and help both the children and their parents to reach their goals.”

—Judy Gran

“It’s all about the kids. The opportunity to impart a kind word, friendly smile, words of encouragement or words of wisdom to the children we serve.” —Virginia Espinosa

Continued on page 10

Visitation Staff —What keeps you going to work each day?

Visitation, Continued...

"Working with Aviva for the last 4 years has been extremely rewarding. With the many resources Aviva provides, I continue to be able to bring families together and enable them to work toward becoming healthy, happy and complete."

—**Nikki Davis**

"Making a small difference in the children's lives."

—**Maribel Perez**

"Seeing the expression on a child's face when they see Mom or Dad. After four years it still melts my butter." —**Yvette Hart**

"Passion for life and Compassion for people" has been the motto of my life and it is what keeps me going as a Visit Supervisor. I found myself knowing that I have a purpose in life. I have passion because I care like someone cares for me and I give compassion because someone reaches out to help me! Thank you Aviva for letting me be part of your team. There is no job, no position, no career or opportunity that compares with the soul satisfaction experience of knowing you are fulfilling your purpose in life!—**Violeta Lazo**

"I can make a difference in the families."

—**Lourdes Peacock**

"I am committed to the idea that children are our future. If we fail them in anyway we fail ourselves and the world's future. Every day I get up and go to work in hope to make a positive contribution to the lives of the children by showing them care & kindness. I work to give them a voice about the injustice of their many experiences, and I attempt to educate those who care for them. I hope for a ripple affect toward individual and social change. In return, their sweetness makes me smile everyday."

—**Judie Pradier**



Visitation Staff: (back row): Eleanor Springer, Katie Barry, Shelli Glass, Jason Farlee (front row): Moira O'Connor, Priscilla Sheridan-Roberson

VISIT MONITOR PROGRAM

As a result of state budget cuts, the visitation between children and their families was impacted when the number of visits was reduced from two times a week to one visit a week. Dedicated community volunteers stepped forward to offer their time to ensure that visits occurred between the children and their families.

Aviva Visit Monitor Volunteers are present during relaxed visits between the children and their families. A relaxed visit happens toward the end of the reunification process, right before the children are placed back with their parents or with the parent(s) and a newborn or small infant.

The Visit Monitors are screened and trained as all Aviva volunteers are required to be. They observe the interaction between the parents and children and document who participated in the visit, where it took place, and the nature of the parent-child interaction.

We are in need of more Visit Monitors so if you are interested or know of someone who would be, we ask for 2-4 hours per week for at least six months. Contact the office at 327-6779 for more information.

Supervised Visitation Continued...

children's fears are eased as families work towards reunification or an alternate permanency setting. There is no mechanism, other than time spent together, that can maintain and build family bonds. Aviva Children's Services is proud to provide this service to the most vulnerable children in our community.

Emmett is currently involved in CPS's Arizona's Young Adult Program (AYAP) and is in his second year of college. Considering the circumstances Emmett came from, he maintains a positive attitude about his future and strives to achieve his goals in life. Although his experiences with foster care were difficult at times, he looks back on them and is thankful for the opportunity to have a different life.

Sew Much Love to Help Children in Need

2010 Bags for Kids Sew-A-Thon

By Pat Palmer, Bags for Kids Coordinator

The 11th annual Sew-A-Thon is already in the planning stages! We have tentatively set the date for Saturday, March 6 and negotiations are under way for possibly a new location. The change of date will, hopefully, give us time to put the holidays behind us and start spring with eagerness.

The Bags for Kids Project started in 1999 by Carol Punske from Child Protective Services and Sandy Loomis from CPSA (Community Partnership of Southern Arizona) when they agreed that garbage bags were an unacceptable form of luggage for foster children. They recruited some friends to spend an afternoon making as many cloth duffel bags as possible. This volunteer effort reached the public and in January 2000 approximately 200 community members

and individuals donated food, fabric, sewing machines, services and supplies.

Over the years this event has evolved into an annual sewing and social gathering! Dedicated and organized volunteers meet every year to cut, sew, decorate, cord and assemble bags. Volunteers then continue to sew bags throughout the year at their homes, churches and in community groups. Over 7500 bags have been completed at the Sew-A-Thons and we estimate that several thousand more are sewn in the community during the year.

As our annual Sew-A-Thon approaches, we would like to thank all who have participated and encourage first-timers to join us this year. Each of you play an important role in preserving the dignity of foster children and we hope that your continued enthusiasm for this event will remain the "heartbeat" of the Bags for Kids Project.



Pat Palmer, with volunteer Julie Siplon holding one of her Bags For Kids. Julie sews quilts and much more for the children.

***Pat is the new coordinator for the Bags for Kids project. Please feel free to contact her with any questions or comments 327.6779 ex 37.**



The Bags For Kids Project is a collaboration between the Community Partnership of Southern Arizona, the Arizona Division of Developmental Disabilities, Child Protective Services, and Aviva Children's Services.



Please Join Us!

- **When:** Saturday, March 6, 2010 - 9:00 to 4:00 All or part of the day!
- **Where:** (Location to be determined)
- **Who:** Those of you with the knowledge and experience of past years **AND**, first-timers who would like to join the fun!
- **How:** Volunteers can choose from jobs including sewing (bring sewing machine), cutting fabric (bring scissors or rotary cutting equipment) and stringing cords through the bags (bring nimble fingers).
- Fabric is supplied, but donations of fabric one yard or larger are gladly accepted.
- Lunch, snacks and beverages will be provided!
- Free raffle and door prizes!
- **PRE-REGISTRATION IS A MUST!!!!**
- Call Pat Palmer at 327-6779 Ext. 37 or email pat.palmer@avivatucson.org
- Aviva would like to thank Ronda Chance for her 10 years of 'hosting' the Sew-a-thon at ATPT and organizing and storing all of the Bags for Kids and fabric during the year.

Volunteers Give from the Heart and Create Handcrafted Items with Love

Volunteers tell Aviva why they give so much for the children :

Pam Kline, Bags for Kids volunteer, says that "Aviva is a great place to volunteer." She said she feels appreciated and feels her input is welcome. "100% of Aviva's efforts go to the children."



Pam Kline, the "Bargain Queen", has been a long-time Aviva volunteer. Pam is always on the lookout for fabric, trim and volunteers for quilting and making bags.

A few examples of the Bags for Kids, quilts, afghans and blankets that our donors make and stuffed animals that we match with them.



"I have been quilting for over 50 years and the satisfaction that I feel with the quilts for Aviva seems to surpass the love I put into those for my own family and friends. It is knowing that possibly this comforting item could make a child feel that someone cares for them during a very troubled time. This makes me feel that the purpose of the quilt has been fulfilled. The quilting ladies are very special people." — Joy States

Harriette Stein has crocheted more than 1,500 blankets for CPS children. "Making these does as much for me as it does for the kids," she said. Volunteering has been a part of Harriette's, her husband, Sam's and their son's life for many years. All three volunteered at a Veterans' Medical Center in Tennessee before



Harriett and Sam Stein donate blankets to CPS children.



Peggy Lucas and Linda Scheel (mother and daughter) make and donate blankets with matching stuffed animals.



Tanque Verde Lutheran Church Quilters Group, Back Row: Kathy Lohmeier, Joy States, Lucy Dahn, Seated: Jan Lundahl, Sherry Cain.

moving to Arizona. Harriette shared that one of the patients at the hospital told her much he appreciated their being there because everyone else was paid to be there and the Steins were there because they wanted to be.

"Making quilts for the children served by Aviva is very rewarding to myself and the ladies of the Tanque Verde Lutheran Quilters. We hope and pray each quilt gives the child the feeling that someone loves and cares about them." —Kathy Lohmeier

Rosie Schmidt, long-time volunteer, shared that her family has always been involved in helping others – her mother passed the tradition to Rosie and Rosie has passed it along to her children. They support, not only Aviva programs, but others in the Tucson community as well. Rosie enjoys sewing and has been making Bags for Kids since she moved to Tucson.

Vi Kaim loves to sew and for years she made things for her grandchildren. Now Vi sews Bags For Kids, beautiful quilts and Christmas stockings for children in CPS care. She said that this her first venture into charity quilting and that she does it because she knows the children will enjoy the things she makes.



Rosie Schmidt and Vi Kaim give from their hearts.

“Do I Get to Keep it?”

by Cindy Lingel and Susan Kelly

Aviva is proud to distribute all types of items that are handcrafted by Tucsonans. Sewing and crafting for others is a time-honored tradition and who better than children who are victims of abuse and neglect to receive these handmade treasures?

Imagine on a cold day a child goes to school wearing just shorts and a T-shirt because they are caring for themselves or their clothes were not cleaned. They gaze around at their classmates wearing hats and mittens and they feel and look different. Just a simple knit hat gives that child a sense of normalcy and makes them feel that they belong – that they are not different. So much love and caring is sewn into each item. When a child cuddles a quilt, wears new pajamas, twirls in a new dress, or packs belongings in a handcrafted bag, the love that was sewn into each article comes out and surrounds that child. When asked, the children are told that each thing was made especially for them. Very often it is the first time that

anyone cared enough to make something just for them and they ask, “Do I get to keep it?”



Larry Mullica from Seniors For Kids (with staff member Cindy Lingel) displays a donated handmade quilt.



This is only a sample of the 100 bears adopted by the Tucson Quilters. Each one has a unique theme and came with an outfit, accessories and blanket. Just one more sample of our talented dedicated crafters.

We also have several groups and individuals who make Christmas Stockings for children. Each one is filled with age appropriate toys or items from the list below. We like to include Beanie Babies in each regardless of their age.

Please contact Katie Barry at 327.6464 for more information.

Infant- 3 Years Old

- Bath toys
- Blocks
- Soft toys
- Receiving blankets
- Pacifier
- Bibs
- Wash cloths
- Fork/spoon sets
- Rattles

4-10 Years Old

- Crayons (no bigger than 20 count)
- Coloring books
- Play dough
- Bubbles
- Stickers
- Hot wheels
- Hair ties
- Cards
- Card games

11 Years and Older

- Pocket games/ cards
- Nail polish
- Mini flashlights
- Combs
- Address books
- Key chains
- Toiletries
- Lip gloss
- Perfume/cologne
- Gel pens, Markers, Color pencils

Candy/gum

Christmas Stocking Sew-a-thon in my home and invite Sewing Guild members to attend. On the day of the event we made 179 stockings and more stockings have been delivered to me...bringing the total to 225, so far. The Mission Sewing ladies from St. Andrews are making more stockings and two Sewing Guild neighborhood groups are making even more.

Last year Dick, who is a woodworker, made puzzles for the children and this year he has more puzzles and wooden cars and trucks to donate. The most rewarding part of all is when you hear that a child has said...

“Someone I don’t even know made this just for me”.

Couple Gives Time and Crafts

By Carol Backus

My husband, Dick, and I moved back to Tucson from Maryland 13 years ago. Before we left Maryland, I wondered what I would do with my time once we arrived here...Well it was obvious: sew for those who are less fortunate.

The first church that we visited in Tucson was St. Andrews Presbyterian Church. In the bulletin there was a listing of all of the various activities that were available. “Mission Sewing” caught my eye and I immediately joined that group. Several years later, the woman who was the coordinator resigned because of health reasons. I wasn’t certain if I could hold the group together because at that time there were only four of us and three were moving away. I started recruiting new members and today we have a good size group.

There was an article in the newspaper not long after we moved here about “Bags For Kids” started by Aviva. I found instructions at a local fabric store, purchased several yards of fabric and made my first



Carol and Richard Backus deliver donations from St. Andrews Presbyterian Church Mission Sewing Group.

bags. Each year since I have attended the “Bags For Kids Sew-a-Thon and encourage all of my sewing friends to join me. We have such a wonderful time meeting people from all over the city and just sewing for others.

Years ago the American Sewing Guild used to make Christmas stockings for another organization. We never received a thank you from them, but often received requests for donations. One day when I was delivering items from the Mission Sewing Group to Aviva, I asked Cindy if they could use Christmas stockings. Since then I have held a

Our Donors—Our Volunteers—Our Bright Spots

Why Do I Volunteer?

- Because I can make a difference...
- Because I can give time even when I can't give money...
- Because the positive energy generated through working with Aviva staff makes it all worth it...
- Because even the 28 hours I put in working on this 16-page issue is time I have to give....
- Because any stress I might feel to meet the deadlines is nothing compared to what these families and children go through to live their lives normally....
- Because I can....



Kim Beck, Volunteer Aviva Editor and former Life Book writer



Annual Sunquest Barbeque event to 'kick off' the holidays. These folks have donated money, toys and gift cards for 10 years to Aviva.

Want to be a Donor?

If you donate to the community through **United Way** and want to designate Aviva our number is **1113**. If you are a city or county worker our **ECAP number is 9797**. Aviva also qualifies for the **working poor tax credit** (if it is available this year). All donations made directly to Aviva are tax deductible and will be put in the Abused Children's Fund unless otherwise directed.

Krafty Krihos

Dodie and Milan Kriho belong to several organizations and are always collecting undies, socks and toiletries for our children. Dodie sews Bags for Kids and makes crafts plus Christmas stockings and Milan crafts ornaments for Christmas plus other goodies out of wood. They both turn into Santa Helpers and pick up and deliver packages to help ease the load of some of our other donors and CPS staff.



Jonathan and Paula Easley and children are great supporters of Aviva.

Thanks to Tuller

Aviva is truly blessed with so many donors, volunteers and friends. We have had a long running tradition of awarding plaques to some of these groups and will continue to do so with the help of Tuller Trophy and Howard Tuller. He gives us such good deals on the frames and this year on acrylic stars.

To the right on this page are just two examples and we hope to continue this tradition.



Gene and Erna Rosten attend yard sales almost every weekend, looking for items that clients can use.

If we have missed you or your group please contact Bonnie so we can rectify this error. It is our intention to recognize as many of our Aviva friends as we can in each edition of our newsletters.

Plaque recipients this year were:

- Pantano Christian Church
- Wilmot Prison Catalina and Winchester units
- LDS Church Pantano Ward-Becky Theis
- Fennemore Craig Law Offices
- Pima Community College Campus Police
- Pima Community College Staff Council
- Joe and Vicky's Place
- Sandra Beecher with her Realtor Associates
- Ron Bush/Miracle Center Thrift Store
- Pat Gutierrez/Aqua Caliente Elementary
- Barbara Moore and the Stocking Project
- Linda Wetterlind and Sisters
- Barry Mosman - Santa
- St Francis in the Valley Episcopal Church
- TR Ellis (shown)

Star recipients were:

- Accurate Products/Christian Frueh
 - Carol Punske
 - Carol Backus
 - Linda Scheel and Peggy Lucas
 - Pam Kline
 - Pat Palmer
 - Georgia Reinert (shown)
 - and *Mary Helen Dimercurio/Project Linus
- *Mary Helen passed away October 1, 2009 after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Mary had a infectious smile and unbounding energy that all of us at Aviva will truly miss.*



Christ the King Lutheran Church Volunteer, Georgia Reinert, (middle) with staff members Bonnie and Bob holding her "star" for coordinating donations to teens in AYAP at the holidays and all the children with undies, socks, school supplies and Easter baskets.



TR Ellis, holding his plaque, has been a mentor, donor and adopts families at the holidays.



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LETTER FROM BOB HESLINGA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend of Aviva,

The celebration of our 10th Anniversary gives us an opportunity to look back, to acknowledge the good work being done now, and most importantly, to look ahead. What will the next 10 years bring?

I know that our organizational culture—caring, professional, compassionate—will remain strong, thanks to Anne Sankey, the staff (past and present), our volunteers and Board. I know that our commitment to Aviva's mission will grow stronger. We will continue to enhance services *"...that improve the quality of life for children who are victims of neglect, abuse and poverty and who are in the care of Child Protective Services."*

I know that we will continue to fulfill our contractual obligations to the State of Arizona. I know that we will continue to be deficit-free and sound financially. I know that we will remain fundamentally open to new possibilities of service.

Unfortunately, the need for our services grows with our population. I know that if we had the resources, we would have more than enough work. I know that our future lies in creative partnering with other agencies and, most especially, with you. Later this month, I will be sending you a letter speaking more about our future.

THANK YOU on behalf of abused and neglected children. **THANK YOU** for all you do. Together, we can make the world a better place.

Sincerely,

Bob Heslinga
Executive Director