

They're Here To Help Parents And Children

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Teenage pregnancy.
Abortion.
Keeping the baby.
Arranging adoption.

When an unplanned, unwanted baby is on the way, and the young, unmarried mother is faced with a lot of conflicting advice, what she really needs is competent, professional help.

When a childless couple decides to adopt — they, too, need the aid of professionals.

This is where the Children's Home Society, with its newly established Santa Cruz office, comes into focus.

All the pitfalls can be considerably smoothed out by Lynne Warren, new C.H.S. social worker, whose office is located at 532 Soquel Avenue.

Lynne describes the pressures put on an unwed mother, and shows how C.H.S. can help — free of charge. She also tells of adoption services.

Lynne holds B.A. and M.S.W. degrees from the University of Arkansas, and worked with the Florence Crittenton Homes, Inc., in that state. The homes are nationwide centers for unwed mothers.

During her four years in Santa Cruz, she has been affiliated with Blaine House, an adult, short-term residential treatment facility for problems ranging from mild stress to persons who have been under treatment in county neuropsychiatric wards.

She says, "I now feel I've come back home — to pregnancy and adoption counseling."

Take a typical case of a pregnant, unmarried teenager.

"First, I explore her feelings on different options," Lynne says. "If the pregnancy is early enough, whether she wants to continue or to terminate the pregnancy.

"Abortion is a hot issue at this time. We provide an objective service — abortion is a choice a woman has.

"What is her belief system? Will she feel guilty for the rest of her life? Then an abortion might not be best.

"I help her find ways to solve her conflict; to cope with stress. If she

chooses abortion, I refer her to some of the resources here. It changes all the time — some doctors who do abortions, change — and it is the same with social agencies.

"We are middle-of-the-road — we work with Birthright and with Planned Parenthood.

"After the abortion, we would explore her needs. Does she need follow-up counseling? If we have explored it all beforehand, it might not be necessary. But I would like to follow her as long as she wanted to see me."

If the mother-to-be decides to continue the pregnancy, Lynne follows this procedure:

"I explore the options of providing a home, parenting for the child and herself. And I provide her with information on the two kinds of adoption."

The two kinds involve independent adoption and agency adoption.

According to Lynne, independent adoption can be handled correctly or it can lead to tragedy and even illegal practices. Children's Home Society does not handle this type.

"Independent adoption is where young parents can choose a family for their child — they will meet the adoptive parents. There is a six-month period in which they can claim the child — one of the risks of independent adoption.

"The adoptive parents live under fear of the child being reclaimed."

In this type of adoption, other factors creep in.

Lynne says, for instance, when she talks to social workers and nurses in the hospitals, they may tell her they have noticed an unmarried (or even a married girl who is not ready to parent or does not have the resources) mother not bonding with her baby. Sometimes one of the hospital personnel will offer to adopt the baby, or knows someone else who wants one. But Lynne asks them to call her or a county agency — so counseling about her rights can be provided to the mother.

Sometimes pressure at the hospital is very great, she says, because personnel know the wait through an agency is so long. It is



legal for a hospital worker or minister or other person to adopt the baby as long as the mother knows who is adopting and where her baby will be.

But, Lynne points out, it is illegal for hospital personnel or anyone else to act as a go-between for mother and adoptive parents, if identities are concealed. This is called 'The Gray Market' and is a misdemeanor, because the whole purpose of independent adoption is for the mother to choose the family for her child.

Is this happening in Santa Cruz County?

"It's got to be going on," Lynne says. "It is fairly common, and has existed ever since there has been adoption. So has the 'Black Market'; that is where money changes hands and the adoptive parents pay the go-between and the mother. It is selling babies, and it is a felony. And it goes on here — I've had young women say they have had offers of large amounts of money for their babies."

In agency adoption, the mother, after being fully informed of all aspects, relinquishes her baby to the agency and the agency becomes the guardian. At that point, the agency may place the child in a foster home situation while checking out the best possible permanent placement for the child. And, for six months after the child is placed in a permanent family, the family is checked. If, for some reason the agency discovers the home is not suitable, as guardian for that period the agency may find another home for the child.

Lynne says adoption of foreign children is becoming more and more

prevalent, although the cost is much higher.

"We are the only agency in this county, besides the U.S. State Department, that offers foreign adoptions," she says.

Children in this country with emotional, physical or mental handicaps, however, are much more readily available for adoption.

What of adoptees and their natural parents trying to find one another, years afterward and when records have been sealed? Lynne says she gets lots of letters from natural parents, saying if their child wants to search, they are willing for records to be opened...or at least some information shared.. And so she urges everyone involved -- the true parents, the adoptive parents and the adoptee to keep their files up to date so if an exchange of information is agreed upon, it can be effected. This is another advantage of agency adoption, she points out, since in the other type contacts are easily lost.

Lynne, who is a licensed clinical social worker, also does other types of family counseling on a sliding scale fee. She says two of her goals for the new office are to look at other needs of area children, find gaps in services and explore further available funding sources.

Invitations are out for the C.H.S. office open house, to be staged Thursday from 4 to 6 p.m.

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Among the duties of Lynne Warren, social worker for Santa Cruz office of Children's Home Society, is counseling with pregnant, unmarried teenagers. If the girl chooses abortion, Lynne refers her to some of the resources here. If she chooses to have the baby, she explores with her the options of providing a home or choosing from the two kinds of adoption. "We are middle-of-the-road," Lynne says, "we work with Birthright and with Planned Parenthood."

I'm going to the what?

If taking your baby to the dentist seems like a surprising idea, remember that just as your child's physician can help prevent serious illness through regular appointments, your local pediatric dentist can help prevent or minimize dental disease in your child when you arrange an early visit. Through nutritional counseling, instruction in good oral hygiene and early detection of decayed teeth, he can help you stop needless dental problems and save you the cost of avoidable "repair work". It's never too soon to start on a lifetime of healthy smiles. Want to know more? Call the pediatric dentist in your community and find out why going to the dentist is **definitely** for babies!



GOING TO THE DENTIST IS FOR BABIES

A message from the Academy of Pediatric Dentists of Santa Cruz County, specialists in dentistry for infants, children and teens.

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- Dr. Stephen L. Fehrman, 7545 Soquel Dr., Aptos • 662-2900
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