



Support. Education. Local Events.  
*for Adoptive Families*



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The PARC newsletter is published quarterly.  
Please direct questions and comments to  
[parcnewsletter@bethany.org](mailto:parcnewsletter@bethany.org)

Bethany Christian Services is a nonprofit,  
private social services agency with more  
than 115 offices located in 36 states. In  
addition, Bethany offers social services to  
children and families in 15 countries.



[www.bethany.org](http://www.bethany.org)

*This program is funded in part by the Michigan  
Department of Health and Human Services.*

These past several months have stretched us as parents, instantly placing many of us in the position of unqualified homeschool teacher. I've felt both the wonderful moments of quality time and the terrible pressure of too much time with a bored teenager. Truth be told, parenting teens is never an easy task.

That's why we decided to dedicate this issue of our Post-Adoption Resource Center (PARC) newsletter to the special challenges of parenting teenagers. Even if you don't currently have teenagers, your young kids will get there sooner than you think!

On the surface, your teenager may have communicated that they don't want you around as often, but as parents, we must remember that connection to our teens during this time is critically important. Often their behaviors can get in the way of connecting.

Amanda Purvis, in her Empowered to Connect session, *Connecting with Your Child*, said this about teenagers' undesirable behaviors: "When they are 13, their cries look different than the baby. Behavior is the language of unmet need." As hard as it may be to believe, your teenager needs you.

Our attitude, as a parent raising a teen, is critical. I remember attending a training where the speaker said, "The only thing harder than being a parent of a teenager in this society today is being a teenager in this society."

As parents with a front row seat to our teenagers' struggle to find their identity and place in this world, our optimism matters on a very personal level.

*Kim Waldie, PARC Supervisor, Region 2*

*"If parenthood came with a GPS  
it would mostly just say... recalculating."*

*—Anonymous*

***I will never forget the day that my son arrived on our doorstep, holding his caseworker's hand. His bright red hair matched his boisterous personality. I didn't know that a year later he would become my son.***

Now, 16 years later, we constantly strive to stay connected with him, along with his other four siblings (also teenagers), amidst a constantly changing culture. Most days it feels we are living in opposite, and at times, opposing worlds, yet we know for our teenagers to become healthy adults, we must connect with them.

Connecting with our teenage children, who sometimes have strong, independent thoughts of their own, looks a lot different than it did when they were toddlers. As we attempt to make this adjustment, we as parents can slip into different beliefs that cause trouble.

One parent might believe, "If I parent strictly enough," I will control the outcome of my teen's life. While another might think, "If I become friends with my teen," I will produce the most successful adult. Consider for a moment that a parent's job is not to determine the outcome of their teen's life; instead, your job is to love, care for, and build a relationship with your child, preparing them for life as an adult.

Through parenting four biological kids, one adopted child, and fifteen foster children, I've found that giving responsibility of my children's future to them as they grow into their teenage years has brought more peace and deepened our relationship.

Instead of fighting about homework, chores, and curfews, we let natural consequences take over, and it leaves us more room to stay relationally healthy. This connection leads to mutual respect and successful young adults.



**Here are a few important ideas to remember when connecting with your teens:**

- **It's not about us.** Forget about what you love for a moment and take the time to learn what your teen loves. Parents often don't find value in learning about their teen's hobbies, and teens notice that instantly. Recognize that you're not asked to pick up a new hobby; rather, learn a new way to connect with your teenager.
- **Quality, not quantity.** You may have just completed your first effort at being a forced homeschooling parent, but my challenge is for you to spend quality time with your teens. Put down your cell phone and other distractions and connect with your teen through games, talking, or sharing a meal together. If your children are not used to you spending time with them, the first few attempts might be awkward, silent, or even rejected. Be consistent and listen, and this may become their favorite time of the day.
- **Laugh over spilled milk.** Show your children their home is a safe training ground. We all make mistakes, and often that's the best way to learn. Help your teen feel safe, even when they mess up, by calming yourself before responding. If your teen understands and responds well to humor, make a joke and have fun. Most mistakes don't require a lecture, so keep talking to a minimum with teens.
- **Find the good.** Often, when our children return from a long day at school or from an activity, they feel defeated or worn down from the negative words they have heard all day. Point out when your teen does well at something, no matter how small. You might think they already know, but make a point to tell them anyway in small ways, like, "I love how you helped your friend today," "You did a great job cleaning your room," or "I think you have a great smile."
- **Be silly.** Life does not always have to be serious. Laughter is good medicine for the soul. Make a point to bring joy into your home through spontaneity. Make a silly face, sing your response to them, dance across the room, turn on crazy dance music, or challenge them to a competition. Make life fun. Joy builds connection and diffuses anger—both theirs and ours.

**Always remember that no one is perfect, parenting is hard, and parenting teens some days feels impossible and thankless.**

One day long, long ago, we all were teenagers. Yet we made it to this wonderful and sometimes terrifying place of adulthood. Erickson's law of expectation simply states that 85% of what you expect to happen will happen. Positive and negative expectations have the same chance of coming true.

I challenge you today to choose to enjoy your journey with your teenager, try something new, and expect great things for their future!

*"The best way to keep children at home is to make the home atmosphere pleasant and let the air out of the tires."*

*—Dorothy Parke*

## DID YOU KNOW?

Disability Network of Michigan represents the collective voice of Michigan's 15 Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Their focus is on leadership development, relationship building, effective communication, and mobilizing around issues that will have the greatest impact on delivering high-quality, independent living services to people with disabilities.

They do this through:

- Convening leadership teams and issue teams
- Providing relevant trainings to members
- Engaging with key partners and the legislature
- Employing effective communication strategies
- Promoting the network of CILs

If you are a person with a disability, a family member or support person of someone with a disability, a business, or an organization, and need assistance or information about disabilities in your local community, please visit their website at [disabilitynetwork.org](http://disabilitynetwork.org).



## Practical Ways to Build Connection with Your Teenager

- **Bake together.** You'll bond through the mess of baking and the joy of eating.
- **Brush their hair.** Many teens may resist hugs but love the sensory feeling of having their hair brushed.
- **Go camping.** Going outside offers a chance to disconnect from the outside world and social media.
- **Play a game together.** Let them choose what it is.
- **Take frequent walks together to decompress and connect.**
- **Let them catch you speaking highly about them.**
- **Empathize with their pain (physical or emotional), even if it's trivial.** It tells teenagers that they are valuable to you.
- **Take a fun photo of them and give it a special frame and place in your home.**
- **Avoid automatic "no" answers.** Say "yes" as often as you can.

"Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives."

—Bessel A. Van der Kolk



# Local Events, Training & Family Activities

All three Post-Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned, as well as support groups and trainings. Please check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page or website, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.



## REGION 2:

**Northern Michigan**

231-995-0870

[parctc@bethany.org](mailto:parctc@bethany.org)

[www.facebook.com/  
PostAdoptionResourceCenter  
OfNorthernMI](https://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI)

## REGION 3:

**Central Michigan**

231-924-3390

[parcfr@bethany.org](mailto:parcfr@bethany.org)

[www.facebook.com/  
PostAdoptionResource  
CenterCentralMichigan](https://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan)

## REGION 4:

**Western Michigan**

616-224-7565

[parcgr@bethany.org](mailto:parcgr@bethany.org)

[www.facebook.com/  
PARCRegion4](https://www.facebook.com/PARCRegion4)



One of our adoptive families made the best of quarantine time earlier this year with family time outside!

We're continuing to support our adoptive families during COVID-19.

Until we return to face-to-face meetings, please check our website or Facebook page for the current list of virtual support opportunities available for you.



Bethany is committed to supporting adoptive families through the lifelong, rewarding journey of adoption.

### REGION 2

Bethany Christian Services  
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2  
Traverse City, MI 49686  
231-995-0870

[www.bethany.org/traversecity](http://www.bethany.org/traversecity)

Charlevoix, Emmett, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Iosco counties

### REGION 3

Bethany Christian Services  
6995 West 48th St  
Fremont, MI 49412  
231-924-3390

[www.bethany.org/fremont](http://www.bethany.org/fremont)

Mason, Lake, Osceola, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Isabella, Midland, Bay, Montcalm, Gratiot, Saginaw, Ionia, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties

### REGION 4

Bethany Christian Services  
901 Eastern Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616-224-7565

[www.bethany.org/grandrapids](http://www.bethany.org/grandrapids)

Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



[postadoptionrc.org](http://postadoptionrc.org)

other suggested websites: [www.adoptivefamilies.com](http://www.adoptivefamilies.com) [www.adoptioninstitute.org](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org)