



# Mēle Kalikimaka

***Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Catholic Social Services of Montana***

**December 2017**

## **Aloha from the Catholic Social Services of Montana Staff!**

Aloha is a Hawaiian word that is exchanged as both a hello and goodbye. In Native Hawaiian Culture, the word Aloha means so much more...love, affection, peace, compassion, and mercy. This word encompasses the feelings we have as we transition leadership at Catholic Social Services of Montana.

For almost 20 years, we have been nurtured, supported, shepherded, and encouraged by Rosemary Miller. Rosemary became the Executive Director of Catholic Social Services in the infancy of our transition to fully open adoption relationships in which birth parents not only choose a family for their child, but also meet and are encouraged to develop a relationship with adoptive parents. Through Rosemary's tenure, CSSM helped with hundreds of open infant adoptions, scores of international adoptions and the implementation of the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program that helps recruit adoptive homes for children in temporary foster care placements. She truly personifies the meaning of the word Aloha. Through her example, we continue to show love for our work, affection for the birthparents we meet, and help them to be at peace with the informed decisions they make when placing their children. We offer compassion and support for our adoptive couples and mercy for the many people who come to our office for a wide range of aid. Rosemary's everyday presence is truly missed.

Rosemary has entrusted us to very capable leadership in Twila Costigan. Twila previously worked with Rosemary at the State of Montana. From there, she worked for 18 years at Intermountain Children's Home creating the Adoption and Family Support Program. With a mind toward compassion and mercy for children as well as adoptive families that desired to parent children with emotional difficulties, Twila nurtured the program for many years. She first brought this same energy and guidance to CSSM five years ago as a social worker and recently transitioned to be our new Executive Director.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta once intoned; "At the heart of silence is prayer. At the heart of prayer is faith. At the heart of faith is life. At the heart of life is service." Rosemary embodied this sentiment, and as we bid Aloha to Rosemary and wish her well in her retirement, we say Aloha to Twila and join her in her continued great vision at CSSM.

**Thank You  
Rosemary Miller  
for your many years of  
dedicated service to  
CSSM!**



## **A Look Inside:**

**Our Placements this year, pages 2-3**

**An Adoptive Mom's Story, pages 6**

**Wendy's Wonderful Kids, page 7**

**CSSM Golf Tournament, pages 7-8**



# Dear Families, Friends, Supporters:

Blessings from CSSM during this year's Christmas season. Since 1952, Catholic Social Services has continually provided services to women experiencing unexpected pregnancies, and to couples struggling to expand their families. Through our ministry of providing help and creating hope, God has enabled these beautiful and loving families to blend into one. With pride and joy we present the children of 2017; each one special in God's eyes.

**Corey and Stefanie** had been praying for a child for some time. They remained hopeful, but none of the paths they traveled seemed to achieve their dream of becoming parents, until a friend in their small community told them about her niece who was expecting. They met with this young mother, and they all instantly felt a connection. They offered kindness and acceptance to this young mother, and allowed her the confidence and security to choose them to adopt her child. They were able to bring Gracelyn home April 22, 2017. She immediately added light and joy to their home. She continues to be a ray of light to them each day.



**Tim and Lisa** were going through their day as they would any other normal day. Adoption and their dreams for it to happen a second time were placed to the back of their minds. They had been waiting in the adoptive family pool, and were focusing on living life as they waited. Their day and lives changed instantly when they received the call that there was a beautiful baby girl waiting at the hospital for them. Within an hour and a half, they were holding their new daughter. The joy of their gift was muted slightly when they found that their birth mother had chosen to have a fully closed adoption. They were incredibly thankful for her choice of them, but sorrowful at the loss of her presence in their lives through open adoption. Sweet Celia with her calm and smiling personality has been a joyful addition to Tim and Lisa's lives.



**Chad and Liz** had been considering how to best expand their family for some time when Chad's mother met up with a longtime friend. Her daughter was expecting twin boys who really wanted her babies to have a life she could not provide. Chad had known this mother his whole life, and he and Liz just kept feeling the pull to pursue adopting her two boys. Bentley and Mason were born two months early on December 8, 2016. Chad and Liz immediately began sharing in the care at the NICU of these sweet small babies with their birth parents. Although it was a very emotional and difficult decision for birth mother of these boys, knowing Chad and his family helped the mother have the faith that this was the best for her boys. Chad and Liz are so thankful for the selfless and loving choice she made.

**James and Kellie** knew the joy adoption could bring to their home. They had been blessed with the joy of adoption when they adopted their son Christian. They both felt strongly that their family was not quite complete, and chose to pursue adoption a second time. Their family was filled a bit more than they anticipated when they were matched with beautiful identical twin boys! Keegan and Gavin have added a whole new level of joy to the home for James, Kellie, and Christian. Christian is an amazing big brother, and both James and Kellie say they are humbled by how their adoption journey has unfolded.



**Greg and Patty** had a happy life that included three charming sons. However, in spite of all the great things that they were blessed with, they felt that there was something and someone missing. The missing piece appeared when they were asked to adopt a baby girl. The baby girl's mother felt like she was doing all she could to get through her life and she really wanted a complete family for her baby. Greg and Patty offered her everything she was looking for, as well as friendship and emotional support. Not only for her and her baby, but also for her older child. Paisley fully moved into the role of princess of their home, not only filling Greg and Patty's hearts with love and joy, but by completely enamoring her three teenage brothers.



**Timothy and Carrie** had given up on ever having the opportunity to have a child together. This all changed when a good friend connected them to a Mom who felt like she was in a situation that would not allow her to bring her baby home. Due to some legal complications, this Mom was not sure she had a family that would be allowed to adopt her son. This finally resolved two days after he was born when it was determined Timothy and Carrie could adopt her baby boy. They treated her with honor, kindness, and respect. This laid the ground work for a beautiful and evolving relationship between them and their son's birth mother. Zeke has been an answer to a prayer for Timothy and Carrie, while they have been an answer to the birth mother's prayer.

**Jeffrey and Jaimee** had waited many years for a placement and were thrilled when chosen by Emma, a family member, to parent her son. The family chose Jax as the baby's name and they have regular contact. Emma spent several days with Jeffrey, Jaimee, and Jax this past summer and they look forward to many more years of open adoption relationships.





# New Staff At CSSM

## **JANN**

Hi, my name is Jann Petek and I am the new Social Worker based in the Helena office. I came to CSSM after a 35-year career at Intermountain working with severely emotionally disturbed children, as well as birth, kin, foster and adoptive parents. My last six years were spent in management of Family Based Services, which included case management, in-home support, therapeutic foster care, adoption and the Therapeutic After School and Summer Program. I am looking forward to working directly with children and families again, as this is truly my passion. Most of my experience is with older child adoption so I hope to bring my expertise in that area, while learning more about infant adoption.

## **SENJA**

Hi my name is Senja (pronounced Sen-ya) Linjanen. I am the new Executive Assistant to the Director. I came to Catholic Social Services in February this year from Student Assistance Foundation. I am told I fit in instantly with our team! Even with little knowledge of adoptions, I was able to pick up on the job quickly and hit the ground running. My main focus is to provide our clients excellent customer service. I have enjoyed helping plan and facilitate events such as Charity Band Night, the Annual Golf Tournament, and the Adoption Celebration. I enjoy photography and have provided these skills for our events. Family is very important to me. In my spare time, I can be found with my husband, Michael, playing with four of our 4-legged pups. Another favorite place to find me is camping with a tight knit group of friends that also includes my parents and my sister's family. I enjoy hunting, but most of my shots are taken through a digital camera lens!

## **STACEY**

My name is Stacey Spears. I joined Catholic Social Services of Montana in January 2017 as the part-time administrative assistant. Some of my duties include processing and recording incoming payments and donations, applying for Medicaid when an infant is placed with one of our families, assisting with finalization paperwork, maintaining communications with our donors, and special projects such as newsletters, cards and organizing CSSM events.

I moved to Montana from Western Washington with my family about a year ago when my husband accepted a job in Helena. I have two sons, my oldest is a student at Washington State University and my youngest started high school this year. We really like living in Helena, it is such a

supportive, friendly and welcoming community. We are still adjusting to the winters here which are very different from Western Washington! The stunning sunrises, sunsets and gorgeous sights in Montana are amazing. I never imagined I would be living in a neighborhood with regular visits from the local herd of pronghorn.

I really enjoy my job at CSSM. My fellow staff members are such a kind and caring group and the families we work with are a wonderful group of people. There is a great spirit of teamwork in the office! It is also very rewarding to help clients that stop in our Helena office for assistance with diapers, clothing and baby items. The clients are always thankful for the help and many of them give back to the organization by bringing in outgrown baby clothes or items they no longer need for their children.

## **OLIVIA**

My name is Olivia and I am the intern at the Helena Office. I am originally from California but I am a student at Carroll College. I have a double major in Sociology and Spanish with a Theology minor. I chose these majors because I feel that I am called to social work, specifically working with foster children. After graduation I plan on continuing my education by pursuing a Masters of Social Work and hopefully working for an organization like this one.

My internship with Catholic Social Services began in September and it has been a great experience so far. I have learned a lot about the adoption process and have enjoyed my time working in the office a few days a week. I have had the opportunity to reflect on the ministry I am a part of, and my appreciation for this organization has grown over the course of this semester. Everyone in the office is so kind and I look forward to continuing this experience and learning more about the great resources Catholic Social Services provides.

## **JENN**

I am Jenn Dodson-Cantu and I am the MSW intern in the Billings office. This year has started off with so much learning, I'm looking forward to the Spring term! Working with birthmothers and adoptive families is rewarding, especially since I am adopted myself. What a blessing it is to see families come together in such incredible ways. I had the privilege of meeting many of our new adoptive parents during the Fall Workshop in October, it was an emotional and amazing event. I'm so grateful to be part of this team. Happy Holidays!

## A Message from the CSSM Social Workers

Merry Christmas! We have had another wonderful year of connecting with prospective adoptive parents, counseling expectant parents considering adoption, facilitating many various placements and soaking up the magic inherent in this amazing work. We have so much respect for those of you who are putting your whole hearts into adoption and we're immensely thankful for each of you. We know it hasn't always been easy. Many of you are waiting with anticipation and heartache for that special call from one of us. We think of you every day and also can't wait to make that call! Many others are busy with the day to day activities of parenting, guiding your children and having your own unique experiences. We are not necessarily aware, but there are also people who are contemplating their choices right this minute and may be led to CSSM for support. We are happy to be here for each of them and for you. Together, let's pray for those who are struggling with difficult and scary circumstances who may cross our paths at any moment.

We've had a lot of change this year, with a new director and some new staff, but we continue to move steadily forward in the direction of positive change and growth for the better. Our team is a close-knit one and we aim to support each other whenever possible, in order to provide the best service for the sake of children.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. We wish you the happiest of holidays and a very happy New Year!

***Jenny (Missoula) Michelle (Billings) and Jann (Helena)***

## November is National Adoption Month.

This November, CSSM Staff members attended adoption celebrations in Billings, Missoula and Helena. Finalizations often take place during the celebrations. This year CSSM had one finalization each at the Billings, Missoula and Helena celebrations. CSSM staff helped organize the Helena celebration and joyfully participated with all of the adoptive families where 15 finalizations took place. The event took place at the State Capitol with Governor Bullock as the keynote speaker.



CSSM Social Worker Michelle Perlick at the Adoption Celebration in Billings with one of our families.

**Did you know** you can choose Catholic Social Services when you shop at **Amazon Smile** and donate to us every time you buy? Please consider choosing us as your Amazon Smile partner!

**A call for help!** Do you have connections to a professional printer or funds you are willing to donate? We are redesigning our marketing materials to remain professional and be reflective of the quality services we provide. Please consider helping us with this large undertaking. Thank you!

# Failed Adoption TO Adoption... An Adoptive Mom's Story

To begin, this is our story of failed adoption. Our adoption journey started about 4 years ago. It was about a year after we completed all our training and paperwork that we were notified we'd been MATCHED!!! The JOY of that moment was one we'll never forget. Baby girl was due in 1 MONTH! We met with our expectant mother and immediately fell in love. We were incredibly humbled that she had chosen us and we enjoyed every moment with her and her wonderful family. To this day, we feel blessed to have known them.

Baby girl came a few days early by emergency C-section so we weren't able to be there when she was born. I remember walking into the room and I hugged the new mother. She looked down at her beautiful little girl and said, "Isn't she precious?" I knew in that moment this little girl had her mama's heart. As beautiful as that was, my heart was gripped with doubt that we'd be the ones taking her home.

The plan had been for us to have baby girl in our room that night but her mother kept her in her room that night instead. Doubt that she'd be ours set in even deeper. The next morning while we visited in her room, it was pretty quiet, as though someone wanted to tell us something but couldn't. Our social worker sent us a text to meet her in the lobby. Together, we decided that we should go home and give her space to decide. Deep down we knew we'd never get a call back and we didn't. The feeling of LOSS is deep. It was hard coming back to an empty house, to an empty room, to our empty arms. Those first 3 days were numbing. We were emotionally exhausted. We remember saying, "What now?" We had so many dreams for our lives with this little girl and now they were gone.

How did we pick up the pieces and start again? FIRST, we grieved and let others grieve with us. SECOND, we thanked God for an incredible opportunity to LOVE this family and prayed for their future and the life of that sweet baby girl. We are not going to lie and say we didn't want to feel a bit sour towards them. It's really easy to let bitterness creep in if you let it. No one can blame her for the decision she made and we certainly didn't. It was just the disappointment talking, trying to find someone to blame for this heartache. THIRD, we picked up where we'd left off and eventually the hum and flow of our lives went back to normal. We'd been marked in a beautiful, yet painful, way that God has used time and time again to minister to others and for THAT we are truly grateful. We don't downplay our grief or the loss we and others have endured, but we also refuse to wallow in it. We know we have SO much to be grateful for and there are so many

that wish they had even a quarter of what we do, so it is important to keep some perspective as well. NOW, here we are 2 years later, parents to a beautiful little boy.

This is our story of ADOPTION. We got the call on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 that we'd been MATCHED once again! We were elated of course, but also very cautious for the sake of our own hearts. We went into this with NO expectations. We were in it purely to LOVE the one we'd been matched with and IF it resulted in a child in the end, THEN we would let the JOY of this new life wash over us. Would there have still been disappointment and heartache? Absolutely, BUT we were better prepared this time.

She was due in 3 months and from the moment we met her and her family we couldn't help but fall in love once again. The baby was born the evening of September 14<sup>th</sup> and we were discharged 2 days later with him in our arms. The final papers weren't to be signed for another 2 days so it was still a risk even though we hadn't seen birth mom waver in any way. We knew she could still change her mind even after all the time we'd spent with him. We were in LOVE with this little soul, no matter how much we tried not to get attached.

The morning of the entrustment came and we all met at the CSSM office. Our hearts were pounding hoping that there hadn't been a change of heart. At the same time, we didn't want to be the cause of her pain. She signed the papers as tears rolled down her face. Telling each other what we meant to one another was impossible. Everyone was sobbing. The LOVE we had and continue to have for this young woman is so deep. As she handed us her son, I took her in my arms and she wept uncontrollably. My heart broke realizing the weight of the decision she'd just made. It was the most beautiful act of selfless love we'd ever witnessed, and it marked us for life.

We were overjoyed on the way home, seeing a little human finally filling that car seat we'd had for 4 years. At the same time, I grieved for the first week we had him home. I felt such a sense of responsibility for the birth mom's pain. We look back over these past 4 years of great loss and great love and are just in AWE at what God has done through it all. SO many have been touched because of this journey and WE have been forever changed. We can allow our heartbreaks to BREAK us OR we can find the diamond in the rough and press on knowing the BEST IS YET TO COME!

[Written by a CSSM Adoptive Mom, edited for brevity]

## Wendy's Wonderful Kids

2017 has been a busy year for Katie Lamach, our Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter. She traveled all over the state establishing and maintaining relationships with children in the foster care system who are waiting to be adopted. She had children scattered from Trout Creek to Billings. Some wonderful news is that 1 of the children on her caseload was adopted on November 13<sup>th</sup>! Two other children are waiting for court dates to finalize their adoptions. Katie had many children featured on the CBS news segment, A Waiting Child. She also has children featured in the Heart Gallery at the Missoula Southgate Mall with a picture and brief description. Katie has helped many of the children have new experiences, such as pottery and fly fishing. A 10 year old girl that she works with loves it when Katie brings her dog to town. A frequent quote from this girl is, "Katie, I think your dog misses me because she really likes me. Maybe you should bring her next time."

The services Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiters provide are extremely important for children in foster care. More than 130,000 children in the foster care system across the nation are waiting to be adopted. In Montana, 661 children are permanent wards of the State and waiting to find adoptive families. Of those children, 191 reside in counties covered by the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter at Catholic Social Services of Montana. We believe every child is adoptable and every child deserves a safe, loving and permanent family. Across the US, it is estimated that 20,532 children will age out of the foster care system without a family or home to call their own. Wendy's Wonderful Kids is trying to change those numbers. More than 6,500 children have been adopted through the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Program. If you would like to learn more about adoption of a child from foster care, please contact Katie Lamach at 406-442-4130 or 1-800-222-9383.



The 18th Annual CSSM Charity Golf Tournament took place at Bill Roberts Golf Course in Helena this September. CSSM would like to recognize all the generous sponsors that helped make this year's tournament a huge success!

### MAJOR SPONSORS

Cathedral of St. Helena (Silver Level)  
Sullivan Financial Group (Silver Level)  
Saint Mary Catholic Community (Silver Level)  
SS. Cyril & Methodius (Bronze Level)  
Cloninger & Son Electric (Bronze Level)  
Catholic Mutual Group

### RAFFLE SPONSORS

Diamond Dream  
Spieker Sprinklers  
Coeur d'Alene Resort  
John Reddy



### SPONSORS

Placer Motors Subaru  
Mountain Hot Tub  
Bert & Ernie's  
KNEH Relevant Radio 97.3 FM  
KGR Radio  
Montana Radio Company

Continued on back page



**Catholic Social Services of Montana**  
**PO Box 907**  
**Helena, MT 59624**  
**406-442-4130 or 800-baby-due**  
**www.cssmt.org**

NONPROFIT ORG.  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 Helena, MT 59601  
 Permit #216

Continued from page 7

## GOLF TOURNAMENT HOLE SPONSORS

3 Brothers Plumbing & Heating	Finstad's Carpet One	Montana Flag and Pole
A-1 Rental & Party Plus	Franz & Driscoll, PLLP	Montana Tire Company
A & A Plumbing	Geolex	Mosaic Architecture
All Season Heating & Air Conditioning	Helena Hardwoods	Motherlode
Allstate Insurance, Carrie Martin	Helena Eye Clinic	National Body & Paint
Ancient Order of Hibernians	Helena Family Dentistry	Opportunity Bank
Anderson Zurmuehlen	Helena Orthodontics	Power Townsend Company
Bill Bahney and Associates	Helena Sand and Gravel	Sandy Mac's Distributing
Bison Insurance	Hjelms Auto Body	Steve's Café
Clarks Plumbing & Heating	Hugh McWhorter, CPA	St. Vincent Healthcare Foundation
Clear Choice Auto Glass	Jackson, Murdo & Grant, PC	The Connect Group
D&D RV Center	Knights of Columbus Council #844	The Floor Show
Dakota Supply Group	Last Chance Casino	The Investment Group
Doubek, Pyfer & Fox PC	Lopach and Carparelli, PC	Tri-County Disposal
Edward Jones, David Polk	Marc Parriman Construction	Van's Thriftway
Employee Benefit Resources, LLP	Montana Eye Care	Wells Fargo Advisors

### MAIN OFFICE

PO Box 907  
 Helena, MT 59624  
 (406) 442-4130  
[helena@cssmt.org](mailto:helena@cssmt.org)

### MISSOULA

420 W. Pine  
 Missoula, MT 59802  
 (406) 728-5429  
[missoula@cssmt.org](mailto:missoula@cssmt.org)

### GREAT FALLS

410 Central Avenue #601  
 Great Falls, MT 59401  
 (406) 771-7805  
[greatfalls@cssmt.org](mailto:greatfalls@cssmt.org)

### BILLINGS

1048 North 30th St.  
 Billings, MT 59101  
 (406) 252-3399  
[billings@cssmt.org](mailto:billings@cssmt.org)