



Heart Times

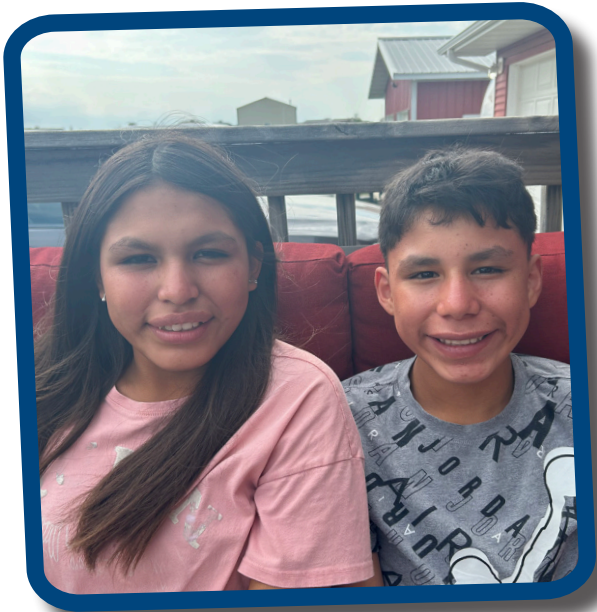
NEWSLETTER



Spring 2025

AASK - Adults Adopting Special Kids

www.aasknd.org



Meet Kazia & Joey!

Let's find Joey and Kazia their forever family!

Siblings Joey and Kazia know how to make people laugh! Like any siblings, they know exactly how to push each other's buttons and love being competitive.

Joey is 14 years old and loves video games. He is currently enjoying his basketball season and gaining new skills

on the court! Joey does well when given clear expectations and directions. He enjoys being active and can be open to new things! He does well when given support and incentives to do his best.

Kazia is 13 years old! Her makeup skills are impressive, and she loves trying new products! She has participated in volleyball and basketball and enjoys being part of a team! Next, she might try cheerleading! Kazia enjoys playing video games, too.

It is important for the children to be adopted by a family that is willing to accept and support their Native American culture and heritage. The siblings have connections in North Dakota that will be important to maintain post adoption.

Joey and Kazia's team is looking for a supportive and committed adoptive family that is willing to meet all their needs. Both Joey and Kazia receive therapeutic services, and their adoptive family must be willing to continue these services and attend appointments. Joey and Kazia need an adoptive family that can be their biggest supporters and advocates. Joey and Kazia's adoptive family will need to provide a safe, nurturing, and structured environment for both children to continue to grow and develop.

If you have any questions or want to learn more about these awesome siblings, reach out to your adoption worker or Micaela at 701-837-8391.



Our Mission

AASK commits to building permanency for children from foster care through adoption by stable and nurturing families.



**NORTH DAKOTA
POST ADOPT NETWORK**
A SERVICE OF THE AASK PROGRAM



Catholic Charities
North Dakota
Forever Grateful Since 1923

Staff Contact Information

Fargo

Catholic Charities North Dakota
5201 Bishops Boulevard- Suite B
Fargo, ND 58104
P: 701.235.4457
F: 701.356.7993

ND Post Adopt

Catholic Charities North Dakota
Offices in Fargo, Grand Forks,
Bismarck, and Minot
P: 701.356.7992
TF: 844.454.1139
F: 701.356.7993

Belcourt

Catholic Charities North Dakota
216 South Broadway- Suite 201
Minot, ND 58701
P: 701.534.0145

Grand Forks

Catholic Charities North Dakota
311 4th Street South- Suite 105
Grand Forks, ND 58201
P: 701.775.4196
F: 701.775.0129

Devils Lake

Catholic Charities North Dakota
311 4th Street South- Suite 105
Grand Forks, ND 58201
P: 701.775.4196

Williston

Catholic Charities North Dakota
PO Box 1843
Williston, ND 58802-1843
P: 701.580.2032

Bismarck

Catholic Charities North Dakota
600 South 2nd Street- Suite 150
Bismarck, ND 58504
P: 701.255.1793
F: 701.255.1505

Dickinson

Catholic Charities North Dakota
235 Sims Building- Suite 22
Dickinson, ND 58601
P: 701.361.1881

Minot

Catholic Charities North Dakota
216 South Broadway- Suite 201
Minot, ND 58701
P: 701.852.2854
F: 701.852.6573

Director's Corner

Greetings!

Over the past few months, AASK has been working diligently to implement a restructuring of the program to support the efforts of adoption redesign. This created opportunities to specialize positions to assist cases in moving in a timely and efficient manner. An overview of these changes are below!

- **The creation of an AASK Intake Unit:** This unit is comprised of two workers who have become proficient in gathering child referral information and work directly with families on their AASK application in the beginning stages of their adoption journey. Feedback from our community on this process change has been very positive!
- **The creation of a Recruitment Unit:** This unit is the first point of contact when a team identifies recruitment as a need for a child in foster care. The unit is comprised of two Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) Recruiters and one AASK Recruiter--- all three positions work directly with kids who do not yet have an identified adoptive home. They use many methods of recruitment to find the best match for a child!
- **Appointing ICPC cases to Concurrent Specialists:** Sometimes, children are matched with a family out of state and other times children enter into North Dakota to be placed with a family who resides here. These cases require work with the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC). To create proficiency in this area, AASK's concurrent adoption specialists are assigned ICPC cases, as long as their caseload allows.

The program also recently added two additional Lead Adoption Specialists, for a total of four across the state. These adoption specialists work hard to bring awareness to the AASK and Post Adopt program—the primary goal is to help match children who do not have an identified home!

The AASK program continues to be filled with devoted, passionate, and committed staff. These changes have allowed us to ensure children and families remain at the forefront of our service delivery while being thorough, efficient, and timely. We look forward to the months ahead!

Kara Eastlund, MSW, LMSW, LGSW
AASK Director

To learn more about
any of the Waiting Children,
please visit



www.ndheartgallery.org
or visit the AASK website at
www.aasknd.org

Lemon Biscotti



Submitted by Julie Hoffman

Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons butter (softened at room temp; salted or unsalted can be used)
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups all purpose flour (plus more for shaping the dough)
- 1/3 tsp salt (if you're sensitive to salt, you may want to omit this if using salted butter)
- 3 Eggs
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- Zest of 2 lemons

For the Glaze

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- Juice of 1 lemon



Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Prep one cookie tray with parchment.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the butter and sugar. Mix until light and fluffy using a hand mixer. Add the lemon zest and mix until fully incorporated.
3. Add the eggs and mix for about 1 minute. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl.
4. Add the flour, salt and baking powder. Gently mix the dry ingredients on low speed until incorporated. Stop mixing once all of the flour is absorbed. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl.
5. Once the mixture comes together, sprinkle a dusting of flour onto the cookie tray that is lined with parchment. Carefully dump out the bowl onto the tray and gently form the dough into a log. The dough will be sticky and soft, so add more flour to your surface and your hands as needed to form the shape.
6. Once your log is ready (it should be about the length of the tray), press down so that the dough log is about 1/2 inch thick.
7. Bake for about 30 minutes until puffed up, light golden brown and firm.
8. Once the cookie log is done baking, remove from the oven and set aside. Drop the oven temp to 300°F.
9. Allow to cool for 10 minutes on the tray. Once the cookie log is done resting, use a serrated knife to slice the log into about 1 inch cookies, on a diagonal.
10. Place the cookies on their flat sides and place back into the oven for 10 minutes* (or more time if desired).
11. After the cookies are done baking on the one side, flip them over again and bake the other sides for 10 minutes (or more time if desired). After the last bake, remove the cookies from the oven and allow to cool on the tray.
12. In a small bowl, combine the lemon juice and powdered sugar. Drizzle the glaze over the tops of the biscotti. Allow the glaze to dry.

Note from Julie: I love all things lemon this time of the year – so fresh and reminds me that spring is on the way. I love biscotti with coffee, so this recipe satisfies my taste buds.

Waiting Kids



Blaiz

Meet 13-year-old Blaiz!

In his free time, Blaiz enjoys playing board games, reading, listening to music, and building LEGOs. Blaiz loves to play video games on the Nintendo Switch. His favorite games to play are any type of Super Mario Bros video games.

To learn more about Blaiz, visit www.aasknd.org or contact Mikayla at 701-831-1334. Also, don't forget to check out his Reel Hope video on the AASK Website, <https://www.aasknd.org/meet-the-kids>.



Bryar

Meet 16-year-old Bryar!

In his free time, Bryar enjoys riding bike, climbing trees, and playing basketball! Bryar enjoys being active through sports such as football, basketball, baseball, and wrestling. Bryar is very knowledgeable about semis, tractors, dirt bikes, and farms and loves to share his knowledge about them with others!

To learn more about Bryar, visit www.aasknd.org or call Mikayla at 701-831-1334. Also, don't forget to check out his Reel Hope video on the AASK Website, <https://www.aasknd.org/meet-the-kids>.



Israel

Meet Israel!

Israel is 14 years old. In his free time, Israel enjoys being active through sports. Israel has played on his school's football, basketball, traveling basketball, and track & field teams! Israel also enjoys being outdoors, fishing, and playing video games!

To learn more about Israel, visit www.aasknd.org or contact Mikayla at 701-831-1334.



Jace

13-year-old Jace is a confident young man but is humble enough to be prideful. He has a relaxed personality and is content with most activities! Jace likes to play Fortnite on his switch or computer with his little brother and friends from school. He is not a picky eater and likes helping in the kitchen to cook meals such as pasta, pizza, and breakfast meals!

To learn more about Jace, visit www.aasknd.org or call Emily at 701-356-8039! Also, don't forget to check out his Reel Hope video on the AASK Website, <https://www.aasknd.org/meet-the-kids>.



Jaydan

15-year-old Jaydan has high energy, so being able to spend time outside is enjoyable for him. He likes most foods and is looking for a busy family that enjoys spending time with him doing all sorts of activities! Jaydan is empathetic to others' feelings and does not like when he disappoints someone.

To learn more about Jaydan, visit www.aasknd.org or call Emily at 701-356-8039. Also, Don't forget to check out his Reel Hope video on the AASK Website, <https://www.aasknd.org/meet-the-kids>.



Malachi & Melinda

Malachi is a quiet, laid-back, 13-year-old. Malachi enjoys playing video games and virtual reality, spending time with his friends and family.

Melinda is 10 years old and is in the 5th grade. She loves Taylor Swift, staying up-to-date on all of the latest styles, and enjoys spending time with her friends.

To learn more about these siblings visit www.aasknd.org or call Micaela at 701-837-839. Also, don't forget to check out their Reel Hope video on the AASK Website, <https://www.aasknd.org/meet-the-kids>.

Waiting Kids



Michael,
Kalysta, &
Tabitha

Michael is a smart, kind 13-year-old boy who enjoys video games, soccer, board games, and reading.

Kalysta is a sweet 12-year-old girl. Kalysta enjoys volleyball and will be trying out for basketball for the first time this year.

Tabitha, who goes by her nickname "Tabby," is an outgoing, inquisitive 8-year-old girl who is always up for conversation.

To learn more about these siblings visit www.aasknd.org or call contact Jean at 701-317-7512.



Noah

Outgoing, silly, and creative are all great adjectives to describe 11-year-old Noah! Noah has an amazing imagination and loves to play games that allow him to create his own stories. He is loving, talkative, sweet, and helpful. Noah is not a picky-eater and really loves chef salad, though he also enjoys eating chicken nuggets, macaroni and cheese, and pizza!

To learn more about Noah, visit www.aasknd.org or call Emily at 701-356-8039. Also, don't forget to check out his Reel Hope video on the AASK Website, <https://www.aasknd.org/meet-the-kids>.



Oliver

Meet Oliver!

Oliver is a kind, creative, and loving 13-year-old who enjoys Legos, anime, and playing video games. Oliver is in the 7th grade and loves to read in his spare time. He has a great sense of humor, is known to be very clever and sweet, and would enjoy traveling and exploring new places.

To learn more about Oliver, visit www.aasknd.org or call Emily at 701-356-8039. Also, don't forget to check out his Reel Hope video on the AASK Website, <https://www.aasknd.org/meet-the-kids>.

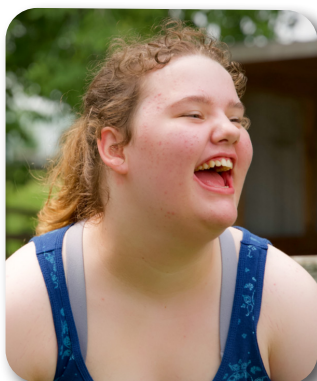


Raydin

Does your family love spending time outside or building things? If so, your family may be the perfect fit for Raydin!

Raydin is a very active and social 8-year-old! He is very talkative, engaging, and curious. He is also a sweet, caring, and sensitive individual. He enjoys video games, riding bike, swimming, jumping on trampolines, playing at the park, animals, and building paper airplanes.

To learn more about Raydin, visit www.aasknd.org or call Sadie at 701-356-8027.



Timberlie

Meet 14-year-old Timberlie!

Timberlie enjoys being active through dancing, gymnastics, jumping on the trampoline, and swimming! Timberlie is warm-hearted, loves to be social, and has a great sense of humor!

To learn more about Timberlie visit www.aasknd.org or call Mikayla at 701-831-1334. Also, don't forget to check out her Reel Hope video on the AASK Website, <https://www.aasknd.org/meet-the-kids>.



Trenton

Meet 17-year-old Trenton!

In his free time, Trenton enjoys being creative by drawing and creating artwork on articles of his clothing such as his shirts and shoes! He is kind, creative, and humorous! Trenton enjoys playing basketball and video games. His favorite video game is Fortnite!

To learn more about Trenton visit www.aasknd.org or call Mikayla at 701-831-1334. Also, don't forget to check out his Reel Hope video on the AASK Website, <https://www.aasknd.org/meet-the-kids>.



Meet Alex!



Hello! My name is Alex Johnson, and I am excited to announce I have accepted the role as the Post Adopt Coordinator serving the Southeast Region of North Dakota. I graduated from Minnesota State University Moorhead in the spring of 2024 with a bachelor's degree in Social Work. I have always enjoyed working with children and have been doing so since I was old enough to become a certified babysitter. While pursuing my degree I gained experience working with children and families at the Boys and Girls Club throughout the Fargo Public School district. My senior year of undergrad I had the privilege of interning at Clay County Social Services where I gained knowledge in child welfare.

I was born and raised in Fargo and for me it will always be my home base. I have a younger brother attending Valley City State University and I could not be prouder. My boyfriend and I have a husky named Kona, and she keeps us very busy. I enjoy spending time with family and friends, traveling, art, and daily walks with Kona.

I am grateful and excited for the opportunity to join the Post Adopt team and community. I look forward to making and building those connections as well as supporting adoptive and guardianship families in any way possible!

2025 Winter Retreat

Just like that, another successful Winter Retreat in the books! This year 10 families attended; in total, Winter Retreat consisted of 25 kids, 15 parents, and 8 staff. Although the weather was surly, the company was not. While the kids were with staff letting off energy, crafting, and meeting other kids, parents spent time with Laura Sokolofsky, a North Dakota Trauma Trainer and Mental Health Therapist with West Fargo Public Schools. Parents also got some much-needed down time and time spent conversing with other parents. Families also enjoyed various activities including decorating a family mug, indoor skating, a rock wall, sledding, movie night, a hot chocolate bar, family games, and more!

It is safe to say the Post Adopt team and volunteers truly enjoy attending camp and seeing the growth (both physically and emotionally) in returning families, while also meeting and welcoming new faces! It always puts a pep in my step and smile on my face when I see parents and children connecting with others and building their support system. I am very fortunate and grateful to witness such connections!

Stay tuned for details and information regarding Camp Connect!

Bailey Kitko
Post Adopt Supervisor

Upcoming
EVENTS

All upcoming events including support groups
can be found on the ND Post Adopt website
<http://www.ndpostadopt.org/calendar-of-events/>

From the Professional

One of my favorite parts of being a member of the AASK team is my direct work with families to prepare them for adoption. It is a special privilege to do this work and comes with the task of preparing families for some of the 'what-ifs' that may come their way in the future. Parenting is hard and parenting an adopted child can come with unique challenges. Some of these adoption specific challenges manifest during adolescences – a time when many kids struggle with figuring out 'who' they are and 'who' they want to be.

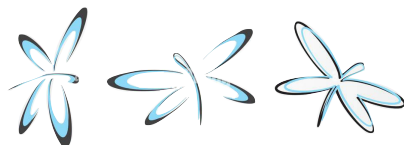
Debbie Riley's book, *Beneath the Mask: Understanding Adopted Teens*, captures some of these unique challenges into what Ms. Riley has named the 'six stuck spots'. These stuck spots can help unpack and address challenges with the goal of helping teen adoptees work through their feelings.

The stuck spots are as follows:

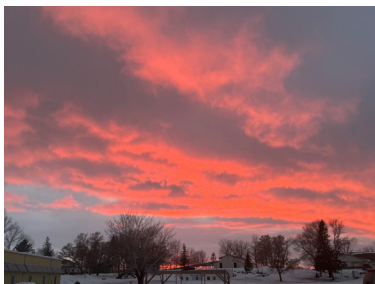
1. Reason for Adoption
2. Identity
3. Difference
4. Missing or Difficult Information
5. Loyalty
6. Permanence

While no child is exactly like another, there can be a common through lines for challenges adoptive families face. For adoptive parents, acknowledging and understanding these 'stuck spots' is instrumental to supporting their adopted children as they journey through adolescences into adulthood. Help from outside support and adoption-competent therapeutic services can also allow for adopted children to have the best possible opportunity to navigate and overcome challenges they face.

Read more here: <https://adoptioncouncil.org/publications/adoption-advocate-no-124/>



Submitted by Micaela Haider, LBSW
AASK Adoption Specialist



*Post Adopt
Winter Retreat 2025*

Featured Family

Greetings from the Solem Family!



We became foster care licensed in 2021 through the Human Service Zone in our community. We initially became foster parents with the intent of providing a safe home for youth until they found permanency. We provided respite for a few families before welcoming Winnie and Sophia as our first placement. We navigated the time during the foster care process and when the opportunity arose to adopt both Winnie and Sophia, we couldn't imagine our girls transitioning into another home. Our home had become a place of comfort and stability for both; it had become their home. We have loved watching our girls grow and develop in so many ways, from meeting various developmental milestones to gaining more confidence!

Kyle is a Central Sterile Technician, working closely with a surgical team at the hospital in town. Darcy is an Adoption Specialist at Catholic Charities North Dakota. Winnie is our sweet and silly six-year-old and Sophia is our energetic and spirited almost five-year-old! We have one dog, Kona, who we adopted when she was 8 weeks old! As a family, we enjoy going to parks, watching movies, visiting extended family, and playing games!

If we were to talk with someone considering becoming an adoptive parent, we would highly recommend doing as much research as possible. Become acquainted with all aspects of adoption, including, and not limited to, birth family connections, the adoption triad, and supports youth may need, just to name a few! Allow yourself to sit in the uncomfortable of where you may have some biases, and challenge where these biases may stem from. Talk with other adoptive parents about all aspects of adoption. If you have thought about adoption and feel that your family would be able to support a youth while providing for their emotional, mental, and physical needs, we would highly encourage you to allow your home to be a place where they can blossom—jump in in feet first!



LOOK
who's in the

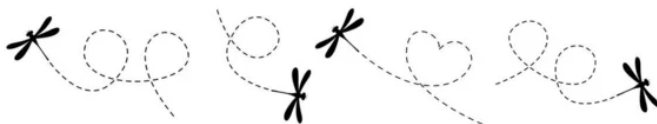
SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight On Staff

My name is Tesia Miller, I am the Lead Adoption Specialist in Fargo. I've been with the AASK Program for 8 years! It's truly been an honor to serve so many kids and families over the years and to help them find their forever home through adoption. I'm blessed to work alongside my amazing colleagues who are passionate about helping support our kids and families.

I've been married to my amazing husband for 8 years and we have a beautiful 2-year-old daughter. In my downtime I love making our house into a home by cleaning, cooking, and organizing. I enjoy reading and have a goal to read the Bible this year.

Go Pack Go!



Tesia Miller

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



CATHOLIC CHARITIES ND
5201 BISHOPS BLVD - STE B
FARGO ND 58104

“It was a pleasure working with AASK. Jessica Morey was very helpful and easy to work with!”

-Adoptive Family

MAILING LIST UPDATE: If you have an address change or do not wish to receive this newsletter, please email Angie Martinez at amartinez@catholiccharitiesnd.org Thank you!

Did you know individuals can also support the program? Online donations can be made on our website at www.aasknd.org. Donations can also be mailed to CCND/AASK at 5201 Bishops Boulevard - Suite B - Fargo, ND 58104.

Donations can be made in memory of a loved one who has passed or to honor a special occasion such as a birthday, graduation, wedding or birth of a child. What a great way to give tribute to someone who has impacted your life while making a difference for a child in the AASK program.

Thank you for your support! It helps the program provide that “special touch” for the children and families we serve!



www.aasknd.org



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