

## HONORING, UNITING, AND CELEBRATING FAMILIES

### MOVING FAMILIES FROM TRAUMA TO HOPE AND HEALING

#### A Visitation Coach's Story

As a visit coach with Salvation Army Children's Services, I have the honor of working with parents whose children are living in kinship and foster homes. I love this month's theme of "honoring, uniting, and celebrating families," because this is what I am able to do every day. I respectfully seek to build trust and partnerships with parents while supporting them to identify and consistently meet the needs of their children during visits. Visit coaching provides child-centered, attachment-rich, and playful visits by empowering parents to focus their full attention on the emotional, physical, and developmental needs of their children. One mother liked to remind herself that her son needed to be "front and center" of every visit and of each decision she made toward reunification.

One of my great joys as a visit coach is watching a family emerge from a history of trauma that debilitates to a place of hope and healing where parents are equipped to protect and support their children. I marvel at the determination, tenacity, and courage of the parents and children I serve. The father who stepped up to prove his metal as full-time parent for the first time. The mother who was separated from her twins at birth and surprised everyone by staying the course for 3 years to bring her daughters home. The couple who learned to communicate without aggression in order to lead their children as a protective, united team. And, finally, the precious children who teach their parents how to play and express tender affection.

Visit coaching helps families to endure the grief of separation, to connect and bond through shared play, and to celebrate their strengths. One father said it best, "I never realized how much my son needed me! And now I know how to be there for him." During a therapeutic game of learning to express feelings, a teenager announced that she has learned that "family is the most important thing of all." Her tearful mother later shared with me that she used to think of parenting as giving the best of things to her children, but, "Now I know that what they really want is a relationship with me." Three cheers for the families who learn from their painful experiences and rally to live restored lives!

To learn more about foster care and adoption services offered through the [Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware Salvation Army Children's Services](#).



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