



# Update . . .

January 2012

5772 Tevet



## Substance Abuse & Child Welfare (Part 2 of 3)

*by R. David Weisskopf*

[Note: To protect the identities of the children and their families, the names and specific details have been changed.]

During that same period, the caseworker placed Andre into my home. Ramirez and Andre came from similar communities, but Andre did not have a drug problem of his own. It was his biological parents. Cocaine was the sole reason why Andre lived with me instead of his parents. These parents were hostile to nearly everyone in our agency and had a reputation for making false allegations against foster parents. That, of course, was quite unsettling for me as I had to consider whether to accept Andre into my home.

As I got to know the family, it was clear how deeply they cared for each other and detested their own drug addictions more than any of the rest of us. The parents could not test negative more than three weeks in a row in compliance with the court order. That was the only parental strike against them. The drugs prevented them from getting their son back.

The mother was not working, which gave her more time to use drugs. It seemed to all of us at first that she was not making enough of an effort to find work. However, she lived in a suburban area with no public transportation. It was impossible to support a family in that neighborhood without a car. Neither parent owned a reliable car – so

consistent employment was out of their reach – especially for the mother. They could not save enough to buy a car because they were always using their money to buy drugs.

Somebody I knew was having trouble selling their car, though it was mechanically sound. I convinced them to donate the car to my licensing agency and asked my director to give it to this mother. It worked. As soon as she had a reliable car, she found a reliable job. Her self-confidence boosted tremendously and the two parents were using their money to pay bills instead of buying drugs. They both tested negative for drugs from then on and Andre returned home with his family six months later.

As for Ramirez, he managed to earn a GED and enlisted in the army. He served in Iraq as a tank commander and has since returned to settle in Chicago. Today he is building a new family of his own and works in a career very suitable to him.

In both situations, my home was potentially the last option before institutionalizing Andre and Ramirez. Oftentimes solutions to child welfare are within our resources and require creative problem-solving both on the micro management level and on the macro management level. The solution in Andre's case was on the level of micro management, while the solution in

Ramirez's case was on the macro management level.  
*(to be continued)*

**R. David Weisskopf** will be in the USA and available to speak February 17<sup>th</sup> – March 13<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested in booking him during this trip, please contact us via e-mail or the Contact Page on our web site for more information.

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