

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: April 16, 2011

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SYBIL GOOD TO RETIRE AFTER 20 YEARS OF WORKING WITH FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

On one wall of Sybil Good's office hangs a picture of children playing Ring Around the Rosie in a Charleston, S.C., courtyard. It's an idyllic scene that reflects the harmony often lacking in the lives of the foster and adoptive children she works with.

After 20 years as a social worker and social work supervisor in Catawba County, Good will retire at the end of April. She started working for the Catawba County Department of Social Services in 1969, shortly after she graduated from Lenoir-Rhyne College with a degree in sociology. She quit in 1974 to have her children, since there was no maternity leave in those days. After working for a neighboring county, and then spending 20 years in the private sector, she returned in 1999 as a foster and adoption worker. A year later, she was promoted to a supervisory position.

"When I started in social work, there wasn't much training for the job," she said. "A lot of it was just common sense -- what was the logical way to deal with people."

She said she has always tried to deal with families and children in a courteous and kind manner, even when relaying news they might not want to hear. "One thing I say to my staff, is, 'It's all in the tone.' "

Over the years, Good has helped license and train foster parents, and provide ongoing training for foster and adoptive parents. She said it is rewarding to see adoptive and foster parents grow into their new role. "They come in with the desire to do it, but they often come in rather surprised about the challenges. Over time, you see them getting more knowledgeable, wiser and more confident."

Good has seen the rules about adoption change dramatically since she started working in the field. In the early days, "It was like their past life never existed" after a child was adopted.

"That's one of the great things about adoption now," she said. "It's done in the way that's best for the child."



Good has also worked in a fairly new part of adoption law, Confidential Intermediary. In this service, an adult who was adopted as a child can seek assistance in finding their birth parents or other relatives. Good serves as the intermediary, determining if both parties want that connection. If so, she will try to put them in touch with each other. "There are so many emotions that come into it for birth mothers," she said. "There's always this little hope that they'll find out what happened to their child. But they try not to dwell on it." Navigating that first meeting can be difficult, she said, since the adult child and parent are strangers when they reunite. "I haven't had any come together that didn't go well," she said.

In some cases, she has helped reunite an adoptee whom she originally placed for adoption. Those are special cases. In one case, two brothers were reunited in their 60s after having been separated as children. In another case, two sisters found each other after one was raised by her grandparents and the other was adopted.

"Everybody's got a significant story that I wish I could tell -- or that people could understand," she said. However, confidentiality is still the rule in these cases, unless the individuals choose to make their story public.

Amy Herman, child welfare program manager, said: "Sybil has positively impacted the lives of countless families and children through her work here, most recently with the Confidential Intermediary service. She has been a tireless advocate for renewing relationships with birth families through this program and helped to craft the legislation that makes it possible. She has facilitated many great memories for families. Sybil is extremely wise, warm, fun and funny. She evokes a sense of joy. Sybil will be missed; her energy and presence will always be felt in this agency by those who know her."

Good said she has worked with some outstanding colleagues over the years. "My partnership with Sarah (Shumate, her team supervisor) was just meant to be. She sees into the future, the direction this department should go."

After retiring, Good said she and her husband plan to take a cruise along the Eastern Seaboard. Then she plans to spend some time with her grandchildren. And, she has one more thing to cross off her bucket list. She wants to learn to ride a horse.

How does she want to be remembered? She stopped and thought for a moment, then answered, "I hope that my being here made somebody's life better."

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