

Case Conference Report

Name of Family: Timothy and Barbara Atwood

Name of Children: Alyssa and Amber Keast

Date of Conference: 11-17-2006

Present: Timothy and Barbara Atwood – adoptive applicants
Debora Ward – Timothy Atwood’s sister
Timothy Atwood Jr. – Timothy Atwood’s son
George Atwood – Timothy Atwood’s father
Phyllis Atwood – Timothy Atwood’s stepmother
Suzanne Adams - Bethany Christian Services adoption specialist
Susanne Jordan - Bethany Christian Services adoption supervisor
Dave Glerum - Bethany Christian Services Fremont Services director
Brian De Vos - Bethany Christian Services Michigan Director of Operations

SUMMARY OF CASE CONFERENCE:

- I. Introductions were made, and the purpose of the case conference was presented.
- II. Timothy Atwood stated that they are aware of their rights under State of Michigan Adoption Policy regarding a Section 45 hearing.
- III. Timothy Atwood presented his written report entitled, “My Rebuttal to the Bethany Christian Services Adoption Assessment”. Mr. Atwood then read the report to those present. His objections included:
 - He has never seen the Parent-Agency Agreement that is mentioned in the Adoptive Family Assessment and DHS reports.
 - Timothy Atwood reported that his son, Timothy Atwood Jr., saw Alyssa at school, and she just stared at him. Mr. Atwood concluded that Alyssa has been emotionally damaged by having been removed from Mr. and Mrs. Atwood’s care.
 - Mr. and Mrs. Atwood tried to keep the children away from Erica’s boyfriend, but she allowed the children to have contact with him without Mr. and Mrs. Atwood’s knowledge.
 - Erica is in jail for making a false police report. She is a liar, and can’t be trusted.
 - Mr. Atwood presented a letter from Erica which requested that her children be placed with someone she knows. (This letter is attached to this report.)
 - Mr. Atwood believes that DHS has failed many children in the system, and has also failed to make the best decisions for Alyssa and Amber.
 - Mr. Atwood acknowledged that he does indeed have a drug history, but claims that he quit the hard drugs 28 years ago, and that the last time he smoked marijuana was March 7, 2005. Mr. Atwood also admits that he has smoked marijuana with his daughter, Erica, in July 2004.

- Mr. Atwood believes that children should be with relatives, barring any other factors, and does not agree with the recommendation of Bethany Christian Services that Mr. and Mrs. Atwood be denied the adoption of Alyssa and Amber Keast.
- Mr. Atwood's complete statement is attached to this report.

IV. Barb Atwood presented her written report entitled, "My statement about Suzanne's adoption assessment". Mrs. Atwood then read the report to those present. Her objections include the following:

- She objects to the statement in the Adoptive Family Assessment which states that she is emotionally dependent on her husband. She stated that both she and her husband are dependent on each other as a married couple.
- Barb states several examples in her report which she believes reflect her efforts to keep Alyssa and Amber away from Erica's boyfriend.
- Her complete statement is attached to this report.

V. Debora Ward read a statement, objecting to the denial of Mr. and Mrs. Atwood as adoptive parents for Alyssa and Amber. Her statement reflects the following opinions:

- She herself was removed from her father's care when she was a child, so she knows firsthand how devastating that can be to a child.
- She believes that Tim and Barb are good parents.
- Deb believes that children belong with relatives.
- Her full statement is attached to this report.

VI. Timothy Atwood Jr. gave a verbal report, in which he stated that he had a great childhood. His parents (Tim and Barb) were loving. He remembers working with his dad on the farm, and later, in the shop. He remembers Erica (his sister) as his best friend until she got into the drug crowd in high school. Tim said that Alyssa and Amber were happy at Tim and Barbara's house. Tim said that Alyssa and Amber lived with him and his wife for about one week shortly after they were removed from Tim and Barb's house, but that he asked that they be removed because they were too much to handle. He and his wife were raising three children already, and a fourth was on the way.

VII. Phyllis Atwood gave a verbal statement. She stated that she remembers when Erica came back from Detroit, and she let Erica know that she had put her mother (Barb) through a terrible time with her behaviors. Mrs. Atwood also reminded Bethany Christian Services that she had written a letter of recommendation for Tim and Barb's family assessment, in which she recommended them for the adoption of Alyssa and Amber. Mrs. Phyllis Atwood feels that Bethany Christian Services erred in denying Mr. and Mrs. Atwood for the adoption of Alyssa and Amber. Mrs. Atwood is also disgusted with DHS' incompetence. She stated that the whole family wants Tim and Barb to have the girls.

VIII. Mr. George Atwood gave a verbal statement. He stated that he loves Erica, but believes that Erica did wrong. At one time, Erica started the classes to join the Catholic Church, but then quit and got into drugs. He wants Alyssa and Amber to stay in the family.

IX. The representatives from Bethany Christian Services that were present at this case

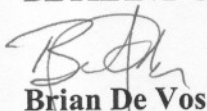
conference thanked Mr. and Mrs. Atwood and the guests they invited for coming to the case conference.

- X. Mr. Timothy Atwood summarized his position by saying that he was willing to take “unorthodox” steps to get his granddaughters back, although he would not do anything illegal.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION BY BETHANY CHRISTIAN SERVICES:

- I. Bethany Christian Services recognizes that Mr. and Mrs. Atwood love Alyssa and Amber. Bethany Christian Services also acknowledges the strong opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Atwood and the family members present at the conference that Alyssa and Amber should be adopted by relatives.
- II. As Bethany Christian Services is not a monitoring agency for DHS, Bethany Christian Services is unable to comment on the complaints that Mr. and Mrs. Atwood have regarding DHS. Bethany Christian Services recommends that Mr. and Mrs. Atwood communicate directly to DHS for issues relating to past DHS actions which they disagree with.
- II. Bethany Christian Services stands by its denial of Mr. and Mrs. Atwood for the adoption of Alyssa and Amber, based on an assessment of the possible risks to the children. This risk assessment is based on the following:
- Mr. Atwood has an extensive drug history. He admits that he started using drugs when he was 16 years old. Mr. Atwood claims that he has quit drugs, and says that the last time he smoked marijuana was in March, 2005. He also admits to having smoked marijuana with his daughter, Erica. The most recent incident of Mr. Atwood smoking marijuana with Erica was in July, 2004, as reported by Mr. Atwood. He reports in his written statement that Erica “begged” him to smoke with her on that July day, and he gave in to her begging. Mr. Atwood has never participated in a drug treatment program or support program to aid him in staying clean from drugs.
 - Mr. and Mrs. Atwood failed to provide appropriate supervision and monitoring of Erica’s visits with Alyssa and Amber so as to insure that the children were kept away from Richard, Erica’s boyfriend, for whom there was a no-contact order.
 - On July 13, 2005, the Foster Care Review Board assessed the reasons for the removal of Alyssa and Amber from Mr. and Mrs. Atwood’s care, and supported the removal by DHS. The Foster Care Review Board stated in their report, “We find that the Agency demonstrated that Amber and Alyssa were at risk of harm; their needs were not being met under Tim and Barbara Atwood’s care and moving Alyssa and Amber were in their best interest.”

Respectfully submitted,
BETHANY CHRISTIAN SERVICES



Brian De Vos
Director of Operations, Michigan