

# ON THE MOVE

# Adopted

Story by Mike Latona

**O**n the surface, adopted children don't appear to be different than anyone else. They walk, talk and act the same as their schoolmates, and they simply refer to their adoptive parents as "Mom" and "Dad."

Yet adopted children experience many situations and feelings with which most of us are not familiar. Teens interviewed for this story described emotions ranging from anger to happiness, from curiosity to indifference as they spoke about the circumstances surrounding their adoptions.

These diverse feelings, they explained, stem from knowing they were detached from their natural families — but not fully understanding why.

Amanda Mathis has been reminded of her status as an adopted child during discussions in school about family histories. Amanda, 17, who was adopted shortly after her first birthday, explained that she knows little about her natural family's heritage.

In addition, when she has filled out college applications, "they ask for my family's medical history and I have to put 'unknown,'" said Amanda, a parishioner at St. Paul's Church in Webster.

Curiosity has led Kristen Terkoski to consider tracking down her biological parents. Kristen, 20, from the St. Anthony's/St. Patrick's Cluster in Elmira, was adopted as an infant. However, she said she suppressed the desire to explore her family background until recently.

"I wouldn't have been ready for the emotional stuff — like what if my mother didn't want me anymore, or if other family members didn't like me or may not have known that she had another (child)," Kristen said.

Carmen Zinn, who was also adopted during infancy, possesses scant information about her biological family.

"I could be face to face with my real mom and not even know it," remarked Carmen, 16, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church in Elmira and a junior at Elmira Notre Dame High School.

Unlike Kristen, however, Carmen has no desire to pursue details about her biological parents — even though her adoptive parents have offered to provide her with information.

"I don't really care to know. I'm not a part of their lives," Carmen said of her birth parents.

Carmen said that the reality of having been adopted is sometimes painful.

"Sometimes I wonder why I was given up for adoption and what the family situation was," Carmen said. "When I was a little kid, I used to think my (biological) parents didn't want me."

Amanda has felt similar hard feelings. She explained that her biological parents had children prior to her own birth — yet they felt they couldn't take care of her.

"I've wondered, why was it *me* they gave up? Why didn't feel they could keep me?" Amanda said.

These days, Amanda feels it would do



Carmen Zinn with her adoptive parents William and...

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