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Foster Care and Adoption • Residential Treatment
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For Immediate Release

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Adriel Foster Parents Receive National Award

Archbold, OH--Adriel foster parents Don and Irene North, of Waterville, have received the prestigious Lonnie and Elaine Phillips Practitioner of the Year award from the Teaching Family Association.

Recipients of this award can be nominated from over 50 Teaching Family Association member agencies from around the United States and Canada. The Lonnie and Elaine Phillips Award is one that recognizes exceptional service and innovative use of the Teaching Family Model.

Kylie Towers of Adriel's Northwest Ohio office in Archbold, who has worked as a foster care consultant with the Norths, said, "Don and Irene are outstanding foster parents who touch the lives of all they meet." Having been foster parents for eight years—and with Adriel for the past three—the Norths have fostered 14 children, most of whom have had special needs.

"It is clear that Don and Irene are committed to helping their kids reach new heights," said Towers. Part of their success is their ability to quickly see what will motivate a child, and then they work tirelessly to help each child reach his or her goals, she said.

The Norths were presented with the award during a special ceremony at the annual Teaching Family Association conference in November. During their acceptance of the award, Don North said, "We just think of ourselves as an ordinary family from Ohio that said yes to God."

Don and Irene had looked in to adoption before being blessed with their own two children, and had friends who were foster parents, so they had some idea of what was involved. However, their call to action did not come until they heard about a mother who had neglected her children so badly that one child died from malnutrition and the other two children were critically injured. Don said, "When we heard that story, we knew we needed to do something to help children in need."

Don and Irene knew that they could not make this decision on their own and just be foster parents—their two children had to be okay with sharing their parents, their house, and

their stuff. Don said, “We knew this would be a family effort. We are not just foster parents, we are a foster family.” But the rewards, they say, have been great. Through this journey, their children have learned how to love with their whole hearts, and to truly love all kinds of people.

In their work as foster parents, Don and Irene have cared for children with significant challenges and special needs. But instead of focusing on the challenges, they celebrate the fact that they get to be a part of these children’s lives. Don said, “We get to be the ones to see the first steps or the first smiles, and to be a part of them growing up.”

Don and Irene have also appreciated having Adriel walk on this journey with them. “We are so blessed to be a part of Adriel,” Irene said. They have felt supported and are thankful for the extensive training they have received on working with children with special needs. “I really feel like this is a team effort, and we know the workers at Adriel will be there to support us,” she said.

Kay Wyse, Chief Operating Officer at Adriel, said, “Adriel is fortunate to have many, many excellent foster families, such as the Norths. Don and Irene and their children exemplify Adriel’s mission. Their love is unconditional, and their joy is contagious.”

Adriel, founded as an orphan’s home by the Mennonite Church in 1896, is a not-for-profit agency that provides foster care, adoption, and residential treatment services for children who have been abused and neglected. Adriel is licensed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, certified by the Ohio Department of Mental Health, accredited by COA, and is a Certified Teaching Family Sponsor Site. With offices in West Liberty, Archbold, and Dublin, Adriel serves more than 400 children each year. For more information about Adriel and their services visit their website at www.adriel.org.