

Advice

# Adopted son's name change cuts his true father to the quick

**Dear Abby:** My wife had an unhappy five-year marriage to her high school boyfriend. They divorced when their son, "Noah," was 20 months old. Then she met me, and we have been married for 34 happy years.

I adopted Noah with the consent of his birth father, who also remarried and had a family. My wife and I added a daughter to ours.

I was aware that Noah had re-established contact with his birth father and half-siblings. We supported it. But we were blindsided when Noah told us he plans to take back his original surname. He says it isn't "personal," but he wants his children to have their "rightful" name and know their "true" lineage.

Abby, we are hurt and confused. This has caused a painful rift in the family. Please help. — Noah's Real Dad in New York

**Dear Real Dad:** I strongly believe that the people who raise a child are that child's "true" parents, regardless of whether the child meets his or her birth parents. Is there any ill will between you and Noah? Could there be money or prestige connected with Noah's birth father's name, which could account for what's happened?

After investing 34 years of yourself in that child, you have reason to feel hurt. Family counseling might smooth some of this



**Jeanne Phillips**  
Syndicated advice columnist

**Dear Abby**

over. I am sorry for your loss.

**Dear Abby:** My 20th high school reunion is coming up, and I'm extremely excited. The main activity has been planned for the Saturday evening. One member of the reunion committee has been put in charge of scheduling other activities such as a picnic. She has planned a hike.

I love hikes, but the hike she has planned is a strenuous trail that gains 2,000 feet of altitude over three-quarters of a mile. My hometown is already at a high altitude, and for those of us who no longer live there, it takes some getting used to. And, quite honestly, not all of us are in good enough shape to do this kind of hike.

I'm disappointed that this woman is scheduling an activity that seems so noninclusive. Many of my classmates feel the same. Some of us have discussed making our own plans for a safer activity everyone can participate in. What are your thoughts? Can we plan alternative events on our own without offending the reunion committee? — Class of '91 Alumna

**Dear Alumna:** Rather than make alternative plans on your own, you and your former classmates who feel the hike would be too much should inform the reunion committee. Have the reunion committee come up with alternative plans for that afternoon. There could be medical reasons why some of you shouldn't indulge in strenuous activity (as well as lack of interest.) And remember, attendance at the reunion activities is voluntary, not compulsory.

**Dear Abby:** Now that we have arrived at that time of year when weddings are at their peak, would you please let us know if written thank-yous are still appropriate and proper?

My husband's niece was married last December, and my mother-in-law told her, "No one sends thank-yous anymore." I thought that on this, above all occasions, a thank-you for a wedding gift is necessary. Or am I crazy? — Taken Aback in Colorado

**Dear Taken Aback:** You're not crazy. A gift for ANY occasion should be acknowledged. The proper way to do that is in the form of a written note thanking the person. It does not have to be long, fancy or flowery — just sincere. And prompt!

— Write to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069, or www.DearAbby.com.

# Facing neuralgia from shingles

**Dear Dr. Gott:** I am a 70-year-old woman who developed shingles on my right leg last June and am now left with neuropathy. It went from the middle of my leg all the way down to my foot and toes. I was immediately put on an antiviral and a prednisone pack, so the doctor was surprised that I developed post-herpetic neuralgia. My leg and foot are completely numb and I cannot bend the right foot upward, so I wear a boot and go from a wheelchair to crutches and then to bed. It is causing excruciating pain.

I have seen two neurologists, who both ordered MRIs of my spine, an EMG and nerve conduction tests. Both dismissed me, saying there is nothing more they can do for me. The last neurologist suggested I see a pain management doctor. I saw one two weeks ago and am getting epidurals in my spine. The first one didn't help, so I am hoping to get some relief with the second one, because as soon as I can get out of some of this pain, I can try a physical therapist to help me walk with this dropped foot.

I am currently taking 300 mg Neurontin four times a day, 25 mg Elavil twice a day, 40 mg OxyContin twice a day, and 150 mg Oxcarbazepine twice a day. One of these is causing me to have some involuntary movements. Do you have any thoughts



**Peter Gott**  
Syndicated medical columnist

**Dr. Gott**

on this?

I read your column daily and was hoping that you would have some input on my condition. I went from feeling fine to waking up one day and having my whole life turned around. The first neurologist I saw told me that I would never walk again, and the second one pretty much said the same thing because he had never seen a case like mine where the neuralgia is paralyzing the leg and foot. Any help you can give me would be very much appreciated.

**Reader:** The most common symptoms of post-herpetic neuralgia (nerve damage caused by shingles) are pain and sensitivity to any light touch of the affected area. Less commonly, itching and numbness may be present. Rarely, weakness or paralysis of the area may occur.

You appear to be one of those rare cases.

Treatment typically consists of opioid painkillers (narcotics), certain anticonvulsants, tricyclic antidepressants, and lidocaine patches (a topical anesthetic). You have been prescribed Neu-

ronin, an anticonvulsant; Elavil, a tricyclic antidepressant; OxyContin, a narcotic; and Oxcarbazepine, another anticonvulsant. Some patients may find relief by using a topical cream that contains capsaicin. Many readers have also written about the qualities of mentholated chest rubs in relieving numbness, tingling and pain associated with peripheral neuropathy, a similar type of nerve damage.

You may benefit from seeing a super-specialist at a teaching hospital if you fail to improve under the care of your newest neurologist. You may also profit by seeing a pain specialist, who may be able to help you control your pain levels, thus allowing you to begin physical therapy. You must keep in mind that despite appropriate care, the damage may be permanent.

Readers who are interested in learning more can order my Health Report "Managing Chronic Pain" by sending a self-addressed, stamped No. 10 envelope and a \$2 U.S. check or money order to Dr. Peter Gott, P.O. Box 433, Lakeville, CT 06039. Be sure to mention the title when writing, or print an order form from my website's direct link: [www.AskDrGottMD.com/order\\_form.pdf](http://www.AskDrGottMD.com/order_form.pdf).

— Write to Dr. Gott c/o United Media, 200 Madison Ave., 4th floor, New York, NY 10016.

# Don't tell counselor of feelings

**Dr. Wallace:** I'm a 19-year-old guy and just finished my first year in college. I've had a difficult time adjusting to college. To make matters worse, my college counselor and I don't get along very well.

When I was in high school, I had a counselor who understood my problems and was a great help to me. Last week, I went back home and talked with her and she really helped me out. I took her advice and it's working wonders for me.

I considered this counselor a good friend, but now I have even stronger feelings for her. I honestly think that I'm in love with her. I now find myself thinking about her during all my spare moments.

She is so friendly that I think she might have special feelings for me, too. She is only 32, and I know she is unattached because I remember her saying that she was divorced.

I realize there is a significant age difference, but it doesn't matter if love is involved. Would it be considered poor taste if I told this counselor that I loved her — really loved her? I don't want her



**Robert Wallace**  
Syndicated advice columnist

**Between 12 & 20**

to get upset and end our friendship. — Will, Chicago.

**Will:** It is common for students to think they are in love with an understanding and kind teacher, counselor or principal, but in time, the love fades away and respect takes its place. Your counselor has many desirable qualities and you feel secure when you are talking with her, but I'm not so sure that you are in love with her.

Regardless, keep your relationship with the counselor cordial and professional. Do not tell her how you feel toward her.

**Dr. Wallace:** I'm 13. And when I was 12, my friend and I smoked for about a month. My friend stole the cigarettes from his parents, who both smoked. My friend and I smoked about two packs each, but then quit because he got caught stealing a pack from his mother's purse.

I can't speak for my friend, but I will never ever smoke again. I didn't like smoking, and the tobacco smoke hurt my throat when I inhaled.

Now I'm worried that I might have caused some physical harm to my body by smoking.

If so, what harm have I caused? I'm a girl and someday I want to be married and have healthy children. Please answer my question. I'm really worried about this. — Nameless, Brookhaven, Miss.

**Nameless:** You're in the clear. Smoking two packs of cigarettes over a month's time will not cause you any physical problems.

This was confirmed by my personal physician. Habitual smokers consume thousands of cigarettes in a year, and tens of thousands over a (shortened) lifetime. Smoking causes damage in the long term, not the very short term.

Congratulations on your decision never to smoke again. It's a habit with nothing but negatives. You have a healthy life ahead of you.

— Write to Dr. Wallace at [rwallace@galesburg.net](mailto:rwallace@galesburg.net).

# Community Life Bulletin Board



## STAR Foundation receives grant

Posted by Lee Owens

The Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation recently announced the grant awards for 2011.

STAR Foundation was one of the recipients of the award and plans to use the grant for technology upgrades and to purchase a laptop.

Pictured are **Bill Stembler**, Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation board member, from left, presenting the check to **Ellen Murphy**, executive director and founder of STAR Foundation, **Elaine Auten** and **Pam Devenney**, STAR board members.



## YMCA-McIntosh earns grant

Posted by Lee Owens



The Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation recently announced the grant awards for 2011.

YMCA-McIntosh was one of the recipients, and it plans to use the grant for a health management lab as part of its "Activate America" program.

**Diane Laws**, community foundation board member, presents **Julie Dean**, senior program director at YMCA-McIntosh, with the grant check.



## Safe Harbor gets grant

Posted by Lee Owens

The Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation recently announced the grant awards for 2011.

Safe Harbor was one of the recipients and will use the grant for needed technology upgrades.

Pictured are **Leslie Hartman**, Safe Harbor's director, and **Bill Stembler**, Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation board member.



# Students earn academic honors

The following students were named to the dean's list at Mercer University this spring.

**John Carl Hebbard** of St. Simons Island, **David Ellis** of Brunswick, **Kristina Bolinger** of Brunswick, **Kyle Bliton** of Kingsland, **Connor Cosenza** of St. Marys, **Lauren Turner** of St. Marys, **Daniel Quintanilla** of St. Marys and **Lauren Pitts** of St. Marys.

The following students were named to the president's list at Mercer University this spring.

**Carl Virgil Lewis** of Hoboken, **Joseph Chafin** of Hortense and **Ashley Kiara Murray** of St.

## ACADEMICALLY Speaking

Simons Island.

**Karonda Chinita Ivery** of Brunswick graduated from Georgia Southern University with a bachelor of science in electrical engineering technology.

**Joanna Carver** of St. Simons Island recently graduated from Agnes Scott College with a bachelor of arts degree in English literature-creative writing. She is the daughter of John and

Kathleen Carver.

**Barakah Jamison** of Brunswick made the dean's list at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. He is an aquaculture and fisheries major.

**Julia Marie Kraus** of St. Simons Island, daughter of Barbara Kraus and Jim Kraus, recently graduated from Peddie School, Hightstown, N.J. She will attend the University of Santa Clara.

**Seung Beom Yoo** of Townsend graduated from Cornell University with a bachelor of science in agriculture and life sciences.

Lawrence G. Blasik Jr., M.D., F.A.A.D.

Gail Rose, PA-C

Rachel Duncan, PA-C

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## The Mini Page® Standards Spotlight: American Symbols

Mini Page activities meet many state and national educational standards. Each week we identify standards that relate to The Mini Page's content and offer activities that will help your students reach them.

**This week's standard:**

- Students understand how democratic values are exemplified by symbols. (U.S. History)

**Activities:**

1. Write the words "This is America!" in the center of a piece of paper. Then paste newspaper words and pictures that show symbols of America around your sentence.
2. What is your favorite American symbol? Write a few sentences explaining why.
3. Circle items in the newspaper that could be used as symbols for America's (a) beauty, (b) people, (c) foods, and (d) sports.
4. Design a new symbol for America. Draw it on a piece of paper and write a paragraph explaining what your symbol represents.
5. Use the Internet to learn about the symbols for your state. Create a poster showing the symbols. Write a paragraph describing how the symbols represent your state.

(standards by Dr. Sherrye D. Garrett, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi)