



KIDSAVE®

Because Every Child Needs a Family

Summer Miracles



Visiting Family Packet



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Kidsave is a section 501(c)(3) public

www.kidsave.org

Dear Visiting Families:

Welcome! We are pleased and excited about your interest in the Summer Miracles program. The program provides a unique opportunity for you to meet and interact with children and participate in our mission to advocate for them in the hopes that they will someday have a family and a brighter future.

Please take a moment to review the contents of this packet which includes:

- Copy of the Affidavit of Understanding
- List of Do's and Don'ts
- Q's and A's

We encourage you to submit a Visiting Family Application online, which you can access here: <https://www.kidsave.org/visiting-family-application/>.

If you are interested in spending time with a particular child/ren outside of our local advocacy events. The local visiting family coordinator can assist you. All visits must be supervised by the host family, chaperone or Kidsave staff. Visiting families cannot spend time alone with a Summer Miracles child/ren.

Please direct any questions regarding policy, procedures, or weekend events to Kidsave staff or the Visiting Family Coordinator. The Visiting Family Coordinator can also direct you to the appropriate Kidsave staff member should you have questions regarding our organization or the children.

Thank you again for your interest. We look forward to having you visit the children and learning about Kidsave's mission to find families for children the world has forgotten.

Warm Regards,



Lauren Reicher-Gordon
Vice President/Director of Family Visit Programs

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Kidsave Visiting Family Protocols

Families interested in meeting the children can do so by:

1. Attending weekend events and/or weekday advocacy events.
2. Attending “pocket parties”. Pocket parties are smaller events with fewer children that allow visiting families to spend time with a child they are interested in. This eliminates one-on-one visits that can unnecessarily stress the child or prematurely raise expectations. Visiting Family Coordinators will organize these events.
3. Visiting the host family’s home where the child feels safe and the visiting family can be introduced as a friend.

Visiting families should be aware that:

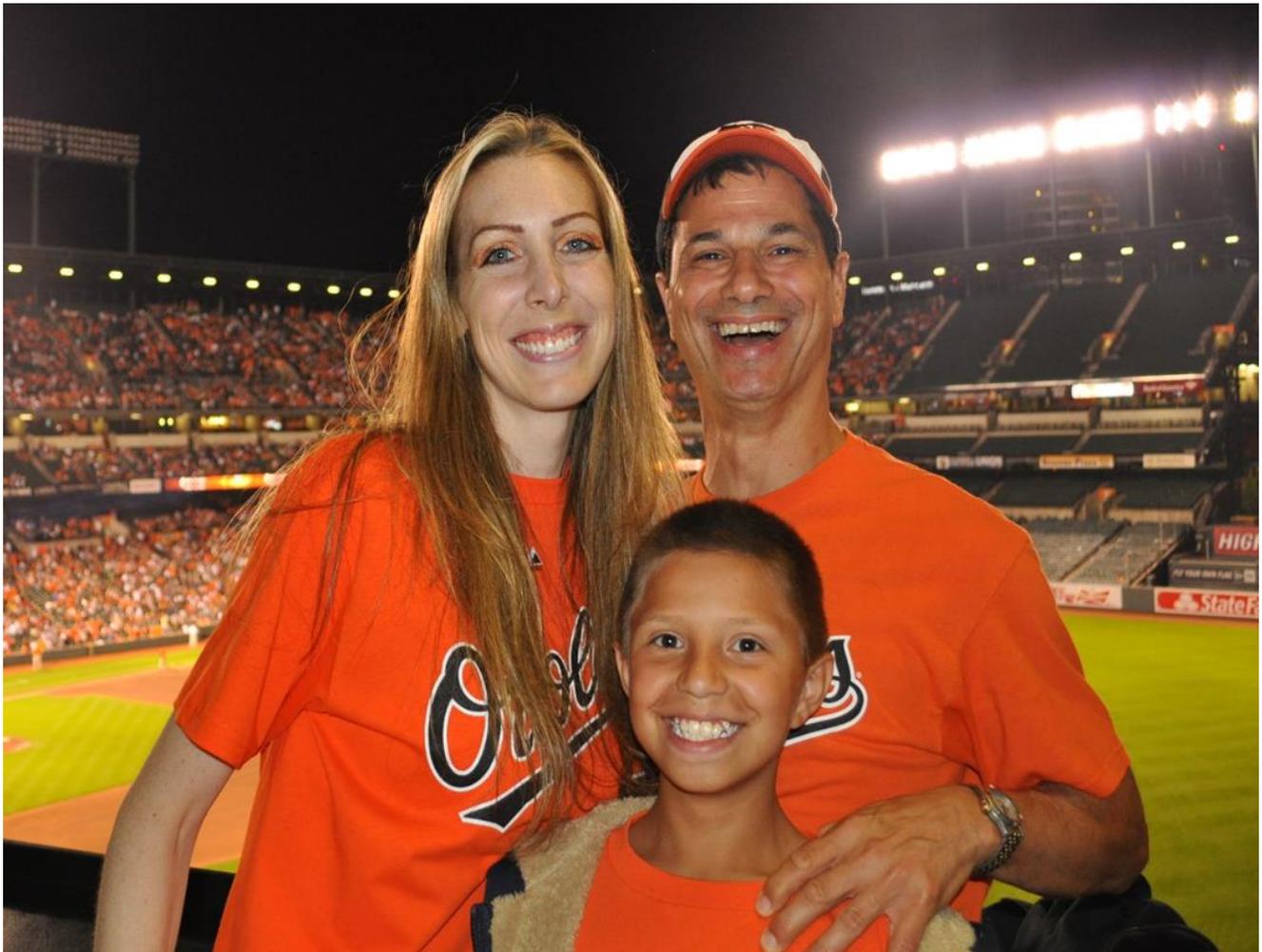
- Host families have completed training on issues related to supporting institutionalized children, the Summer Miracles Program, and issues related to adoption.
- Host families have first choice as to whether they would like to adopt their host child, regardless of whether they come into our program interested in adoption or as an advocate.
- If a Visiting Family wishes to be considered as an adoptive family for a child, they must complete all the visiting family paperwork and communicate their desire in writing to Kidsave. All families wishing to adopt must work with a Hague accredited adoption agency that facilitates adoptions in Colombia. Kidsave partner agencies include Catholic Charities of Baltimore, Nightlight Christian Adoptions, and Wide Horizons for Children. If two families want to adopt the same child, the chaperone will make recommendations as to the family that best meets the needs of the child/ren. Ultimately, the **Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF)** is responsible for making adoption decisions.
- Many families will be meeting the children over the course of the summer. Kidsave is not always aware of every family’s intentions concerning adoption. Once you communicate your desire to adopt a certain child, the local coordinator and/or Kidsave can advise you if there are other families that are interested in adopting that child.
- The adoption process is lengthy and requires a lot of paperwork. Neither host families nor other families interested in adoption can be sure that they will be selected to adopt a child until they receive official notification from the child’s country.

Visiting Families Making Adoption Decisions

Visiting families & Hosts are not required to make their adoption decision during the program.

- Families should speak with the local community social worker and/or professionals in the community regarding their adoption decision.
- Families should inform Kidsave staff of their interest in adoption.

The child's needs will be the primary consideration in matching the child with a family. If a family's skills and resources are determined not to meet the child's needs, they may be denied and another family will be considered. This will be determined by the Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF) in Colombia.



Visiting Family Affidavit of Understanding

Thank you for your interest in the Summer Miracle's children! Kidsave's mission is to find families for children the world has forgotten and to give every child the opportunity to grow up in a permanent, loving family. These beautiful children come to us with a myriad of joys, risks and challenges. Many people, upon first introduction to the older child, harbor the misconception that a stable home and love is all they will need to heal and thrive. Not so. Children raised in institutional care come to us with the potential, and likelihood, to face many struggles and challenges. It is important that families who consider offering them love, home, family and permanence are aware of what some of those risks and challenges may be.

Children who have been orphaned or raised in institutional care may present with the following concerns including but not limited to:

- Histories of trauma, loss, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and abandonment
- Learning disabilities
- Developmental delays
- Retarded growth and development
- Neurological impairments
- Sensory Integration problems
- Speech and Language delays
- Emotional and Behavioral Problems
- Psychiatric Histories
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) or Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE)
- Nutritional Deficits
- Attachment problems
- Undetected health concerns
- Inadequate medical and dental care

We are adamant about the critical need for host parents to be educated. All host families complete a minimum 10 hours of training. Kidsave is not a placement agency. Should you decide to pursue the adoption of one of the Summer Miracles children, you will do so through a Hague-accredited placement agency. We believe the best parents for these children are educated, informed families who maintain realistic expectations, have personal and community resources to address the challenges, and are determined to be there for the long haul. In their world of loss, disappointment and abandonment, these children deserve no less.

We have neither the right nor the vehicle to require you to pursue education and training. Read, talk to other adoptive families, attend a conference, and/or join an adoption group. We suggest you investigate parent education opportunities in your community. They are usually provided by local area adoption agencies.

As you continue to educate yourself about institutionalized children, and you meet and get to know the Summer Miracles children in your community, you may form a particular interest in a child, and you may think about adopting him or her. Kidsave instructs our host parents NOT to discuss adoption with their host children during the summer, and we require visiting families to do the same. Discussing adoption with a child can raise their hopes for something that may not occur, and another disappointment in these children's lives can be devastating.

Thank you again for your interest in the children. Please let us know if we can be of assistance in helping you decide if this is an option for your family. Best wishes as you explore this option of building your family.

Warm Regards,



Lauren Reicher-Gordon

Vice President/Director of Family Visit Programs | Kidsave International | 310-642-7201

Do's and Don'ts for Visiting Families

DON'TS

- Please do not ask for or expect affection from these children. You are a stranger to them.
- Please do not give any gifts to the children.
- Please do not ask about their history or circumstances while they are present. This is private and personal information, oftentimes very painful.
- Please do not ask about private and personal information simply out of curiosity.
- Please do not ask them if they want to be adopted. You must examine and determine your own feelings and intentions before involving a child and then proceed only through the facilitator of an international adoption agency.
- Please do not promise future contact or intentions. Those are to be discussed only with staff, country officials and/or other responsible adults.
- Please do not make visits that are not authorized by visiting family coordinator or Kidsave staff.
- Please do not ask to take the child out of state or out of the area.

DO'S

- Please do educate yourselves to the unique joys and challenges of the post-institutionalized child.
- Please do educate yourselves to the process and costs of international adoption.
- Please do feel welcome to meet and get to know these wonderful children.
- Please do have a good time.
- Please do treat this child as someone you want to get to know.
- Please do feel free to speak with host family and staff, privately, not in the child's presence, about their experience and impressions of a particular child.
- Please do feel free to speak with a particular child's host family and Visiting Family and Community Coordinator to arrange a supervised visit.
- Please do be respectful of the host family's schedule and personal life when requesting visitation.
- Please do ask the Visiting Family coordinator about a child's history and circumstances if your intentions are to consider adoption.
- Please do be aware that Kidsave International is a host/advocacy program and cannot guarantee the legal availability of any child for adoption.
- Please do be aware that your intentions or interest in adoption should be discussed with Kidsave staff and adults only, not the child.
- Please do feel free to tell your friends about these children and their need for home and family.
- Please do be aware that we appreciate your interest in these children and welcome you to become an ambassador for their future. Ask us how you can help these children and many others!

Summer Miracles Q&A'S

Who is Kidsave?

Kidsave is a non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure that no orphan or foster child is forgotten and that every child grows up in a family with love and hope for a successful future. Since 1999, more than 8,000 children have found parents and lasting connections with adults thanks to Kidsave programs.

What is the Summer Miracles Program?

Summer Miracles is a four to five-week hosting program that provides older children growing up in foreign foster care and orphanages with a unique summer experience to share the love and life of a family, attend day camp, and enjoy educational and cultural activities in the United States. While the children are here they receive medical, dental, and/or psychological attention (as needed) and cultivate a lifetime connection with an American family.

We have found that during the summer, miracles happen, and many children are adopted by American families they meet during the Summer Miracles program. Since 1999, more than 1,800 children have participated in the program and over 83% of them have found permanent families. Those few children who do not find a permanent family often leave with an adult connection that will provide support to them. The Summer Miracles program aims to create awareness of children growing up in foster care and orphanages by introducing Americans to kids who have little or no chance of finding adoptive parents in their own county.

Who are the children that participate in the program?

- Mostly children between the ages of 10-14, occasionally children under age 10 who are a part of a sibling group or who are HIV positive or have other more significant special needs
- Colombian
- Single children and sibling groups (up to 4)
- Children who may have emotional, medical, and educational needs

How does Kidsave select the children who will participate in the Summer Miracles program?

The children that are chosen for the Summer Miracles program are selected based on specific program requirements and are believed to have the ability to benefit from the experience and successfully adapt to family living.

Who can Host?

- Hosts must be at least 25 years old. There is no maximum age to host.
- Hosts can be married couples or a single person.
- If a family is hosting with the intent to adopt then they must be no more than 45 years older than the child, they host.
- No member of the host household can have a conviction for any violent crime *or* a crime against a child. Other types of prior convictions such as drug or alcohol abuse/DUI is assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Hosts must be in good physical and psychiatric health. Prior psychiatric hospitalization/history, and/or use of psychotropic medication may cause ineligibility for hosting.
- The host family's home (house or apartment) must provide a safe environment and include adequate space. A host child may share a bedroom with at most one other child of the same gender.
- A minimum of one adult host must be a licensed driver in good standing.
- A past disrupted adoption or denial by home study agency may cause ineligibility for hosting. Our policies for host family selection are bound by country protocols.

How does the Summer Miracles program work?

- Prospective families first attend an information meeting. If interested in hosting, a \$275 application fee and Host Family Application must be submitted. Upon receipt of application and fee, the local coordinator provides the family with access to additional required documents that must be submitted.
- Families meet with a local agency partner social worker from an accredited agency who completes and submits the required hosting paperwork and approves their participation in the program. Agency service fees vary. The family's participation must also be approved by the sending country.
- Families inside a hosting community must make a \$1250 hosting payment and families outside a hosting community must make a \$2500 hosting payment. The payment is the same regardless of the number of children you host, and is used to offset some of the costs for the child's participation.
- Children are matched with approved host families, usually in late spring. The match is facilitated by the family's agency social worker.
- Approved families MUST complete required program training. Training occurs prior to the children's arrival to the United States.
- Host families meet the children at the airport and then take them home to live as part of their family for the duration of the program.
- Children may attend a local day camp with American kids and/or other enrichment activities, and also participate in events planned by Kidsave. Please note: Kidsave does not run its own camp. Camps are selected by the host families based on their location and what would be of interest to the host child.
- Children and host families get to know one another in a relaxed, nurturing, home environment.
- Families advocate for their host child/ren to find a permanent family during their stay by taking the child to planned Kidsave events and also by introducing the child to their circle of friends and others in the community.
- Miracles happen! Many host families fall in love with their child and make the commitment to adopt. Other families meet the children while they are here and make a commitment to adopt. Many families are inspired to become life-long advocates for children growing up without families.
- All children return to their country of origin at the end of the program accompanied by their chaperone.

What will the children do while they are here?

In addition to going to camp/enrichment activities and participating in day-to-day family life, Kidsave volunteers and staff plan weekend and weekday events designed to bring the children and families together, and to give people who are interested in meeting the kids a chance to interact with them as well. As needed, children will receive medical, dental, and psychological attention.

What kind of training and support do host families receive?

Host families must complete required training provided by their home study agency and Kidsave. Families will receive training materials and resources such as the Host Family Handbook, The Profile of the Older Post-Institutionalized Child, How to Talk to My Host Child About Adoption- Not!, a Child Talk language guide, and a recommended reading list so that they can learn more about the issues a post-institutionalized child may face. While the children are here for the summer, families have the support of their local social worker, coordinator, and Kidsave staff. Hosts attend two support meetings during the program, facilitated by their local coordinator. Additionally, families get access to a resource guide that outlines additional support services.

Aside from providing a home to a child for four to five weeks, what is the role of a host family?

- Host families are expected to involve the children in day to day family living in a safe and nurturing environment.
- Host families must attend weekend events that bring all host families, children, and chaperones together.
- Host families are expected to advocate for their host child(ren) at events and help them find a permanent family.

Do the children have health insurance while they are in the US?

Kidsave covers the insurance premium for emergency medical and accident policy to cover each child and chaperone participating in the program while in the United States. The insurance will pay 90 percent for covered services under established “reasonable and customary” charge guidelines for your area and the type of service. There is no deductible. Families are expected to pay the 10% co-pays and uncovered services.

What do the Summer Miracles kids bring with them?

Most Summer Miracles kids step off the airplane with a backpack containing clothes for their visit. It will probably be necessary for your family to purchase a couple outfits for your Summer Miracles child. We also encourage you to use clothing your children have outgrown or collect clothing donations from friends and family. Less is more for these children. They are not used to having many clothing choices so there is no reason to feel you should provide these children with a whole new closet full of clothes.

What is the purpose of the Weekend and Weekday events?

Events are designed to give the community an opportunity to meet the children and interact with them and are held to generate media attention.

Do host families have to speak the child’s language?

No. It is helpful when families speak the child’s language but it is not required. Most families do not find the language barrier a critical problem. Families who have hosted children say they were able to overcome communication problems quickly. To provide additional support to our host families, Kidsave provides a glossary of familiar terms in the child’s language called “Child Talk”. Volunteer translators typically attend events, and are available to interpret and help families communicate with their kids.

What is the role of the chaperone that comes with the children?

Chaperones are representatives from the children’s country and can be social workers, psychologists, directors and/or government officials. These chaperones have the power of attorney over the children. Their job is to make sure that the children have a safe visit and to get to know the families who may be applying to adopt the children. All host families must plan to have the chaperone stay in their home approximately one week during the child’s visit.

What if a host family finds they are not able to keep the child for the entire program?

Kidsave’s goal is to keep a child in the same home for the duration of the summer program. However, sometimes unexpected things happen within a family that will prohibit them from continuing to host the child for the length of their stay. Protocols are in place to address this.

What happens to the kids at the end of the Summer Miracles program?

After the four to five-week visit, all the children must return home to their country with their chaperones. Kidsave's relationship with the children does not stop, as the organization continues to advocate for the children so that each child can become connected to a caring adult.

What if a family decides to adopt?

If a family decides they would like to adopt a child they have met through Summer Miracles, Kidsave provides the family with next steps and a list of accredited partnering agencies who can facilitate the adoption. Only an adoption agency can verify the legal availability of the child for adoption.

What does Kidsave as a national organization do?

Kidsave manages the Summer Miracles program at a national level and helps raise money to bring the children here. Kidsave works with government and country officials to obtain permission for the children to travel, screens and approves the children and chaperones for participation, arranges for all documentation for children and chaperones to travel, coordinates travel for the children and the chaperons, and provides training and preparation for the children and chaperones. Here in the US, Kidsave builds and facilitates the Summer Miracles program, develops partnerships, and recruits and trains community volunteers to recruit to coordinate the local program. Kidsave manages advocacy for all children needing families.

What fundraising responsibilities do host families assume?

We ask that you help your local Summer Miracles committee to raise the necessary funds to bring the identified group of children to your city. The cost for one child to participate in the Summer Miracles program is approximately \$8,000. The local community is responsible for raising \$25,000 to support to cost of children traveling. Host families are not responsible for raising a specific amount but are expected to participate in and/or support their local community fundraising efforts.

What kinds of volunteers are needed for Summer Miracles?

Volunteers are needed to participate in the planning committee that coordinates each local program. Volunteer opportunities include fundraising, host family recruitment, communication/outreach, activity/event planning, host family support, escort coordination, translation, hospitality, etc.