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# Mission to Moms

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# Mission to Moms

BY CLEM BOYD

With adoption, the focus is typically on the adoptive parents and their journey. For Cedarville alumna Jazmin (Gmuer) Taylor '97, her efforts have been with the other individuals in the adoption process — the birth moms. She has committed herself to showing kindness, compassion, and respect to women making one of the most difficult decisions a parent would ever have to make.





For Jazmin (Gmuer) Taylor '97, working with expectant mothers is a God-given mission.

"I have a tremendous amount of patience with my birth moms," Taylor explained. "I really just try to tell them they're making one of the toughest decisions in their lives. It is so sacrificial to give up your child. They deserve respect; I offer them gentleness and compassion. It's the best thing you can do for a birth mom."

And that's true regardless of their circumstances or the decisions that led to the adoption. Taylor is committed to offer a listening ear and an open-hearted kindness that lifts up her birth moms.

"Most of the women I work with are trying to make the best choice, though not always," she said. "One example was a birth mom addicted to drugs. We thought the baby would be drug-addicted, but he ended up not having very many problems. She made the choice to place him for adoption."

The hardest part is seeing expectant moms very conflicted about the decision. "I don't try to sell them on giving the baby up, only if they really want to," Taylor said. "But when they're convinced and we match them with an adoptive family, and they've been together a few months and then the baby's born, it's really hard when they change their minds. You see how heartbroken the adoptive parents are."

Taylor is an advocate for open adoption, where the adoptive parents and the birth mom keep an open line of communication, and there's a concerted effort to sustain a lifelong relationship between birth mom and the adopted child.

"I believe it is in the best interest of the child for everyone to be open, because when you hide stuff, it's not healthy for any party," she said. "I encourage my families to be open with their children, to encourage texting and phone calls with birth mothers, and to allow visits."

Taylor speaks from personal experience as well. She and her husband adopted a little boy, Thomas, now 10, and have kept an open relationship with his birth mom. The Taylors also have an older son, William, 17, and a daughter, Melissa, 15.

## AMAZED

In her work with expectant moms, Taylor helps them develop an adoption plan and serves as a liaison between them and prospective adoptive parents. While she finds it very gratifying to see a child matched with the right family, there can be trials.

For Taylor, she sees many birth moms in a perpetual cycle of miserable decision-making. "They see adoption as a form of birth control or a source of income," she said. "It is very hard as a social worker to see them do drugs and have babies."

Yet she's never shown anger toward an expectant mom. She's remained patient, kind, and . . . amazed.

"I have such compassion for them," Taylor said. "I'm so amazed by them. This is the hardest decision they'll ever make in their lives. Seeing them in such despair, deciding they have to make this choice. Even when they change their minds, I've never lost my cool with a birth mom."



Jazmin (Gmuer) Taylor '97 and her husband, Eric '97, with their children, William, Thomas, and Melissa.

On the flip side, when the match is good, adoption is a beautiful process to facilitate.

"I love when a match is good, when the adoptive parents open their hearts to the birth mom and make her part of their family," she said.

Taylor cited the example of family friends who have an exceptional relationship with their child's birth mom. "She's really become part of their lives," she explained. "She's a hairdresser who lives on her own and she's pretty successful. She comes to birthday parties, goes to events, and even cuts the kids' hair. When you see them succeed and move on, that's pretty rewarding."

## DIVINE DESIGN

While working with expectant moms might be a stretch for some personalities, for Taylor it goes back to her divine design. She's known it since she was a little girl.

"My mom has a journal of mine from when I was 11 or 12 that says I wanted to adopt and work with orphans," Taylor said. "I've always wanted to be a social worker and work with kids. That's always been my passion since I was very, very young. I always feel this has been a calling from God."

"God has given me a talent to work with people," she continued. "I'm super social, and I can relate and empathize with almost anyone. I'm very, very open and transparent."

She followed that calling to Cedarville, where she earned a degree in social work. After graduation, she worked as a case worker for several years. When she and her husband, Eric '97, began having children, she started looking into the adoption field.

She worked for Adoption Link, Inc., a Yellow Springs, Ohio-based agency, from 2004 till 2006, and currently works part time for American Adoptions. She is also a student advocate with Bentonville High School in Bentonville, Arkansas, coming alongside at-risk students who may

**"I love when a match is good, when the adoptive parents open their hearts to the birth mom and make her part of their family"**

not graduate because of behavior, grades, or poor attendance.

For those who may have difficulty imagining a job such as Taylor's, her work with teens at her children's high school has been much more taxing. "It's 10 times harder than working with birth moms," she affirmed. "I've worked with a lot of troubled kids and the hardest part is many of them have no boundaries."

"Working with birth moms and adoptive parents, they're making all these choices based on what's best for the child. I feel so fulfilled."

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**Clem Boyd** is Managing Editor of Cedarville Magazine.