

## Beware of stray dogs, baby birds

**G**od is a sneaky rascal. A few months ago, a stray dog landed in our yard, scared and hungry. My husband Ed and I fed him, found him a home and mourned when he left. But we were secure in the knowledge that we did the right thing.

More recently, a pair of phoebes built a nest on our front porch light. We had fun watching the dedicated mother and father attending the four babies' every need.

I admired how protective the parents were of these little helpless scraps that were their children. The parents even cleaned the nest when it was fouled - a bird's version of diaper-changing, I guess.

I think all that was a sneaky way to prepare us for the big, life-changing event: encore parenthood.

A couple of weeks ago, one of our children had a baby, a little boy, born in Houston County. Because of some problems I won't go into here, the Department of Family and Children's Services decided not to let him go home with his mother. If a relative didn't step up, he'd go straight from the hospital to a foster home.

I know foster homes and foster parents are terrific. But how could this tiny scrap go to strangers when he had grandparents who already loved him?

We were terrified, but we raised our hands. We'd take him home with us until his mother proved herself to DFCS. But I couldn't imagine that we would really get custody, even temporary custody. We had to go through a preliminary hearing in Houston County, and I was sure the judge would say there had been a mistake, that little Caden could go home to his parents after all.

But no. The day he was released from the hospital, we packed him up and brought him almost 200 miles from Warner Robins to Turnerville. As we were walking through the hospital parking lot, I couldn't believe that the nurses would turn this helpless newborn over to us - people who hadn't had baby experience in 28 years.



**Kimberly  
Brown**

Last Wednesday was Caden's three-week birthday. It's been a wild ride already. Stressful. Sleep-deprived. Worrisome. But it's also joyful, rewarding and so many other adjectives associated with holding an innocent baby in your arms.

Caden takes medications four times a day. Two of those times are in the middle of the night, so even if he's asleep, we have to wake him up for that. And then there are bottles. And diapers! Who knew such a small person could go through so many diapers? I know people who have had children in the past 10 years or so know it, but believe me, you forget.

We're grateful to a lot of people here who helped establish us as encore parents. Habersham County DFCS has been terrific getting our home approved quickly. The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) people were great in helping us get Caden's specialized formula. Special thanks to April Reed and Dick Dwozan for helping us find a local pediatrician, and to Dr. Maribel Miller for taking him on as a new patient. And thanks to all of our friends who have given us advice, support and offers to baby-sit.

Welcome to Habersham County, Caden. I don't know how long we'll get to keep you, but it's gratifying to know that when you're a grown person, buried deep in your psyche will be the love your Grammy and Granddaddy gave you when you were so small.

And my advice to everyone: Next time a stray dog takes up at your house, either run the other way or be prepared for something much bigger coming down the pike. It may not happen, but who knows? God is sneaky like that.

*Kimberly Brown is a staff writer for The Northeast Georgian.*