

## Podcast 508: Resources for Fostering and Adopting with Rivers Run

### Episode Transcript

**Andrew Pudewa:** So many people would think about your life and say, oh, that would be so hard. That would be such a sacrifice that would be so overwhelming. And yet you don't seem at all burdened. It's just a supernatural goodness.

**Julie Walker:** Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, "IEW." My name is Julie Walker, and I'm honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

**Julie Walker:** You know what I love about our podcast, Andrew?

**Andrew Pudewa:** What do you love about our podcast, Julie?

**Julie Walker:** We get to talk to so many amazing people about so many different topics.

**Andrew Pudewa:** It's true. Some of which we would never sit around and say, could we find a person who could talk about...?

**Julie Walker:** Right, exactly. And you know, we are a writing company. We do listen, speak, read, write, think, but we also do teaching. We talk about music, but. I know that sometimes we go down a little rabbit trail and we talk about family and raising children and motivation and

**Andrew Pudewa:** Making the world a better place.

**Julie Walker:** Making the world a better place. Yes. And so today, I'm just so honored that we have with us Kimberly, who she and her husband started an organization called River's Run.

**Andrew Pudewa:** They contacted me to let me know about it, and it was almost unbelievably good. It was one of those things that's so good. It stands out among all the good things that you see in any given time period. And so now we have her as a guest.

**Julie Walker:** Yes. So we better hear what that goodness is. Kimberly, what are

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah. Tell us about yourself and what you do.

**Kimberly Klokus:** Okay, great. Thank you so much for having me here. I'm so honored to be a part of your podcast today. We've used IEW for a long time with our kiddos, and now I am doing it again with my foster and adopted children. My five grown children are out on their own, so getting to experience it a second time around.

Basically what we are is a resource center for parents that decided to jump into fostering or adopting. We, my husband and I, have both lost parents when we were young. I lost my mom when I was 12, and my husband lost his dad when he was 16. And then after getting married, we thought, let's start our family.

And we had actually allowed the Lord to plan that. We had four kids. And then we thought, let's jump in to finding out about foster care. We didn't know too much about it. I was in college. I took a class on social work and thought, wow, this is really interesting. I didn't know much about foster care, so.

As my husband and I were looking into it, after having our family of four, we took the class, which was a state mandated class that you take. We thought, well, let's just dive in and find out what this is about. And we decided we didn't want to foster, we wanted to adopt. So after we finished our home study. I think it was in maybe a six month timeframe, they came to us and said, as they were doing our home study, you are a homeschool family. You have four children. That'll be quite a while before you find a child that's in our system to be in your family. And I was kind of discouraged because I was very excited about having a new child that was needed to be adopted. So within maybe seven days we got a call, we found your son. So it actually didn't take that long for our first child to come to us.

**Julie Walker:** Amazing.

**Kimberly Klokus:** So he was seven years old. He had been in seven different placements, and when he came to visit, they said, don't mention adoption because we're just doing a little play date and we don't want him to get too close in case it doesn't work out. And we don't want to break his heart or anything. So he came in and he saw my daughter's guitar. She was twelve at the time. And he grabbed it and said, I'm here to find a family. I'm not here for a play date because I was like, I'm so glad you're here for a play date.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Wow.

**Kimberly Klokus:** Then he ran around the house and was just excited to be there and within 90 days he became our son. So we adopted him. He had been in, like I said, seven different placements. My first thought was, the social worker said, our kids don't fit into your lifestyle. Like, you guys homeschool, you—it's a loving family. Like our kids are filled with trauma and they don't know the Lord, and you guys are very into the Bible and all that. And I was like, oh yes.

And I know there's a perfect child that's supposed to be in our family for all those reasons. And he needed to be homeschooled because he was in second grade and he didn't know how to write his name or read or write. And he was getting A's and going through the school system and emotionally unstable.

And at that same time, I found out I was pregnant. So I thought, this is perfect. I'm going to have a baby at the same time. I'm adopting this 7-year-old, and he's going to get to see his

baby brother. So weeks after our adoption, we found out that our baby I was carrying, he was about 24 weeks at the time, had Trisomy 18, and he probably won't live. But we are believers. So we prayed and believed that we're going to give this child a chance no matter what. We got to hold him for an hour. And he was beautiful and looked just like my oldest son at the time. So basically what that brought us to was just a lot of grief that year. And then also trying to connect with a child that was very, that was hurting. But it was a very sweet time because like I said, I'm a believer, so the Lord works in mysterious ways and he brought us together because we were both hurting.

So after that, fast forward, we decided—long story, but we decided to adopt internationally and we got our 13-year-old daughter from Columbia, which is another beautiful story because the Lord just brought her to us and I didn't think it was going to work because I don't know any Spanish, even though I took four years, and she didn't know any English, but I said to her, I have a lot of love in my heart and Emotioned love. And I hosted her for two weeks. So that was a couple years after. And then we spent about two years to fundraise the money to get her. And we took all the children over to Columbia for six weeks to adopt her.

After that, we jumped back into foster care in 2020 and decided we're going to foster, because we want to work with the whole family and help the parents get their kids back. So we started doing that. Still homeschooling. Homeschooling is unique for the situation because a lot of parents, I think the myth is that, oh, I can't do this with fostering because the parents don't let me. But if you get in good with the parents, and most likely you are kind of a threat to them, a little bit in the beginning, but I'm always like, you know what? I'm here to help. And if I can convince the parent like, the best thing for your child is homeschool, and it was 2020. So that was kind of more a push that like, yeah, we could homeschool because I worried about the health of my family, which is what I said. So I started homeschooling some foster kids. I got a 14 month old. I wasn't homeschooling him, just caring for him. And then another child I got who was six years old, and then in that timeframe I would take overnights. My husband and I would take overnights.

My husband's super supportive, so that was really helpful. Sometimes people ask me, what about if my husband's not on board? I always tell them, pray, but don't push because you really need a supportive husband. So we've taken kids that were, seven or eight, and they would say they're gifted children. They can't be homeschooled, so they need to be in school. And I would push—well, but they're emotionally unstable. One little girl we had was super gifted, but she couldn't get in the car and buckle her seatbelt because her mother dropped her off at the police station because she was abusing her so we couldn't get her in the car no matter what. She didn't wanna buckle. So I was like, you can't learn if you're emotionally unstable. So I would fall suit and still try to get her in school. But then I'd get calls all the time, can you come pick up this child? And then they were like, can you please homeschool them?

**Julie Walker:** Oh, nice.

**Kimberly Klokus:** So, yeah, so basically you do work really hard with the parents, but so far those two children, my first two placements that I got, I ended up adopting them four years later after many, many trials of working with parents and then we continued to do fostering. So basically you may get a call in the middle of the night, and you are getting a new baby that's maybe drug addicted and he's two days old, and so you have to get a pack and play. My husband's been known to go to the Walmart, banging on the door at 10:59. We need another pack and play. We loaned ours out.

So we realized what are the challenges in this? There are so many kids in the system. A lot of myths are out there. What if we built a resource center to—like, I follow Heidi St. John as well. I love her messages, and she's doing the resource center for homeschoolers. And I was like, what if we had a resource center for foster families?

Because now I, I've had so many yeses that a lot of people are like, you should just help other people get set up to do this. So then you can lower your numbers now. Just kidding. But I did get a call just a week ago about a 16-year-old who's a second time adoption from Columbia, who they wanted me to take.

She's in Virginia in a group home because it didn't work in the homeschool family she was in, and I'm like, this is totally doable. It's just really hard. It is hard, but if people had, which we are getting a lot more support than we did, I think the resource center would be helpful. So basically we found an assisted living home. It used to be an assisted living home for elderly people that was like a farmhouse kind of style and it has like nine bedrooms and we were like, we can go and help with overnights. We can build, turn our shed into a clothing closet in a resource. We could have classes here to help parents understand attachment.

We can help and make more people aware of these kids. Because right before I got on this call, I said, oh, should I have some facts about how many people in the US? Like how many kids are actually in the system? But then I was like, you know what? I could do that. There's 400,000 if it's up to date. But I thought also, I know my own experience.

I get calls every night. I'm on the no call list because I have three pending adoptions right now. But I still get calls every night, like if I don't take the kids in, they're staying in the office. So they do. They stay in the office overnight. That's here. But I think the problem is all around. I don't think it's just in Florida.

And people say the system's broken. It's hard. You do have a lot of people in your space, like I have people in my house all the time because you have a little guardian ad litem that checks into the kids, the caseworkers, they're all burnt out. It is hard. That's what my husband and I feel like we're called to, and homeschooling is the best way to attach these kids. So if you get in with the parents and they agree that yes, you can homeschool my kids, then you can do it.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Wow. You are going to have to write a book

**Kimberly Klokus:** I don't know. I'm sorry. See, I was afraid I was going to talk too much. I.

**Andrew Pudewa:** No, you, I mean obviously this is just the very little surface scratch of the depth of what you have been through. This will make a phenomenal book. So keep your notes and once all the kids are gone and you've got some bandwidth to breathe, start writing.

I think that there is a kind of a, I dunno if you call it a natural kind of baseline suspicion between social workers and homeschoolers, and you somehow have created this bond if anything, surely they trust you. You have to trust them. You don't know what kind of problems you're going to take on.

I mean, you kind of do. Every kid is different. And so I'd be curious to know if you kind of had to learn to trust the people who were initially very skeptical of, can you do this kind of thing? Like have kids on your own, a bunch of them, adopt kids, and take in foster care. Like it just seems so extreme. Was it hard for them to get where you're coming from?

**Kimberly Klokus:** So basically with the caseworkers, I'm being honest, sometimes one child has a switch of caseworkers, maybe three or four times that I have them. So I don't build a really strong rapport with the caseworkers because a lot of times they're overbooked and they don't push on, but they've left somebody else taking on.

You sometimes don't know who the caseworker is for a bit. That's just the brokenness of the system and. Their goal is reunification for the child. So you want that as well. You want the parents to do what they need to do. But as you said before in the opening, someone had said like, is it hard to let the kids back? Well, it is hard, especially when you've invested so much. But I do believe, like, okay, my number one goal is to give them hope, and then it is hard to send them back. But what if they never had that slice of hope? Sometimes it's one person, right? One person that believed in you. So I just had a girl who left last Wednesday and was with us for many months, and I was confident that that relationship would still be accessible. But that's one thing that's really broken in the system is you could have kids for a year, which I've had too. I had a seven and 9-year-old that I taught to read and it was such an exciting time and they went back knowing to read and I said, that's one gift I'm going to give you. And they went back, they ended up staying with mom in a rehab for a good couple months and then, then you're not really allowed to communicate with them. So I don't know how they're doing.

Yeah, so with caseworkers I try to build a rapport, but they are so overworked. So they're more working with the parents than the foster parents.

**Andrew Pudewa:** But they have to approve that you're going to have these kids in your home,

**Kimberly Klokus:** Correct.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So they've got to trust you. How do you communicate to them what, what, what is needed? Like if someone was out there hearing this and said, "I've always kind of had this nagging feeling like I should do something like this. Like take in foster kids or look into a hard adoption, international special needs, not the kind of, I want to adopt a baby because

we can't have kids, but more, there's so many kids, even older ones. What would be your advice, I guess, or a way to help people start thinking about this. Because it seems huge. It seems like a big, big thing to do.

**Julie Walker:** Well, yeah, you've got to take classes. She talked about state mandated classes and home study. Sounds like there's a lot of boxes you have to check, Kimberly, before you even get going down this road.

**Kimberly Klokus:** So when people approach me because I do drive a large van and I pull. Up to the park and I don't look normal. I do have, I took on a special needs 1-year-old recently, and then when I was trying to hand my license in to say I'm done, I got—there's a 4-year-old that actually needs adopted. She's going to be adopted now by us, so this'll be the end.

But what I always get is, but how, but how do you do it? And here's the thing. I say, take the class. It's free, it's online, and you can find out. I love learning, so I just go on, and I was interested. My husband and I, we showed up in the class, met some people, so I, if somebody is interested, it's not going to hurt you to take the class.

And it doesn't even mean like, okay, I'm taking the class now. I'm definitely going to jump into foster care. You take time. You learn about it. You figure out what are, maybe I don't want to jump into foster care, but maybe my family can help support a family that is, or maybe I can become a guardian ad litem, which is someone who comes in and helps, like advocate for the child. Like there's so many avenues of jumping into this that you can be a part of it. So that's what I would say if someone's like, this seems so like, such a big chunk, like how would I do it? Just take like, I think the first step would be to take the class if you did have the nudge that you wanted to learn more about in your state.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So I've lost track, but how many kids? You had four, one passed on at right after birth and then you've adopted a number? What's the totals?

**Kimberly Klokus:** Okay, so right now it's 14 and I'm not going to lie, don't ask me how my boys and girls, because I don't really know. No, I'm just kidding. I mean, because the problem is we've had over 50 kids for overnights. Like we've had lots of kids for a week or two when they're just about to reunite or they need a place for the night.

But then like right now at home, I have. Yeah, I have 14 children, but they're not all at home. I have, like I said, a 26, 23, 21, 21, 20, 18, 16, 11, 11, 11, 10, 10, 6 years old, four 18 months, and then Baby River, who we'll see one day.

**Julie Walker:** And that perfect segue into tell us about your organization. So you lost your Son, River, and you actually used his name to name your organization. So tell us about River's Run.

**Kimberly Klokus:** Yes, so my husband and I, when we moved into this house that has eight acres. We were like, we can make a place because sometimes certain kids come into the system and they need therapy and we can have a place for kids to run and play here while parents come and gather what they need. I'm also a licensed cosmetologist, so I don't do that anymore, but I can do hair in my center because a lot of these kids come in with lice. And so a lot of people get freaked out. And I, my daughters and I all help with that and then like, help them get clothing, help them get supplies. They need counseling. I have like a plethora of counseling, like not myself, but like resources to send out.

**Julie Walker:** Tell us about what resources you have available that our listeners can find on your River's Run website.

**Kimberly Klokus:** Oh, perfect. Okay. So basically right now we started with a clothing closet. So if they go on the website and they are like, oh, we want to help support that, they can go on the wishlist and add to the clothing closet. Or if it's a parent, they can go to the clothing closet and get what they need. They can also go to a monthly support class.

Basically, it's in the new stages of creating this resource center so that right now we have the clothing closet that's available, and then also the long-term goal would be like to be respite for parents who have taken in kids, and they're struggling, but it's a place that people can come to get help. That's pretty much where we're at right now.

**Julie Walker:** You're in Florida,

**Kimberly Klokus:** Mm-hmm.

**Julie Walker:** course. So anybody that would be local to you would be able to take advantage of this, but what about our listeners that are living in other states and countries? How can they learn more about your organization? I love that you have an Amazon wishlist. I think every nonprofit should have an Amazon wishlist because it makes it so easy to give really practical items. So we'll put a link in our show notes to your Amazon wishlist so that people can donate to your resource center. What about the mom that's in California and is thinking about adoption? Are there, or even foster-to-adoption, are there links on your website that can help them on their journey toward this?

**Kimberly Klokus:** Yeah, that's a great question. So right now there probably isn't much on there, but I would say as far as where they go for help? But I've gotten calls from people in different states that have gotten my number from other people to say, Hey, I have this struggle with my son. How do I help? And then connecting them with like, they have already adopted or fostered though, I guess.

So that's a little different than someone who's thinking about it. So, but yeah, definitely they would probably go to the resource center, or, I mean, they could, if they're from another state, then they would find programs in their area where they could either help donate supplies or they could go there for help and find out how they can get more involved in fostering.

**Julie Walker:** I think what I see when I go to your website is just most of all an inspiring story that this is actually possible, and that if the Lord is leading me to this journey, that there are people like you that I can be inspired by, encouraged by. And as your organization grows and as you devote your life to this, you know the resources available will be expanded.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I have one question. I think people might be curious. You mentioned teaching some kids to read. And so I think some of the listeners would be happy to know what are your preferred curriculum materials in terms of reading? We know you like IEW writing—math, you know what else? Because it seems like you'd have to keep it pretty simple dealing with so many kids at so many different levels and ages and and circumstances.

**Kimberly Klokus:** Yes, absolutely. That is part of the challenge. In fact, I was listening to one of your podcasts, I'm not sure which one it was, but it talked about how, um, like what are the positive things of AI and like how you can put in your website and it'll correct the things that could be corrected.

Is that right? Like some, something like that along the lines of how can AI be used? And so the other day I put in my schedule, please help. I need to figure out how to do this because I have more kids this year than last year. And so what I feel like is sometimes it wasn't really spitting out what could be helpful because I think it overloaded it, but I,

**Andrew Pudewa:** You overloaded AI. Yeah.

**Kimberly Klokus:** Well, I felt, I felt really bad because I'm like, I went away telling a lot of friends about it and I'm like, I'm super embarrassed now, because they're going to be like, wow, we're going to do that too. And I'm like, oh, it was actually really manipulative. It kept promising me like, your lifestyle is so amazing. Like this is, you're doing so good with pouring into these kids, you deserve this. And I was like, wait, what? And then they're like, in two hours we're going to lay out your whole life strategy. And I was like, this is amazing. And then in two hours I'd be like, can I see the, can I see what it looks like? Can I preview it? And they're like, you are right. You shouldn't have to wait long at all, but it will be ready tomorrow. And I was like, what?

**Julie Walker:** Oh my word.

**Kimberly Klokus:** So back to your question, sorry, rabbit trail there, but I will be honest. I think of like I am super scheduled. I don't have a lot of time for coffee dates. This is the first podcast I've ever done. I try to see my husband once in a while when we do TikTok videos together over, and so when it comes to reading, I was like, okay, I need super simple.

Like we're just going to go through the letters and the sounds and do explode the code. Handwriting without tears. IEW was super helpful for, we actually had it at our co-op. I taught it at our co-op. And then some of the kids, the little ones just want to be by me, so like sometimes they'll learn more about grammar than they do about reading because that's where I am that moment because I'm not as concerned. Yes, I wanna teach 'em to read, but I'm also



really concerned about their attachment because emotionally they need to be feeling like they're with me. So sometimes if I get a new child, they're with me. I don't put them in another co-op class. And so it'll be funny because sometimes my kids know, like all the LY words, but they still are struggling with how to spell their name. But yeah, so I'll use like a 100 Easy Lessons. Like I know they're not all probably the best way, but sometimes I'm like, I've got 10 minutes with this child. I want to try to get them to know their letters and their vowels and blends and work through that. So that really helped over the summer with the other two. And my husband was laughing because he is like, you just saw Mary Poppins take a turn for the worst. She found out you can't read. No, I'm just kidding. But he was like, he knows like, I really want all my kids read alouds. Like I love Sarah Mackenzie.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Sarah Mackenzie

**Kimberly Klokus:** Because read alouds, like it's all about attachment with these kids. So like I will spend an hour reading versus to them and doing audio books and the Lamplighter books and all that, because I know that's going to create an, in their brains, the attachment cuddling next to them.

With Jonathan, you'll be well. Yeah, it's okay. I'm sometimes worried about saying certain names because I didn't know what kids have gone back. Jonathan, my adopted son, you'll be happy to hear this. So I had heard about speech and debate from many, many moons ago, and then I heard you talk about it in one of your speeches at the homeschool convention. Jonathan, he was on medication for ADHD. He couldn't write his name. He was really struggling with learning. I put him right in a speech and debate because that's what my big kids did. And the next thing you know, he's like writing a speech on George Mueller and now he's going to Trinity Bible College. Today's his first day. He's not on medication. And so it's nothing in me, it's just the Lord like showing me where to go. But the NCFCA, like all my kids have been involved in that. I had my daughter who just learned English. I was like, come on Norma, we're going to go do speeches. And she inspired so many of those kids.

I was like, get up there. She doesn't even know English yet. And she's writing her own speeches. So you can do this. You know. So I think when you ask like what rivers run is, I think it is definitely like to inspire the families. Like, you can do this, like, home school's already hard. But I would say the beauty of bringing other children into your home.

Because we can't go on mission trips and things like that. Like we can bring these kids that are really hungry for attachment and they wanna learn. They can come in our home and my bio kids have just flourished. They jump on. And even the other kids I have in the home that I've had for a long time, or I've adopted, they're the most selfless kids. How can I say that? I'm not bragging. It's not me, but my kids are, they're amazing. They love the Lord. They are so giving of their time. So that's, that's the other part, like some people are afraid, well, what if these kids do, like some kids you come in, yeah, their language is really colorful. They've tossed around some words my big kids haven't even heard.

But then like in weeks time, they, their hearts change. They start getting attached.

**Andrew Pudewa:** It is beautiful. Uh, you said mission trip. It's like you are the trip. You, you're living a continuous mission trip by attraction.

Your voice has so much joy in it, and I've studied, kind of, people in their voices, and you just overflow with this supernatural joy. And I would think that so many people would think about your life and say, oh, that would be so hard; that would be such a sacrifice; that would be so overwhelming. And yet you don't seem at all burdened in a way that comes through. It's just a supernatural goodness. And I hope that you inspire dozens, hundreds, thousands of people, because really that's what we are called to above all else is to take care of each other, to love each other selflessly. And it's in that that we live our faith, that's how faith is confirmed in us—loving our neighbor as ourselves. And I don't know that I've ever met anyone who does this as joyfully and powerfully as the way you do. And. Thank you for sharing that short, all too short story with our listeners.

And of course they can go to the website, read more. And I guess at some point they always say if you need something done, give it to a busy person. So I will look forward to reading your book someday.

**Julie Walker:** Someday you will have a book. And Kimberly, could you just give us your website? It's Rivers Run. Go ahead and spell it out for us.

**Kimberly Klokus:** Oh sure. It's [RiversRuncottage.com](http://RiversRuncottage.com)

**Julie Walker:** And we'll, we'll of course have a link in our show notes for that. And just what a tremendous joy. If you were sitting in this room with us, Kimberly, you would've seen Andrew and me just break out in grins oftentimes based on what you said. So we're just so honored to to know you, to have you as a part of our IEW family.

We, as Andrew says, we hope that so many of our listeners will be inspired perhaps to join you in this journey of adoption and foster care, but hopefully at least be able to go on your website and support you through your Amazon gift store. So I just love that.

**Kimberly Klokus:** Thank you so much.

**Julie Walker:** Thank you dear.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Thank you. God bless you.

**Julie Walker:** Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at [IEW.com/podcast](http://IEW.com/podcast). Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.