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Local mom reaches out

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CNHI News Service

AMERICUS— It is a common misconception that mothers who don't have custody of their children are unfit, Tanya Bollin said.

Bollin would know. She's media director for the National Association of Non-Custodial Moms, or NANCM, an advocacy and support organization for mothers who don't have custody of their children, and she lives in Americus.

She also has struggled to regain custody of her own three children whom she gave up when she and her husband divorced.

At the time of the divorce, Bollin was working for less than minimum wage as a waitress in a restaurant, and she was living in a motel.

"My first and natural instinct was to fight for the custody of my children," she said. But Bollin knew during those days she couldn't support her three children financially, so she relinquished custody to her ex-husband.

"It was one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make," she said.

Working with NANCM, Bollin said she's learned it's a common misconception that mothers who don't have custody of their children are unfit. There are numerous reasons a mother might not have custody of her children, said Bollin, including —

- A mother may have joint custody of her children but her ex-husband moved a long distance away and took the children with him.
- A mother may not have enough money to fight a long custody battle in court for the kids.
- She may have been intimidated, threatened or even abused by her ex during the divorce and pushed into giving up custody of their children.
- Her ex may have had connections in the court or legal system that he used to his advantage during the divorce.

The National Association of Non-Custodial Moms' core belief is that children have a right to have both parents in their lives if both parents are fit and loving, and its core role is to provide a community of emotional support to the mothers (and fathers) who find themselves in the position of being partially or wholly shut out of their children's lives, emotionally or geographically.



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While all non-custodial parents face a wide array of issues, NANCM is focused on helping non-custodial moms deal with the pain a mother faces when she is torn away from the children she bore through pregnancy and in most cases was the primary care giver for prior to the separation. NANCM's other primary focuses are on reversing the social stigma and easing the financial strain of being a non-custodial mother.

"We are primarily geared toward mothers but fathers also need emotional support when faced with not being able to parent their children on a meaningful basis," said Bollin. "Non-custodial is not synonymous with unfit," she said.

Bollin now has custody of her 13-year-old daughter, and she's maintained has an amicable relationship with her ex-husband, but she continues to reach out to non-custodial parents in need.

She can be contacted by email at tbollin@nancm.com or visit NANCM's web site at www.nancm.com.

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Tanya Bollin Americus Times-Recorder

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