Mother, son reunited after 19 years

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CECILIA — When Penny Roger went to Catholic Social Services to see about finding the son she had put up for adoption 19 years earlier, she had many fears and hopes.

"I was afraid to do it because I was afraid he didn't know anything (about the adoption)," Roger said.

She also feared disrupting his life — something she, as an adoptee also, understood.

But she wanted to know if her son was happy and doing well, so she entered her name into the Louisiana Voluntary Registry, which tries to unite adult adoptees with their birth parents.

The day after Roger contacted CSS, Chad Rodriguez, her son, contacted CSS to see about finding his birth mother. He did not know Roger had been there the day before. And she did not know Rodriguez had gone there the day after.

"I wanted to know who my real parents were for any medical background," Rodriguez said. He also said he wanted his birth mother to be part of his wedding, which is set for Sept. 19.

But when Rodriguez, who lives in Cecilia, went to CSS, he said he wasn't expecting much.

"I expect the worse so I don't get hurt," he said.

But he certainly didn't expect to find Roger, now 38 and living in Lafayette, in just two weeks.

Roger said it took a week before she could meet with Rodriguez, who had been told when he was 5 years old that he was adopted.

"That was the longest week," she said. "I didn't know if he hated me or begrudged me.

"I didn't know what to expect," she added. "But I was willing to accept whatever his feelings were."

Rodriguez said he had questions to ask Roger, such as why she had given him up for adoption and if he had any brothers or sisters.

Penny Roger hugs her son Chad Rodriguez. Rogers gave her son up for adoption 19 years ago and the two were recently reunited through the work of Catholic Social Services.

Since their September meeting, the two have met occasionally and speak on the phone frequently. They've shared a photo album of special moments in Chad Rodriguez's life. And he's learned he has a brother.

"Now, we're one big family," Roger said. "We accepted each other."

The families are looking forward to their first Christmas together, Chad Rodriguez's 20th birthday in May and planning the upcoming wedding.

He has also asked both moms to walk him down the aisle during the wedding.