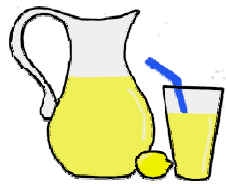




Connections



June

La Crosse County
Human Services
Dept.

Volume 8, Issue 6
2006

"A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken." -- James Dent

Upcoming Training Opportunities



The next Foster Parent Training will be on *Tuesday, July 11th from 6-8pm* in the Human Services Basement Auditorium.

The topic will be **Ethics and Boundaries**. Mark your calendar!



PACE Schedule

The next session of PACE training will run from *Sept. 19th, 2006 to December 12, 2006* on *Tuesday nights from 5:30-8:30pm*.

If you'd like to sign up, please call Rhonda at 789-4834 and be sure to mark the following dates on your calendar: Sept. 19, Sept. 26, Oct. 3, Oct. 10, Oct. 17, Oct. 24, Nov. 7, Nov. 14, Nov. 21, Nov. 28, Dec. 5, and Dec. 12.



As summer quickly approaches we would like to remind all foster parents of the age requirements and releases necessary for certain activities. We have enclosed copies of the agreement forms. Please contact the child's social worker for parent or guardian signatures. Thank you!





Sibling Relationships—Unique, Complex, Important

Siblings are the persons in our lives with whom we share the most history, and are often our most complex relationships. Shared and non-shared experiences interact to create similarities and differences.

Sibling Dynamics

In families where parenting is weak, absent or hostile or when abuse and neglect occur, siblings may interact in ways that are harmful to their development. They may have intense conflicts, competitions, and rivalries; be violent towards one another; seek sexual gratification with one another; or assume caretaking and other age-inappropriate roles.

Intense rivalry is a reality even in some families where there is no abuse or neglect. Most children feel some degree of ambivalence towards their sibs, especially as teens. Sharing family resources and parental affection insures some sibling conflict. Factors such as different ages, natural abilities, gender, and temperaments undermine the most conscientious parental efforts at "equal treatment for all." Older sibs who are very close to their mothers tend to have a harder time accepting the younger sib.

Although sibling conflict can cause parental stress, it also can be beneficial. Through conflict, siblings can learn to take the perspectives of others, stand up for their own beliefs, and practice negotiating a solution. Through competition, sibs can spur each other on to greater achievements. Older siblings are more likely to gain social skills from their interactions with younger sibs, and younger sibs gain cognitive skills through attempts to imitate the older.

Children without siblings need not be isolated in their own families. They can gain skills in childcare settings and through interactions with peers. The children retain the gains in intelligence, achievement, and maturity similar to first born siblings.

Sibling Loss

When a sibling dies, especially before adulthood, it can have a catastrophic impact on the personality development of surviving siblings. This is particularly true when siblings were attached and identified with each other during life, the death was horrific or could have been prevented, or when parents deal with their grief by employing silence and secrecy, overprotecting or over-cherishing surviving siblings, or trying to replace the dead sibling with the living.

Loss of a sibling through separation in foster or adoptive placement is also traumatic. "Separating a child from their parents is sometimes an inescapable necessity," says Scott Dixon, PRS's foster parent program specialist. "But the bond and attachments siblings have with each other is also crucial and should be maintained when possible." Current "best practice" includes placing siblings together whenever possible, unless greater benefits can be found in separate placements. The key to decisions regarding separation is the quality of the relationships. The continued presence of a sibling can ease adjustment to stress and loss. It can provide a child with some level of continuing family life, connection with the past, and one predictable element in a difficult situation.

Current research reports comparatively favorable adjustment for siblings placed together, even when some conflict, rivalry, sexuality, violence, competition, or caretaking exists. When kept together siblings have opportunities to change their interaction patterns and work through these issues, with adult guidance. Some negatives can actually hasten a child's adjustment—for example, competition for parental attention early in an adoptive placement may accelerate the bonding process with adoptive parents.

When separation is unavoidable, however, children can be helped to adjust by making some decisions, saying good-bye, grieving their loss, and participating in some type of contact whenever possible. Jean Verhaar, foster and adoption trainer from Region 6, notes "Foster parents can encourage children to draw pictures, make small craft objects, or pose for photographs to give to their siblings." According to Patsy Buida, adoption program specialist, "Feedback from adult adoptees indicates that when separated, siblings continue to be concerned about each other's well-being into adulthood. Siblings placed into adoption frequently search for each other once they are grown."

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Siblings and Aging

'Baby Boomers' and subsequent generations can expect their sibling relationships to be even more important in their later lifetime than for previous generations, since 78 to 93% of people over age 60 have a living sibling. Smaller family sizes and longer lifespans increase the chances that adult siblings will need to provide or negotiate care for each other or their aged parents.

Sometimes these processes don't run smoothly and require outside facilitation. "Adult children can be frustrated with the older person and not know what to do," says Rick Crowley, APS supervisor in Region 7, "but with direction and a plan for supportive services, siblings can work together to help a parent stay at home. Other times, siblings conflict with one another, especially when one has primary control and others feel out of the loop. Then intervention is needed to bring about an acceptable resolution."

In national polls, 65% of Americans say they would like to see their adult siblings more often, even though more than half of older siblings have weekly or monthly contact with one another. Some surveys suggest that sisters, siblings in large families, African Americans, and sibs in close geographic proximity are more likely to give or receive support.

According to Robert Butler's "life review" theory, siblings reminisce with each other later in life more frequently than with their children. This review process allows resolution of old conflicts and acceptance of one's life. It also contributes to better adjustment in old age.

Sibling relationships last a lifetime—many times rewarding, and maybe just as often frustrating. Either way, they are an important part of who we are.

SOURCE: *Protection Connection* newsletter (Volume VI, Number 1); 1998; published by the Protective Services Training Institute of Texas; available online at <http://www.utexas.edu/research/cswr/psti/index.php?lm=newsletter&m=protconn>



What Do You Mean By

Asthma: Breathing difficulty or wheezing caused by exposure to stimuli such as pollen, mold spores, animal dander, dust, respiratory infections, or food or drugs.

People with asthma should try to avoid the substances that cause the attacks or inhalants that will irritate the lungs. Air conditioning can help in the summer and in dry, cold weather, a humidifier should be used. Drugs are available in a variety of forms to prevent attacks. Families with members who smoke would not be best for children with asthma.

Juvenile Onset Diabetes: The onset of this type of diabetes is before the age of 25 and is characteristic by an absolute insulin deficiency. There are no major outward symptoms besides occasional fatigue. The child can take part in normal play, and exercise should be encouraged because it helps improve glucose utilization.

Juvenile onset diabetes can be quite difficult to regulate. Diet and blood sugar levels must be monitored and can be done at home. Insulin injections may be necessary if regulating the child's diet does not regulate blood sugar levels.

Excerpted from Adopt! January 2005. Published by Adoption Resources of Wisconsin.

Bouncing Back: Promoting Resilience

New research reveals what helps people shake off adversity. While research with clinical populations has shown that children of divorce, violence, alcoholism, and incest are over-represented among adults with problems, some children are beating those odds. Their success against the odds challenges conventional wisdom that children from troubled families are doomed.

Resilience

In *The Resilient Self*, psychiatrist and researcher Steven Wolin notes that among those who experience bad events, some recover and bounce back. To Wolin, "problems don't predict how people do. Something else does." Current studies show that resilience is an interactive and systemic phenomenon involving individual, family, neighborhood, and community factors. It is a combination of inner strengths and outer help that together contribute to coping well.

Since 1955, Emmy Werner has conducted a longitudinal study of 210 at-risk children in Hawaii who were exposed before age 2 to at least four risk factors: poverty; early health problems or handicaps; mothers with low levels of education; and familial alcoholism, violence, instability, discord, or mental illness. Findings reveal that 72 of them—one out of three—developed into competent, confident, and caring adults. What went right?

Protective Factors

Werner and Smith in *Overcoming the Odds* studied the internal and external "protective factors" in children's lives that seemed to mediate the risks. They included:

- **Temperament.** Resilient children were outgoing, likable, easy-to-care-for babies. This promoted caring relationships. As adults they showed independence, humor, and insight.
- **Intelligence.** Although not unusually talented academically, resilient children had at least average IQ's and read at least at grade level.
- **Gender.** More girls than boys overcome risk factors.
- **Early Bonding.** Resilient children had few prolonged separations from their primary caregiver during the first year of life; many were oldest children; none had siblings born before they turned 2; and all developed a close early bond with at least one caregiver.
- **Ability to recruit surrogate caregivers and adult mentors.** Resilient children actively recruited informal support networks in their community, including teachers, youth leaders, mentors, and parents of friends. The children's likeability had a multiplier effect. As adults they found emotional support outside the family.
- **Development of special hobbies or skills.** Hobbies taught resilient children competence and mastery, gave them a place to be other than at home, and helped them continue to think well of themselves and to recruit supportive adults.
- **Inner locus of control.** Resilient children had a sense of coherence, a faith that things could be overcome, and that they were in charge of their own fate. By high school, they had an optimistic confidence in their ability to shape events. (Some studies also suggest that resilient children are able to attribute blame outside of themselves.)
- **Required helpfulness.** By being asked at a young age to take on household and childcare tasks, resilient children learned competence and developed self-esteem.
- **Religious faith.** Religion gave people a sense of structure, mission, and salvation.

Second Chances

Even bad early starts did not guarantee poor outcomes if later conditions produced positive events. Turning points such as a good relationship; achievement in school; a stint in the military; satisfying work; or involvement in a religious group turned things around, even at later points in the life cycle. While resilient children experienced

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stress-related health problems and some aloofness in interpersonal relationships, they also built on positive experiences and enhanced their self-confidence and hope.

Promoting Resilience

Resilience research reminds us that in centuries before therapy, people found their own ways of dealing with life's hardships. Many who contribute to resilience are not professional helpers. It is never too late to build sources of resilience into a life, no matter how desperate. When opportunities exist for education, employment, growth, achievement, and relationships, children can thrive. Ask about the many specifics details in a child's life and you may find resources and interests to encourage and build upon. This effort fits with the approach of building on strengths to empower others. According to Werner, "it may be cheaper than 10 years of therapy."

SOURCE: *Child Protection Connection* newsletter (Volume IV, Issue 3); published by the Protective Services Training Institute of Texas; available online at <http://www.utexas.edu/research/cswr/psti/index.php?lm=newsletter&m=protconn>

Three Rivers Dental Clinic Summer Schedule

- The Health Centers will operate Three Rivers Dental Center for daytime hours from May 17th-August 4th.
- They will be open from 8:00 am—5:00 pm Monday through Thursday.
- There will be no Friday hours in La Crosse but there remain Friday hours in Cashton.
- The summer clinic will be staffed with 2 dentists but the hygienists will maintain their Cashton-based practice; Cashton will continue to see patients with 1 dentist and 2 hygienists during this time.
- Patient scheduling will be handled primarily by the Cashton scheduler. Her phone number is (608)654-5100 extension 258. A back up extension is 257.
- People calling can anticipate their call will go to voice mail. It is a busy phone but the scheduler will be back in touch at her earliest convenience.
- The phone number at Three Rivers will be answered but if people could direct their calls to Cashton, that would be the best at this point.
- After August 4th The Three Rivers site will return to evening only hours at the Three Rivers site with daytime and early evening hours in the Cashton clinic.

The Health Centers maintain a waiting list for services. Currently there are approximately 180 people on the list and they are taking patients off that list on a weekly basis. There is no projection for how long it will take someone to go through the list. They only accept patients who are residents of La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon Counties. Their sliding fee scale is open and available to anyone in those counties without health insurance.



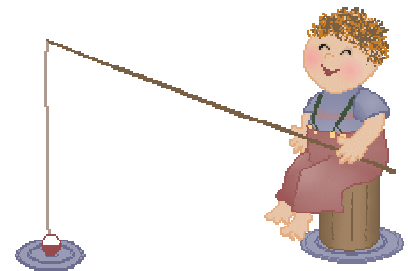
Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center

Looking for information on Foster Care or Adoption? Visit us at our webpage:

www.wifostercareandadoption.org
or you may feel free to contact the resource center at our toll free number: 1-800-947-8074

or via email:

info@wifostercareandadoption.org



Foster Parent Advisory Committee is working again on recruitment for

UW-L Students. We are in the process of having the students create their auto-biographies and fill out background checks & confidentiality agreements. You may contact Keith Keller to look at the results of the background checks. The paragraphs will be available to you soon! Once this is done we will hold a "get to know you pot-luck" where foster homes will be invited to come and meet the students. Please contact Denise Green with any questions.

Got plans?

The June Dairy Days Parade will be **Saturday, June 3rd at noon.**

Our position in the parade is #20.

If you have any questions about participating, call Rhonda at 789-4834.

Hope to see you there!

Partnering with Birth Families (continued from back page)

When there is partnership between birth and foster parents, foster parents are in a better position to help meet children's deep needs for connection, which promotes their healthy emotional development. Through partnerships with birth parents, foster parents can also help birth parents learn new ways to support and nurture the child. For example, foster parents can model parenting skills that ensure the safety of children who have been sexually abused.

Of course, as long as you care about children, you will react emotionally when they are hurt. Fortunately, there are things you can do to manage your emotions before you have contact with birth parents. Some of these include:

- Talk with your licensing worker or the child's social worker before meeting with the birth parents.
- Make a list of the birth parents' strengths; this will help you remember that they are more than what they have done to their children.
- Remind yourself how birth family connections benefit children, especially the development of their identities.
- Have a plan for what to do if your own emotions about the birth parents begin to interfere with your efforts to develop a partnership (e.g., you might count to 10, or simply take a break).

"Birth parents are more than what they have done. They are the people who gave life to the children we love. They created the color of their eyes, the texture of their hair, and parts of their souls we can never touch."



— Debbie Gallimore, foster parent trainer with the NC Division of Social Services and former foster parent



June 18th is Father's Day!

- Here's some gift ideas for that special guy:
- Wash his car.
 - Play his favorite sport with him.
 - Clean his golf clubs.
 - Give him an hour of peace and quiet.

- Take a walk together.
- Prepare a special meal for him.
- Write him a letter.
- Listen to his words of wisdom.
- Give him a hug.
- Tell him he's the world's greatest!



Try this mini-Mad Libs game! First, fill in the spaces in the box below with whatever type of word the space calls for. Then read the story, replacing each numbered blank with the word you wrote in the box.

VACATION SPORTS

- ADJECTIVE _____
- NUMBER _____
- PLURAL NOUN _____
- ANIMAL _____
- TYPE OF SPORT _____
- VERB ENDING IN "ING" _____
- ADJECTIVE _____
- VERB ENDING IN "ING" _____
- VERB ENDING IN "ING" _____
- NUMBER _____
- PLURAL NOUN _____
- NUMBER _____
- NOUN _____
- NOUN _____
- NOUN _____
- ADVERB _____

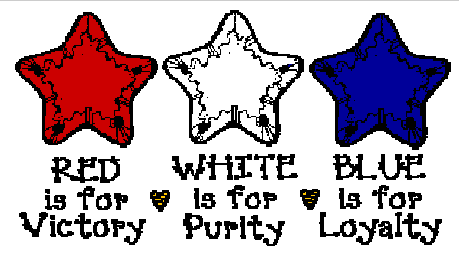
Do you know all 50 states? See if you can figure out which 10 are missing from the list below.

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Michigan | Utah |
| Alaska | Florida |
| Colorado | North Dakota |
| Louisiana | Arkansas |
| New Mexico | Georgia |
| South Carolina | Wyoming |
| Virginia | New Hampshire |
| New Jersey | Washington |
| Pennsylvania | Indiana |
| Minnesota | Connecticut |
| Montana | Alabama |
| South Dakota | Maryland |
| Kentucky | Ohio |
| Illinois | Vermont |
| Texas | Rhode Island |
| Nevada | West Virginia |
| California | Mississippi |
| Tennessee | Oregon |
| Maine | North Carolina |
| Idaho | Missouri |

There are many new and (1) things you can do on your vacation today. (2) years ago, (3) who went on a vacation could play tennis, or go (4) -back riding, or play 18 holes of (5), or spend their time (6) with their family. But today, if you are (7) enough to try, you can go skydiving or wind surfing or water skiing or mountain (8). Skydiving is the most fun, if you are not afraid of (9). First, you strap on (10) parachutes. Then you get in an airplane with eight or nine other (11) and go up to (12) feet. Then you open the door and jump out. Once in the air, everyone holds hands and you go into a free fall towards the (13) below. At the last minute, you yank on your (14) and open your parachute and float gently to the (15). It is a lot of fun if you like to live (16).

The first day of summer is June 21st!

Display your red, white, and blue for Flag Day on June 14th and the 4th of July!



fostering perspectives

Sponsored by the NC Division of Social Services and the NC Family and Children's Resource Program

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Partnering with Birth Families of Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused

Child sexual abuse stirs up strong responses in all of us. When a child has been sexually abused we may experience a variety of emotions, including fear, helplessness, and sympathy.

Often, we also feel anger. Anger toward the abusing parent or family member, for what he or she has done. Anger at the nonoffending parent, for failing to prevent the abuse or for failing to acknowledge that the abuse has occurred. This anger is natural and we should not blame ourselves for feeling it.

Yet anger towards the birth parents can also prevent foster and adoptive parents from being supportive of connections between the child and the birth family.

This can have a devastating impact on children. Regardless of what their parents have done, children have a compelling need to be connected to their families of origin. Without this link, children often continue to have many unanswered questions and unresolved feelings that can make it difficult to develop their own healthy, independent identities.

Judgments can also be a problem. Kids usually know it when their foster or adoptive parents judge their birth parents. The divided loyalties and sense of personal injury or attack that children often feel when their parents are condemned can make it difficult for them to be "OK" in foster care, which can impact their behavior in the home and at school. Over time, conflict between the different parents in their lives may even damage children's ability to attach to adoptive parents, foster parents, and others.

Positive connections between foster and birth parents mean a lot to kids. As veteran foster parent and foster parent trainer Debbie Gallimore explains it, "What I didn't realize for many years is that the more I accepted and honored the birth families of my foster children, the more the children connected with and loved me. It seemed such a paradox. Yet I came to realize that by honoring and loving their families, I was honoring and loving them, too."

(continued on page 6)