



Connections



February

La Crosse County
Human Services
Dept.
Volume 9, Issue 2
2007

Family and Children's Section Mission Statement

We would like to take this opportunity to share with all of our foster and respite families our mission statement for 2007. The entire staff of the Family and Children's Section participated in the creation. We would like this to be a daily reminder of our goals as an agency working within our community.

The Mission of the Family and Children's Section is to identify and respond to safety concerns and needs of children, families and community utilizing a family's strengths and team process along with formal and informal supports to improve child, family and community quality of life.

Welcome Theresa Kirchoff, our Alternate Care Unit Student Intern

My name is Theresa and I grew up in Stevens Point, WI. After graduating from high school I attended UW-Oshkosh for 3 years. I took a break from school and lived in Minneapolis and Milwaukee until moving to La Crosse to go back to school. I am now a senior at Viterbo majoring in Social Work with a minor in Sociology and Women's Studies. I will be graduating in May and cannot wait. I hope to get a job working with families and children, but I am open to anything and anywhere. I love going to concerts, camping, reading, and hanging out with family and friends.

HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!

Mark Your Calendar!

Generalized Foster Parent Trainings

Tuesdays, 6-8pm. Human Services Building Basement Auditorium

March 13, 2007 Independent Living. Presented by Jamie Bettsworth and Dawn Miller.
May 8, 2007 Topic To Be Announced.
July 10, 2007 Topic To Be Announced.
September 11, 2007 Topic To Be Announced.
November 13, 2007 Topic To Be Announced.

PACE

Classes are held in the Human Services Building Basement Auditorium. Please call Rhonda Rude at 789-4834 to sign up for either of these PACE cycles or for make-up classes:

Wednesdays, January 24-April 11, 5:50-8:30PM. 12-week cycle. Facilitated by Dawn Miller and Denise Green.
Saturdays, February 2-March 31st 6-week cycle facilitated by Kathy Lysaker and Richelle
(break on March 10th). Zimmerman. Lunch provided.

Special Events

May 24, 2007, 5:00-8:00pm Foster Care Picnic Myrick Park in the big shelter
September 20, 2007, Social hour begins at 5:30 Foster Parent Banquet Drugan's
October 25, 2007, 5:00-8:00pm Harvest of Thanks Roncalli Newman Center, 1732 State St.

Other Training Opportunities

Monday, February 26, 6:30-9:00PM Triggers: What Causes Adoption & Foster Care Related Crisis?
Human Services Building Basement Auditorium

A free workshop for foster and adoptive parents provided by Friends of Adoption, a Post Adoption Resource Center, and the La Crosse County Dept. of Human Services. Get the knowledge and tools you need to address these questions: What are some of the issues unique to foster care and adoption and their impact on normal child development? How do children think about adoption at different ages and stages of development? What triggers impact children in foster care and adoption and how can we help children cope with these triggers? Presented by Mary Barnes, Coordinator for Friends of Adoption. Please RSVP by Feb. 21 by calling 1-800-227-3002 or 715-832-6644.

Thursday, March 29, 6:30-8:00PM "Sex, Drugs, and Street Racing: What YOU need to know to keep your son or daughter safe"
La Crosse Radisson Ballroom

Child Maltreatment Conference pre-conference event presented by Dr. Leonard Sax. This presentation will explore gender differences in regards to drug and alcohol abuse, adolescent motivation to engage in sexual activities, street racing and other forms of high-risk activities, and fundamental changes in adolescent culture. This event is free and open to the public. Parents, foster parents and teachers are encouraged to attend! No registration required.

* The 10th Annual Child Maltreatment Conference will be *Friday, March 30, 8:30AM-4:00PM*. See insert for more information.

Mark Your Calendar! (continued)

Upcoming Workshops at Family Resources, 1500 Green Bay St.

For more information or to register, call 784-8125. Child care may be provided.



Thursday, March 1, 6:30-8:00PM.

Quick Meals for Busy Families

Time savers, ingredient substitutions, and a demonstration. Sample a meal!

Thursday, March 8, 6:30-8:00PM

Food Safety at Home

Learn to avoid food safety mistakes and get a food storage chart to use.

Thursday, March 29, 6:30-8:00PM

The Last Child In the Woods

Discussion on the significance nature plays in our children's development.



Dealing with Reading Discouragement

BY LEE TOBIN McCLAIN, PH.D

Most adults agree that reading is good and important for children. And most children start out liking to hear stories. Yet by the time our children are 5, 10 or 15, they may not listen to stories or read as much as we'd like. Enthusiasm may be lost; reading discouragement can set it.

Who's discouraged? Sometimes kids, and sometimes adults. Kids can get discouraged when reading is too hard, or listening to stories requires more focus than they possess. They can get discouraged when adult expectations outstrip their abilities. Adults can get discouraged when kids reject reading, prefer television or video games, wiggle through story time, or struggle with seemingly simple reading concepts.

Discouragement, whether a child's or an adult's, usually results in one thing: less reading. And since time spent reading is a huge predictor of school success, it pays to figure out ways to

beat reading discouragement.

- **REGRESS.** Who says second-graders are too old for "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" Why can't sixth-graders enjoy the antics of a kindergartner like Junie B. Jones?

Sometimes we're so intent on helping our kids learn and improve that we push them too hard. But anyone gets discouraged by challenges that are too far beyond our abilities. Just try wading through an advanced physics textbook if you're a non-scientist or *Moby-Dick*, if you're less than literary. That's probably how long chapter books feel to a struggling reader. Similarly, did you ever nod off during a meeting when you didn't understand the topic being discussed? That's how kids feel when the stories we read them feature too many words and not enough pictures.

- **PROCESS, NOT RESULTS.** Sometimes we force our way through a whole book because we know we need to write a title in the homework journal. Sometimes we push through extra workbook pages because we know a quiz is coming up. And with schools' focus on high-stakes testing, results are king. Focusing on results is understandable, even laudable, both

at school and home. We have such a short time to influence our kids, many of whom have difficult challenges to overcome.

But overemphasis on results can make reading a chore. Sometimes you have to toss a dull book aside halfway through in order to read something more fun. Sometimes you have to push aside the worksheets and draw a picture. Sometimes you have to keep on reading the fun book even when phonics homework is due tomorrow. It's not such a bad thing when reading feels like a sneaky pleasure instead of a duty to be checked off the list.

- **ENLIST OTHERS.** During certain periods, parents can be the worst people to read with kids. We're so aware of academic problems and behavior goals that the fun is milked out of the process. That's the time to enlist others.

Who? Relatives are a great place to start. An older sibling might be willing to read to a younger sibling, especially if he could escape doing dishes in exchange. Aunt Jane or Uncle George might stop by for story time if you'd throw a piece of pie or an oil change

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into the mix. Sure, you get an extra chore; but a peaceful half hour doing dishes is better than a contentious one forcing your child to read to you. And siblings, aunts and uncles are bound to inject more fun and games into reading.

What if you don't have relatives? Head for the library. Most libraries these days have programs for all age groups, and they're a lot more hip than they used to be. Teen book groups now feature controversial books--and even more shocking, pizza served up right there in the library. For the younger set, story times have expanded with innovative programs

that will surprise you and delight your kids. For example, my library features "Roll Over and Read," a monthly program in which kids read aloud to trained dogs. Even the most discouraged reader perks up when the audience is an attentive canine listener.

• **SHOP.** OK, it's shallow. But sometimes something new and shiny from a nice store can lift your spirits. Whether it's the latest chick novel or the Bernstein Bears, letting your child pick it out and buy it can break through a reading rut.

OK, it's expensive, but it's worth it. Breaking through discouragement can require creativity and persistence,

but it's worth it. If both you and your child start to enjoy reading again, you'll have a bonding experience that can last. And your child will enjoy the academic gains and leisure fun for many years to come.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Lee Tobin McClain, Ph.D., is the author of "My Loco Life," "My Abnormal Life," and "My Alternative Life," a series of novels featuring teens in foster care. Visit her website at www.leemcclain.com.

This article is taken from Fostering Families Today, January/February 2007 issue.



Welcome New Foster Parents



Please welcome Nate and Tina Johnson to our foster care community. The couple lives in Holmen with their three boys. Nate and Tina enjoy going for bike rides and walks as a family in their neighborhood and they are very busy keeping up with their sons' school activity calendar. The Johnsons are also very involved with their church and its activities within the community. Nate enjoys dirt biking and has involved his children with this passion. The family looks forward to being a foster family and they believe that they

have something to offer a child that is around the age of their own children. Their youngest son is particularly interested in this foster care experience as he will be sharing his room with another child. When you see this family at up and coming foster care events, please welcome them to our group of "Everyday Heroes".

Please welcome Mike and Julie Klimek to our foster care community. Mike and Julie live in Holmen with their daughter. They come to our foster care world with hopes of providing a home to one of their relatives that is in need. They are busy with their daughter's social and academic life but are looking forward to providing a safe and stable home. They will be involved with PACE in the near future and will be looking for other foster parents in their area to provide some support and wisdom regarding what it is like to work with social services. When you see them at one of these trainings or functions, please welcome them.

Please welcome Joan Blaschke to our foster care community. Joan and her two children live on the south side of La Crosse with their three large and friendly dogs. Joan is an in home child care provider and is able to be a stay at home parent because of her in home business. Joan is interested in caring for younger children and may be an emergency foster parent for our agency. Joan's children are hoping to be a part of helping other children that are in need. The next time you see Joan or her kids at a foster care event, please welcome this new resource family to our community.



The Stages of Foster Family Development

Retention of foster parents is a key concern for agencies. With the high rate of dropout occurring within the first two years, it is crucial that foster parents understand the stages of development they will experience. Foster parents can avoid becoming one of those “dropout” statistics as they begin to understand what they will encounter and how they can grow through experiences.

Stage One: Room for One More

Foster parents in this stage do not know what they don't know. They are motivated to become foster parents because they love children, are close to becoming empty-nesters, love parenting, etc. They want to take the child home and love her while being less concerned with working with the agency or birth family.

Growth and development as a foster family often comes as part of the process of going “through the fire.” This crucial period for the foster family occurs during the first two years or so of their fostering experience. Although the family received information about what to expect in pre-service training, now that they are living it out, it feels different than what they expected. A critical component that brings this stage to crisis is the foster family's realization that “love is not enough” and that the child has another family he or she cares about very much. The chills will most likely return to that family. The end result of these crises can be the foster family

ending their foster care career. If they survive this stage, they will move on to the next area of development. Some of the events that characterize “going through the fire” are:

- unmet expectations
- feeling that needs are not met
- the problematic behavior of the child
- lack of responsiveness from the agency/caseworker
- court decision
- lack of extended family support
- difficulty working with the birth family
- announcement that the child is returning home

Stage Two: Team Member

This family has experienced a crisis or two and has moved on from the first developmental stage. The foster family continues to view the birth parents from a distance, as opposed to being actively involved with them. The foster caregivers respond to directions from caseworkers and hesitate to initiate changes to what they feel are needs of the child in their care. They join the team, show up at meetings and participate actively within the agency structure.

The foster family will likely go through another developmental crisis in this stage that will impact their decision to either continue or drop out. The crisis may be a disagreement regarding a decision about the child in their home. Perhaps the disagreement involved the child returning home, lack of timely services, or the selection of an adoptive family. They don't see the child being served by the team.

The impact feels to the foster parents as though they had no input into the decision-making process.

Stage Three: Team Leader

This family has made a decision to continue in the fostering program, and it is evident by their participation in training, support groups, etc. They view themselves and their purpose in fostering from a much more proactive perspective. This foster family actively works with primary families toward the goal of permanency. The foster caregiver feels a responsibility to obtain appropriate services for their child and often takes the lead in seeking those needed services. The team leader family does play a key role for the particular child they have in their home. Often, this foster family is needed most within the agency to serve the needs of children and their families.

The challenges often encountered for this family occur when the family begins to believe that no matter how hard they work with the caseworker or primary family, they will not be able to secure for the child in their care the end result they feel is in the child's best interest. They feel they can't get the necessary services in a timely manner.

Stage Four: Child Advocate

This family sees their role as expanding to that of a child advocate and feels that they can have a voice in changing foster care and the child welfare system. They may choose to leave their active participation as a foster parent to spend more time and energy on advocacy.

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What Do You Mean By

Acronyms or terms you may hear in reference to foster children and their involvement with social services or the juvenile justice system.



Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS): A designation of children through the age of 17 who are in need of services because they are victims, or at risk of becoming victims, of physical or sexual abuse or of neglect. Also applies to children in need of special care and treatment or require adoption services.

Juvenile in Need of Protection and Services (JIPS): A designation for juveniles who are in need of services due to behavior that does not represent a violation of the Criminal Code. This can include out of control behavior in the home, or status offenses. Also applies to children under the age of 10 who commit a delinquent act.

The Stages of Foster Family Development

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Understanding Your Emerging Role

Because of the shifts in philosophy from "rescuing" children, to returning children home as soon as it is safe to do so, to preventing placement of children, to providing family-centered services, there have been significant changes in the role of foster parents.

The demands are greater.

Children entering foster care are typically more severely disturbed emotionally and behaviorally than

foster children of the past.

The requirements are greater.

Foster parents, as appropriate role models, are now being asked to work directly with primary parents to provide guidance and support on nurturing and disciplining their children.

The expectations are greater.

Foster parents are being asked to assume more of a role as professional caregiver and are asked to function as team members with the child welfare agency staff.

SOURCE: This information is from "Foster Families and How They Grow," by the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, February 2005.



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

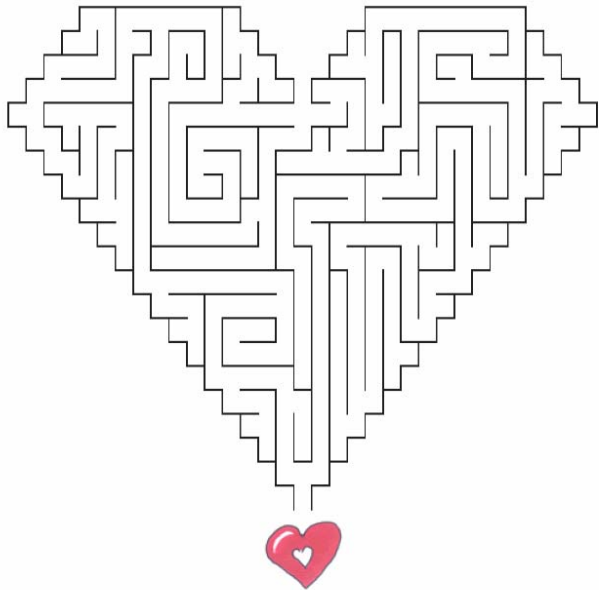


Pass the word on!

If you know anyone who would like to learn about becoming a foster parent, orientation is held the first Monday of every month from 6:00-7:00PM. Anyone interested should call Rhonda Rude at 789-4834 to sign up.



Valentine's Day Maze



www.ActivityVillage.co.uk
Keeping Kids Busy!

Featured Website

Check out www.activityvillage.co.uk for coloring pages, educational resources, kids crafts, puzzles, recipes, parenting articles and much, much more...there are over 2000 pages of activities to help keep your kids busy!



Heart-and-Lollipop Flowers

With just a little TLC, colorful hearts flourish as the petals of a new flower variety—one with a lollipop center and stem.



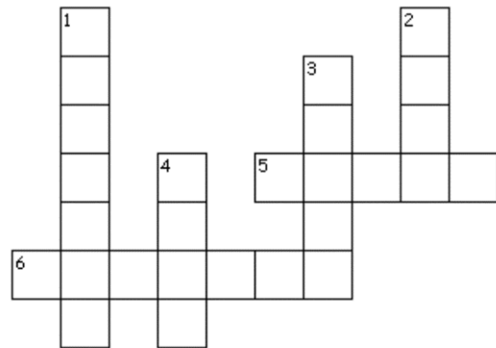
1. Use card stock to make a half-heart template about 3 inches high and 1 1/4 inches wide. Fold a 12-by-3 1/2-inch piece of construction paper in half vertically, and trace four half-hearts along the fold.

2. Cut out hearts; unfold.

3. Stack hearts; punch a hole 1/4 inch up from bottom. Position petals to form a flower, making sure holes line up. Secure by applying glue around holes; let dry. Write name on a petal. Insert lollipop.



Valentine's Day Crossword



Across
5.



Down



6.



3.



Down
1.



4.



fostering perspectives

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

Vol. 7, No. 1 • November 2002

Little Feet, Little Minds

by E. L. Davis

They come into our lives one small child at a time,
Always scared and lonely and wondering what they'll find.
Their minds so full of questions and their eyes full of fear,
Always listening closely just to see what they can hear.

Little feet, little minds. So many children, so little time.

Once someone's little angel sent from heaven up above
Now battered, bruised, and broken and only wanting love.
You offer them affection just to see them pull away,
But you keep on trying, every single day.

A child is like a garden – without love, it won't grow.
But give it to them daily and soon it starts to show.
You see a little sparkle in eyes once filled with fear,
You hear a little laugh that sounds oh-so-dear.

Little feet, little minds. So many children, so little time.

Once someone's little angel, now ours for awhile,
That gives us hugs and kisses and a big, warm smile.
Now all those deep dark secrets they've kept locked up
inside,
They start to tell them to you, a little at a time.
As you sit and listen to the words they say,
You ask yourself, "How come life turns out this way?"

Little feet, little minds. So many children, so little time.

Now the days are passing by and all their fears are too.
You hope you've made a difference with all you say and do,



And you know you have when you hear "I love you."
It makes it all worthwhile when bedtime comes at night,
And you get those hugs and kisses when you turn out the light.

Little feet, little minds. So many children, so little time.

Now as the love inside grows more and more each day,
The call you knew was coming finally comes your way.
They're coming to get the angel that someone threw away,
Now your heart is breaking because you know that they can't stay.

As you pack the memories that all of you have made,
You gently wipe away the tears streaming down your face.
And as you place each item a reflection you will see,
Of the child as they are today and how they used to be.

Little feet, little minds. So many children, so little time.

Once again the house falls silent of tiny little feet,
Gently, softly running, playing hide and seek.
Even though you're leaving, in our hearts you'll always stay
In a special place, safely locked away.
God bless all little angels sent from heaven up above.
May they all find families, filled with happiness and love.

Little feet, little minds. So many children, so little time.

E. L. Davis is a foster parent in Chatham County, North Carolina.