



Connections

January



La Crosse County
Human Services
Dept.

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The importance of the connection...

A local family lost their home recently due to a fire. During the tragedy, the first person the mother contacted for help was foster parent Teri Herrewig. Teri responded immediately and went to help the family. The Red Cross put the family up for the weekend in a hotel. Teri then transported the family to the hotel and assisted them in getting settled in, and made sure they had what they needed. Teri really went out of her way to help this family out!

Teri had provided care to a couple of the children in the past. During that time, Teri developed a positive working relationship with the birth family by opening up her home for visits, having frequent contact with the parents, and respecting the family's cultural beliefs and values. It goes to show that all of her efforts at connecting with the birth family made a difference as the family trusted her and turned to her during a time of crisis.

We just wanted to take this time to recognize Teri and thank her for going above and beyond to help a family in need!



Mark Your Calendar!

PACE for 2007

Please call Rhonda Rude at 789-4834 to sign up for either of these PACE cycles or for make-up classes.

PACE is scheduled for a 12-week cycle starting on January 24th, 2007 and ending April 11th, 2007. These classes will be held on Wednesday evenings from 5:30 to 8:30PM in the Basement Auditorium of the Human Services Building and will be facilitated by Dawn Miller and Denise Green.

A 6-week PACE cycle will start on February 2nd, 2007 and end on March 31st, 2007 with a break on March 10th. These classes will be held on Saturdays from 9:00AM to 3:30PM (lunch provided) in the Basement Auditorium of the Human Services Building and will be facilitated by Kathy Lysaker & Richelle Zimmerman.

Upcoming Workshops at Family Resources, 1500 Green Bay St.

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



Stewards of Children

A nationally acclaimed training opportunity designed to educate adults to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

Monday, January 22nd from 9:00AM-12:00PM OR Tuesday, March 6th from 5:30-8:30PM

Understand Your Baby Through Baby Sign

Learn about the advantages in using Baby Sign and learn some basic signs to start you on your way.

Thursday, January 25th from 6:30-8:00PM

Attention Child Care Providers

A planning session for a new provider support group. Come share your ideas, stories, successes, and challenges.

Thursday, February 1st from 6:30-8:00PM

Nurturing Your Spirited Child

A four-week workshop to help parents understand temperamental traits, identify cues leading up to challenging behavior, cope with tantrums and blow-ups when they do occur, and develop strategies for reducing or eliminating power struggles.

Tuesdays, February 6th-27th from 5:30-8:00PM. (Light meal provided).

Active Parenting

A four-week program that teaches skills that will help parents build responsibility, respect, cooperation, and self-esteem in their children.

Wednesdays, February 7th-28th from 1:00-2:30PM OR Wednesdays, March 7th-28th from 5:30-7:00PM

Skills for a Successful Marriage

Helps you assess and develop the marriage you desire.

Thursday, February 15th from 6:30-8:00PM

Preparing a Safe, Secure Home for Sexually Abused Kids

BY MARY CARTER CREECH

It is estimated that 85 to 95 percent of children in foster care will have experienced some level of sexual abuse before coming into foster care or while in foster care. The belief once held by adoption workers and foster and adoptive families was that within a safe and loving new home children would be able to overcome the past problems. Today, the emotional and behavioral residue of sexual abuse has been dispelled forcefully by children who still feel terror, confusion and rage despite the efforts of a new family to help them feel secure. As they move into foster care from family to family, children have a residue of pain and confusion too great to carry and resolve on their own.

Donna Davis, one of the authors of the "Foster and Adoptive Parents Preparation Curriculum" and a trainer, readily admits that the training alone is not sufficient to instruct parents on the complexities of parenting sexually abused kids. She encourages families to assume that a child will have experienced some level of sexual abuse, prepare for how they'll cope with the behaviors and establish their rules for privacy before the child comes into the home. She emphasizes that families must examine their own levels of tolerance for a child who sexually acts out. At the conclusion of the training, Davis says, "First, you know that this is a job worth doing, and second, you don't know much." She encourages families to read everything they can find, and to realize the training is just a start.

Tips for "Preparing a Safe, Secure Place for Healing"

- Have boundaries and rules that are clear and safe.
- Emphasize that feelings can be experienced without choosing to act on them.
- Supervise in ways that allow you to keep track of your kids at all times and know who they are with, as well as to give opportunities to redirect "trigger" behaviors such as aggressive horseplay, teasing and lack of boundaries.
- Present opportunities for increasing self-control by helping kids learn to identify "trigger" feelings such as fear, frustration, anxiety and stress. Reduce stress through slow breathing, word hugs, prayers and imaging; develop social, communication and problem solving abilities; understand cause and effect; and develop goal-oriented behavior.
- Make the "rule of three" a new family rule—avoid having just one adult alone with a child, or two kids without an adult present. Teach kids the "No/Go/Tell" defense.
- Talk respectfully about sexuality using correct terms for body parts. Suggestive and ambiguous words, slang and obscenities can be "triggers" that create feelings of stimulation and shame.
- Communicate actions and intentions clearly. Touching and cuddling between children and adults may be threatening and trigger sexualized feelings or behaviors.
- Discuss how secrets, surprises and privacy differ. Emphasize that there are to be no secret games, stories, clubs or presents, especially between them and adults or older kids.
- Discuss openly as a family the boundaries and rules for bedrooms,

- bathroom, bedtimes, dressing and undressing. All members need to understand that for kids who have been hurt and compromised by sexual abuse these may carry sexual or aggressive messages and that all adults, regardless of sex, may be perceived as potentially threatening.
- Provide separate beds for children and separate bedrooms for boys and for girls to help set safe boundaries and encourage privacy.
- Use logical consequences and behavioral contracts for misbehavior.

The family's sense of optimism for a future child oftentimes makes them resistant to the realities addressed in training, to what is told to them by their social workers, and to even their own uncertainties. Any child, they believe, will thrive in their family with the love, commitment and guidance they will be provided. Norma Nelson, a former state adoption placement worker and now the project manager for the Alaska Adoption Exchange at NWA, finds the following parental characteristics valuable in helping sexually traumatized children:

- A certain comfort level about sex, meaning things like masturbation, reproduction and birth control can be talked about among family members.
- Every family member has worked through any of his or her own past sexual abuse issues.
- Comfortable with an intrusive parenting style, "This is the way we do things in this house."
- A family that is between being what she describes as closed and too loose. The closed family won't want anyone to help because they believe they know how to handle all problems.

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The too loose family is often highly influenced by extended family and friends and has little structure. An appropriate family tends to have a healthy flexibility but knows its boundaries and will seek out help. A good sense of humor is usually an important and very useful trait in such a family.

- A family who plans to prepare birth children and talk about the transition of the new child into their home.

For many families, therapeutic intervention becomes the primary source of post-placement training. The child may have begun therapy before being placed in the home. Because therapy can be pivotal in recovery, it is important that the parents be aware of how to choose therapy for their child and/or determine if the current therapy is working. For many parents, this may be their first experience with therapy and they may have to

overcome their own resistance to seeking therapy.

Many families express difficulty finding a mental health professional who understands the issues of their adopted children. A therapist who is doing individual therapy but is not sensitive to the importance of transferring attachments may usurp the parental role and aggravate the child's ability to attach to a new family. It is important that parents understand the goals of therapy and the child's needs, and actively participate in helping the child change behaviors.

For therapy to be successful, it must directly relate to the presenting problems the family and child are experiencing and be based on a good understanding of adoption dynamics. The therapeutic interventions that are viewed as most helpful are those that are active and direct and focused on strategies to help children change

negative behaviors and to learn to trust sufficiently to be able and willing to form attachments with their adoptive parents.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Mary Carter Creech is the manager of the Adoptive Parents Mentor Program at the Northwest Adoption Exchange and recently obtained a master's degree through Antioch University. Creech is also a longtime adoptive parent of a later placed child. Creech, along with other Northwest Adoption Exchange staff, share some ideas about how parents who foster or adopt children who have been sexually abused can be supported in this difficult task. Creech also drew upon the books, "Adoption and the Sexually Abused Child" by Joan and Bernard McNamara and "Adopting the Hurt Child: Hope for Families with Special Needs Kids" by Keck and Regina Kupecky.

Source: *Fostering Families Today*, March/April 2005



Books Available:

Here is a list of some of the books that are available through the Alternate Care Unit. These were ordered through the Halos Program. In addition to these we have many other materials available in our library. If you'd like to check out an item, please stop in and see Rhonda Rude.

- *Fighting Invisible Tigers*
- *The Power to Prevent Suicide*
- *Get Off My Brain*
- *The Kids' Guide to Working Out Conflicts*
- *What to Do When You're Scared & Worried*
- *Speak Up and Get Along!*
- *Kids Need to Be Safe*
- *Stress Can Really Get on Your Nerves!*
- *How to Take the GRRRR Out of Anger*
- *What in the World Do You Do When Your Parents Divorce?*
- *What to Do When You're Sad & Lonely*
- *The Courage to Be Yourself*
- *Get Organized Without Losing It*
- *Respect*
- *The How Rude™ Handbook of Family Manners for Teens*
- *The How Rude™ Handbook of Friendship and Dating Manners for Teens*
- *The How Rude™ Handbook of School Manners for Teens*
- *Stick Up for Yourself!*
- *When Something Feels Wrong*
- *Bringing Up Parents*



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: I-800-947-8074
or via email:
info@wifostercareandadoption.org



Fun with Snow...Indoors!

Make a batch of "faux snow" using powdered laundry soap (not detergent). Measure 2 cups of the laundry soap into a mixing bowl. Add 1/2 cup of water and whip with an electric beater until the mixture resembles dough.

To form a snowman, shape the dough into 3 balls and stack using a toothpick down the center to keep them together. Get creative decorating the snowman with objects around the house (beads, twigs, mini carrots, pipe cleaners, felt, etc.)

As the soap dries (this can take a few hours), it will lose its grayish tinge and turn bright white.

Featured website

Check out www.familyfun.com for tons of fun activities, games, family-friendly recipes, and more!



Did you know...

Wilson Bentley photographed a snowflake for the first time on January 15, 1885.

Welcome 2007!

How many times can you find "2007" in the puzzle? The numbers go across, up and down, diagonally and backwards too!



"Happy New Year" From Around the World

f	7	0	0	2	2	7	0	0	2
y	k	p	7	2	0	0	7	n	o
b	h	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	7
2	0	0	7	7	0	0	2	7	2
2	7	7	2	2	0	0	7	0	0
0	2	0	0	7	0	7	7	0	0
0	l	0	0	7	2	0	t	2	7
7	c	2	7	2	0	0	7	0	0
2	0	0	7	0	0	2	0	j	0
l	7	0	0	2	7	2	s	p	2

China	"Gung Hay Fat Choy "
Denmark	"Godt Nyttår"
France	"Bonne Année"
Germany	"Gutes Neues Jahr"
Hawaii	"Hauoli Makahiki Hou"
Israel	"Shana Tova"
Italy	"Buon Capo d'Auno"
Japan	"Akemashite Omedetou Gozaimasu"
Netherlands	"Gelukig Nieuwjaar"
Norway	"Godt Nytt År"
Phillipines	"Maligayang Bagong Taon"
Poland	"Szczesliwego Nowego Roku"
Spain	"Feliz Año Nuevo"
Sweden	"Gott Nytt År"
Turkey	"Yeni Yiliniz Kutlu Olsun"

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fostering perspectives

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Secrets of the Good Life

Improving the health and tone of our bodies is only half the secret of a long life. Taking care of our minds and nourishing our spiritual sides help reduce stress levels and boost our immune systems. Here are a few thoughts to consider:

- **Loosen technology's grip on your life.** Your fax, cellular phone, voice mail, e-mail, and beeper are meant to make your life easier, not more hectic. Reserve certain times of the day to respond to messages, and share on-call times with others so you have some protected time.
- **Avoid unnecessary loads of bad news.** Consider reading the paper rather than watching TV news, which tends to focus on the sensational. Choose your movies carefully – films today are longer and feature more violence and disturbing imagery. Reduce the negative gossiping and bad-mouthing you do and hear.
- **Make a pact with yourself to enjoy life's pleasures in moderation.** Avoid unhealthy temptations such as high-fat ice cream and smoking. However, don't deprive yourself of all sweets if you enjoy them; consider having a once-a-week treat.
- **Explore preventative health measures.** Eat a low-fat diet, rich in veggies and fruits, and utilize mind/body therapies and exercise to reduce stress.
- **Connect with your spiritual side.** Spiritual people sense that their lives and the universe have a meaning and purpose, and they discover ways to express this meaning. Spirituality has definite health benefits linked to longevity – the ability to accept loss and remain optimistic.

Source: Dr. Kenneth R. Pelletier's "Secrets of the Good Life," *Bottom Line/Personal*, March 15, 1997, cited in *Protection Connection*, Vol. 6, No. 3, published by the Protective Services Training Institute of Texas.

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happy new year