



Connections

May

La Crosse County
Human Services
Dept.

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2007

May is National Foster Care Month

May is National Foster Care Month, a time to honor America's more than 142,000 foster families and over 518,000 children in foster care. Locally we have approximately 100 foster families and 130 foster children in care. La Crosse County wants to take this opportunity to thank our foster families for the work they do caring for our children and their families.



La Crosse County foster families not only provide temporary homes, safety, and nurturing to children, but they also help birth families by ensuring that children can be safely reunited with them. And, when reunification is not possible, many of our families choose to adopt the children who have been placed in their homes, offering permanency and stability the children would otherwise not know.

The commitment of our foster families leaves an indelible mark on generations to come. They are helping to end the cycles of neglect, abuse and helping the children accomplish personal goals.

Foster parents do not get nearly enough thanks or recognition for their efforts but we appreciate all they do. Thank you for sharing your families and your homes, giving love, encouragement, and hope to children and families in need.

Please remember to mark your calendar for The Foster Parent Appreciation Banquet which will be held on September 20, 2007 at Drugan's supper club. This is our chance to say "Thank You" for your contribution to foster care.

"To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world."

Mark Your Calendar!

Generalized Foster Parent Trainings

Confidentiality Trainings:

Monday, May 7, 9:00-11:30AM

Wednesday, May 9, 1:00-3:30PM

Tuesday, May 15, 6:00-8:30PM

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

July 10, 2007 Topic To Be Announced.

September 11, 2007 Topic To Be Announced.

November 13, 2007 Topic To Be Announced.

Other Training Opportunities

Thursday, June 28, 8:30am-4:00pm Safe Support to Children in Emotional and Physical Distress

923 East Garland St., West Salem, WI

This training is sponsored by the Coulee Coalition for Children of Differing Abilities and CESA IV. It is being offered for caretakers supporting children who are currently exhibiting significant challenging behaviors. The goal is to effectively address significant challenging behaviors of children and adolescents without the use of isolation and restraint. See enclosed flyer for information on how to register. Registration is limited!

Upcoming Workshops at Family Resources, 1500 Green Bay St.

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



Thursday, May 17, 6:30-8:00PM Parenting Counts

Hear how you and your child can develop a clear emotional vocabulary, leading to fewer tantrums and life-long "emotional intelligence".

Tuesday, June 12, 5:30-8:30PM Stewards of Children

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

Special Events

May 24, 2007, 5:00-8:00pm

August 9, 2007, 4:00-7:00pm

September 20, 2007, Social hour begins at 5:30

October 25, 2007, 5:00-8:00pm

Foster Family Picnic

Family Resources' Children's Summer Festival

Foster Parent Banquet

Harvest of Thanks

Myrick Park-Large shelter

Myrick Park

Drugan's

Roncalli Newman Center, 1732 State St.

Parade Season 2007

The Sunfish Days parade is only a couple of weeks away. If you haven't signed up yet please call Rhonda Rude soon. **The Sunfish Days Parade will be held on Saturday May 26th at 12:00pm.** We are looking families to participate in this parade to help with handing out candy and generally helping the community at large learn more about foster care. Please call Rhonda Rude with your interest in helping with this parade.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the **June Dairy Days parade which is being held June 2nd at 12:00pm.** We need foster families to sign up for their participation in this parade as well.

For more information about the complete schedule of the 2007 Parade Season, refer to the March edition of the Connections Newsletter. You may also call Rhonda Rude at (608) 789-4834 for any additional questions you may have about participating in one of these fun parade events. Remember your involvement in a parade event helps the general public learn more about all of the Everyday Heroes that are out there in the community. Thank you all for what you do each and every day.



Welcome New Foster Parents

Please welcome Jennifer and Kael Clemmerson to the foster care community. Kael and Jen live on the south side of La Crosse with their two cats. The Clemmersons are youth pastors at New Beginnings Christian Fellowship and they come to foster care with intentions to provide foster care for teenagers in their home. They have experience in helping teens and young adults with the difficulties that come with independence and responsibilities in life. They are also available to do respite for some of you out there that currently care for teenagers. Some of you may have met Kael and Jennifer at the recently completed PACE training.

Please welcome Maxine and Tom Jacobs to the foster care community. Tom and Maxine have been foster care parents for La Crosse County in the past and they were also house parents in the past for two different group homes licensed by Coulee Youth Centers. The Jacobs come back to foster care as their interest in foster care was renewed after their daughter and son in law, Charlie and Sara Kujak, became licensed in September 2005. They are looking to take in teen mothers that need help with mentoring and developing parenting skills. The Jacobs are also interested in taking in younger children that are in need and possibly becoming an emergency foster home as well. Tom and Maxine have already completed the pre-service training (PACE). Please welcome the Jacobs back to our foster care community when you see them at the next foster care event.

Please welcome Stephanie and Rob Lass to the foster care community. Stephanie and Rob live in Onalaska, WI with their three children, a dog, two cats, and the occasional fish, lizard, or hamster. Rob and Stephanie would like to provide care to younger children in need and may even be a concurrent placement for children. This is a very active family that loves to be outdoors. Stephanie's employment schedule allows her to volunteer at school when possible and Rob is just finishing a stint as an assistant hockey coach. Stephanie and Rob have recently completed their PACE training so some of you may recognize them. If you should see them at the up and coming foster care events or other trainings please take the time to welcome them

The Indian Child Welfare Act

The Legal Approach to Meeting the Needs of American Indian Children

BY MADELYN FREUNDLICH

The Indian Child Welfare Act, or ICWA, enacted in 1978, is the major federal legislation addressing foster care and adoption of American Indian children. In place for close to 30 years, it has been both applauded and criticized for its approach to placement decision making for American Indian children in foster care. Its history is closely tied to the historical experiences of American Indian tribes, families and children in the United States. The application of ICWA in individual cases, however, has been unclear and the decisions made on the basis of ICWA have been the subject of much debate.

THE HISTORY OF ICWA

Beginning in the 1800s, the U.S. government routinely separated American Indian children from their families and tribes, often placing them in distant boarding schools to be "civilized." Even as this practice declined, the removal of significant numbers of American Indian children in foster care continued. In most instances, these children were placed with non-Indian families or in institutions and never returned to their families and tribes. This practice came under serious scrutiny in the 1970s when Congress began to closely examine the removal of American Indian children from their families. Congress found that there were extremely serious problems in the treatment of American Indian children and families. Nearly one-third of all American Indian children on reservations had been removed

from their families. Children were often removed from their families on vague grounds such as "social deprivation," and the vast majority of the children were placed, temporarily or permanently, with non-Indian families or in institutions. Congress found that these problems were so serious that they threatened the existence of American Indian culture. ICWA was enacted in response to the problems Congress identified

WHAT ICWA REQUIRES

ICWA applies to any "Indian child." Under the law, an "Indian child" is a member of an American Indian tribe or is eligible for membership in a tribe and is the biological child of a member of an Indian tribe. Each tribe makes its own determination regarding its tribal membership. One of the critical issues regarding ICWA is the need to identify children as "Indian" at the time they are removed from their families and placed in foster care. Many of the problems that arise in American Indian children's foster care placements and adoptions result from failures to identify children as "Indian" at the outset, and failure, as a result, to follow the provisions of ICWA. ICWA applies to all "child custody proceedings" that involve American Indian children. It applies to both voluntary and involuntary proceedings, including parents' voluntary relinquishments of their children for adoption, foster care, and termination of parental rights proceedings.

ICWA contains a number of provisions designed to protect American Indian children and families. The law requires that child protection agencies meet a high standard of evidence that an American Indian child is at imminent risk of harm before the child can be removed from his or her family. One of the key

provisions of ICWA is the "preference" section of the law, which outlines the order in which placement options are to be considered for American Indian children when they are placed in foster care or with adoptive families. When an American Indian child needs foster care services, the order of priority for placing the child is first, with a member of the child's extended family; second with a Native American foster family who is approved or licensed by the child's tribe; third with a Native American foster family approved or licensed by an authorized non-Indian agency; and fourth as the final option, in an institution approved or operated by the child's tribe or Indian organization. When an American Indian child needs an adoptive family, the priority order is similar. The child is to be placed first with a member of the child's extended family; second with another member of the child's tribe; or third, as a last option, with another American Indian family. These preferences, however, can be overridden if a court finds that there is "good cause" to do so. The law does not define "good cause," and courts are free to make this determination based on the circumstances of each case.

Unlike other cultural communities in the United States, American Indian tribes have a unique political and legal status, including the power to administer their own court systems. American Indian tribes, in effect, operate in many ways as independent nations. Tribal courts have the power to decide a range of matters, including foster care and adoption issues. Historically, however, state and county child welfare agencies often ignored the authority of tribal courts or refused to follow tribal court directives regarding foster care and adoptive placements of American

Indian children. ICWA recognizes the right of American Indian tribes to be involved in deciding what should happen when American Indian children may need to be placed in foster care or with an adoptive family. If an American Indian child lives on a reservation, the tribal court has full authority to make decisions regarding the child. If the child does not live on a reservation, the state court with authority over the child must give the child's tribe notice of any legal proceedings involving foster care or the adoption of the child. In these cases, the tribal court may make the decision to become involved in the legal process regarding the child's placement. In some situations, the child's case may be transferred from the state court to the tribal court, in which case the tribal court has full authority to make decisions for the child.

HOW ICWA HAS WORKED FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

There has been both support for and criticism of ICWA throughout the years. Supporters of the law believe that ICWA has reduced the disproportionately high number of American Indian children who are removed from their families and tribes. Many believe that ICWA has stopped the wholesale removal of American Indian children from their families and tribes and has helped to promote placement of children with American Indian families. Supporters point to research that has indicated that American Indian children placed with non-Indian families are at heightened risk of poor outcomes, particularly when they reach adolescence. They point to studies that have indicated that American Indian youth raised in non-Indian families are at increased risk of identity confusion, significant depression, substance abuse, and

suicidal behavior.

Many tribal communities, however, have continued to express concerns that ICWA is not being fully implemented and that American Indian children continue to be inappropriately removed from their families and tribes and placed with non-Indian families at an excessive rate. They believe that in many cases, child welfare agencies and the courts do not fully understand the requirements of ICWA and in other cases, they avoid applying the requirements of the law in cases when they should have done so.

Others, however, believe that ICWA is over-applied. Critics of ICWA maintain that the law is applied in cases when it should not be applied and that it is not working in the best interest of children. They believe that many children considered to be "Indian" under the law lack meaningful connections with a tribe or with an American Indian heritage. They disagree with ICWA's emphasis on sustaining the Indian child's cultural identity through continued involvement with the tribe. They believe that Indian children's best interests should be based on individual assessments, which may not translate into the child's need for cultural or tribal connections.

Adding to the complexities of ICWA is the reality that often few, if any, American Indian foster families are available for American Indian children who cannot be placed with members of the extended families. In these cases, children are placed with non-Indian foster families who care for them on a temporary basis until they can return home or who, in some cases, express an interest in adopting the child when adoption becomes the child's plan. When adoption becomes

the plan, ICWA may be raised as a barrier to a non-Indian family's adoption of an American Indian child whom the family has fostered. These difficult situations bring to the forefront a range of competing values and interests bearing on the child's needs—needs for attachment to a family with whom the child has lived for a significant period of time, family stability, cultural identity with connections to the child's tribe, and self-identity as an American Indian.

Optimal results in these cases have not typically been achieved. In some cases, however, all parties have worked together to make an arrangement that meets all of the child's needs. In one case, for example, an adoption by a non-Indian family was considered by a Navaho tribal court, but was contested by the child's extended family and the tribe. The tribal court awarded permanent guardianship of the child to the family seeking to adopt, allowed the birthmother to retain her parental rights, granted the extended family open visitation, and ensured tribal membership for the child. Although not typical of most resolutions of these difficult situations, this example suggests that it is possible to find solutions in the children's best interest that can be achieved within the requirements of ICWA.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR ICWA

As the debate about ICWA continues, it can be expected that further proposals will be introduced by Congress to amend ICWA in a variety of ways. It is essential to recognize the role that ICWA has played in addressing the abuses that historically have characterized government intervention into the lives of American Indian families and children. The law recognizes the importance of American Indian

(continued)

children's cultural connections and protects the child's relationship to his or her tribe and Indian identity. ICWA, however, has posed challenges in individual cases, particularly when non-Indian families have fostered American Indian children and wish to adopt them, but objections are then raised to the adoption on the basis of the law.

These situations raise important questions about the best interests of American Indian children and how all of their needs—for stable and loving families to whom they are attached and for cultural ties to their cultural and tribal communities—can be met. Through careful adherence to the requirements of ICWA when a child first enters foster care and a

concerted focus on an American Indian child's best interest, it may be possible to avoid some of the difficult situations that have arisen since the law's enactment. Foster families can play an important role in talking with children and their families about their backgrounds whenever there is an indication that a child might be considered American Indian under the law. By identifying children as "Indian" early in the process and complying with the law, heartbreak, hopefully, can be avoided in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Madelyn Freundlich, JD, LL.M., MSW, is policy director for Children's Rights in New York. She formerly served as the executive director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute and as general counsel for the Child Welfare League of America. She is a social

worker and lawyer whose work has focused on child welfare policy and practice for the past decade. She has authored a number of publications on child welfare law and policy, and most recently, on adoption issues, including "Wrongful Adoption: Law, Policy and Practice" with Lisa Peterson and a series of books on ethical issues in adoption. She has written numerous articles on such issues as the impact of welfare reform on foster care and special needs adoption; genetic testing in adoption evaluations; the application of the American with Disabilities Act to adoption practice; and confidentiality in child welfare practice. Freundlich has master's degrees in social work and public health.

SOURCE: *Fostering Families Today*, January/February 2005

Here are three websites you may find helpful and interesting:

Parenting Counts Talaris Research Institute for ages 0-3
<http://www.talaris.org>

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning for ages 2-5 <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/>

Zero to Three www.zerotothree.org go to Baby Brain Map



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



Mother's Day Craft Ideas

Woven Basket

Wash and dry a plastic strawberry basket. Fold strips of crepe paper streamer lengthwise in half reducing its width. Use roughly an arms length of streamer. Begin weaving the streamer through the holes any way you want. Braid three different colors of pipe cleaners and attach to either side of the basket as a handle. Catch short pieces of crepe paper into the braid for a nice effect. Fill the basket with whatever you like.

Painted Pots

Decorate a small clay pot using sponges and non-toxic paints. Sponges can be cut into heart shapes or flowers. Place inside the pot some packs of flower seeds.

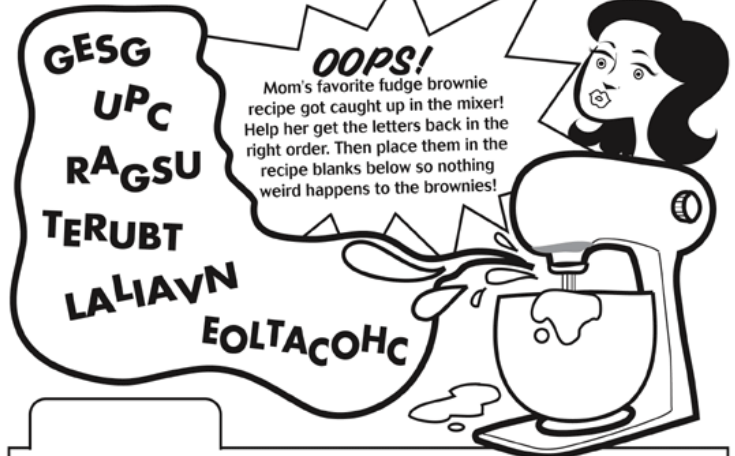
Stained Glass Candle

Gather together small votive candles, scissors, a paintbrush, glue, water, small baby food jars and tissue paper. Cut the tissue paper into small pieces. Mix water and glue and then paint the jar and place the tissue paper on. When this has dried, paint over the tissue paper with the same mix. Put a votive candle inside. Use pretty spring tissue colors to create a cheerful candle.

Picture Frame Magnet

Paint four popsicle sticks different colors. Glue them together in a frame shape. Use a permanent marker to write a name or message on the frame. Attach a photograph on the inside and then glue a magnet on the back.

FUN FUDGY BROWNIE RECIPE RIDDLE!



1/2 cup ----- or margarine
 4 oz unsweetened baking -----, chopped
 1 1/3 cups granulated -----
 3 large -----
 1 1/2 tsp ----- extract
 3/4 ----- all-purpose flour

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Line an 8-in. square baking pan with foil, letting ends extend above pan on 2 sides. Coat foil with nonstick spray.
2. Melt butter and chocolate in a medium saucepan over low heat, stirring often. Remove from heat; whisk in sugar, then remaining ingredients until smooth.
3. Spread batter in pan. Bake 25 to 30 minutes until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with moist crumbs attached. Cool in pan on a wire rack.
4. Lift foil by ends onto cutting board. Cut into 16 squares.

Per brownie: 189 cal, 3 g pro, 23 g car, 1 g fiber, 11 g fat (6 g saturated fat), 55 mg chol, 72 mg sod

To all High School
 Graduates...

CONGRATULATIONS
 ON YOUR
 ACHIEVEMENT!



fostering perspectives

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Every Child

by Frances Hutson

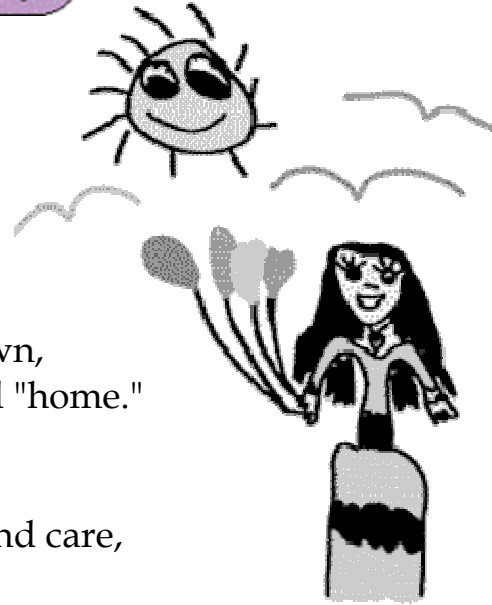
Every child deserves a family of their own,
A place of love and safety, a place to call "home."
But sometimes that doesn't happen,
For one reason or another.
And to meet the need, to provide love and care,
God made foster dads and mothers.
He gave them loving hearts, arms to comfort and to hold,
He gave them a sense of humor
And the much-needed patience of Job.
He gave them a deep commitment
And a love that grows and grows.

He gave them common sense and wisdom

and strength when it's time to let go.

But most of all He gave them the privilege
Of opening their homes and hearts to
another,
The special blessing that comes from
Being a foster dad and mother.

*Frances Hutson is a foster parent from Wake County,
North Carolina.*



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