



Connections



November

La Crosse County
Human Services
Dept.

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Extended Family Gatherings and Children in Foster Care

By Carrie Craft, from Your Guide to Foster Care and Adoption

Holidays or big family gatherings are a tough situation for introducing your foster children to your extended family. Your extended family may feel uneasy about your choice to be a foster parent in the first place. Meeting the foster child/ren may help this situation or confirm their fears. Here are some things to consider when preparing your foster child and extended family for a gathering.

Try to introduce your new foster children before the main holiday or family event. If this is not an option due to travel or time, try showing pictures of your extended family and go through their names prior to the party.

Make sure to give the extended family time to be just with you and your child/ren. Consider busying the foster children with a game or movie to give your children time to visit with a visiting aunt, for example. Some foster children are very attention seeking and may unknowingly "hog the show". This may cause hard feeling within your family.

Remember confidentiality. Most people care about the plight of children. Some may ask what seems to be harmless questions about why the foster children are in care, but to answer these questions would mean breaking the confidentiality of the foster child and his/her birth family. Politely tell your family that you appreciate their concern and you know that they'll understand that keeping the children's past confidential provides them more security and respect.

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*May your stuffing be tasty
May your turkey be plump,
May your potatoes and gravy
Have nary a lump.
May your yams be delicious
And your pies take the prize,
And may your Thanksgiving
dinner
Stay off your thighs!
~Author Unknown*

Mark Your Calendar!

Saturday, Nov. 17 National Adoption Day

National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the 114,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families. For the last eight years, National Adoption Day has made the dreams of thousands of children come true by working with courts, judges, attorneys, adoption professionals, child welfare agencies and advocates to finalize adoptions and find permanent, loving homes for children in foster care.

National Adoption Day is celebrated every year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. For the first time in 2006, National Adoption Day was celebrated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In total, more than 250 events were held throughout the country to finalize the adoptions of more than 3,300 children in foster care, and to celebrate all families who adopt.

For more information visit: <http://www.nationaladoptionday.org/2007/index.asp>

Friday, Dec. 21 7:00-9:00pm Ninth annual "A Home for the Holidays," a CBS television special bringing together all-star talent to raise awareness for foster care adoption.

Other Training Opportunities & Special Events

Thursday, Dec. 6, 6:30-8:00pm "Personal Property Tax for In-Home Providers"

La Crosse Main Library - Basement. Guest speaker is La Crosse City Assessor Mark Schlafer. This event is sponsored by GRAEYC (Great Rivers Association for the Education of Young Children), a local affiliate of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association. For more information on GRAEYC events contact President Gwen LaPour at 784-7353 or sonshinefamilychilcare@hotmail.com.

Upcoming Workshops at Family Resources, 1500 Green Bay St.

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



Thursday, Dec. 6, 6:30-8:00pm Leaps and Bounds

A discussion about young children, developmental milestones, and signs of delay and what to do about them.

Thursday, Dec. 13, 6:00-7:30pm Holiday Bake!

Come help your children bake some holiday cookies, create a festive ornament, enjoy refreshments, and a puppet show with Miss Lucy! Pajamas allowed. Enrollment is limited. Registration is required.

Attention foster parents:

If you attended any trainings this year please remember to get your hours submitted! Final letters showing how many training hours you have earned for the year will be sent out in December.

Welcome New Foster Parents



Please welcome Joann and Lee Germanson to the foster care community. Joann and Lee live in Onalaska, WI with their daughter and they also have four little dogs in their home. The Germansons have been respite providers for nearly 20 years. Lee has also worked at Family and Children's Center in the past, caring for children with special needs that lived at the residential unit. They come to foster care with the intention of being a concurrent planning option for a child but they also have interest in providing ongoing foster care. Joann and Lee are currently enrolled in the pre service (PACE) training. If you should happen to see them at future foster care events and trainings please congratulate them on joining the ranks of child foster care parents. You all are Every Day Heroes!



(Extended Family Gatherings, continued)

Have gifts ready for the foster children at family holiday gift exchanges. Offer this to your extended family so that they don't feel obligated to add to their already long buying lists. If they are able and willing to buy for the children be sure to tell them a bit about the kids and what their interests are. Here are a few easy to give gift ideas:

Cap, mittens, scarves

Watch

Earrings, necklace, bracelets

Basic toys—dolls, Barbie's, color books & crayons, action figures, trucks

Fun socks

Personal CD players and CD's

Go over basic manners and rules prior to the get-together. Go over 'Thank You', 'Please', and 'Excuse Me' and the situations in which to use these words. Remind the children to say 'Thank You' even if they don't like a gift. Go over other basics like no running in the house, table manners such as how food is passed, and chewing with their mouths closed. Consider practicing at home if time allows. Role plays can be fun.

Pre-teach about the party situation. Go over the number of people that will probably attend. How loud will it be? We had a foster child who became frightened when she interpreted a loud game of cards as a fight. Will there be a toy room at the party? How about a room where kids are not allowed? Are there family rules that are well known that you need to inform the children about? For example, an aunt that doesn't allow visitors to wear shoes in the house.

Pre-teach about the season. Do the children have a general knowledge about the holiday? Ask about their past holiday celebrations at home. Are they used to having a tree? Visiting Santa? Having a stocking? They may be overwhelmed by some traditional holiday events if they are not prepared. With a little bit of preparation, family gatherings can be a joy for all involved.

From Family Notes

A note from one of our foster parents...

Lois Gissal recently attended the Hmong New Year celebration at Veteran's Memorial Park in West Salem and was willing to share her experience. Thank you Lois!

I took the time to attend the Hmong New Year on Saturday, October 13th. It was a first time experience for me, and one that I will never forget. It seems that as I get older, it takes more and more to impress me, and believe me, that was one impressive occasion.

The Hmong community really knows how to "throw a party." There was a huge variety of cultural foods to try, booths with traditional dress, music and crafts. Many people wore their beautiful Hmong dress. It was so interesting and fun to be a part of the celebration. Dancers and singers on stage all day, and exciting soccer games going on in the field.



Attending Hmong New Year is something that I would highly recommend to everyone. Plan ahead for next year!

Teens Benefit When Families Eat Together - Not Just At Thanksgiving

As families gather around the Thanksgiving table, they may be doing more good than they realize. Research has found that, like other forms of parental involvement, there is a link between frequent family dinners and positive teen outcomes. Teens who eat regularly with their family are less likely than other teens to get into fights, think about suicide, smoke, drink or use drugs. They are also likely to do better in school and initiate sexual activity later than teens who do not have regular meals with their families. Are families gathering for meals together?

The Child Trends DataBank, the nation's largest online source of trends and indicators on children and youth, reports that in 2003, 42 percent of adolescents ages 12 to 17 ate a family meal six to seven days a week. Twenty-seven (27) percent did so four to five days a week, and 31 percent ate meals with their family three or fewer days a week.

The numbers are higher for children ages 6 to 11. Among this age group, 56 percent ate a meal as a family six to seven days a week, 25 percent did so 4 to 5 days a week, and 20 percent ate a family meal three days a week or less.

Foreign-born, Hispanic, and poor teens are more likely than other teens to eat meals with their families.

- Foreign-born teens are more likely than native-born teens with native-born parents to eat meals together six to seven times a week - 62 percent versus 40 percent, respectively.
- Hispanic adolescents and children ages 12 to 17 and 6 to 11 are more likely than both non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic blacks to eat meals together six or seven days a week.
- 55 percent of teens living in poor households ate meals six to seven days a week together, compared with 44 percent of those living at 100 to 200 percent above the poverty level and 37 percent of those living at 200 percent or more above the poverty level.

Most families try to spend the holidays together, but eating together on a regular basis may have a lasting positive effect on their teens' behavior.

From: <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org>.



Work Permits

A work permit is required before anyone under the age of 18 is allowed to work in any job with the exception of agriculture or domestic service work. Employers should have a work permit on file for the minor being employed before they may allow the minor to begin work. Work permits are issued at various locations throughout the state. You may apply for a work permit at your school office or call (608) 266-6860 for information on where in your area you may apply for a work permit. The permit will not be issued if the work is prohibited by law.

To obtain a work permit, the minor or parent must visit the permit officer, taking with them the minor's birth certificate or other proof of age, social security card, hiring statement from the employer, explaining job duties, hours of work, written parent's consent and a \$5.00 fee. We may accept a valid operator's license or an identification card issued by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation as proof of a minor's age. This means that we may now accept either a duly attested birth certificate, a verified baptismal certificate, or a driver's license or photo ID card issued by the Department of Transportation. The \$5.00 fee for the permit must be reimbursed to the minor by the employer at the end of the first pay period. Copies of the permit go to the employer and the minor, in addition to the school district where the minor is enrolled.

See insert for information on the hours and times of day minors may work in Wisconsin.



Soap up! The 12 Germiest Places in Your Life

By Ginny Graves

We call them the dirty dozen. It's our laundry list of the germiest places you're likely to encounter during an average day. Sure, there are outbreaks of microbes and viruses across the country, but these buggers are where you live. In the office, at home, at the gym, on your vacation. "It's enough to make even the least germophobic person a little worried," says Dr. Germ, a.k.a. Charles Gerba, PhD, a professor of environmental microbiology at the University of Arizona. After all, some of these germs lurk where you least expect them, he says: "People are more worried about the trash can than the kitchen sink, when it should be the other way around."

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Your kitchen sink | 8. Playgrounds |
| 2. Airplane bathrooms | 9. Mats and machines at health clubs |
| 3. A load of wet laundry | 10. Your bathtub |
| 4. Public drinking fountains | 11. Your office phone |
| 5. Shopping cart handles | 12. The hotel-room remote control |
| 6. ATM buttons | |
| 7. Your handbag | |

The fight is in your hands. Literally. Eighty percent of infections are spread through hand contact. So wash up, people, and get ready to wage a bit of germ warfare of your own.

To read the entire article with tips on how to reduce your risk go to: <http://www.health.com/health/article/0,23414,1674348,00.html?cnn=yes>

Independent Living

Independent Living Services at *Family and Children's Center* continues to serve youth ages 15 to 18 that are placed in foster care through La Crosse County Human Services. During the past year, services have been expanded to offer transitional support for these youth until the age of 21, assist additional at-risk youth in the community, and provide transitional housing.

These recently added transitional support services are designed to assist youth to become successful, self-sufficient adults over the long-term. To best reflect this focus, position titles for Jamie Bettesworth and Devon Chesebro will be changed to **Youth Development Specialist** (instead of Independent Living Coordinator) effective November 1, 2007.

For more information about any of the above services, feel free to contact Jamie Bettesworth at (608) 785-0001 Ext. 232 or jbettesworth@fcconline.org.

fostering perspectives

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

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Why is adoption important to me?

by Michael, age 8

It is important because I want and need a good and safe family. Where I used to stay was not that safe. I like my new safe home and my new safe adoptive family. The special part of my family is that I have two moms, and that makes my brothers and I have a lot of love.

There are seven people in my home: 2 moms, 4 brothers, 2 dogs, and me. I like my new big family. My old family was not safe because there was a lot of fighting.

When I first came into foster care I felt OK. I thought was being babysat. I liked the new house, the new people, the new school. I didn't like seeing the people I used to see. I felt sad and mad.

When I realized I might not be going back [home] I felt sad. I did things to misbehave. I did and said things to scare my foster moms. I even tried to hurt their feelings and get them in trouble. That is when I realized they loved me – because they didn't send me away to another home.

This is new for me, and they are working with me. Although I had never lived in another foster home, I knew I loved them, too. I told my social worker that I didn't want to leave.

When I finally heard I was staying I felt happy, great, excited, calm, motionless. The day I was fighting against had finally come. I was shocked but yet very happy to have a forever family.

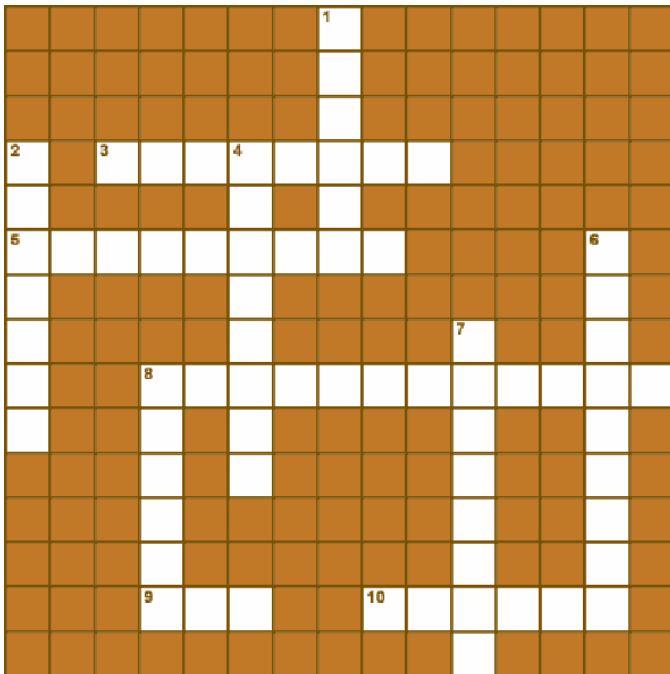
Michael received \$15 for having his essay published.





Thanksgiving Crossword Puzzle

From: www.abcteach.com



Across

3. A side dish made with bread and often cooked inside the turkey.
5. The name of the ship many Pilgrims came to America on.
8. An American Holiday celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November.
9. Sweet potato
10. People that are related to you

Handprint Thanksgiving Wreath

You'll Need:

- construction paper, felt or craft foam in autumn colors
- poster board
- scissors
- glue
- brown buttons
- permanent marker
- ribbon



Fashion the wreath leaves by tracing the child's or entire family's hands on colored paper. Then cut several hands in a variety of colors.



If you are using paper or craft foam as opposed to felt, use markers to write messages on the hands, listing reasons to be thankful.

Cut the wreath ring using poster board or cardboard.



Glue the felt or paper hands randomly around the wreath. Until the cardboard is covered. Then attach buttons or nuts with a glue gun (a job for a grown-up). Attach the ribbon for hanging.

From: www.amazingmoms.com

Down

1. _____ Americans joined the Pilgrims at the first Thanksgiving.
2. A pie often served on Thanksgiving Day with whipped cream on top.
4. A fall sport
6. A red jellied sauce served with turkey.
7. The _____ came to America for religious freedom.
8. Traditional meat served on Thanksgiving Day.

Connections



LA CROSSE COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES
300 4TH SREET NORTH
LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN 54601

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Pass the word on!

Do you know anyone who's interested in being a foster parent? Orientation sessions for those who'd like to learn more about the program are held the first Monday of every month from 6:00 - 7:00PM. Those interested in attending should call Rhonda Rude at 789-4834 to sign up.

Is there anything you'd like to contribute to our newsletter?

Please send it to:
Attn: Sharon McHugh
La Crosse County Human Services
300 N. 4th St.
La Crosse, WI 54601
mchugh.sharon@co.la-crosse.wi.us
(608) 785-6056

We welcome any feedback or suggestions you may have!



Foster Care & Adoption
Resource Center

Looking for information on foster care or adoption? The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center provides the following services:

- Resource lending library
- Links to training opportunities and resources
- *Fostering Across Wisconsin* quarterly newsletter

Visit their webpage at www.wifostercareandadoption.org or contact them at their toll free number 1-800-947-8074 .