



Connections



April

La Crosse County
Human Services
Dept.

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2008

Have You Ever

By E. Hoffman

Have you ever opened wide your door,
And met terror eye to eye?
Have you held his trembling body?
Have you rocked him while he cries?

Have you clutched a single garbage bag
That holds everything he owns?
Have you seen his trepidation
As he moves into your home?

Have you ever been a witness
To the toll maltreatment takes.
Not through Sunday papers,
But touched it face to face?

Have you guarded the dark secrets
That little ones dare to share?
Has your heart been crushed and broken
By the demons living there?

Have you tried to answer questions
For which no answers lie?
Have you turned your head and looked
away,
So he doesn't see you cry?

Have you fumbled with the band-aid
To heal a heart left bare?
Have you pulled from depths with measure
Some bit of you to share?

Have you heard him tell of siblings,
Whose names he does not know?
Have you listened when he tells you,
"They'll get names when they grow"?

Don't tell me that you understand
Until you do your part,
And carry living cast-a-ways
Forever in your heart.

You ask for a decision,
Does he go or does he stay?
He'll stay in my heart 'til heaven
He moves to some bright day.

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*"Unless someone like
you cares a whole
awful lot, Nothing is
going to get better.
It's not."*

*From The Lorax
by Dr. Seuss*

**April is National
Child Abuse
Prevention Month!**

Mark Your Calendar!

Special Events for Foster Families

<i>Thursday, May 29, 5:00-7:30pm</i>	<u>Foster Family Picnic</u>	Myrick Park - large shelter
<i>Thursday evening, September 18th</i>	<u>Foster Parent Banquet</u>	Drugan's, Holmen
<i>Thursday evening, October 2nd</i>	<u>Torchlight Parade</u>	La Crosse - North side
<i>Thursday evening, November 20th</i>	<u>Holiday Open House</u>	Children's Museum

Fun Community Events

<i>Sunday, April 13, 12:00-5:00pm</i>	<u>Family Fun Day at the Museum</u>	Children's Museum
Free admission thanks to the Coulee Region Child Abuse Prevention Task Force. Come for crafts, refreshments and loads of fun!		
<i>Wednesday, April 23, 6:00-7:30pm</i>	<u>Let's Celebrate Turn Off TV Week!</u>	Family Resources
Come for fun games, activities, refreshments, and storytelling by Sara Slayton! Registration is required. Call Fran at (608)784-8125.		
<i>Saturday, April 26, 9am-3pm</i>	<u>Family Resources' Power of Parenting Walk</u>	Riverside Park
Come walk in honor of a positive parent figure in your life. Accessible to all ages and abilities. Cost is \$10 per walker (ages 10 and under free). T-shirts are \$7 each. Register online at www.laxfamilyresources.org or on the day of the event. For more information contact Family Resources at (608)784-8125.		
<i>Saturday, May 10, 10-11:30am</i>	<u>Attention Dads and Other Male Caregivers--It's A Surprise!</u>	Family Resources
Mother's Day is coming up! Give Mom a morning break (the best gift ever!) and bring the kids to create a surprise for Mom, make mini pizzas to eat, and enjoy other fun activities. Call 784-8125 to register.		

Training Opportunities

<i>Tuesday, April 15, 6:00-8:30pm</i>	<u>Stewards of Children</u>	Southside Community Center, 300 6th St. S.
Learn how you can protect your own and other children from childhood sexual abuse. Registration is required. Call 789-8298.		
<i>Tuesday, April 15, 6:00-7:30pm</i>	<u>Storytelling with Sara Slayton</u>	WTC Parent Child Center
Join renowned storyteller and UW-La Crosse instructor Sara Slayton as she guides child care providers and other teachers of young children through the storytelling process. This workshop is sponsored by GRAEYC. Space is limited so registration is required by emailing Sue Wrobel at wrobel.susa@uwlax.edu .		
<i>Friday, April 18, 9am-4pm</i>	<u>Adoption Preparation Training: Putting the Pieces Together</u>	Quality Inn, Eau Claire
A training for adoptive/foster parents and professionals working with children who are preparing to be adopted. This training will look at ways families and social workers can work together and better prepare children for the transition from foster care to adoption based on the child's development and age from infancy through later teen years. Presented by Marnie Hersrud, MSW, LCSW and Michelle Chalmers, MSE, LISW. Cost is \$15 per person. Lunch and snacks are provided. For more information or to register call (715)839-0068 or email: ewall@pathinc.org .		

Mark Your Calendar!

Training Opportunities (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, April 17, 6:30-8:00pm

Growing, Choosing, and Preparing Vegetables

Learn about the benefits of eating vegetables, recommended amounts, community resources for fresh produce, and tips on starting a container garden. Presented by Sheila Harding and Mary Hoeft-Leithold--La Crosse UW Extension.

Thursday, April 24, 6:30-8:30pm

Skills for a Successful Marriage

Whether you're engaged or have been married for many years you will benefit from this presentation on learning to develop the relationship you desire. Presented by Jerry Nelson, MS, Marriage & Family Therapist.

Tuesdays, May 6, 13, 20 & 27th, 6:00-7:30pm Parent Recharge

Parenting is hard work! This 4-week class is all about getting a tune-up, a recharge. Topics include improving communication, positive discipline strategies, differing parenting styles, and understanding child development and brain research.

Thursday, May 22, 6:30-8:00pm

Toddlers...Preschoolers! You've Got to Love Em!

Let's talk about ways to enjoy your little ones more - even during those challenging stages. Learn about ways to avoid tantrums and turn misbehaviors into "teachable moments." Presented by Fran Swift, Parent Educator.

Mandatory Confidentiality Training Set for April 2008

We have scheduled our next mandatory Confidentiality Training for foster parents who have not attended this, which was offered last year. This training will be held on **Tuesday, April 22nd, 2008 from 5:30pm to 8:00pm**. This training is mandatory for all licensed homes and requires all individuals on the license to take this training, preferably the

first year of being licensed. Please make the necessary accommodations to attend this training if possible. Another date will be offered in autumn of 2008 for those who are unable to attend but will only be offered twice a year.

This training will be held in the Basement Auditorium of the

La Crosse County Human Services building and requires you to call Rhonda Rude at 789-4834 to sign up for this training. If you are unable to attend, please notify your Alternate Care worker, so we can notify you of the next training available.

Foster Care Central

www.fostercarecentral.org

This new social networking site is billed as "for foster agencies, foster parents, social workers, and volunteers dedicated to improving the lives of foster and adopted youth." If blogs, forums, and online groups are of interest, you have an opportunity to make this site work for you.

From the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work



Welcome New Foster Parents

Please welcome Jodi and Bill Harding to the foster care community. Jodi and Bill live in the New Amsterdam, WI area just outside of Holmen with their two children. The family also just brought in a puppy to their home. Jodi is an in-home childcare provider and has provided this care for several years. Jodi and Bill come to foster care with the desire to be concurrent planning foster parents however they are very interested in being an integral part of the reunification plan of the children placed in their home. These parents have lived in the surrounding area for the majority of their lives. Both parents have attended the pre-service training (PACE) that is required of all licensed foster parents last fall 2007. Bill and Jodi have been licensed with Lutheran Social Services in the past and they are looking forward to helping children in need in the community. Next time you see them at a training or foster care event, please welcome them.

Please welcome Jennie and Todd Olson to the foster care community. Jennie and Todd live on the north side of La Crosse with their four children. The family also has two cats that seem to enjoy their nap time in the home when the kids are off to school. Jennie is an in-home childcare provider and has been doing this for several years. The family is very interested in providing foster care to children that are school age. They have prepared a room and the children are anxiously awaiting an arrival of a child to the home. The parents have come to know foster care through their friends Denise and Brian Green and Kelly and Jason Mayer. Thanks goes out to the Greens and Mayers! The Olsons are currently enrolled in the new Foundations training that is being offered at our agency. This training is the new training that is being offered in 2008 that replaces the original PACE training that many of you are familiar with. Please be sure to welcome Jennie and Todd to the foster care network the next time you see them at one of our yearly foster care events.



Expanded Access to College Financial Aid for Former Foster Youth

A new federal law removes a financial disincentive to adopting teens in foster care.

How Will the New Law Help Youth?

The new law will make it possible for teens in foster care to be adopted without losing access to college financial aid. Under this new law, youth who are adopted from foster care at any point after their 13th birthday will not have to include their parents' income in the calculations for determining their need for financial aid.

The Fostering Adoption to Further Student Achievement Act became law

as an amendment to the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (Public Law 110-84). This law includes a revised definition of an "independent student." Currently, youth who were still in foster care as of their 18th birthday are considered to be independent students, meaning that they do not need to count parental income for determining their eligibility for college aid. The revised definition of "independent student" will extend to youth who were in foster care on or after their 13th birthday, even if they have subsequently been adopted.

When Will This Change Take Effect?

This expanded definition of "independent student" will go into effect in July 2009, to apply for the

2009-2010 school year. The provision will apply to youth even for adoptions that were finalized before the law was passed in 2007. Youth who meet the new definition will need to indicate their status as an independent student when they fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form for college financial aid.

Legal reference: Section 604(a)(2) of Public Law 110-84 amends the definition of an independent student in federal law at 20 U.S.C. 1087vv(d) to include an individual who: "is an orphan, in foster care, or a ward of the court, at any time when the individual is 13 years of age or older."

Source: www.voice-for-adoption.org

La Crosse County Mobile Crisis Program

The La Crosse County Mobile Crisis Program in partnership with Lutheran Social Services provides service 24 hours a day /seven days a week to children and families within our county who are experiencing a crisis. Our mission is to keep children and their families safe and together within the community whenever possible. We do this by offering urgent assessment and intervention in homes, schools, hospitals or other settings within the community. When remaining at home is not desired or possible we do offer **VOLUNTARY** crisis stabilization placements when available. Occasionally, when a child's mental health needs are severe, hospitalization may be necessary. Should this become necessary, it is everyone's goal to return the child to their family as soon as the crisis has been resolved. In providing these services it is our

program's heartfelt desire to enhance, strengthen, and solidify family relationships rather than disrupt them by unnecessarily removing children from the care of their parents.

All of our Mobile Crisis Responders are trained in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention techniques. Our interventions are geared toward resolving crisis situations without use of any physical force/ restraint of any kind. This will ensure the physical safety of everyone concerned. We strongly encourage families/caregivers to contact our services as soon as there is any indication that a crisis is developing. The earlier we are able to intervene, the better our chances of de-escalating a situation **before** it results in physical aggression. If a

child has a mental illness, developmental disorder or a pattern of behavior that may result in physical violence or other crisis, it is strongly recommended that the child's treatment team formulate an **Emergency Response Plan** so that all parties will know how to best respond to the child's behaviors in order to prevent further escalation. By doing so it is hoped that any contact with Law Enforcement will be kept to a minimum.

If you have questions or would like to make a request to formulate an Emergency Response Plan consult your alternate care social worker.

If a crisis situation arises do not hesitate to call when things become unmanageable. We're here to HELP! Day or Night **784-HELP (4357)**

Abuse in Public Places

If you see a child being abused in public, do what you can to help:

- **Divert the adult's attention.** Start a conversation with the adult. Offer sympathy. For example, you could say, *"Shopping with children can really try your patience, can't it."*
- **Talk to the child.** If the child is acting out or misbehaving, start a friendly conversation to distract him or her.
- **Praise the parent or child.** Find something positive to say about the child or parent. For example, *"That's a pretty dress your daughter is wearing. Where did you get it?"*
- **Offer to help.** For example, if a child has been left unattended in a grocery cart, stay near him or her until a caretaker returns.
- **Avoid negative looks or comments.** This may only increase the adult's anger, making things worse for the child.

www.preventchildabuse.org

Wear a blue ribbon during the month of April and help spread awareness of child abuse prevention!



fostering perspectives

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

Letter from a foster mother "Our Biggest Reward"

My husband and I both are very dedicated to our role as foster parents here in Wake County, NC. Most recently our work has been dedicated to a very bright, energetic 15-month-old boy, J, and his young mother, K, helping them to grow as individuals and to be reunited with each other as quickly as possible.

Working toward reunification between children and their legal guardians has to be the number one goal of a good foster parent.

It is easy, if we do not stay focused, to get caught up with feelings and thoughts like, "How can I possibly say good-bye to a child I have fostered so long in my home and send them back to the same environment from which they came?"

My husband and I do not look at it as saying good-bye or as the child returning back to the same environment. We see it as giving children a new beginning, a fresh start with their natural families after the healing process has begun to take place in their family.

Please do not misunderstand me here—there are some cases where the children are unable to return home again. But many will be able to return.

The Story of J and K

When my husband and I heard of their story and about little J we immediately took him into our home. He was somewhat shy and frightened at first, but with a lot of hard work and attention we earned J's trust very quickly. This was our first reward.

As we worked with him and taught him new skills, we were also able to get to know his mother. We first met her at social services and grew closer during our regular weekly phone calls, during which we discussed J's progress at home and school, his ups and his downs, and the highlights of his life. We soon learned how devoted K was to her son.

After a very short time J's social worker asked my husband and I if we would be willing to work with J and K together in our home so K could spend quality time with her son and continue to practice her parenting skills and to learn what she could from us, since she was such a young, single mother.

We agreed to this without any hesitation or doubt. We did not feel threatened or endangered by K at all. In fact, we felt this to be very therapeutic for J.

J's social worker requested a complete weekly update on K's meetings with her son and their progress together. All our reports to him were positive. Over time my husband and I had gotten to know K and liked her. She and her son were unfortunately in the wrong place at the wrong time, caught up in a bad situation that caused their long separation.

My husband and I were impressed with K's determination—she did everything that was required of her in order to have her son returned to her. K worked 40 to 50 hours a week to provide for her and her son. She also attended many meetings with the social worker and team leaders, and spent 8 to 10 hours a week in our home doing things like feeding, bathing, clothing, and reading to her son so that she would not lose touch with her parenting skills. She also spent hours on the phone getting progress reports on her son's toddler achievements.

We feel strongly that having K spend time with her son in our home helped them both tremendously, especially little J. We hope that K learned some problem-solving and parenting skills from us that she can continue to use with J.

We still hear from K and J on a regular basis. They are both doing great. This is our biggest reward.

Jim and Linda Boseman are foster parents in Wake County, NC.



Mock Chalk

This tough version is ideal for sidewalk use. Mix 2 parts plaster of Paris with 1 part warm water and add powdered tempera paint to get the desired color. For each stick, line a toilet paper tube with waxed paper, seal one end with tape, and pour in the mixture. Tap the tube to release bubbles. Let harden.

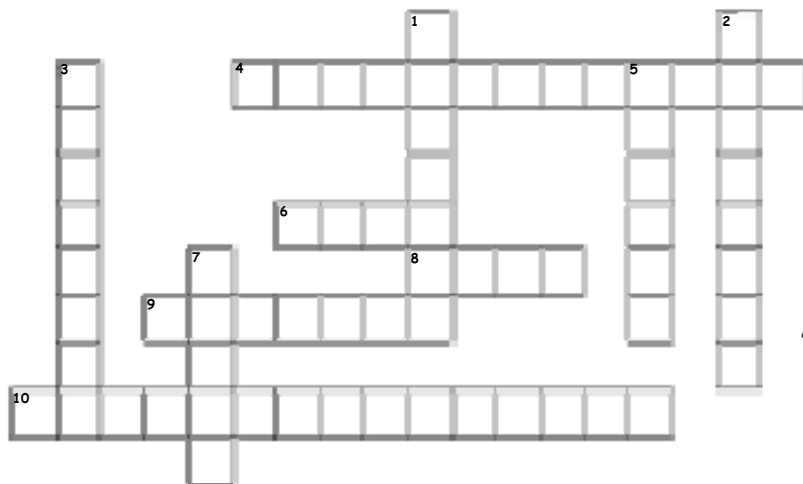


Watercolor Chalk Painting

During a gentle rainfall, hand your kids some colored chalk and let them create an impressionistic masterpiece. They can draw rainbows, family portraits, and nature scenes on the driveway, then watch the rain blur the edges (big, simple images produce the best results.) To help the rain along, "paint" over the picture with a large, damp paintbrush.

From *FamilyFun Boredom Busters*, edited by Deanna Cook, 2002

Spring Crossword



ACROSS

4. A day for pranks
6. Works best on a windy day
8. Precipitation
9. Small pools of water
10. Set clocks ahead one hour

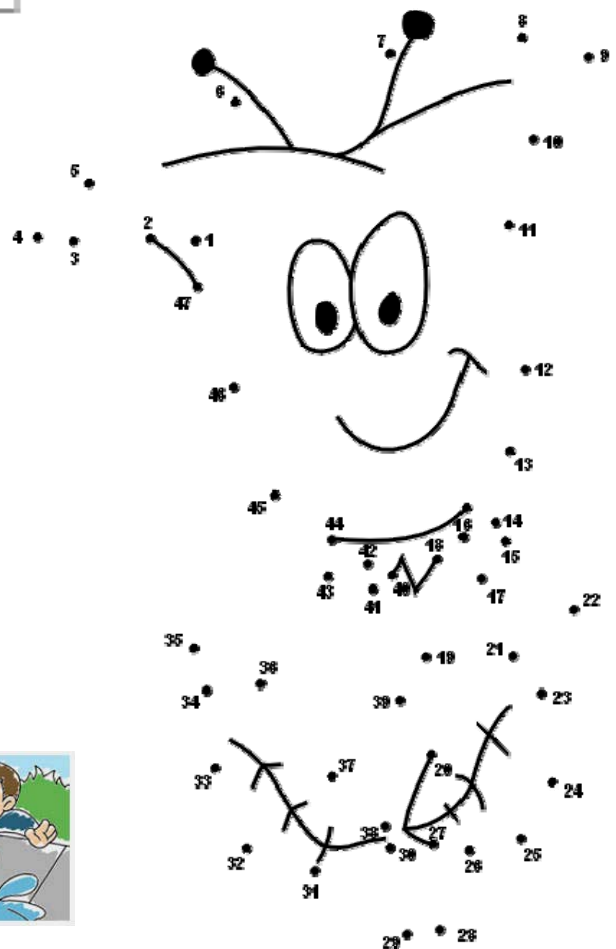
DOWN

1. April showers bring these
2. A yellow flower with a trumpet-shaped center
3. Used to keep dry
5. A season of the year
7. A flower often associated with Holland

<http://homeschooling.about.com>



Spring is Here! Connect the dots.





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 .