



Connections



August

La Crosse County
Human Services
Dept.

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2008



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Recruitment and Retention Committee

Last month I announced the formation of a new committee at La Crosse County called the Recruitment and Retention Committee. Since that announcement, the committee has met twice and we are coming up with many new and exciting ideas about foster care. So far we have one foster parent from the community that has volunteered to be a part of this new committee. We are still looking for more foster parent representatives from each of the different types of homes (ongoing, specialized, concurrent planning, and emergency). Please remember that the time commitment for these meetings is one hour for each meeting per month. Your participation on this committee will have a positive result on the recommendations this committee makes to the agency regarding foster care.

If you are interested in the committee and can make the time commitment, please contact me as soon as possible. I can be reached at (608) 785-6448.

Thank you,
Will Herber Recruitment and Retention Committee chair

"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph, but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered, but to have fought well."

Olympic Creed

Mark Your Calendar!

Special Events for Foster Families

<i>Thursday, September 18th</i>	<u>Foster Parent Banquet & Golf Outing</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>Friday-Saturday, August 15-16</i>	<u>CenturyTel Sand on the Riverfront</u>	Riverside Park
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Sand sculpting competition and festival. For more information call 784-9450 or visit www.riverfrontinc.org.

Training Opportunities

<i>Thu.-Fri. August 21-22</i>	<u>Unlocking the Mysteries 2008: Adolescent Brain Development</u>	Holiday Inn, Eau Claire
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This two-day training summarizes the latest research on adolescent brain development and popular trends affecting adolescent programming and treatment. Participants will learn about:

Module 1	Starting at the Beginning: Baby Brain Basics
Module 2	When are They Going to Grow Up? Adolescent Brain Basics
Module 3	What Could They Be Thinking? Cognitive Development and the Change Process in Adolescent Development
Module 4	Truth or Dare: Risk Taking by the Adolescent Brain
Module 5	Mad and Moody: Emotions, Hormones and the Mental Health of the Adolescent Brain
Module 6	Teaching Empathy to Kids Who Don't Give a SH*T
Module 7	Get Going! Motivating the Adolescent Brain

Both days of the training will begin at 9am. First day ends at 4pm. Second day ends at 3pm. Fee: \$130 to cover cost of materials, meeting space, and lunch both days. For more information contact MaryAdele Revoy by email at mrevoy@wccf.org or phone: (608)284-0580, ext. 328. Register online at http://www.wccf.org/event_unlockingmysteries2008.php.

Upcoming Workshops at Family Resources, 1500 Green Bay St.

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



<i>Thursday, August 28, 6:30-8:30pm</i>	<u>We Need Sleep</u>
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Learn which everyday activities disrupt sleep and how to end bedtime struggles. Presented by Lois Fredrick-Baker, Parent Educator, Family Resources

<i>Tuesdays, Sept. 9th, 16th, 23rd, 6:30-8:00pm</i>	<u>Snicker, Bicker, Tattle Battle...Taming Sibling Rivalry</u>
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Join this interactive class to explore ways to end the bickering and strategies to keep the peace!

Mark Your Calendar!

(continued)

Thursday, Sept. 11, 6:30-8:00pm

Getting the Most for Your Food Money

Topics include meal planning, grocery shopping strategies, ways to stretch a recipe and decreasing food waste. Presented by Sheila Harding and Mary Hoeft-Leithold - La Crosse UW Extension.

Thursday, Sept. 15, 6:30-8:00pm

Assets...the More the Better!

It's never too early to be aware of the significance assets will play in your child's life. Come be informed and learn what personal assets children need in their lives to be successful and ways to build them. Presented by Mary Nelson, Student Services - School District of La Crosse



Welcome New Foster Parents

Please welcome Susan and Richard Lusk to our foster care community. They live with their son in rural La Crosse County near St. Joseph's Ridge. Richard runs a dairy farm that has been in his family for many years. The couple is looking forward to using the more rural setting of their home to provide naturally therapeutic outdoor activity for children. Their son is looking forward to sharing his home with other children that need a safe place to stay. Susan and Richard are also willing to be a concurrent planning home for children if this becomes a part of the treatment plan. The Lusks have already attended the new Pre Placement training that is offered by this agency and they plan on attending the Foundations training in the near future. If you should happen to see them at future trainings or up and coming foster care events, please welcome them.

Please welcome Kristine and Paul Gasch to our foster care community. They live with their daughters just south of the Goose Island County Park. The couple is hoping to provide on going care and potentially be a concurrent planning home for younger children in need. They are looking forward to being a part of the reunification plan while working with parents and their children in foster care. Kristine and Paul enjoy many indoor and outdoor family activities with their children that they look forward to sharing with other children that come to live with them. They particularly enjoy their "Christmas in July" vacations to Jellystone resorts during the summer. The Gasch's have already attended the Pre Placement training and will be attending Foundations training. It is likely that you will see this family at up and coming foster care events such as the foster care banquet in September. Please congratulate them on joining our growing community of child foster care parents.

Please welcome Sheila and Neil Stout to our foster care community. They live with their two children in Onalaska, WI. The family also has a very active Brittney Spaniel and two not so very active cats. The couple is hoping to be foster parents for our agency in the future and is now licensed to provide respite care. They are also providers of child respite care for Gundersen Lutheran. The Stouts have taken the Pre Placement training offered by La Crosse County in preparation for their eventual licensure as child foster care parents. The family enjoys going to parks and the community pool or engaging in any kind of outdoor activity whenever possible. The children have enjoyed their respite care experience thus far that are looking forward to becoming a foster family in the future. It is likely that some of you may use this family for your respite care needs so please welcome them to our community of Everyday Heroes!

Shared Parenting: Creating Partnerships for Children

Foster parenting revolves around establishing and maintaining positive relationships. The relationship between foster parent and foster child is just one piece of a complex puzzle. Youth in care need positive relationships and support systems both inside and outside of the foster home.

Developing a shared parenting relationship with the child's birth parents can be beneficial for everyone involved. Foster parents have the opportunity to positively affect the life of the child in their care as well as make an impact on the lives of their foster child's birth parents and extended family.

Fostering Connections

In most cases, the goal of foster care is to reunite the child with his or her family. The focus of shared parenting is for foster and birth parents to develop a partnership focused on the well-being of the child.

Shared parenting creates an alliance among foster parents, birth parents and social workers; it's a way of working together to meet the needs of the child. Foster parents can empower this relationship in several ways:

- Foster parents and birth parents can exchange and display pictures of family gatherings or special times together.
- They can also share academic, artistic, athletic achievements, or any other positive accomplishments with one another.
- Foster parents can assist the child in creating a Life Book. Life Books honor the child by highlighting their past and present. (For additional information on Life Books, visit: <http://www.fyi3.com/funstuff/lifebooks.cfm>).

Positive Outcomes

Creating and maintaining supportive relationships between foster and birth parents will result in establishing positive connections that will ultimately benefit youth in care. Some potential benefits include:

- **Honoring the Family** - Youth in care often have strong connections with their family of origin, even if they have witnessed extremely difficult situations and circumstances. Fostering family bonds and relationships with immediate and extended family can establish a cooperative versus a competitive relationship among the families.
- **Building Bridges** - The goal (in most circumstances) is to return children to their parental homes. Foster parents play a vital role in encouraging and empowering an alliance between themselves, birth families and their child, which will help to establish permanence for children. Shared parenting can help birth parents preserve and strengthen their bonds with their children and enhance their parenting skills.
- **Child Centered and Child Focused Approach** - Shared parenting encourages foster and birth parents to work together to meet the child's needs. The central focus of shared parenting is connecting for kid's sake.
- **Accessibility of Resources** - When relationships are established between birth and foster parents, resources and information will become more accessible and available, such as health records, medical histories, educational information, family histories, behavioral information, etc.
- **Creation of Long Term Positive Connections** - Relationships that are created early on between foster parents, the child in care, and the child's family can continue long after the placement ends. Shared parenting further promotes ongoing support for the family and the child; not only while the child is in care, but also after the child returns home.

From: *Partners*, a publication of Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Spring 2008

CHECK IT OUT!

Recommended reading for parents and children



Represent: The Voice of Youth in Care

There is never a dull moment as you read through the pages of Represent.

Forget the fantasy and the glitzy trappings of the teen mall crowd. The writers and illustrators of Represent are seasoned survivors of the foster care system. Their stories are wrenched from life experiences born in the grief and loss of family and the betrayal of an unfulfilled childhood.

Through personal narratives and reported stories, the teen staff provides an inside look at life in the system that other teens in care can connect with. The magazine is written by a core staff of 30 teens in New York City. However, teens from across the country are encouraged to submit their stories, poems and essays for publication in Represent, formerly called Foster Care Youth United. This unique magazine offers a tremendous opportunity for teen writers to learn and practice their craft while exploring and dissecting the family issues that led to their out-of-home placement.

Represent's mission is to help youth in care stand up, be counted, and be heard. These plain truth stories can help teens plan for the future,

survive the present, and understand their past.

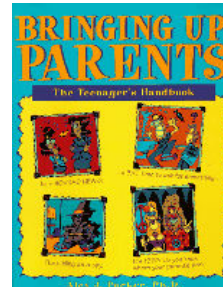
The topics covered speak to the real everyday issues that confront and entangle many teens in foster care. Topics such as: Learning to Love; Tracking Down Your Past; How We Cope; Redefining Yourself; Battered and Blue: Living with Domestic Violence; Standing Out; When Race Sets You Apart are often scribed with great emotion and are always openly honest. Occasionally the language used in some articles can get a bit coarse, not vulgar but certainly in line with the dialogue of the street-smart teen.

Represent has been recognized and has won numerous awards from agencies and groups such as The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities; Child Welfare League of America; and the Association of Educational Publishers.

I recommend Represent for teens in foster care and definitely for their caregivers who would benefit greatly from listening to the heart of a foster teen.

*Reviewed by Richard Fischer
From Fostering Families Today,
March/April 2008*

Visit www.youthcomm.org to read select stories or to subscribe to this bi-monthly publication.



Bringing Up Parents: The Teenager's Handbook By Alex J. Packer, Ph.D.

This book not only respects teens, it understands teens. It respects and understands parents. The humor, wordplays, and general tone of the book demonstrate Alex J. Packer's great skill and knowledge of his subject. The introduction addresses teens directly: "This book lays out a smorgasbord of strategies. What happens after that is up to you. It's up to your motivation, creativity, flexibility, and commitment. If changes occur, if miracles are wrought, it will be because of you." Packer presents the challenge with a kid glove, a wink, and absolute understanding. Filled with great information presented in the perfect way to reach teens, this book should be on everyone's required reading list.

*Reviewed by Suzie Draper,
www.parents-choice.org.*

Bringing Up Parents can be borrowed from our Alternate Care unit library. Stop in and check it out!



fostering perspectives

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

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A Word from the Wise

Responses to Last Issue's Writing Contest for Children

Gabby, age 12

I had just turned seven when DSS took me away from my mom. During the two and a half years that I was in the foster care system I lived with two different families. I learned that being a foster child feels different from living with your biological family. I constantly had to deal with negative feelings, visits with my mom, answering personal questions from others, and dealing with grief. . . .

The hardest situation for me was the weekly visits with my mom. The visits were so hard because I had to leave her over and over again. Saying "goodbye" wasn't the easiest thing to do, so after the visits I would get angry. Sometimes I would get angry at the littlest things

Before I learned how to deal with anger, I would tear things up, tantrum for hours on end, take things that weren't mine, and last but not least, I would refuse to do anything that my foster parents asked me to do.

Since that time I have come a very long way. I have adapted to other, positive ways to deal with angry feelings. I would:

- Kick a tree
- Go outside and scream
- Write letters to people I was mad at (I normally didn't send them!)
- Throw a pillow in the air, and then punch it
- Draw a tornado (I drew a tornado by scribbling exceedingly hard, in a tornado shape, letting the anger flow through my pencil onto the paper)
- Make a list of things I was mad at, and then rip it up

Try these the next time you get angry. They really help!

Another difficult issue that popped up is people asking me personal questions. Some nosey, ignorant person would ask, "Did your parents die?" or, "Why didn't your real family want you?" I felt insulted by this and ashamed because they reminded me of my past. I felt my past was my fault, so that brought up a sudden pang of guilt. That guilt caused me to do some things without thinking...

If I could relive that two and one half years, I would have handled my sadness over the loss of my family differently. I would:

- Write a diary to relieve grief
- Cry instead of keeping the grief inside
- Draw pictures of the sad moments
- Share my feelings with a caring adult or friend

The grieving process takes a long time and is stressful. I often felt I would never get over the loss, but time makes it easier.

Being a foster child is difficult, but learning to deal with your feelings will help you to get through it. I am still working on how to deal with leaving my biological family. Every day I have to remind myself of the positive ways to handle my emotions.



Blow Bubbles!

Homemade Bubble Solution:

In a large plastic container, stir together 3 cups of water, 1 cup of dishwashing liquid, and 1/3 cup of light corn syrup. (Although you can use any brand of dish detergent, we found that Joy and Dawn produce the best bubbles.) Store the homemade soap in a covered container.

Tip: The best time to blow bubbles is when the air is calm and muggy, such as after a rain shower (bubbles last longer when there's more humidity).

FUN FACT: The longest bubble was 105 feet long, created with a wand and homemade soap by Alan McKay of New Zealand.

Homemade Wonder Wands:

Miniature Paper Clip Wand

How to make it: Bend a paper clip into a bubble wand shape.

Dipping container: Cap from a small jar.

What you'll get: A single baby bubble.

Flyswatter Bubblette Wand

How to make it: Grab a clean flyswatter.

Dipping container: Flying disk turned upside down.

What you'll get: Cumulus-cloudlike masses of mini bubbles.

Classic Coat Hanger Wand

How to make it: Bend a hanger into a circle and handle. Wrap the circle with string.

Dipping container: Upside-down trash can lid.

What you'll get: A *loooong* bubble.

Giant Hula Wand

How to make it: Dig out your hula hoop.

Dipping container: Kiddie pool (hold on to the outside of the hoop when dipping).

What you'll get: Say aloha to the biggest bubbles ever.

How to Blow a Double Bubble:

Here's a trick from bubble-ologist Casey Carle (www.bubblemania.com). 1. Balance a bubble on your wand. 2. Wet the bottom two thirds of a straw in bubble solution. 3. Poke the straw through the side of the bubble until the straw's end is in the bubble's center (wetting the straw keeps the bubble from popping). Blow gently!

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

Olympic Events Word Search



B	A	D	M	I	N	T	O	N	L	U
D	C	R	I	E	R	V	Q	F	L	R
P	D	V	C	V	Y	N	A	R	A	E
V	E	L	C	H	I	W	V	E	B	S
X	O	N	J	C	E	N	P	I	T	V
S	E	G	T	Y	E	R	G	O	E	B
F	W	E	B	A	L	S	Y	M	K	D
F	Z	O	L	R	T	E	V	Y	S	S
F	M	T	I	C	E	H	G	C	A	L
H	O	C	K	E	Y	C	A	J	B	E
F	D	O	S	D	F	U	F	L	R	A
F	U	J	B	R	J	P	O	N	O	B
F	J	F	E	N	C	I	N	G	I	N

BADMINTON	PENTATHALON	JUDO	HOCKEY
DIVING	BASKETBALL	FENCING	ARCHERY

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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 .