



# Connections

## March

La Crosse County  
Human Services  
Dept.

Volume 10, Issue 3  
2008

### Foundations...Formerly known as PACE!!!



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The Foundations training, referred to as "formerly known as PACE", is a pilot training for the state. What this means is that we are phasing out our previous pre-service training PACE and transitioning to Foundations. Foundations was developed by a workgroup through the State of Wisconsin Department of Family & Children, and La Crosse with a few other counties statewide will be running the first sessions of this in the state. From these piloted sessions we will be required to give certain feedback to help finalize this training. The final version of this training will be offered statewide January of 2009; that is after this pilot is complete and any changes prompted by this pilot are updated.

Since this material is new, trainers of these sessions

will also need to be trained on the content, as well as the pilot process. Initially this two-day training of the trainers was to occur in Stevens Point on February 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Due to the winter storm that occurred throughout the state this training was cancelled and reschedule for March 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. This change created a dilemma for us. The training of trainers would not occur in time for us to conduct this training by March 1<sup>st</sup> and we needed to push this training back. Since Easter is March 23<sup>rd</sup>, we opted to begin this after Easter, beginning on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

Currently this training is set to begin on **March 29<sup>th</sup> 2008 and run 6 straight Saturdays; ending Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008.** Time wise each day will begin at 9:00am and will end at 3:30pm. Lunch will be provided, with a 30-

minute lunch break. If you know you will need to miss a Saturday in this schedule, please still sign up as that can be accommodated! If you know that you will need to miss more than one Saturday, then you will not be able to take this current cycle as the participants play a vital piece in the pilot and the more sessions you miss the less information can be gained for the pilot.

We do plan on running at least two more sessions before January 2009, which will run in the fall of 2008. The two options will be weekday evenings 5:30pm to 8:30pm (12 week cycle) or 6 full Saturdays. These fall dates have not been determined and will be set this summer. For those of you needing to sign up for the current cycle or a fall session, you will need to call Rhonda Rude at 789-4834.

We are also inquiring about running a summer session during the weekdays. These would be 6 weekdays, 9:00am to 3:30pm. In the past we have had low attendance for this type of summer structure, but would consider this if we could get a group to commit to this time. If you are not interested in attending during these summer times, please notify Rhonda Rude so we determine if there is need for this type of summer structure.

# Mark Your Calendar!

## Foster Parent/Social Worker Training

### Independent Living Program

March 25, 2008

6:00 to 8:00 pm

Health and Human Services Auditorium

Presented by: Jamie Schloegel, CSW and Devon Chesebro, MS, Youth Development Specialists, Independent Living Program

Participation in the Independent Living Program is required for all youth in foster care 15-18 years of age. All youth within the program work with a Youth Development Specialist to focus on preparing for self-sufficiency in order to live successfully after aging-out of care. Independent Living utilizes the team approach in programming meaning foster parents, social workers, and other professionals on a youth's support team play vital roles in addition to the Youth Development Specialists. Foster parents who provide care for youth 15 to 18 years of age are *strongly* encouraged to attend. Teaching independent living skills is a life-long process; therefore the information presented will be relevant to anyone fostering children age 5 and older.

#### Training topics will include:

- Independent Living Program requirements for foster homes
- Program purpose and philosophies
- Information on program curriculum, assessment tools and reporting documents
- Creating IL learning environments within a foster home setting
- Identifying and creating essential connections
- Evaluation and research
- New additions and expansion projects
- Teen panel of current and former youth

Please contact Rhonda Rude at 789-4834 to register.

## Other Training Opportunities

- ♣ **Thursday, Mar. 20, 7:00-9:00pm** From Binge to Blackout: Addressing Underage Drinking in La Crosse County  
Resources and information available for parents and teens. Key speaker Toren Volkmann (BA in psychology, former Peace Corps Volunteer) lives one day at a time after successfully completing rehab and a six-month residence in a Florida halfway house. A panel discussion will follow with La Crosse Police Officer Drew Gavrilos, SADD and Community Youth Initiative Students and Jerry Sample, AODA specialist from Franciscan Skemp Behavioral Health. For more information contact Al Bliss at (609)789-4820.
- ♣ For a list of additional training opportunities visit La Crosse County's Children with Special Needs website at <http://www.co.la-crosse.wi.us/humanservices/fc/docs/specialneeds/> and click on Training Information.



# Mark Your Calendar!

## Special Events

- ♣ *Thursday evening, May 29, 2008* Foster Family Picnic Myrick Park - large shelter
- ♣ *Thursday evening, September 18, 2008* Foster Parent Banquet Drugan's
- ♣ *Thursday evening, October 2, 2008* Torchlight Parade La Crosse - North side
- ♣ *Thursday evening, November 20th* Holiday Open House Children's Museum

## April is Child Abuse Prevention Month!



- ♣ *Monday, March 31, 4:00pm* Pinwheels for Prevention  
Plant a pinwheel for each 2007 report of suspected child abuse or neglect in La Crosse County in the open lot across from Franciscan Skemp's Onalaska Clinic. State Representative Jennifer Schilling will speak.
- ♣ *Tuesday, April 1* Proclamation Day  
Join your community to launch Child Abuse Prevention Month. Cake and other refreshments served.  
Locations/times: La Crosse County Human Services Basement Auditorium, 9am; La Crescent Elementary School, 11am; West Salem Boys & Girls Club, 1pm; Holmen Middle School, 10:45am; Onalaska City Hall, 1pm.
- ♣ *Thursday, April 3* Bullying: Where do you fit in? La Crosse Radisson Ballroom  
Come to this free Child Maltreatment Conference pre-conference event and learn how you can address bullying in your community. Co-presented by Melanie Fay, School Counselor at Hamilton and Franklin schools and Carol Kuphal, School Counselor at Summit and Southern Bluffs Elementary schools.  
2 sessions: 4:00-5:30pm Models to deal with bullying for educators and other caregiving professionals  
6:30-8:00pm Demonstrations by a local youth improv group; discussion facilitated by Diana Henry  
Foster parents are encouraged to attend either or both sessions! No registration required.
- ♣ *Friday, April 4, 8:30am-4:00pm* 11th Annual La Crosse Child Maltreatment Conference Radisson Ballroom  
Visit <http://www.co.la-crosse.wi.us/humanservices/fc/docs/specialneeds/Trainings.htm> to see the complete conference brochure and registration form. Registration must be received by March 23rd. Registration fee of \$85 includes tuition, continental breakfast, lunch, refreshments, ice cream break and conference materials. A limited number of conference scholarships are available--call (608) 392-4172 to request an application or for more information about this conference.
- ♣ *Sunday, April 13, 12:00pm-5:00pm* Family Fun Day at the Museum Children's Museum of La Crosse  
Free admission thanks to the Coulee Region Child Abuse Prevention Task Force. Come for crafts, refreshments and loads of fun!
- ♣ *Tuesday, April 15, 6:00-8:30pm* Stewards of Children 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.



# Allegations Happen: How to Prevent and Survive Them

By Diane Martin-Hushman  
From *Spring 2002 Adoptalk*

"It's the worst thing that's ever happened to me," said one parent about the time her foster daughter filed an abuse allegation against her. Most often false, allegations of abuse against parents who foster and adopt children with special needs are frighteningly common. When parenting these special children, it is in our best interest to prevent situations that could be construed as inappropriate, and seek out help when an allegation disrupts our lives.

Whether false or confirmed, allegations arise for different reasons. We hope that children who are abused by their caregivers will notify a teacher, social worker, or someone else in authority. But sometimes children whose backgrounds include abuse are highly sensitized to triggers that they associate with abuse. You may just be leading a child to a time out after he kicks his sister; but the instant you grab his arm, your foster son may flash back to times when he was dragged to a room and whipped with his birth father's belt. As children age through the foster care system, and grow in street wisdom and anger, many also learn that allegations are a ticket out of a placement, a means of getting attention, and a way to keep parents who are starting to get too close a safe distance away.

The general public is concerned about child abuse and neglect, but not very knowledgeable about how parents must try to deal with some very difficult behaviors presented by abused children. The media is quick to shine the spotlight on a few foster and adoptive parents who abuse children in their care, and say

little about those who are diligently working to improve children's lives. Once they happen, allegations are hard to live down.

## Consequences of Allegations

When I was a social worker, a 13-year-old girl in my caseload alleged that her 71-year-old foster grandfather had sexually abused her. The grandfather had a heart condition and I thought the reports would kill him! After looking into the charges, investigators discovered that the girl was distorting the situation and reenacting a previous abuse situation with her birth grandfather. Though not substantiated, the charge became part of the family's case file, and the stress family members experienced lingered on. Many parents describe allegations and the subsequent investigation as a process of loss and grief. Parents may lose their sense of identity, their self-esteem, and their trust in the worker or agency. Children may be removed—another painful loss for both the children and parents. Even after child protection closes the case, a parent may feel that the family's good name is forever tarnished and the episode will never be resolved.

Allegations that uncover licensing violations or substantiated abuse claims can cause additional stress. Depending on the severity of the infraction, foster parents may be placed on probation, be issued a correction order, or have their license temporarily suspended or permanently revoked. Serious allegations may result in a criminal charge that could land a parent in jail, and forever ruin chances of fostering or adopting another child.

## Allegation Prevention Strategies

Foster and adoptive families who have lots of children, including children of different races, and who have been fostering for a long time are at greater risk of being reported for alleged abuse. All families who care for children with special needs face some risk, and every parent can take steps to keep situations from turning into allegations. Below are some ideas for parents to consider.

- **Know your limits.** If you are not comfortable handling children with certain challenging backgrounds and behaviors, don't set yourself up by bringing such children into your home.
- **Learn all you can about each child before placement.** You have a right to know about previous abuse and allegations. Ask: "Has this child been abused? In what way? Who were the perpetrators? Have there been any abuse allegations?" Had the foster family whose 13-year-old girl charged the grandfather with abuse known about her abuse history, they would never have left the foster grandfather alone with her.
- **Make sure that men and boys in your house are never alone with a girl who has been sexually abused.** Proactive precautions are very important in this situation, especially at the beginning of the placement. Talk with your partner and others in the household about this safety plan, and stay proactive.
- **Give each sexually abused child his or her own bedroom.** I know this is difficult, but why put another child in your home at risk? If a child's boundaries have been invaded, he or she needs to

re-learn proper boundaries.

- **Be crystal clear about rules for dress, privacy, touching, etc.** Caregivers must agree on house rules, boundaries, and consequences. Each child comes from a different culture of parenting, sexuality, sleeping habits, dress, touch, and more, and needs to learn what is appropriate. As a foster mom, I talked about sexuality as one of the house rules. "In this house," I would say, "my husband gets his sexual needs met with me and only me." Sound crude? Yes, but I said it in a matter-of-fact way and set a very clear boundary that the teenage girls we worked with really needed.
- **Never use physical discipline.** Corporal punishment is not allowed in foster care, but I know some folks think that once the kids are adopted, physical discipline is okay. Don't do it. Children with a history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse often misinterpret physical discipline and an allegation is likely. Physical

discipline can also undermine attachment.

- **Avoid teasing, horseplay, wrestling, and suggestive language.** These are acts of intimacy, and intimacy is just what abused children often resist. In addition, the child may get a different message than you intend during the close physical contact involved.
- **Document sexual acting out in writing.** Send reports to the child's social worker and therapist. Then, if another incident comes to light, the worker and therapist can see that there might be a pattern to the child's acting out that perhaps relates to past experiences.
- **Document behavior patterns.** When a child enters your home, use a calendar to record changes in the child's behavior; inappropriate words or actions during birth parent visits; the child's behavior following visits; the cause of scratches, bruises, or other injuries; and any

patterns of behavior that seem to follow specific events or times of the year (like anniversaries of certain past events).

- **Participate in a support group.** As foster and adoptive parents of children with special needs, we need to share the struggles and joys that are a part of our lives with those who can empathize and support us. We need folks who can laugh and cry with us and really understand foster and adoptive parents' journey.
- **Reserve personal time to reduce stress.** Know what really pushes your buttons, and establish a calming plan. Post 20 calming tips on your refrigerator and model stress-reduction techniques for your children. Then, make plans for a weekly-yes, weekly-time away from the children. Take care of yourself; you are the child's greatest gift!

*From Adoptalk, published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, 970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 55114; 651-644-3036; www.nacac.org.*

## Do you know a youth ready to build a better future?

**Building Opportunities**, a YouthBuild program administered by Workforce Connections, Inc. is designed to engage youth who are between the ages of 16-24 AND a high school drop-out or at risk of dropping out (some exceptions may be made if a participant has already earned a GED, HSED, or high school diploma). Youth must also meet one of the following requirements: a youth offender; a current or former foster care youth; a migrant farm worker youth; a homeless or runaway youth; a child of an incarcerated parent; a low-income youth.

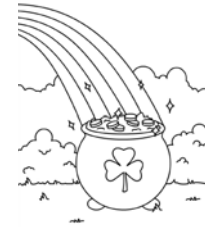
Youth participating in **Building Opportunities** gain skills and knowledge to obtain a high-paying job while earning a high school diploma, GED or HSED. They will learn construction skills by building a home for a low-income family and earn a wage for their work. **Building Opportunities** takes a holistic approach to providing services including, but not limited to life skills attainment, skills assessment, career exploration, Individual Service Plan (ISP) development, occupational skills training, work readiness and experience. Other training such as

HIV/AIDS/STI prevention and ATODA prevention, smoking cessation, nutrition and fitness, and financial management will be made available through a variety of community partnerships.

For more information or to refer a youth please contact:

Linda Zimmerman, Manager of Community Programs, (608)785-7003, ZimmermanL@workforceconnections.org; or Kevin Henry, **Building Opportunities** Employment Coordinator, (608)785-9944, HenryK@workforceconnections.org

# fostering perspectives



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

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## SaySo Members' Suggestions to Foster Parents by Kay Gillis

On Sunday, October 6, 2002, foster parents Becky Burmester and Kay Gillis joined over 50 young people involved in the group SaySo (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out) to develop a list of things that the youth want to make clear to the people they live and interact with. The workshop attendees were vocal, refreshing, and full of great ideas. Here are some of the many ideas, opinions, and desires the young people shared that day:

- **Parent us!** Treat us like family members. Don't expect the social worker to be our parent. Would you call a cab for your birth child if he or she had a doctor's appointment? Then why call the social worker to take me to my appointments?
- **Don't embarrass us** by pointing out our situation. Why introduce us as "My foster child?" Why not just say, "This is Peggy Sue," and leave it at that?
- **We are individuals, not a group.** Don't label us. Don't judge me by what another foster child has done. Don't think that we all feel the same or think the same. Each of us has and is entitled to our own feelings.
- **Is it about the money? IT CAN'T BE!** We need people to care about us, not just people doing a "job." The money you get is to provide for our needs, not to "pay" you. We know we eat a lot. If the money you get isn't enough to feed us, **do** something about it. When we get a job, don't skimp on us. We are trying to get ahead. When we get a job and then you say we now have to buy our own shampoo and deodorant, we figure, "Why try?"
- **Ask us what we need** to help us feel like we belong. Ask our opinion on things. Just because we don't have a permanent home doesn't mean we don't have opinions, feelings, or brains! Don't talk to the social worker about us as if we weren't even there!
- **Help us stay connected and in touch with our birth family and our previous foster families.** Those people helped make me what I am. If I feel that I need those connections, then I do. If I don't want to see them, respect that.
- **Advocate for more, better-trained social workers.** When a social worker has 30 other kids on his or her caseload, no wonder they can't remember my name when we run into each other outside the office or the foster home. No wonder they don't come check on me. I am just their job. **You** are my parent for now. If they don't come to see me, you call them and ask why not. We want the social worker to come see us when things are going good, not just when there is a problem.
- **If you have a teenager with children, help us with transitions.** We want to figure out how to raise our kids. We didn't learn that from our parents. We hope we learn it from you.
- **Talk to us, trust us, be honest with us.** Compromise with us—we aren't always wrong, you know! We want to be accepted. Give us unconditional acceptance. We want continuity. We don't want you or the social worker to move us every time there is a problem. Share information about what's going on in the system concerning us!
- **Don't give up on us when there is trouble.** Try to figure out what we need.
- **Teach us, don't just do for us!** None of us are born knowing how to live life. Most kids' parents teach them. We need to learn!

As you can see, these young people had a lot to say!

*Kay Gillis is a foster parent and chairperson of the N.C. Foster Parents Association's Communications Committee*



## Can You Let Go of the Leprechaun's Gold?

Legend says a leprechaun can't lie, but he can be very tricky—just like this St. Patrick's Day challenge. Can you let his gold slip through your fingers?

**The Setup:** Put your hands together, palms facing. Bend your middle fingers as shown, then ask someone to slip a coin between the tips of your ring fingers.

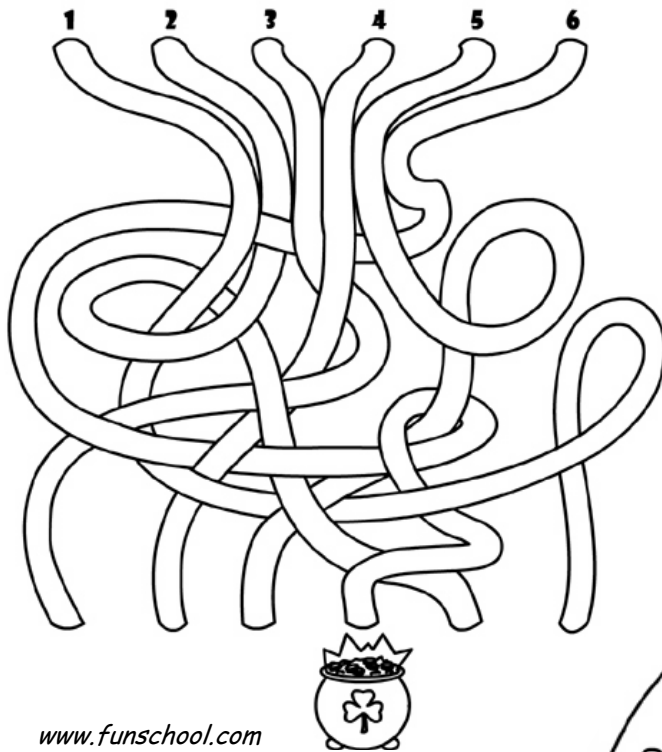


**The Challenge:** Try to release the coin by pulling apart your ring fingers. Letting go of money is usually easy, so how come here it's so hard?

**What's Going On:** Because it lacks certain tendons that your other fingers have, your ring finger is at the mercy of its next-door neighbor, the middle finger. The two are connected by a piece of cordlike tissue, and when your middle fingers are bent as they are here, it tightens, drawing together your ring fingers. Until you unfold your middle fingers, the coin is all but impossible to release.

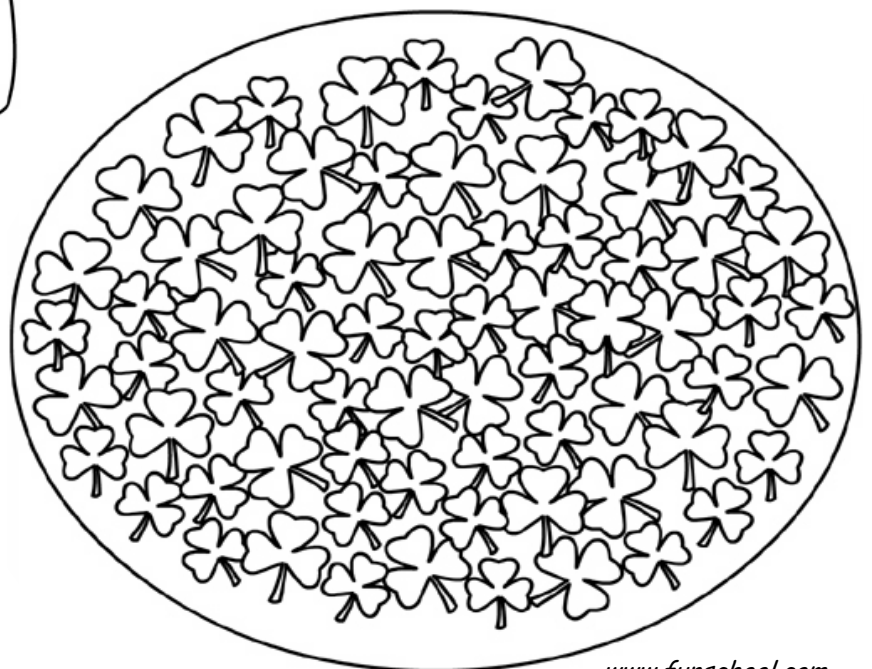
[www.familyfun.com](http://www.familyfun.com)

## The Rainbow is in tangles! Which number leads to the pot of gold?



[www.funschool.com](http://www.funschool.com)

## Can You Find the Four Leaf Clover?



[www.funschool.com](http://www.funschool.com)

## Leprechaun Fizz



Here is a great St. Patrick's Day recipe! Just put a scoop of lime sherbet into a clear plastic cup and fill with ginger ale or Sprite. Kids will love to watch the green fizz!

[www.dltk-kids.com](http://www.dltk-kids.com)

# 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](http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org) or contact them at their toll free number 1-800-947-8074 .