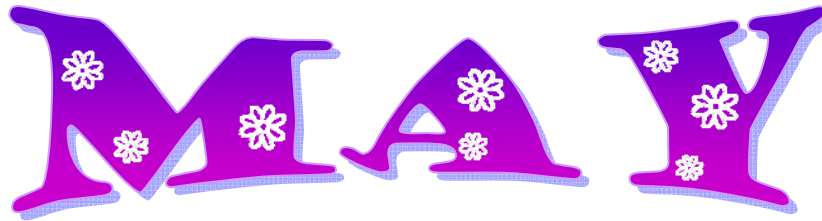




Connections



La Crosse County
Human Services
Dept.

Volume 10, Issue 5
2008

National Foster Care Month!

Each May, Wisconsin recognizes the incredible contributions that foster families make for children in their communities. Too often, foster parents don't receive the thanks or recognition they deserve.

Foster parents...

Live deeper. Foster families stretch their own boundaries to accept more children into their lives. These families find meaning, strength, and hope in the change they are helping to make happen.

Love bigger. Foster parents know that all children deserve to be loved, especially those who have experienced difficult situations and are facing unique challenges. They know that all children, including the siblings who never seem to stop fighting, and the child who struggles to focus, need safe, stable, and loving homes.

Leave bigger. Even if it's for a short period of time, foster parents leave the foster children they have cared for bigger people. They leave their time as foster parents with bigger hearts, and they leave their own children with bigger experiences.

No matter how long a person is a foster parent, no matter how many children they have fostered, these incredible adults and families have made lasting contributions to our most important resource - the children in our communities.

Thank you to each and every foster parent and to every person who has ever cared for a foster child. You have done the most important thing any person could do; you have made a difference in a child's life.

www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov

The Foster Care Picnic is just around the corner. We hope to see you all there! See page 2 for details on this year's events to celebrate La Crosse County Foster Care.



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"A smile of encouragement at the right moment may act like sunlight on a closed-up flower; it may be the turning point for a struggling life."

~Unknown



Mark Your Calendar!

Special Events for Foster Families

Thursday, May 29, 5:00-7:30pm	<u>Foster Family Picnic</u>	Myrick Park - big 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, May 18, 12:00-4:00pm</i>	<u>Riverside Family Fun Fair</u>	Riverside Park, La Crosse
Fun family event in recognition of National Tourism Week. Come for lots of inexpensive activities and exhibits and learn about local history and La Crosse tourism.		
<i>May 22-25</i>	<u>Onalaska Sunfish Days</u>	Omni Center, Onalaska
Community festival includes a parade, carnival, softball and volleyball tournament, kids fishing derby, kids activity day, clowns, petting zoo, refreshments and entertainment. Visit www.onalaskasunfishdays.com for more information.		
<i>May 30-June 1</i>	<u>June Dairy Days</u>	West Salem Village Park
Parade, fun run/walk, softball, big wheel races, music, chicken Q, food, bingo, tractor pull, clowns, soccer tournament, sawdust pile, speedway races and more. Visit http://www.westsalemwi.com/jdd.htm for more information.		

Training Opportunities

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

6:00 to 8:00 PM

La Crosse County Human Service Building -Auditorium

Placement Decisions

As part of the monthly training program the La Crosse County Alternate Care Unit will be reviewing how placement decisions are made. Keith Keller and Kay Collister will be the trainers.

If you are interested in learning more about the matching process the county utilizes when matching children to foster homes please plan on joining us.

Two hours of foster parent training will be granted for attending this training. If you have any questions about the training feel free to contact your Alternate Care Social Worker.

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, 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.

Thursday, June 19, 6:30-8:00pm

Live Your Values...Live in Peace

Come explore and define what is important to you and your family and learn strategies to help you live in harmony with your values. Presented by Stacy Shapiro, President of Shapiro Strategies.

Thursday, June 26, 6:30-8:00pm

To Pee or Not to Pee...That is the Question!

Hear about how to recognize the signs of toilet learning readiness, how to proceed, and how to avoid turning toilet learning into a major power struggle. Presented by Fran Swift, Parent Educator.



Welcome New Foster Parents

Please welcome Stephanie and Matthew Sprehn to La Crosse County child foster care. The Sprehns live in Barre Mills with their three children however one has recently left the nest to go to college. The family comes to foster care with the hope of providing ongoing foster care to children until they can be reunified with their family. Besides raising three children of their own, Stephanie also ran an in-home child care business for nearly 20 years and she is now a teacher's aide at Head Start in La Crosse. The Sprehns have recently completed the Foundations (formerly PACE) training and are excited to experience the world of child foster care. They are an active family that enjoys many outdoor activities. If you should see them at the Foster Family Picnic being held on May 29th please welcome them to our community of Everyday Heroes.

Please welcome Cathi and Tim Pederson to the foster care community. The Pedersons live in Onalaska with their teenage daughter. Another daughter has recently left the home to attend college. The family comes to La Crosse County Human Services to provide respite care for another foster family, Jennifer and Erik Wright. The Pedersons are looking forward to helping their relatives with the care of the children in their home while Jennifer and Erik use their respite time. This is a good example of how foster families use their informal support network to provide assistance during the provision of child foster care. If you should see the Pedersons at an up and coming foster care event or training please welcome them and thank them for adding to the positive support network that our community has for children that are in need.

Please welcome Mindy and Ed Mahlke to our foster care community. Ed and Mindy live in Onalaska with two very active and loveable dogs. The couple is interested in being a concurrent planning foster home with the option to adopt a child if he/she cannot be returned to their birth family. They are very excited about sharing their home and lives with another child that is in need. They come to the foster care community with birth to three (Family Resources) experience and parenting a child with special needs experience. Mindy and Ed have already completed the pre service training that is required of all newly licensed homes and they are looking forward to attending future trainings offered by this agency. If you should happen to see them at these trainings or events please welcome them.

Angry Child

By Ruby Bilyeu, foster parent

I'm so very angry and I really don't know why
I never know just what will make me laugh or cry!
You are supposed to fix it, you are supposed to see
You are supposed to always know what is hurting me!

Don't feed into my anger; don't give into my rage
Help me fight the battle my inner self doth wage!
Giving in confuses me, so it helps me not at all
It just makes me angrier, and again I fall!

Don't let me control you; I've no control over me!
Help me control my anger, so that I can see
Please, show me that my anger will never leave you cold
Show me that I'm worthy for you to love and hold!

Please, show me that sharing your love will not leave me alone
And that sharing my love brings more love of my own!
So I'll know that when I'm hurting you; you want to understand
And I'll know that when I fall I'll always have your hand!



Mother's Day Flowers



Keep these flower meanings in mind when creating heartfelt arrangements for mom:

- Amaryllis** - splendid beauty
- Baby's Breath** - happiness
- Birds of Paradise** - joyfulness
- Carnation, pink** - I'll never forget you, mother's love (Emblem of Mother's Day)
- Carnation, red** - admiration
- Carnation, white** - sweet and lovely

- Chrysanthemum** - loyal love
- Daffodil** - chivalry
- Daisy** - gentleness
- Freesia** - innocence
- Geranium** - comfort
- Gladiolus** - strength of character
- Hyacinth** - constancy
- Hydrangea** - heartfelt
- Iris** - my compliments
- Lily** - majestic
- Pansy** - merriment
- Peony** - bashful
- Rose, pink** - perfect happiness
- Rose, red** - love and desire

- Rose, white** - charm and innocence
- Rose, yellow** - friendship
- Tulip** - declaration of love
- Violet** - faithfulness

Have
a
Happy
Mother's
Day!



Caring for Ourselves While Caring for Others

By Karen Jorgenson

We all know that the children and youth being placed in our homes are becoming more challenging. Foster parents across the country report that the youth they are caring for are more emotionally and behaviorally disturbed, frequently exhibiting multiple problems. One of the effects of caring for these challenging kids is that we find the job affecting our relationships with others, especially our spouse, partner or significant other. To take care of others we must keep in mind that we first need to care for ourselves and our intimate relationships to avoid burnout and to continue providing good care.

In "The Healing Power of the Family," Dr. Rick Delaney writes, "When a foster or adoptive child enters his/her new home, the impact can be highly stressful, especially when the child is emotionally troubled and the victim of past abuse, neglect or sexual exploitation. In effect, the foster or adoptive family imports the child's history into their family. Oftentimes such families unsuspectingly fall victim to the child's historically distorted expectations about parents. In short order, the child evokes from these new parents negative feelings and behaviors which are as unfamiliar as they are unwanted by the couple." Caring for our relationships can be easily forgotten but plays an important part in determining success in foster care.

Healthy relationships between caregivers helps sustain energy and balance during challenging times when caring for traumatized children and youth. Frequently, one caregiver steps in when the other caregiver feels overwhelmed, is ill,

or needs to attend to the needs of other family members. Having established an understanding of the needs of each other, the transition of responsibility happens seamlessly and provides a positive role model for the children in care.

Some Characteristics of Healthy Relationships

- **Communicating:** Take a moment to assess how you communicate with each other, verbally and non-verbally. Touching, holding hands, hugging and teasing relieve stress. When is the last time you gave a gift or care to your significant other, for no reason? The first year my husband and I were married, I was working for the Bank of America in Santa Barbara. On Valentine's Day all of the girls in the bank received flowers, except me. The following day I received flowers from my husband with a note reading "I refuse to believe that yesterday was Valentine's Day!" Forty-two years later, I have never received a gift or flowers on Valentine's Day; it may be a few days before or two weeks later, always unexpected. He has made this a tradition—keeping fun in our relationship.



- **Recognizing stress, dysfunction and conflict:** These feelings or interactions are not because of what has changed in the relationship, but by the challenges of troubled children in placement in your home. Talk about it. Take a break.
- **Taking time to renew your relationship:** Surprise your special person by arranging for child care, making a reservation, and driving him or her to a favorite place, for an evening or weekend.
- **Taking care of yourself:** Make a list of all the things you would like to do on a day if you had no responsibility or appointments. Then pick a day within the next three months and make arrangements for your special day. Having something to look forward to has a tremendous impact on your attitude.

Some foster parent support groups provide "Foster Family Survival Kits" for new foster parents. Some of the kits include: "Patience" slip, Emergency numbers, Aspirin, List of respite providers and foster parent mentors, Bubbles and bubble bath, Pen for paperwork, Tums for tummy, Kleenex for tears, Candy kisses to sweeten the day, List of training opportunities, Aromatherapy candle, Movie pass, McDonald's coupon, Stress ball.

You are all to be commended for assuming the responsibility for this most vulnerable population of our society. Enjoy one thing each day--- and make it each other.

From: Fostering Families Today, March/April 2008

fostering perspectives

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

Vol. 8, No. 1 • November 2003

Planting Forever Seeds

by Caryl Harvey

They left her mid-afternoon, dressed in too-large sweats, holding her worn bag in a death grip.

"I'm Lizabeth."

"Hi, Lizabeth, can I take your bag for you?"

I reached for it; she drew back.

Of course, I couldn't take it. It was hers. Inside, a crayon drawing of her mother and another stained, torn sweat suit were her treasures.

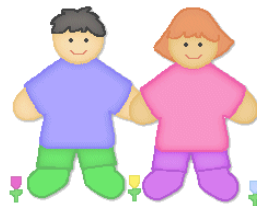
I wanted to gather her in my arms, to hug her, to make everything all right. Instead, I asked her if she'd like to see her room.

"Can I watch TV?" She eyed my seven-year-old grandson, sprawled on his stomach in front of the set. At my nod, she plopped down beside him and cupped her chin in her hands. She was eight, and alone, and the TV seemed the friendliest place to be.

Eventually, she left us, but not before she learned all the words to several bedtime stories, and how to make suds on the frilly bath "poof" in the tub. Not until she mastered writing her ABC's on primary "clothesline" paper, biting her tongue with the effort. Not before she found out adults can touch without hurting. She left us, waving frantically from the back window of the car that spirited her away. She cried, and so did we.

Foster children aren't forever. Foster parents are. That's why I love being a foster parent. We plant a seed in a child that grows with her, a seed of self-respect and trust. We don't always get to water it. Sometimes there's only time to drop it into the fertile soil of a young life. We seldom get to see it mature. But we plant our seed nevertheless, in the knowledge that it will make a difference as it grows. A forever difference.

Caryl Harvey is a foster parent in Colorado. This essay was one of the winners of the Colorado State Foster Parent Association's 2003 essay contest on the subject "Why I Love Being a Foster Parent." To read other contest winners, visit the Casey Family Programs National Center for Resource Family Support at http://www.casey.org/cnc/support_retention/.





Memory Stones

Materials Needed: 12-inch-diameter cardboard building form, small handsaw, spade, small stones or gravel, concrete mortar mix such as Quickrete (a 60-pound bag will yield 3 stones), mixing tub or bucket, hoe, trowel, scrap of wood, mementos (shells, pet rocks, broken china, small toys, etc.), craft knife



Directions:

- 1. Make the molds.** For round stepping-stones, use the handsaw (adults only) to cut a 2 1/2-inch-wide section from the building form. In the area where you'll be setting the path, dig a hole just large enough to accommodate the form and set it into the ground, firming the soil around it. Alternatively, you can create a free-form stone by digging a hole the shape you desire, roughly 2 1/2 inches deep. Once the mold is ready, place a 1-inch layer of small stones or gravel in the bottom.
- 2. Mix the concrete.** Following the directions on the bag, combine the concrete with water in a mixing tub, stirring it with a hoe (adults only). It's ready to pour when it doesn't

fall off a hoe held nearly parallel to the ground. Use the hoe and a trowel, if necessary, to scoop the concrete into each form. Smooth the surface with a scrap of wood.

- 3. Add mementos.** When your fingertip leaves a lasting impression in the mixture (usually after one to two hours), you can start customizing. Using a stick or pebbles, write your name and the date, make impressions (of your hand, a favorite toy, a prize begonia), and add your mementos. Let the stones cure for several days--covering the stones with a cloth and misting them with water several times a day for three or four days will keep them from cracking in a severe winter. Remove the cardboard forms with a craft knife (adults only).

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

Name that Star!

Each of these famous people spent time in foster care as children.
Can you guess who they are?

1. A genius comedian who is best known for his appearances on Saturday Night Live and for his movies "Beverly Hills Cop", "Trading Places", and "The Nutty Professor". He and his brother spent a year in foster care while his mother recovered from an illness.

2. This Minnesota Viking is the largest quarterback in NFL history. He was born in prison to a teenage mother and was the last of 15 foster children to be raised by his foster mother.

3. Faster than a speeding bullet, this fictional character's past all started when he was taken into the home of human foster parents.

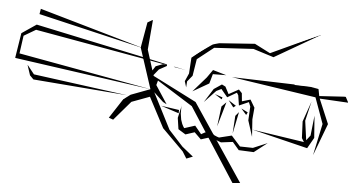
4. She overcame an unstable childhood to become a rock and roll star, a disco diva, a fashion icon, a chart-topping singer, a TV star, a movie star and an Academy Award winner.

5. This famous foster child went on to found the greatest rock group in recording history.

1. Eddie Murphy, 2. Duante Culpepper, 3. Superman, 4. Cher, 5. John Lennon

ANSWERS:

To all
High
School
Graduates...
CONGRATULATIONS
ON
YOUR
ACHIEVEMENT!





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 .