



Connections



November

La Crosse County
Human Services

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2008

Here Come the Holidays

Halloween has passed, and the winter holidays are almost upon us; symbols of merriment and good cheer are starting to appear. Many of us have mixed feelings about the holidays. However, for children in foster care, especially those who have recently been placed, these weeks may be full of more challenging feelings and experiences than for other children and families. Since getting together with extended family and friends is a big part of the season, we have listed some ideas for helping families and children in foster care handle these get-togethers with a little less stress.

- Talk about the season; explain what events you celebrate and why. Describe what your holiday celebrations are like: noisy or quiet, formal or casual, large groups or small. Let the child share about his or her family celebrations and customs.
- Work with the birth family, if appropriate, to have the child spend time with his or her birth family or invite the birth family over for a gathering.
- Try to introduce children to members of your extended family in person before the major holiday gathering or show them pictures of people they might meet.
- Make sure there are gifts for children in foster care if there is a gift exchange. Some suggestions include: mittens, scarves, earrings, bracelets, fun socks, board games or common toys such as trucks or books. Give your family specific suggestions.
- Go over basic manners such as saying "please" and "thank you." Explain the expectations of children prior to the celebration. Role-play if you can; it can be fun and instructive.
- Remember: Information about children in foster care and their families is **CONFIDENTIAL**; remind children that they don't have to talk about their particular situation with others, and let them know that you will be available to change the subject. Remind others that personal information about children in foster care and their birth families cannot be discussed.
- Be prepared for the sadness and grief that children in foster care may experience, and respect their feelings. Talk about their feelings in age appropriate ways, and give them time and space to grieve. Remember the grief takes many forms.

Open discussions and good preparation can make this holiday much more enjoyable for everyone—including you!

By Carrie Craft, <http://adoption.about.com>



Inside this issue:

Mark Your Calendar	2-3
Welcome New Foster Parents	4
National Adoption Day	4
Service Provider Contracts	5
Foster Parent Training Survey	5
Independent Living Program	5
Fostering Perspectives	6
Kid's Stuff	7

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

~John F. Kennedy

Mark Your Calendar!

Special Events for Foster Families

Thursday, Nov. 20, 5:30-7:30pm

Holiday Open House

Children's Museum, 207 5th Ave. S., La Crosse

Come celebrate foster families! Please bring a dish to pass.

Fun Community Events

Saturday, Nov. 22, 10am-12:30pm

Christmas/Thanksgiving-themed Children's Portraits

The Red Giraffe, 990 12th Ave. S., Onalaska

Portraits by Mary Luebke of First Impressions. \$16, \$25, and \$45 packages and greeting card packages available. Call 779-9004 with questions and 783-KIDS to schedule. Walk-ins welcome.

Friday, Nov. 28-Wednesday, Dec. 31

Rotary Holiday Lights

Riverside Park, downtown La Crosse

See more than two million lights, a live nativity scene on weekends, and visit Santa until Christmas Eve. Open daily 5-10pm. Admission is free but cash or food donations are encouraged. Call 1-800-658-9424 or visit www.rotarylights.org for more information.

Training Opportunities

FOUNDATIONS Call Rhonda Rude at (608) 789-4834 to sign up for the following sessions:

FALL 2008 SCHEDULE

- Saturdays, 9:00am-4:30pm
November 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd
Trainers: Richelle Zimmerman and Kathy Lysaker.

SPRING 2009 SCHEDULES

- Wednesday evenings, 5:30-9:00pm
Feb. 4, 11, 18, Mar. 4, 11, 18, 25, and April 1
Trainers: Dawn Miller and Denise Green
- Thursday evenings, 5:30-9:00pm
Jan. 8, 22, 29, Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26, and March 5
Trainers: Sarah Koenen and Rita Wolcott

Tuesdays, Nov. 4, 11, 18, 6:00-7:00pm

Caring for a Sexually Abused Child

Gundersen Lutheran Behavioral Health (Onalaska Annex), 123 16th Ave. S., Onalaska

This education and support group is for non-abusing parents and foster parents who provide or have provided care for sexually abused children. The group will meet Tuesday evenings for three consecutive weeks. Group participants will be expected to attend all three sessions. There is no charge. There will be an educational component with time set for discussion. Issues that will be covered include belief, emotions, reaction, and effects. To register and for more information please call the Sexual Abuse Counseling and Support Program of Gundersen Lutheran, (608)775-3845.

Mark Your Calendar!

Training Opportunities (continued)

Tuesday, Nov. 18, 6:30-8:00pm

Supporting the Specific Learning Needs of Your Child

Clearly Alumni and Friends Center, UW-La Crosse

This portion of the annual fall educator workshop is designed for parents to learn strategies to support child's individual learning style, ways to extend classroom learning at home, and how to advocate for your child's specific learning needs. Cost: \$9 (includes refreshments). To register go to www.uwlax.edu/conted or call (608)785-6504.

Tuesday, Dec. 9, 9:00am-4:00pm (Registration begins at 8:30am) Understanding Unwelcome Behavior

South Side Neighborhood Center, 1300 S. 6th St., La Crosse

Why are we more likely to describe children/students with disabilities as distractible, aggressive, withdrawn, in a world of their own, or even challenging rather than bored, curious, assertive, frustrated, frightened or in other more ordinary ways? A child's actions can become more clear and understandable after we ask questions that cause us to wonder about the child's point of view. This session will focus on the kinds of questions that help us get to know a child better. They are questions that can be asked among families, schools staff, and others who know the child. They are questions that can open our thinking toward providing more individualized support.

Training objections include:

- Understanding the root causes of a child's behavior
- Learn positive behavioral strategies that will help support the child(ren) through challenging times
- Using a Family/Person centered approach to develop appropriate interventions or strategies as part of team process
- Reducing and eliminating the use of physical restraint

Presenter: Mark Sweet, PhD has been a special education teacher and a university instructor in teacher education. He is Trainer and Consultant with Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW). In this role, he works with school districts, supported employment and supported living organizations, consumer and parent groups, long term care programs, and others. More recently, Mark has been working with the Violence Against Women with Disabilities project. The emphasis of his work is to help people refine and individualize their support by focusing on learning patterns and communication styles, and by encouraging people to imagine what it's like to be the person receiving support.

This training is free and includes lunch and snacks. For questions or to register call or email to Susie Becker at (608)785-6284, becker.susan@co.la-crosse.wi.us. Deadline for registration is Wednesday, December 3rd.

Upcoming Workshops at Family Resources, 1500 Green Bay St.

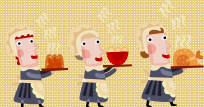
For more information or to register, call 784-8125. Child care may be provided.



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

Leaps and Bounds

Join in a discussion about young children and their developmental milestones. Signs of delays (language, motor, cognitive, or social) and what to do about them will be addressed. Presented by Bethany Kies, Birth to Three Service Coordinator—Family Resources



HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

November 27, 2008





Welcome New Foster Parents

Please welcome **Jean and John Funke** to the ranks of La Crosse County Foster Parents. Jean and John live with two of their three children in West Salem, WI, near Barre Mills. They have raised three children through the entire range of childhood years and are approaching the "empty nest". The Funkes are hoping to provide a home to children of either sex between the ages of 0 to 8 years. Their two children (one young adult and one teenager) are also looking forward to having a toddler in the home and being involved in a child's life. John and Jean have already completed the Pre Placement training that is the new mandated requirement in the State of Wisconsin prior to receiving children in the home. If you should see them at future foster care events or trainings please welcome them.

Please welcome **Geva Thole and Kirk Friedline** to the foster care community. The couple lives on the south side of La Crosse in the Town of Shelby. They have been foster parents in the past in the State of Minnesota and they have also raised two children to adulthood. Geva and Kirk are being licensed to provide respite to other foster parents in the community because they would like to give back what they received when they were licensed child foster care providers. They feel that respite care was a valuable resource to them in their foster parenting days. They would like to care for children of either sex under the age of 5. Please be sure to contact Sharon McHugh for your respite requests and ask for Geva and Kirk if you have children in this age range. If you should see them at future foster care events such as the Holiday Open House in November at the Children's Museum please welcome them back to the world of foster care.

Please welcome **Lisa and David Freisinger** to the foster care community. The Freisingers are hoping to provide respite to children of either sex up to the age of 12 years. They have plans to become fully licensed to provide child foster care in about a year. Lisa and David live on French Island in La Crosse and they are relatively new to the area coming from the Chicago Illinois area. They are looking forward to getting experience in foster care through providing respite. Please be sure to contact Sharon McHugh regarding your respite requests for this age range. The Freisingers have already completed the Pre Placement training for newly licensed foster parents and are planning on attending the Foundations training in the near future. If you should see them at future trainings or foster care events please welcome them to our community of everyday heroes.



National Adoption Day



National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the 129,000 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.

Celebrated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, more than 300 events are held each year throughout the country to finalize the adoptions of children in foster care, and to celebrate all families who adopt. In total, more than 20,000 children have been adopted from foster care on National Adoption Day. This year, National Adoption Day will be **Saturday, November 15, 2008**.

Check out www.nationaladoptionday.org for more information and resources on National Adoption Day.

Service Provider Contracts are in the Mail

This is just a friendly reminder that the La Crosse County Human Service Provider Contracts will be sent out in the mail soon to you. Please note that you are asked to provide updated insurance declarations for your home and autos. This is a requirement of all providers for La Crosse County. You can ask your insurance agent to fax copies of your insurance declaration page to **Fran Hegenbarth at fax number (608) 793 6567**. Otherwise be sure to include a copy of your insurance declarations with your signed service provider contract in the mail.

Also please note that you will be receiving reminders in the mail to provide updated renewal information to Fran Hegenbarth just prior to the expiration time of your insurance coverage. Please refer below for current La Crosse County insurance policy/coverage expectations of service providers.

1. Homeowners or renters liability insurance is required at a minimum of \$300,000.00 combined single limit (bodily injury and property damage).
2. Automobile insurance shall include minimum liability limits of \$250,000.00 each person, \$500,000.00 each occurrence or a combined single limit of \$300,000.00 each accident.
3. A \$1,000,000.00 Umbrella Liability policy may be held when Homeowners, Renter or Automobile Insurance does not meet the minimum limits.
4. Certificates of insurance for homeowners or renters and automobile coverage must be sent by the insurance carrier to the agency. When certificates of insurance are issued it is incumbent upon the issuer to notify the agency when the insurance is no longer valid.
5. Waiver of liability insurance requirement is only allowable by following further procedures as outlined in HFS 56.05(5).

If you have comments or questions about this, please contact Rhonda Rude at (608) 789- 4834 for more information.

Attention Foster Parents!

Foster Parent Training Survey

The Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Committee is seeking your input about the training offered by the department. We will be conducting a survey over the next couple of weeks and will be contacting each of you by phone. A copy of the survey questions has been mailed to you to help you prepare for this phone call. Your honest feedback is greatly appreciated!

Upcoming Changes to the Independent Living Program

The Independent Living Program will begin offering weekly Independent Living Skills classes every Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:30-7:30pm. This will be in place of individual appointments for 15-16 year olds. Fifteen-year-olds will be required to attend at least one class a month. Sixteen-year-olds will be required to attend two classes each month (but can attend all of them if they want). Older youth have the option of attending these classes as well. This change will allow the Youth Development Specialist to focus on youth aging out of care and offer follow-up services for youth who have already "aged-out" and/or require further individual attention. Individual class information will be provided on the Family & Children's Center agency website. There foster parents and/or their youth will be able to RSVP to the classes they would like to attend. A hard-copy version of the events calendar will also be sent out at the beginning of each month and RSVP can also be done via email or telephone.

If you have any questions or comments regarding these changes please contact Devon Chesebro, Youth Development Specialist for the Independent Living Program, at (608)785-0001 ext. 247.

fostering perspectives

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

Dear Foster Parents . . .

*An open letter from Heather,
a former foster youth*

Dear foster parents,

I have been adopted twice now. I read Debbie Gallimore's article [in a previous issue of *Fostering Perspectives*] and I do agree with her that if you respect and "take in" a foster child's family, that child will take you (the foster parent) in. I find this true in my life.

Now that I am adopted for the second time I find it harder to trust and become dependable upon my adopted parents. From a personal experience I will say that it hurts whenever "my" parents talk negatively about my family and I find it harder to respect them afterwards. Our real family is something that was taken from us and we acknowledge that every second of each day. It hurts us worse every time someone mentions our family, it is offensive and your words will never go away.

It is not easy for a child to adapt to a new family. The best way to earn a child's trust, respect, and dependence is to respect their feeling toward their family.

Most of my life I have been independent and parentless (referring to parental care and guidance), so when I was adopted for the second time "my" parents did not and sometimes they still do not understand why I'm not getting along with them. I am still not used to being able to depend upon anyone and my trust in anyone is gone.

Why? Because that is to me the safest way not to get hurt again. I even find it hard to love or care for "my" new family. I will reject their love to me because it is something I have not yet been able to take in. I don't care for family time or bonding time because I am very uncomfortable with it. Part of the time these feelings come because of something they had said to me either about me or my family. I do not have my family and I wish to see them all.

I am proud of all my accomplishments that I have made so far in my life. Most of all, I am glad that I did not give up on life even through the hard times when I would've rather have been dead.

One of my wishes in life is to be able to be the little girl I once was, when I did not worry how the day would end or if I could ever trust or depend on anyone again. It was a time when I was happy.

I do not write to you to tell you of all my problems that very few know about. I write to say this: what you say and how you treat a foster child does affect them, whether they show you it or not. I cry every night because my heart aches from not being able to be with my family, wondering if they were even alive, wondering what it is like to be held by my real mother. I cry because I feel alone and I feel like something is missing.

Every foster child cries because they are in pain. We want to be held and cared for, we reject it because we are afraid of getting too close to anyone. Please keep this in mind when you have a foster child of any kind in your home because what you do and how you react to a child does make an impact on their lives forever.

Heather is 16. She received \$15 for having her letter published.



Apple Turkey

Lay a large red delicious apple on its side and insert five toothpicks in a fan-type arrangement on the smaller end of the apple. On each toothpick slide gum drops, small colored marshmallows, raisins, or dried fruit so that they look like feathers. Take a large marshmallow which will be the head of the turkey and using the end of a scissors cut two small slits for eyes, one for a beak and one for the bottom of the marshmallow for the turkey wattle. Put two chocolate chips with the pointed ends facing in on the marshmallow for eyes, a candy corn with the pointed end

facing out for a beak, and a small red licorice bit cut in half under the marshmallow for the wattle. Insert a toothpick into the larger end of the apple opposite the tail and stick the marshmallow head onto the toothpick. Turn the apple turkey over and put four toothpicks, two in front and two in back, so the apple will stand on the toothpick legs.



www.about.com

Family Handprint Turkey

Trace the hands of each family member onto different colors of construction paper and cut them out. Starting with the largest hands, layer smallest on top of largest and glue together. Cut out a plump circle for the body and an oval for the head from brown construction paper. Glue on top of the smallest hand. Cut out a small red heart for the gobbler and orange triangle for the beak and glue in place. Glue on wiggle eyes.



www.familycorner.com

Thanksgiving Word Search

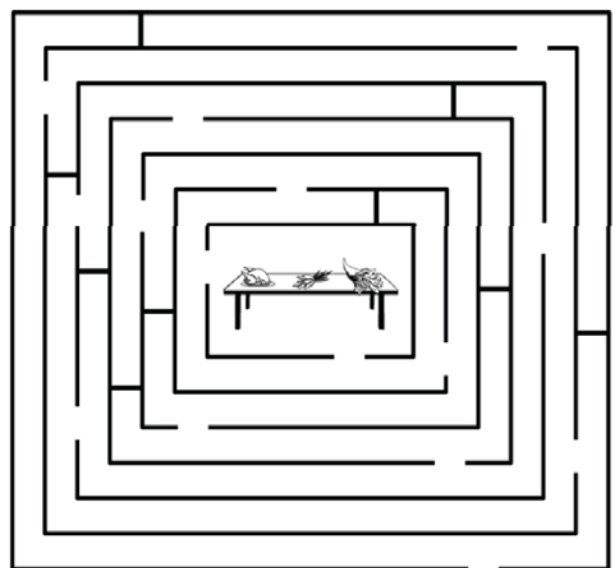
A N D H S P I L G R I M S P
M T H A N K S G I V I N G U
P U O R A G T I A H M N M M
M R B V S E U N F I F X A P
B K J E P F F D A E R O I K
F E A S T Z F I M F I G Z I
K Y H T G I I A I P E I E N
L C F H G E N N L Z N E Z K
A D O O F Q G S Y E D S A J
N O V E M B E R O M S T R T

THANKSGIVING
TURKEY
HARVEST

FAMILY
FRIENDS
FEAST

NOVEMBER
PILGRIMS
STUFFING
PUMPKIN

Help the pilgrim and Native Americans find their way through the maze to the Thanksgiving feast.



<http://printables.familyeducation.com>



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 - 7:30pm. 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 .