

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

June/July 2014

N F A P A

A LITTLE BIT "O" "LOVE..... AND LOGIC"

By Pamela Allen

So, how many of you woke up one morning and said to yourselves " hmmm....I think this is the day that I want to start making the rest of my life miserable.....so, I think I should take care of children! It may not be a popular concept, however, I believe that parenting should be fun! It should be fun to look forward to the lessons the child can learn from by allowing them to make mistakes (that, of course, won't harm them) The lessons that are learned at a young age when the price is small.....are much better than those that have to be learned as adults because someone was always rescuing them.

Did you know, that no one EVER starved to death from missing one meal and that fifth, sixth and just about every other grade is offered EVERY year...AND the world as we know it will absolutely NOT come to an end if a child misses a field trip? Well, it's true!

It took me most of a school year, but I finally had the school secretary on the same "page" when it comes to raising responsible children and allowing natural consequences. What does that

have to do with school, you ask? As a parent, aren't we responsible for making sure that our children do absolutely everything they are asked to do at school? Isn't it our job to make sure that papers get handed in and field trips are attended

(what does the school do with a child who cannot attend the field trip), and children have to eat lunch....right? As a parent, it is our responsibility to raise children who become responsible adults. If we are always rescuing our children (helicopter parents), how are they ever going to learn to become responsible? I believe that often times the grades our children achieve (or don't achieve) and the activities they are involved in, become social status to us

as parents. Of course I would like to see my child have straight A's, especially when I know he is capable, but it is definitely NOT my responsibility to make sure he takes his papers to school with him and actually hands them in. When *(and it does occasionally happen)* I forget my papers at home, no one brings them to work for me!



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association <h1 style="margin: 0;">Families First</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">a newsletter for Nebraska Families</p> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: 1.2em; letter-spacing: 0.5em;">N F A P A</p>			
<p><i>Families First</i> is published bimonthly.</p> <p>When reprinting an article, please receive permission from the Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association, 2431 Fairfield St. St., Suite C, Lincoln, NE 68521; 402-476-2273, toll-free 877-257-0176, e-mail: Pam@nfapa.org. To contact a board member or mentor, visit our website at www.nfapa.org.</p>			
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<p style="text-align: center;">Questions? Call NFAPA at 877-257-0176 or 402-476-2273. This publication is supported by Grant #93.566 under a sub-grant from HHS Administration for Children and Families and Nebraska DHHS.</p>			

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A LITTLE BIT "O" "LOVE.....AND LOGIC"

The phone rings at 8:35; it is my child calling from school. "Mom, I forgot my lunch ticket somewhere in my room", "Bummer" I say, "What are you going to do?" Does my heart go out and wish that he had remembered? Yes, of course, but if I take it to school today, I will end up taking it many more times during the school year. He will have a good supper when he gets home. Suzie (school secretary) felt really bad for him and asked why I wouldn't bring him his ticket. I told her I was trying to raise a responsible child and that I was pretty sure he wouldn't starve to death before supper, however, if she felt that strongly about it, she could "feel free to come and pick up his lunch ticket and deliver it to him." Know what...she didn't come! I didn't take his permission slip to school when he forgot it for the school field trip and the paper that he would get an F on if he didn't get it handed in that day. It took a few months but my heart smiled when another child I had come home from school and told me she had not had lunch that day because she had forgotten her lunch ticket and on top of that she had to take a lower grade on a paper because it was somewhere in her room. I asked her why she didn't call. She said Suzie said "Don't you live at the Allen's?" She said "yes", and then Suzie said, "Don't even bother to call; they want you to be responsible. It won't do you any good. I am sure you will have a good supper."

It is very tempting to be a "Helicopter" parent and rescue our children. Just remember, if you do it now, are you willing to do it when they are adults?!

A Cool & Easy Fundraiser for NFAPA!

Ok friends, help support NFAPA by taking an item you are no longer using and posting it in your local exchange for sale! Please put in that the proceeds are going to the non profit organization, The Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association!

Encourage your friends to do the same.

Then, let us know how you did!

Thank you for supporting NFAPA!

Bill Would Provide Tax Relief for Foster Families

WASHINGTON, D.C. -U.S. Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) introduced The Foster Care Tax Credit Act on May 26, 2014. This legislation will provide tax relief for foster families to help cover the costs of caring for a foster child.

The Foster Care Tax Credit Act would help cover the costs of caring for children in foster and kinship care by establishing a tax credit of up to \$1,000 each year. The bill, introduced during National

Foster Care Month, would also direct the Federal government to improve outreach and education to foster families about the financial benefits currently available to them.

"Children in foster care, like all children, deserve a safe, loving and nurturing home. Caring for foster children can be more expensive than caring for one's own biological children because foster children have often been through traumatic physical and emotional circumstances that require additional care and resources to address," said Kaine. "I'm a proud supporter of The Foster Care Tax Credit Act because it provides tax relief to those who are willing to open up their hearts and homes to children who need it most. This important legislation also increases outreach and education on the tax benefits that are currently available to foster families who are already making a profound difference in the lives of vulnerable children."

Kaine and his wife, Anne, have been longtime advocates for foster children and during his term as Governor they successfully strengthened permanent family connections for older children in foster care through the "For Keeps" initiative and increased funding to recruit more foster and adoptive parents. In December, Kaine introduced the Sibling Connections Act to keep brothers and sisters together in the foster care system.

Contact your senator and ask them to support this bill. Fischer, Deb - (R - NE)

383 Russell Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510
(202) 224-6551 www.fischer.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact

Johanns, Mike - (R - NE)

404 Russell Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510
(202) 224-4224 www.johanns.senate.gov/public/?p=ContactSenatorJohanns

ATTENTION FOSTER PARENTS! EARN YOUR FOSTER PARENT CREDITS WHILE GETTING THE CHANCE TO WIN A GREAT PRIZE!

Answer these 10 questions from this newsletter correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a sleeping bag and small tent. Just answer the following 10 questions and email the information to Felicia@nfapa.org or send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 2431 Fairfield Street, Suite C, Lincoln, NE. For your convenience, this questionnaire will be available on our website (under newsletters) for you to print off, fill out and send in by email or mail. We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. What are three reasons to document?
2. What should be included in documentation?
3. T or F: Foster children are more likely than other children to be involved in risky activities on line.
4. What does *Essentials for Parenting* address?
5. What are three pros to taking a foster child on a family vacation?
6. T or F: You should inform your child's case worker your foster child has regular and consistent access online.
7. Name three reasons why ages 12-15 can be tough for both child and adult.
8. How do you check your foster child's browser history?
9. The number of false profiles on social networking sites is alarming, over
10. Why is it important to keep a close eye on who you and your child are friends with on social media?

Name:
Address:
Email:
Phone #:
Issue: Families First Newsletter: June/July 2014

FOSTER A FUTURE DAY

NFAPA and DHHS in North Platte hosted "Foster a Future Day" on May 17, 2014. The event was held in Cody Park, and despite cooler temperatures and chance of rain, was well attended and fun was had by all. Several local businesses donated items in order for the day to happen, and staff members sent invitations, called homes, sought donations, collaborated with community partners and helped to set up and tear down the day of the event.

"Foster a future" was held to raise awareness of the need for area foster homes, as well as serving as a way to thank our current homes in western Nebraska. The goal was to have a fun, free and family-centered event, and it was made into a reality by a lot of work and donations.

Over 90 people attended, and ate 176 hot dogs, bags of chips, grapes and carrot sticks, over 60 bags of cotton candy, lots of snow cones and over 100 bottles of water. For fun, those in attendance blew bubbles, created bracelets and fed the ducks, deer, elk, donkeys, geese and peacocks bread and popcorn. Older kids threw footballs, hoola-hooped and raced in gunny sacks. Many of our younger kids bounced balls, created art with sidewalk chalk and jumped in the bouncy house. Everyone there was able to eat lunch and do a lot of relationship building and networking amongst traditional, relative and kinship foster homes.

NFAPA and DHHS collaborated with St. Francis, Right Turn and Project Everlast to try to reach as many people and homes as possible. Laura Davis, from DHHS, was on the Newsmakers segment and I was interviewed at the event itself that aired on a special spot during the evening news on KNOV TV. Everyone did a lot to promote "Foster a Future," as advertisements announcing the day were on radio stations, public television stations and throughout our area on signs as well.

We gave away two get away "packages" to foster families. The first package was for a motel room in North



Platte, gift cards for dinner out, and two tickets to the movie theater, free large coffees, and gift certificates for a quick lunch the next day. Included was also the offer to assist in setting up respite care so the foster parents can enjoy this get away alone! The winners of this prize were Alice and Clyde King - traditional foster parents for over 14 years now in the NP area.

The second packet was for the Gothenburg area, which included a free night in a motel, two free movie theater tickets and a gift card to a nice eat-in steak house. This included the same offer for setting up respite care! Winner was Tony Ballard/Laura Mitchell who are relative foster parents in NP.

Congratulations to both families! We appreciate all you do for the families you serve. Another important part of the day was the opportunity to meet former foster youths who attended as an outreach to help raise awareness for our teens in the foster care

system. Tina Gastineau, RD supervisor in North Platte, shared that she wouldn't soon forget one of the young women sharing some of her experience in foster care. When asked what the best thing was that her foster parents did for her, the young lady replied "They made me feel like I was one of their own. We went on vacations together, all family events included us, and we got the same gifts and had the same parties that all the biological children had!"

Thank you to everyone who made "Foster a Future" possible. And thank you to every one of our foster homes. What you do makes such a difference! Most of us feel passionate about the kids we serve and know that what we do today makes a huge impact in the lives of foster children and their families. I encourage you to reach out to people in your life and tell them about foster care, and the ways it has enriched your life.

Deirdre Nichelson, NFAPA Resource Family Consultant



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

2014 Guardianship Training Classes Education for Guardians of Nebraska State Wards

Guardians of children who are in the custody of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services due to abuse and/ or neglect face many issues that normally are not addressed in the probate code or in probate court proceedings. Foster parents (prospective guardians) or guardians of former state wards should fully understand the permanency options of adoption and guardianship, including the rights, responsibilities, and commitments necessary for each. The Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association facilitates a 3 hour Guardianship training that provides participants with detailed information on the duties of the guardian, rights of the ward, annual reporting requirements, and instruction on the forms required for guardianships of this population of minors.

This class fulfills Guardianship education requirements set by the Nebraska Probate Code Educational requirements for Guardians must be met within 3 months of appointment.

Note: Foster Parents may attend the Guardianship training for continuing credit hours.

Pre-registration is required for the class by phone or email to:

The Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association
1-877-257-0176 or felicia@nfapa.org

A registration fee of \$30 per participant is due upon arrival at the class.

A full list of Guardianship class are available on our website at www.nfapa.org.

Below is a list of trainings available in the next three months.

Registration is required at least one week ahead of the training date.

- ***Grand Island** August 4, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. St. Paul Lutheran Church 1515 Harrison
- ***Fremont** August 4, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. Fremont Medical Center 450 E 23rd 3rd floor Conference Room 3
- ***Lincoln** August 9, 2014 1 to 4 p.m. NFAPA Office 2431 Fairfield Ste. C **Spanish Class*
- ***McCook** August 9, 2014 9:30 to 12:30 p.m. McMillan Hall room 213 1205 E 3rd st
- ***Lincoln** August 13, 2014 9 to 12 p.m. NFAPA Office 2431 Fairfield Ste. C
- ***Omaha** August 20, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. Comfort Inn 7007 Grover Street
- ***Chadron** August 22, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. Chadron Community Hospital
Prairie Pine Lodge, Easy Activity Room
- ***Omaha** Sept 17, 2014 9 to 12 p.m. Comfort Inn 7007 Grover Street
- ***Lincoln** Sept 17, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. NFAPA Office 2431 Fairfield Ste. C
- ***Kearney** Oct 6, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. 1st United Methodist Church 4500 Linden
- ***Beatrice** Oct 7, 2014 9 to 12 p.m. Southeast Community College 4771 W Scott Road
- ***Lincoln** Oct 8, 2014 9 to 12 p.m. NFAPA Office 2431 Fairfield Ste. C
- ***Grand Island** Oct 11, 2014 1 to 4 p.m. St. Francis Medical Center Room A
2116 W. Faidley Ave **Spanish Class*
- ***Seward** Oct 16, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. Seward Civic Center 616 Bradford st
- ***Hastings** Oct 16, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. Public Library 517 West 4th
- ***Sidney** Oct 17, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. Memorial Health Center Ray Cruise Room

ner out, and theater, free rtificates for y. Included ist in setting ster parents alone! The re Alice and oster parents the NP area. was for the free night in sts and a gift his included are! Winner ho are rela 1 NP. o both fami- ill you do for ve. Another the former fos- ended as an e awareness : foster care upervisor in ouldn't soon haring some When asked oster parents "They made n. We went nts included same parties er a Future" oster homes. st of us feel wv that what ves of foster ou to reach t foster care, y Consultant

Document! Document! Document!

By Jo Ann Wentzel

Foster parents are some of the busiest folks I know. They must assume the role of parent, confidant, friend, policeman, investigator, cook, chauffeur, teacher and mentor. There is no wonder that there is little time left in the day for one more important duty- documentation. It seems to be ignored by most foster parents and only an emergency or unfortunate event seems to remind us of its value.

There are many reasons to embrace the idea of documentation. First, being organized and efficient makes fostering easier. If you already have become slave to your calendars, dayrunners, and schedules, you are now half way there. We write down these dates and duties so as not to forget them. This is the primary reason for documentation. Busy people cannot trust their memories to always get all details right, so we write them down shortly after the important event or beforehand as a reminder. Documentation is nothing more than a written record of events.

A second reason to document everything of importance is to settle disputes, answer questions intelligently and be able to transfer information to those who need it. When your social workers want to know the facts as they occurred, you have them. When a therapist asks you to recap the event when your foster child went off the deep end, you are able to do so. When your foster son argues that he did not have the car that night in question, you can show him the proof. Documentation is like having a witness to those situations.

The third reason for documentation is to protect yourself in the event of allegations. Reporting the incident by detail can wipe an untrue story

from the slate. When a mischievous child reports you and alleges you abused him or her, those logs of driving times, appointments, phone calls and incident reports are going to be invaluable in proving your innocence.

What items should be documented? Everything! I know that's a tall order, but foster parents are very vulnerable to allegations and misunderstandings. Keeping appointment and phone call records are a good start. If dates must be reconstructed, these items help both in establishing where you were at the time, as well as serving as a way to jog your memory. These should include exact times, (dates and hours), purpose of call or meeting, where it was held, if meeting and who attended. If phone call, who was called and what significant things were said or decided in either case. Add to this a vehicle log for transporting kids. Include time left and time arrived at destination, mileage when left and when arrived. It takes a few extra precious minutes, but can prove it was virtually impossible for events as alleged to happen in the total time of the trip. You probably are required to fill out an accident or incident report. One is usually damage to property, the other some physical harm to a person. Keep copies of anything handed in for future reference. I learned the value of documentation when I did a stint as a worker in a home with mentally handicapped and disabled adults. The state required us to write up a short description of the highlights of the resident's day during your shift. Foster parents should also keep some sort of notebook in the same way.

You will find in time, these small chunks of writing will not be even be a problem to you. It goes faster and easier with practice and as it becomes habit. It will only take one terrible allegation experience to convince you of its worth. Please don't wait until you are accused and must defend yourself to start to document. Get the habit now.

And thanks for all you do as a foster parent. We truly need you.

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CDC Launches Essentials for Parenting Toddlers and Preschoolers

CDC's new resource for positive parenting Essentials for Parenting Toddlers and Preschoolers is a free, online resource developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Designed for parents of two to four year olds, Essentials for Parenting addresses common parenting challenges, like tantrums and whining. Positive parenting skills and techniques can reduce parenting stress and provide parents with ways to handle their child's misbehavior. Skills focus on encouraging good behavior and decreasing misbehavior using proven strategies like positive communication, structure and discipline, and consistent discipline and consequences. Build the foundation of a positive parent-child relationship with Essentials for Parenting.

Essentials for Parenting includes:

- Articles with a variety of skills and tips
 - "Frequently Asked Questions" answered by parenting experts
 - Fun and engaging videos featuring parents, children, and parenting experts who demonstrate and discuss skills
 - Free print resources like chore charts and daily schedules
- <http://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/overview.html>

Awesome Opportunity for Foster and Foster/Adopt Parents

Thanks to Foster Focus Magazine, the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) is collaborating with the magazine to highlight foster and foster/adopt parents from across the country. This is your chance to tell the magazines many readers why you foster and what it means to you. Want to participate? Here is what is needed:

- One paragraph, at your discretion, under 150 words, that describes why you foster/what it means to you.
- A high quality jpeg photo.
- Your name.
- Your day job.
- Length of time fostering.

You can be a single foster parent or a couple. The magazine will publish 20-30 selected entries early this fall. Deadline for submission is August 15. Please email your entry to: iclements@nfpaonline.org.

Again, thanks to Foster Focus Magazine and NFPA for this wonderful opportunity to show the world this positive view of foster parenting. Hope to see your entry soon! For additional information, please email the president of NFPA, Irene Clements, at the email address above.

Due to weather, the Reimbursement Rate Informational Meeting that was scheduled for June 3 in Gretna had to be postponed. The new date is August 6, 2014 at the Good Shepard Lutheran Church located at 11204 S. 204th Street, Gretna. Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Waiting Ryan & Austin

Birthdate: March, 2006 & January, 2005

Sex: Male

Race: Caucasian

Is Contact with Siblings Requested:

Ryan & Austin must be placed together.

Ryan, the social butterfly, loves to meet new people. He has a big heart and will try to comfort others when they are feeling down. He has a passion for sports, especially football and basketball. He is often found outside shooting hoops or playing catch. Ryan also enjoys helping in the kitchen and learning to prepare meals. He also enjoys music and is often caught singing out loud to the radio. When stuck inside, Ryan likes to complete puzzles and play Legos with his brother. Ryan is close to his older brother and considers Austin a role model.

An affectionate boy, Austin loves to help others and often volunteers to help with household chores; his favorites vacuuming and cooking. He loves to be the center of attention and make people laugh. Austin is learning how to swim and would go swimming everyday if he could! He loves the outdoors and especially enjoys riding bikes, playing soccer and helping in the garden. When inside, he likes to spend time playing with cars, Legos and board games. Austin is a great big brother and needs a family to provide him with love and stability.

For more information: Email: tschaffer@nchs.org

Phone: 402-677-5275



Children... Hailey

Birthdate: August 2001

Sex: Female

Race: Caucasian/Native American

Number of Siblings: 3

Is Contact with Siblings Requested:

Hailey has a brother, and two sisters that she needs to maintain contact with.

Hailey is a vivacious, confident young lady, who has many hopes, dreams and talents. Hailey is passionate about animals, creative writing, fashion and MUSIC! She hopes to one day audition for American Idol by singing country music (her favorite stars are Carrie Underwood, Taylor Swift and George Strait). She also aspires to model, photograph and travel the world, as well as become a veterinarian.

When at home, Hailey enjoys playing video games and eating Italian food, which she likes to help prepare. Hailey also loves playing outside, swimming and playing volleyball. Hailey will thrive in a home that is dedicated, supportive and encouraging as she chases her dreams!



For more
information: Email:
karkfeld@nchs.org
Phone: 402-677-5283



L5 Youth Ranch

The L5 Youth Ranch sits on 112 acres of scenic rolling wooded countryside east of Sprague. It is operated by Matt and Daisy Langston and was opened the summer of 2006. The ranch provides a sanctuary for rescued horses and kids that are struggling with a variety of personal issues. Children are given the opportunity to ride the horses once a week to help them learn responsibility and give them a safe and supportive place to spend their time. Many of the horses at L5 Youth Ranch have been rescued from abusive situations. Some were seized with help of law enforcement personnel, others by simply approaching the negligent owners directly and others that simply needed a new home.

The ranch is open from May through October. Kids typically come out once a week and spend two hours at the ranch each time they visit. The ranch tries to have one adult counselor matched up with each child when they arrive. They pair up and do 15 minutes of chores before they start working with the horses. The chores may include grooming and brushing the horses, cleaning tack or mucking stalls. Eventually the youth learn to bridle and saddle the horses before they are able to begin riding. L5 Youth Ranch lets the children decide when they are finally ready to ride the horses. They begin working in a round pen where they learn non-verbal cues and how to control the horses using body language. It takes on average about two months for them to learn to direct the horse from the saddle. Most parents note that for many kids, the ranch offers therapy that surpasses any other available options. The kids seem more relaxed, less anxious and more content and confident when they are at the ranch. When working with a horse, kids are focused on helping the horse and it makes it easy for them to open up and talk about school, talk about struggles, talk about life. One of the main benefits the ranch can offer families is that it's free for children to attend. There's no cost to the kids or their families. The only requirement to be welcomed at the L5 Youth Ranch is a willingness to learn.

Sessions with Matt, Daisy, or one of our wonderful volunteers are available by appointment; simply call Matt at 402.525.9963 or Daisy at 402.525.9964. To learn more about the Ranch visit us online at www.L5YouthRanch.org.

Fundraiser for Foster Children's Kits for Kids Bags

Kendra Bear, a foster parent from Merriman, brought in a donation from the Undie Sunday event she held at the Presbyterian Church in Gordon. A special thank you to them for their efforts and all of the donations! These items will go into our Kits for Kids bag and given to foster families at support groups or other NFAPA events when they have foster children that just entered the system. If you have a Church or group that would like to hold an Undie Sunday or similar event to collect items for Kits for Kids Bags, please contact the office at 877-257-0176.



View Children waiting for adoption at:

http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/Pages/adoption_children.aspx

The Pros of Including Foster Children in Your Family Vacation Plans

Source: Iowa Foster & Adoptive Parents Association

Many foster families feel that since foster children are part of the family, they should also be included in family vacation plans too. So, if you are deciding whether or not to include your foster child on your next family vacation, here are some pros of taking along your foster child.

Time to bond as a family– It's important for a child to have healthy attachments. Remember, if a child can attach to you, he can attach to anyone. A family vacation is a great time for a child to grow closer to you and your family.

Create unique experiences and memories– Your family vacation may be the child's only opportunity to see the ocean or ride on an airplane. This can be another gift you can offer your foster child. Yet another reward as a foster family –foster parents know that being a foster family has many rewards: helping a struggling family, providing safety and comfort to a hurting child. Taking a child on vacation is another opportunity. It's wonderful for a child to see something new. It's almost better for a foster parent who gets to witness the child's wonder.

Family vacations are a normal part of growing up– Many foster children have missed out on the normalcy of family life. Families have fun together. Families argue. Families spend time together. Even if a family vacation turns out to be just horrible and stressful, isn't that a normal part of the family experience? Give that to your foster child too.

Let them know that they are important enough to include– So many foster children struggle with feelings of low self-worth. What better way to let them know that they are important part of the family than to include them in your family vacation plans.

Opportunity to be a part of planning process– There are many valuable lessons to be learned while planning a family vacation, such as the location, the itinerary, and the financial planning. Many foster children feel out of control within their worlds and with good reason. Everything about their lives is planned by adults around them from judges to social workers. Foster children can learn a lot from the process that will allow them to have some ownership, not only in the process, but perhaps in the outcome too. It's a great opportunity to learn more needed life skills.



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Stalking and Other Dangers Facing Foster Parents

Posted in [You Need to Know](#)

Written By: **Dr John DeGarmo**

Time and time again when I host training seminars I hear stories of foster parents who have been stalked by their child's biological family members. One foster mother told me of a time when a biological uncle followed her from work and slashed her tires in a grocery store. Another had a grandmother park the car across the street from the family and monitor the home, waiting for the foster child to come outside. This occurred several times until law enforcement was called. Still another related to me the ongoing incidents of a birth mother repeatedly making obscene phone calls to the foster home. Along with this, the mother also called the child welfare agency several times, making false reports about the family, and even went so far as to go to the police and make false accusations about the family. My own wife was followed by a biological mother and father in a car one afternoon for roughly thirty minutes, after a visitation between our foster child and the family members was held at the local child welfare agency. These incidents can be very threatening and intimidating experiences for foster parents, and the frequency of such events has increased due to online technology. Birth parents and other biological family members are easily able to spy upon foster parents through these social media sites. The act of birth parents or biological family members stalking, or trailing, foster parents is not a new one. If foster parents post all of their actions,

movements, weekend plans, and vacation destinations through social network sites, birth parents may well have easy and ready access to this information. These birth parents and biological family members are able to determine where the foster parents will be next, along with the foster child, and arrive at the same location. Biological parents are also able to post threatening and harmful messages on a foster parent's page. One foster parent told me of an incident where a birth mother was posting messages that were hateful towards her on her social network site. Along with this, the birth mother was also posting false accusations against the foster parents, indicating that the foster parents were using physical means of disciplining her child, such as spanking, and that the Foster parents did not like the child or enjoy having her in their home. Unfortunately, as these messages were posted for all to see, it was not only a humiliating experience for the foster parents, but the child welfare agent began a thorough investigation into the foster parents, due to the birth mother's accusations against them. Other birth family members have been known to create false profiles on social media sites, in order to gain access to a foster parent's site. Creating a fake profile is simple, and one can find directions through various search engines. The number of false profiles on social network sites is alarming, over 83 million, and it is not surprising to discover that many birth parents have done so, as well.

Keeping Foster Children Safe Online

Positive Strategies to Prevent Cyberbullying, Inappropriate Contact, and Other Digital Dangers

Dr. John DeGarmo

Hello my friends, my newest book, *Keeping Foster Children Safe Online* is now available. You can find information about it below. Quite frankly, this is the most important and relevant book you will find today in foster care, as your foster children, and yourself, are both at many risk and face many dangers in today's world.

Foster children are more likely than other children to be involved in risky activities online due to backgrounds of neglect and abuse, an absence of supportive adults, lower self-esteem and greater exposure to drugs and alcohol.

Covering all the dangers of online technology that your foster child might encounter, from cyberbullying and "sexting", to child grooming and online hoaxes, this book pays particular attention to dangers unique to foster families, such as the difficulties internet access poses for maintaining formal arrangements for contact with birth families.

DeGarmo equips foster parents and professionals with strategies to keep foster children safe online, giving tips on establishing expectations for internet usage, advice on how to prevent inappropriate contact and protect personal information, and explaining the importance of "netiquette".



The Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association and the Foster Care Review Office

The Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association and the Foster Care Review Office along with several community & state partners are collaborating to provide training this fall across the state. This will be a great opportunity to network with foster/adoptive parents and other professionals that work in child welfare and an opportunity to learn. We hope that you can join us for one of these outstanding training and development opportunities. Stan Waddell, a national Cenpatico trainer, along with other trainers will be providing the training and updates. So please, mark your calendars and attend a training in your area.

**Below is a list of dates and locations.
More information and registration forms will
follow.**

August 26, 2014	Norfolk
August 27, 2014	Lincoln
August 28, 2014	Omaha
September 6, 2014	Gering
September 22, 2014	Kearney
September 23, 2014	Grand Island
September 24, 2014	York
October 4, 2014	North Platte



Strings Too Short to be of Use:

Article I by Dr. Toni Heineman

Many of those who lived through the Great Depression developed uncanny uses for all sorts of things that those who never knew that kind of scarcity would toss without a thought. Although he was not much of a handyman, I believe that my father saved every nail or screw that ever came into our home. He reused rubber bands and prided himself on never having bought one.

Following in his footsteps, without much thought, I, too, saved rubber bands—until I discovered that they dry out and break and, at some point, are of no use. There is really little point in saving them.

Around the time that I was reading Lorrie Moore's (brilliant) novel *Anagrams*, I had been thinking about how to start a conversation about the emotional needs of kids in the foster care system. One of Moore's characters, in the process of clearing her deceased aunt's attic, comes across a box labeled "strings too short to use," filled with matted bits of string. It struck me that this is, far too often, just like the relationships that we offer foster youth—they are just too short to be of use. Too many foster youth leave care with a life stuffed full of relationships that came and went too quickly to be helpful.

A culture of scarcity demands that we discard nothing, even when we suspect or know that what we're doing isn't necessary or reasonable. Often times this does no harm—bits of string, twine, and yarn just gather,

tangled in a box or carefully stored nails and screws line workshop shelves "just in case" they might be needed one day.

Relationships that come and go too quickly are different. They don't help build the trust or sense of safety and security that children need. In fact, they do the opposite—undermine trust and create a sense that the world is unpredictable and chaotic. We know this. Parents know that their children will be unhappy if a favorite caregiver or teacher is out ill. Employers know that staff turnover leads to low morale and decreased productivity. The statistics on the emotional well-being and productivity of adults raised in the foster care system merely confirm what we know—as adults, former foster children are, by and large, neither happy nor productive.

I wonder: Why is it so hard to act on what we know? It's easy to point to a broken system or fluctuations in funding streams or changing regulations that interfere with continuity in care and relationships. There are thousands of people trying their best to help foster children, and yet we continue to give too many of them relationships that don't last long enough to be of use. Do we think that something—anything—is better than nothing at all? What do you think? I would love to hear your ideas.

Dr. Toni Heineman, LCSW, DMH, is the Founder and Executive Director of A Home Within, a nonprofit that offers open-ended pro bono therapy to foster youth, as well as a clinical psychologist who has been in private practice in the San Francisco Bay Area for over 30 years. She is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco, and was selected as a fellow by Zero to Three for the 2003-2004 National Leadership Initiative. She was also awarded a DraperRichards Social Entrepreneur Fellowship, the Social Entrepreneur Award from the Manhattan Institute, and a 2008 Purpose Prize. Toni has taught and supervised interns, graduate students and psychiatric residents and presented at numerous local and national professional meetings. She has authored a wide range of journal articles, a book, The Abused Child: Psychodynamic Understanding and Treatment, and is co-editor of another, Building A Home Within: Meeting the Emotional Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care.

Marriage and Foster Parenting

Author: Dr. John DeGarmo

I looked at the clock and groaned a little to myself when I saw that it was 3:30 AM. I had just arrived back home an hour and a half ago, 2 AM, from a foster parent training seminar I had just conducted in bright, sunny California. The travel back to Georgia, where I live, had been a long one, and I was a little tired. Yet, our newest foster child, a tiny baby, was crying in the next room, and needed feeding. He was only four pounds when he came to us, up two pounds from when he was born, ten weeks premature. When he first arrived at our house late one night in early May, the tiny infant was on a heart monitor, and was so very week and fragile. As he was so very small and premature, he desperately needed to put on some weight and gain strength. Therefore, our little foster baby was up pretty much every hour and a half each night, all night long, letting us know he wanted a bottle. I had been away from home while in California for a few days, and my wife had seen to all of the child care while I was gone. At the moment, we only had 7 children in the house, and our older children were helping out with the younger ones. Nevertheless, when it came time to feed the little one each night, all night long, my wife was on duty while I was away. Normally, we take turns each night, as we try to split our responsibilities as parents 50/50, or in half. Now, at 3:30 in the morning, my first desire was to sleep, as I had just put my head on the pillow, as I was quite tired from the weekend on the West Coast, and the day's travel. Yet, I knew that my

wife was tired, as well, from her weekend as a single parent. I gladly got out of bed, and fed the infant, and did so again at 5 AM, as well. After all, my wife and I are in this together, and it is a partnership that I do not take for granted. For me, the partnership with my wife is essential in so many ways, and I would not be a good foster parent if not for her.

Sadly, many marriages suffer during the foster process. When you are putting much of your energies and time into your foster child, you may be so drained and exhausted that you soon neglect your spouse.

Further complication this, some foster children are skilled at pitting one parent against the other, bringing some heated and very unproductive arguments to your home. Make sure that you and your spouse are on the same page with your parenting, and ensure that the two of you are consistent when it comes to all decision making with your foster child. Finally, do not neglect the needs and concerns of your spouse. Instead, make your marriage the cornerstone of your home, and work to make it a productive and happy one. Although it may be difficult to schedule, foster parents need to try and have a Date Night with their spouse on a regular basis. I understand that this can be quite difficult, and I struggle to do this, as well. Yet, whether this is once every two weeks once a month, or a similar example, spouses need to have time alone to recharge their foster batteries, have time to talk without the constant interruption of children, and simply to re-connect with each other and listen to the wishes and frustrations each has. Anniversaries, birthdays, and other important dates should not be forgotten by the foster father, as this usually leads to some heavy apologizing afterwards. Indeed, foster



parents should make a commitment to their marriage and make time for it each day in some way. Express appreciation for all the work your partner does. Maintain a positive sense of humor. Learn the fine art of compromise; practice forgiveness and learn to fight fair. These are all practices a healthy foster father should employ. Remember, there should be no shame in seeing a marriage counselor with your spouse. Sometimes, a listening ear and a helpful word can aid in creating a healthier marriage. If we do not take care of marriage, we may very well become filled with anxiety, grow weary, and face burnout. To be sure, I have experienced those feelings, at times, as well. When we do take time for ourselves, for our marriage, and our own children, we not only help ourselves and our family, we also help the foster children living in our homes. May you all take time for marriage, and may you all continue to care for children in need. -Dr. John DeGarmo

Author: Dr. John DeGarmo is a foster and adoptive father. He has been a foster parent for 12 years, with over 40 children coming through his home. He is the author of many books, including *The Foster Parenting Manual*, and the upcoming foster children's book *A Different Home*. For more foster parenting tips and strategies, check out Dr. DeGarmo's book *The Foster Parenting Manual: A Practical Guide to Creating a Loving, Safe, and Stable Home*.



A poem composed by Brandy, age 15, for her foster parent

Sometimes I know the words to say
Give thanks for all you've done
But then they fly up and away
As quickly as they come.

How could I possibly thank you enough?
The one who makes me feel whole
The one to whom I should owe my life
The forming of a brand new soul.

The one who's there at nights
The one who helps me when I'm crying
The one who's continuously an expert
At picking up when I was lying.

The one who sees me off to school
And spent the days alone
Yet magically produced a smile
As soon as I came home.

The one who always makes sacrifices
To always put us first
Who lets me test my broken wings
In spite of how it hurts.

What way is there to thank you?
For your heart, your sweat, your tears
For the ten thousand things you've done
For oh-so many years.

For changing with me as I changed
For accepting all my flaws
For not loving cause you had to
But loving just because.

Thank you for the gifts you give



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I am a Foster/Adoptive Parent. I have fostered for _____ years.
(circle one)

I am with _____ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

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- Family Membership** (married foster or adoptive parents), \$35
- Supporting Membership** (individuals wishing to support our efforts), \$75
- Organization Membership**
(organizations wishing to support our efforts), \$150
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