

## Going green



March is upon us, and you may see a lot of green appearing on store shelves and in your clothing as St. Patrick's Day draws near. I recognize St. Patrick's Day by going green in a different way; I add one more eco-friendly habit to our household. I encourage you to celebrate St. Patrick's Day by going a little greener in your home, too. Below are some pocket book-friendly ways from Michele Borboa of SheKnows.com to add some green to your lifestyle:

- Save electricity
  - Don't heat an empty house. During the winter, turn down your thermostat to 68 degrees F when you're home and 55 degrees F at night and while you're away.
  - Turn your computer off at the end of the day. It still uses electricity when it is asleep.
  - Clean your refrigerator coils — vacuum out the dust and wipe with a damp cloth.
- Use cloth napkins instead of paper napkins at dinner.
- Buy your dog a hemp or canvas leash instead of nylon.
- Put your dryer lint in the backyard for the birds — they use it to feather their nests.
  - Take your own mug to the coffee shop — some shops will even give you a discount for bringing your own cup.
- Buy a new houseplant. Plants provide so many benefits to our lives!
- Recycle. Add another type of material to your recycling list! For instance, I learned that you can recycle the cans that canned foods come in. Check out the SheKnows.com Recycle Chart to figure out what can and can't be recycled.
- Start a compost pile in your backyard.
- Pick up litter as you're walking around. My mother-in-law does this everywhere she goes, and even made the local paper for her commitment to picking up litter.
- Pay your bills online (and opt for paperless billing) to reduce paper usage and postage costs.
- Use a manual can opener instead of an electric one.
- Buy a refillable container for your water or morning coffee. If you don't like tap water, buy one with a built-in filter to improve the taste.

By incorporating just one new idea into your habits, you can help the environment, your family's pocket book and enjoy St. Patrick's Day!

Source: <http://www.sheknows.com/home-and-gardening/articles/807479/52-cheap-ways-to-go-green>

Rachelle Roosevelt, executive director

## Kansas care providers of the month

### Dave and Ronda Cisney



Dave and Ronda Cisney are a committed foster family. They have only been a licensed foster home for a little over a year and have had their home filled with children ever since. They are committed to helping children and their families, while supporting and honoring the love that a family has. Dave and Ronda are mentors for the birth parents they work with in a way that offers support and confidence to the parent who sometimes feels down and out in their current situation. They give hope and love to kids who feel as though their struggle is too much. Dave and Ronda are very strong-willed and want every child that passes through their door to learn something from them and succeed. They understand the children they have in their home have come from tough situations; they just want to support them and try to make their home as family-centered as possible. They are very strong role models and just wonderful people all around.

Jill Fenstermacher, foster care worker

## Oklahoma care providers of the month

### Erin and Russell Houghtaling

Erin and Russell Houghtaling of Norman, Oklahoma are our latest foster parents of the month. The two siblings placed in their foster home were reunified this month with their biological parents. These children were the very first placement for the Houghtaling family when they opened their home in March 2014. They are the definition of Bridge Resource parents. The Houghtalings ensured the children attended weekly family counseling with their parents and helped the biological parents make the transition back into the home smooth for the children. They were great about keeping up with the kids' medical and educational needs the entire duration of their stay. The Houghtalings also made many appointments for various services in Shawnee (about a 45 minute drive one way) so that the biological parents could be involved with the kids' services. Erin and Russell are outstanding foster parents, and we are so proud to say they are TFI foster parents.



Katie Hacker, foster care worker

## Happy anniversary

### 10 years

Damon Williams & Stephanie Carter-Williams

### 5 years

Betty Cockhearn

Jeffery & Meadow Piepho

### 1 year

Robert & Julie Boatright  
Crystal Card  
Jeanne Chambers  
Roy & Sara Cook  
Jose & Kasey Delarosa  
Jason & Michaela Farquharson  
Rene Gonzalez &  
Elvia Rivera-Gonzalez

Scott & Denise Hines  
Russell & Erin Houghtaling  
Wayne & Cathy Hunter  
Casey Lesmeister  
David & Angela Leu  
Daniel & Tami Lewis  
Joel & Kimberly McCoy

Melissa Mietchen  
Bobby & Juelye Nelson  
Amy Sheffield  
Jamie Smith  
Denise Thorpe & Kristi Wilhelm  
Adam & Kodie Timberlake  
Judy Wade

## Compliance corner

### This month's tip | Health assessments

With all of the documentation and paperwork required each year, it can be confusing and difficult to remember everything needed to remain in compliance. Knowing what documentation to provide for health assessments can be particularly confusing. In keeping with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment regulations, each individual living in the foster home, with the exception of foster children, needs to have a health assessment within the year prior to application or within 30 days after the initial application. KDHE requires that all individuals in the foster home over the age of 16 have a tuberculosis, or TB, test with the results remaining on file in the foster home. KDHE does not require that these tests be completed annually unless there is concern of exposure. KDHE also requires that current immunizations be on file in the foster home for all children ages 0-18, unless there is an exemption on file in the home indicating that the child is not to receive immunizations. Because TFI is accredited through the Council on Accreditation (COA), we must also follow COA standards which require each adult caregiver in the home to have an annual health assessment. This includes foster parents, adult children who live in the home and provide care for the foster children and any other adult in the home who provides regular care for foster children.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your foster care worker or a licensing specialist.

### Oklahoma news

**Transport reimbursement:** Effective in February 2015, Oklahoma Department of Human Services increased the number of transports that foster families can submit for reimbursement from three to four per sibling group in your home.

**Spring break visits:** If you are planning to leave the state for a spring break trip with your foster children, be sure to obtain permission for out-of-state travel from DHS before you go!

**Tax breaks:** Remember to check with your tax professional about claiming your foster children and other tax breaks.

**Emergency plans:** Please double check that your disaster and emergency plan is up to date, as the spring storm season is upon us.

## Recruitment moment

Many years ago, a mentor of mine drilled something into my head that still sticks with me today, "retention is recruitment." I will never forget those words. Having a pool of well-prepared and supported families makes it possible for TFI to provide placement stability and permanency for children and youth in foster care. By actively and continually developing our foster families, we can help ensure that we have a pool of families who will be able to meet the needs of the children and youth they are parenting. Just as our staff need ongoing professional development in order to meet the ever-changing demands of their work, our families need ongoing development so they can feel competent in caring for children and youth, accessing appropriate and high-quality services and advocating for their children's needs.

We would love to hear from you on other ways we can succeed in keeping our TFI foster family base the strongest in the state. Please submit your top three wish list ideas that you think could help make you a better foster parent. Send an email to [recruitment@tfifamily.org](mailto:recruitment@tfifamily.org) before March 15, and we will analyze the results of the survey. TFI would like to thank you for all you do day in and day out for the kids in your care. Always remember — for every foster family you refer to TFI that becomes a licensed, certified home you will receive a \$500 incentive. Happy recruiting and we look forward to hearing from you.

Jason Cecil, director of regional recruitment

After hour emergencies, please call 877-921-4114.

For the most current calendar for Kansas Children Alliance Training, go to [childally.org/training.html](http://childally.org/training.html)

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## Foster family living: Six ideas for springtime family fun

As the weather begins to warm up, most children are begging for outdoor fun. They have been pent up all winter and are ready to get out and explore. With the new flowers blooming and sun peeking from the clouds, it's a perfect opportunity to enjoy the warm weather together and learn about nature, too. Here are six springtime family fun activities to get you started.

1. **See the animals.** Check out a nearby farm or zoo where children will love to see and interact with animals. A farm can teach more about local animals, how we get our food and maybe even the chance to pet a few, such as goats or sheep. A zoo will expand their animal knowledge by showing them a variety from all over the globe. Animal sanctuaries are also great if you live near one.
2. **Visit a garden.** Venture to a local garden and take in all of the beautiful blooming flowers. Small kids can learn more about colors while older children discover different types of plants. They may also be exposed to insects, birds and

small mammals while there.

3. **Head to a park.** A picnic in your local park is one of the most affordable springtime family activities. Children can chase Frisbees, ride bikes or check out the birds and bugs around them — for free! A national park can be even more exciting and educational. Both types of parks are great memory makers, so be sure to pack a camera.
4. **Drive down to the lake.** If you've had your fill of grass and plants, a trip in a boat or wading off the beach can be a great alternative for your children. Being surrounded by water is always fun and different than standing on land.

The water brings with it many new animals and birds that your kids may not see anywhere else, not to mention fishing can be a lot of fun!

5. **Take a camping trip.** Spending the night in the woods is a completely new experience for spring. Most children love sleeping under the stars, curled up in a sleeping bag or a tent. Campfire cooking is an experience of its own, and the opportunity to make s'mores is fun, too!
6. **Go on a nature walk.** If the idea of an overnight in the forest doesn't excite you, a day of hiking through the woods might. Give the kids a camera and let them have fun taking photos of things they see. This keeps the outing fun, and the photos can be good discussion pieces later when you are back at home.

Source: <http://southerngirlramblings.com/springtime-family-activities/#ixzz3RZG0xovX>

Anne Reicheneker, LMSW, east region director of foster care and adoption services

