

Between Families

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**November
2013**

Foster Family Matters **Managing Holiday Stress in a Foster Home**

The holiday season can be a time filled with parties, presents and happy family memories. For children in foster care, however, the holidays can also be a difficult reminder of the grief and loss they have experienced by being removed from their birth family. Children and youth in foster care may often feel left out of a foster family's traditions and celebrations despite the family's best efforts to make them feel included. It can also be a painful reminder of what they are missing by not celebrating with their birth family. These family get-togethers can also lead to the child worrying or feeling sad for what their birth mom and/or dad might be missing by not being with them during the holidays.

It is important for foster families to prepare for and be aware of things they can do to help children in foster care navigate through the holiday season. The following recommendations were taken from "The Foster Parenting Toolbox" 2012:

- Don't assume that the child celebrates the same holidays that you do. Ask.
- Find out what traditions the child had in his or her home and incorporate one or two into your celebration (with their permission).
- Start a new tradition and explain how they are a part of it.
- Share stories of previous holiday celebrations.
- Document the celebration with pictures and create a scrapbook or include pictures in the child's Lifebook that the child can take with them when they leave the foster home.
- Be supportive of birth family visits over the holiday or include them in your own holiday celebrations if appropriate.

It is also important to be mindful of how hectic schedules and changes to routine can lead to increased stress for families and children. By preparing children in advance for what to expect with changes in routine and keeping the routine as close to usual as possible, this can be minimized. Limiting your own schedule can also reduce the chaos in the home and leave you more available to attend to the increased needs of the children in your care during this time.

It can also be a good idea to schedule an extra therapy session or two during the time surrounding the holidays to be prepared for difficult feelings that can emerge regarding loss and grief during the season.

As always, be sure to take care of yourself - pay attention to your own needs and feelings during the holiday season. Engage in activities that you and your family enjoy and find relaxing. Taking care of yourself helps keep your mind and body healthy and prepared to deal with stressful situations.

Submitted by Anne Reicheneker, LMSW- Northeast Region Foster Care Director- Kansas



**Devoted
to the Strength
of Family**

Foster Family Anniversaries

One Year

*Christopher and Deanna
Myers*

Dixie Secrest

Buddy and Elizabeth Willis

*Jacob Bollhoefer and Carissa
Shaffer*

Terry and Rachel Forsberg

Henri Jean Howie

Penina Ruto

John and Dixie Covington

Donna Njuki

James and Bonnie Stolen

Michael and Deana Zigler

Todd and Hayley Ramsey

*Nanina (Ryan) Karunaratne
and Chantal Gunawardhana*

*Ernest Voigtlander and Vandy
Hamrick*

Dana Badders

Dan and Shannon Woods

Tina Hannah

Brandon and Jovoli Clark

Robert and Ali Cecchini

Derek and Theresa Gay

Aaron and Freda Felton

Peggy Crawford

Three Years

Brent and Melissa Hutton

Jonathan and Darla Wright

Sabrina Preeo

Annette Sykes

Fredrick and Marcia John

Larry and Cathryn Wenthe

Charles and Mary Carter

Ryan and Mary Severt

Mark and Kelli Sutton

Five Years

Joshua and Kristi Hecker

Brian and Amanda Dreasher

Barbra Ricke

Robin Smith

Tracee Jackson

Charles and Emily Sharp

Ten Years

Travis and Angela Arnold

Recruitment Moment

A Sincere Thank You

We'd like to take this month's Recruitment Moment space, not to ask you for anything, but to instead recognize some amazing foster families who came together on a recent weekend to help their foster care worker (and each other) raise awareness about the need for foster families in Western Kansas. Foster parents Peggy Crawford, Dan Richters, and Dolores Gonzalez accompanied their Foster Care Worker, Sharon Burnett, on a mission to distribute fliers and share their stories while a couple of other families and friends (Danica Hellner and Michelle Solarzano) provided child care to the families' combined 14 children. The families obtained T-shirts that declared they were "Proud to be a TFI Foster Parent!" and dedicated their day to supporting each other and helping raise awareness. We, at TFI, would like to express our most sincere gratitude to these families for their commitment to finding resources for children in need. Thank you!

*Submitted by Tabitha Rosebrough-Reavis, LMSW, Director
of Kansas Recruitment Services*



Care Provider of the Month

Jeffrey Cammarata and Courtnie Scott-Cammarata

Jeffrey Cammarata and Courtnie Scott-Cammarata have been chosen as the Care Provider of the Month. They have been fostering for less than a year but have proven themselves to be an excellent resource for children in need. Jeffrey and Courtnie took in two siblings from a sibling set of six shortly after receiving their license, and it wasn't long before they moved into a larger home and increased their license to four. Within a couple of months, Jeffrey and Courtnie took in two additional siblings of their current placement. They faced many challenges in growing from a family of four to a family of six but have adapted remarkably well, and the children have benefited as a result.

One of the things that I appreciate most about Jeffrey and Courtnie is that they truly love and care about the youth in their home. They have proven to be great advocates and work hard to ensure that all needs are known and met. Jeffrey and Courtnie consistently go above and beyond, not only for the four children in their home, but for the children's other two siblings as well.

Jeffrey and Courtnie partner well with agencies, assist with transportation, partner with the biological family and have the youth involved in community activities. They are a true asset and I'm so thankful that I get to work with them.

Submitted by Erin Ward, LMSW, Foster Care Worker

National Adoption Month

One Family's Foster to Adopt Story

November is National Adoption Month and TFI Family Services has many wonderful foster families who have also adopted. We'd like to take a moment to share the story of one of them with you.

Michael and Cyndi Antoni first licensed with TFI in September, 2003. They fostered for a couple of years and then, in 2005 they added two sisters, Jasmyn and Caitlyn, to their family permanently through adoption. A few years later, in July, 2008, they adopted a third child named Dylan. Michael and Cyndi, with three adopted children and one biological daughter named Jeci, chose at that time to discontinue fostering and focus on the family they believed to be complete. However, in March 2013, they relicensed with TFI as a foster family for a child with whom Michael had worked one-on-one providing supportive mental health services. The child had a history of struggling to maintain steady placement in foster care, but Michael and Cyndi chose to add him to their family in March,

2013, and they are now in the process of adopting him.

When asked about their experience with adoption, the Antoni's said, "Adoption has impacted our lives in more ways than we could have ever imagined. All of our children, regardless of whose belly they were carried in, know their birth stories. We embrace our differences and incorporate each person's strengths to unify our family. God has a plan for each of us and though our family has not grown in the traditional way, we are a family. We love each other whole-heartedly and unconditionally. We thank TFI staff for being there throughout our journey. Their kindness and knowledge has made this process more manageable."

TFI thanks Michael and Cyndi, along with all of our other foster-to-adopt families for making this life-changing choice and dedicating themselves to improving the lives of children in more ways than one.

Submitted by Kayla Schultz, LMSW, Foster Care Worker

Welcome Foster Families

Amanda Keller

Adam and Ashley Ferguson

David and Ronda Cisney

Lynne Snodgrass

Dale and Dawn Dolezal

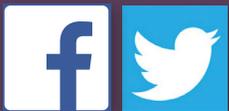
Brad and Jennifer Stallbaumer



After hour emergencies, please call 1-877-921-4114.

For the most current calendar for Kansas Children Alliance Training, go to: www.childally.org/train/foster-training/

Visit www.tfifamilyservices.org for more helpful information.



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Foster Family Living

Who doesn't love playing with bubbles? They're cheap to buy, easy to make and they delight children from one to 92! But did you know that playing with them can help children with a wide variety of developmental skills, something with which many children in foster care may need some assistance?

Besides the fine and gross motor skills required to physically handle the wand and blow (then pop!) bubbles, sensory processing skills (the body's ability to take in information gained through sight, sound, hearing, touch, etc. and make sense of it) are also developed. Bubbles are gentle and can tickle the skin; they float randomly and their iridescence causes them to change colors. They can be sticky and feel funny. The simple physical act of blowing a bubble also helps a child practice deep breathing, which can help the child calm down and focus.

Bubbles can also be a fun way to practice social and communication skills and following directions! You can give directions on how to pop the bubbles with each turn (clap them, poke them, squeeze them, jump on them) or help identify body parts (pop with your finger, your elbow, your knee or your nose). Children can practice taking turns, keeping personal space between their bodies so they don't bump into or knock each other over, and using manners when asking for "more, please" without even realizing they are tackling developmental tasks.

Share the benefits of this simple, inexpensive activity with your whole family. Children love it when the adults in their lives know how to have fun. You might even be able to convince that sulky teenager to join in on the fun with the younger children and turn a beneficial activity into a happy memory!

Submitted by Tabitha Rosebrough-Reavis, LMSW, Director of Kansas Recruitment Services

