

## It's time to reset and recharge

The holiday season is behind us. Sometimes the best of this season is when we have moved through it. Not that we do not appreciate the spirit, relationships, family and friends ... but let's face it, the holiday season can be a lot of extra work. This extra work often multiplies for foster families. While you work through schedules with your family, you also work through staff schedules, biological family schedules, child holiday stressors, holiday parties and so much more. So now is a time to try and reset, review and recharge. But how does one do this?

Many people believe in setting New Year's resolutions. Still no matter what you call them, setting some goals for your new year can help you start on track and stay on track. So what is a foster parent to do that might be different in setting these? It is really nothing other than your special perspective on things as a foster parent. Here are some examples of what this might mean.

### **Plan for self-care**

This seems straight forward enough for anyone. However, as a foster parent, it is often hard to make the time and plan for it. For those who have attended any of the TFI foster family retreats over the last several years, you will recall some form of self-care in each one. We know the importance in our everyday lives for this and it is only that much more important for you as a foster parent.

Take time for yourself, your marriage and your family.

Take turns as parents doing the weekly shopping by yourself for that 30-45 minutes of alone time.

Plan for and enjoy the 15-30 minutes you drive alone in a day. Maybe get an audiobook to

fulfill that desire to read with no time to do it. Plan date nights, even if they are done at home by occupying the kids in another activity while you and your significant other have a more peaceful dinner or movie. Overall, planning these little items helps keep you balanced.

### **Make lasting connections**

Really this is at the heart of what you do as a foster parent. Whether a child stays in your home for weeks, months or years, you can make a lasting impression. The littlest things can be of big significance to a foster youth. Taking a little time to help them review their life book, your family photos, or their hopes and expectations upon first arriving in your home helps set the groundwork for the connection. These are things often done naturally by foster parents, and when planned, practiced and made routine, they become a part of the family dynamic.

### **Have a voice: advocate**

Striving to help foster children in your home get the support they need is such a big part of what you do. Understanding and knowing how to do this can make it easier. Your foster care worker, their supervisor and TFI are all here to help with this piece. Your voice does not have to stand alone with the school, the case management agency, the court or others.

### **Touch your community**

So often people resolve to help in the community but do not know where to begin. As a foster parent, you already did it! You impact the lives of the most vulnerable population by opening your home. So letting your community know about this is the easiest next step to touching others. Be a voice for the needs of youth in foster care at school or church. Recruit others to help kids. The need for more foster parents is always there and you are the best recruiter. Even those families not able or interested in fostering can still be touched by your efforts. Maybe they are the ones who donate to support local foster parent meetings, provide holiday gifts to kids, volunteer or any number of other things that can improve your community. Foster parents touch the lives of both the children in their home and members of their community when they celebrate it with others.

Remember, fostering is about caring for others while also caring for you. Each day you have the opportunity to:

Foster hope. Foster love. Foster care.

Gaven Ludlow

Vice President, Foster Care



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## KANSAS Care provider of the month Chris & Kelly Diller



Chris & Kelly Diller have been foster parents since March 2014. They take boys and girls from birth through age 16. As soon as they became foster parents they were surprised at the amount of phone calls they received for children needing placement. Their hearts went out to all of those kids needing a home. The first set of siblings they took in was a boy and girl who were grade school and middle school age. Both children have developmental delays and mental health issues. The Dillers dove right

in and have worked with the daycare, the schools and the mental health center to meet these children's needs. Kelly even took the training and became the educational advocate for both children. The Dillers also took another sibling group of three. They had to get an exception on their license in order to have five children in their home, but they did it to keep the siblings together. The Dillers bought a bigger vehicle so they could all ride in one vehicle. They bought a new bunk bed for the boys' room to allow more space for playing in their room.

The Dillers attend all the kids' medical appointments. They even stayed overnight in Kansas City to stay with one of the kids while she was having testing done at Children's Mercy Hospital. In fact, they have made a few trips to Children's Mercy Hospital.

The Dillers buy the kids new clothes, shoes and coats as often as they would their own children. The children have multiple pairs of shoes and get new clothes at least monthly. The Dillers keep the kids involved in activities like football, bowling, youth group, church and Special Olympics. The Dillers take the kids out to eat and to the movies. On the child's birthday, that child gets to pick out what he or she wants to do and that is what the family does for an activity. For one of the kids' birthdays this year, they went to Wichita to Chuck E. Cheese's. The Dillers treat these children as if they were their own children.

Christine Denney, BS, Foster Care Worker

## OKLAHOMA Care provider of the month Mark and Heather Arnold

Mr. and Mrs. Mark and Heather Arnold were approved as foster parents just six months ago. At the time of their approval Mrs. Arnold did not want any children over age 1 because her 17-year-old was having hip surgery and her husband was also having surgery. However, when intake called at the end of August about two brothers, with one being an infant and the other 5 years old, Mrs. Arnold opened up her home because she did not want the children to be split up.



While the boys are not able to have visits with their parents, they have two brothers, ages 13 and 15, who were adopted into a tribal home a few years ago. Mrs. Arnold

has been proactive in transporting the younger boys three and a half hours one-way to visit their older siblings, and in getting the 5-year-old into therapy. He started therapy in September to deal with things that he had witnessed prior to removal. Since beginning therapy, he has settled into the home and is no longer afraid all the time. He is also playing basketball, and Mrs. Arnold is his coach. Mr. and Mrs. Arnold are also working with the children to learn about their tribal culture (Choctaw) through books and working with the school.

Jamie Richardson

### Oklahoma news Guidelines for reporting injuries

"Now, where did that bruise come from? When do I call the abuse hotline?"

Have you ever said those words? It is not uncommon for children to have accidents or bruises that we just don't know where they came from. It is important, though to document these accidental and unexplained injuries to foster children. It helps to reduce the risk of your being reported for abuse or neglect and keeps the child's worker aware of the child's health. Oklahoma Department of Human Services recently implemented a new injury documenting process. The foster parents are encouraged to notify both their TFI worker and the child's worker of any injuries and the child's worker

will document the incident. The child's worker and/or your TFI worker may visit the child to be able to view the injuries and document what happened, if known. You no longer need to call the DHS abuse hotline for accidental or unexplained injuries.

Small childhood play bruises and scratches to areas other than the head, face, neck, ears, stomach and genitalia do not need to be reported. If the accidental or unexplained injury is an injury to a child under the age of 5 to their head, face, neck, ears, stomach or genitalia, it will need to be reported to the hotline. This change will reduce the number of calls being made to the

Oklahoma DHS hotline and allow for a more timely response when there are true concerns of abuse or neglect to children.

If you suspect any child has been abused or neglected, regardless of the injury observed, you must report this to the hotline and the child's worker (if the child is in foster care). To contact the abuse and neglect hotline, call 800-522-3511. You should also contact your TFI worker if you are reporting abuse or neglect of a foster child. For further information, please contact your TFI worker at 877-931-1069.

# Happy anniversary

10 years

Violet Madlock

5 years

Tracy Sharp-Marion  
Gregory & Sonya Karpe

1 year

Justin & Cristen Black  
Nola Jones  
Eddie Boykins  
Jason & Mary Krantz  
Harvey & Kerri Jacobs  
Andrew Paciorek & Samantha  
Beck-Paciorek

Sara Murray  
Jason & Desiree Goans  
Daniel & Crystal Delarosa  
Cezanne Weis  
Orlando & Lakiesha Harvey  
Bob & Martha Smith

## Compliance corner

### THIS MONTH'S TIP | High risk activity participation guidelines

Families often times want to include foster children in their favorite activities. This might involve participation in high risk recreational activities such as horseback riding, riding four wheelers and motorcycles, hunting, boating or skiing, to name a few. Some extracurricular sports, such as football and gymnastics, are also included in this category. In order for children in care to partake in such activities which pose an increased risk for injury, approval from the birth parent, the child's case worker and the foster care worker must be obtained. Birth parent approval is often overlooked, as birth parents may be unavailable, unwilling or their whereabouts are unknown. The Kansas Department of Health & Environment requires that birth parent approval be obtained before a child in care is allowed to engage in any high risk activity. If a birth parent is absent or unwilling to give approval, then a child in care is not able to participate in such activities. In keeping with KDHE regulations, foster parents must have a signed high risk activity approval form on file for each child in care which identifies the specific high risk activity.

Please let your foster care worker or licensing specialist know if you have any questions!

## Recruitment moment

### *Everyone is a recruiter*

Whenever you hear the word "recruitment" you probably think working a Saturday, sitting at a booth or hanging up flyers around town. Guess what else it is? Recruitment is informing people about a real need, involving children in their community and asking them to get involved. You can recruit by doing what you are already doing right now; being a great foster parent. Talk to your foster children's teachers, therapists and other supporters. Ask your employer if you can hold a meeting in the break room and answer questions about foster care. Want to go to your place of worship or businesses in town? Call your worker and they will get you connected with staff help and recruitment materials. Recruitment isn't just handing out pens and pencils. It is making a deeper connection where you already have an audience.

**Angi Webster**  
Recruitment Specialist

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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## 200 kids benefit from one church's generosity

It may take a village to raise a child, but it only took one church to make 200 wishes come true. One month ago, Pastor Joe Boyd and the congregation of Aviator Church in Derby, Kansas were asked to sponsor some local TFI children in a TFI Angel Tree. The church agreed. When it became apparent that there were more children in need served by the Wichita office, the church said, "let the little children come to us." "We have a real heart for kids in foster care," said Lisa Woolsey, director of children's ministry at Aviator Church, "and when we were approached with the idea of sponsoring an entire Angel Tree and not just a few kids, we thought it would be a fantastic way for our congregation to get involved and make a difference one child at a time."

Make a difference they did. The church's congregation purchased gifts for all of the children from Sedgwick, Butler, Sumner, Saline, Harvey, Marion, Reno and Clay counties. There were 176 children in all. As gifts began to pile up under the church's 20-foot tree over the next month, 24 more children came into care. The good people acted again and donated several gift cards to supplement their already generous giving. Not one child served out of the Wichita and surrounding offices will go without a little bit of holiday joy this year.

Thank you, Aviator Church, from our hearts to yours.

Angi Webster, Recruitment Specialist

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## Foster family living: Indoor winter fun activities for kids

With the holidays behind us, the kids may start to feel cooped up inside as the winter months drag on. Here are some creative ways to engage children in fun, family activities during the winter months.

1. **Indoor picnic.** Throw a blanket on the floor and enjoy a meal or snack on the floor. You can involve stuffed animals and dolls in the fun as well. Consider a winter hot cocoa picnic by using a white blanket and cotton balls placed near the fireplace while enjoying hot cocoa and cookies.
2. **Indoor ice skating.** All you need is some wax paper, rubber bands and carpet. You secure the wax paper over a child's feet or shoes with rubber bands. It is slippery but lots of fun!
3. **Coffee filter snowflake blizzard.** If you have coffee filters and scissors you can make snowflakes and hang them from string all over the house for an indoor blizzard.
4. **Bake cookies.** Kids love to help in the kitchen and you can even make it educational along the way by teaching them how to read, measure and follow a recipe.
5. **Newspaper snowman.** When the snow isn't falling make snowmen inside out of newspaper. Roll newspapers into balls for the body of the snowman and decorate with household items such as scarves and hats and construction paper.

6. **Marshmallow tinkertoys.** A bag of marshmallows and pretzel sticks are all you need to build the perfect 3-D house or tepee. Your child simply skewers the sticks to create a unique design.
7. **ABC bingo.** Cut out various simple photos like apples, guitars, lizards, potatoes, etc., from magazines and newspapers. Glue them to a piece of cardstock and use M&Ms as the bingo markers. Then randomly select a letter of the alphabet and the child places a marker on the photo of the item that begins with that letter.
8. **A trip down memory lane.** Spend time together looking at old family photos and videos and work on a child's life book!
9. **Homemade winter cottage.** With a large cardboard box and a few craft supplies, kids can be entertained for hours. Cut out holes for the doors and windows and let the kids decorate with markers, ornaments and even fake snow on the roof.
10. **Watch a winter themed movie.** Spend some time snuggled up on the couch watching a family favorite movie together on a cold day.

Some ideas listed are adapted from parents.com and innerchildfun.com.

Anne Reicheneker, LMSW  
East Region Director of Foster Care and Adoption Services