



Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
February 2011



The 411 on Social Media, Networking and Texting!

By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin/The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center

"I get frustrated when my niece and nephew are tappity tap tapping away in their own worlds," says Johnnie, a relative caregiver and foster parent. "I feel left out, until I remember that I really wasn't so different when I was that age. We didn't have cell phones and computers, but we still had our own worlds and, above all, we wanted our privacy."

What Exactly Is Social Media, Anyhow?

Social media is any form of communication between people and the internet. It's a large list of online activities that include:

- Talking (using Voice Over Internet Protocol or VOIP)
- Sharing media files like pictures and videos
- Social networking
- Video gaming
- Web logs or "blogs"

While many of us are familiar with *Facebook* or *YouTube*, in reality, there are too many social media outlets to mention. Focus on the popular websites for now, but know that what's popular can change quickly, and you always want to stay a little ahead of your kids if possible. (Or okay, not too many steps behind.)

Popular Social Technology Definitions and Destinations

Social Networking websites like *Facebook* and *MySpace* are used as ways to communicate, share pictures, music and videos. *Facebook* has become increasingly popular over the past five years and has millions of users worldwide. It requires users to have an individual e-mail account and be above the age of 13.

Once a person has a *Facebook* account, he or she can "friend" people by accepting requests. The site has several security settings that may hide or not hide each user's information.

For example, in the Spring of 2010, *Facebook* changed its default settings to make it much easier for people to see other people's information, but a lot of people weren't aware of the change that took place. It's crucial to know how to set and check account settings.

Blogs are basically online journaling websites. A blog is similar to *Facebook* and *MySpace*, but is more focused. Think of a blog as an online diary or an extended holiday newsletter. There are privacy settings for blogs so you can control who can view them. Blogs can display pictures, text, videos and links to other sites.

MMOGs (Video Gaming) stands for Massively Multiplayer Online Game. Some of the popular games are *Crossfire*, *World of Warcraft*, *Doom* and *SimCity*. Today's MMOGs can have thousands of users worldwide playing one specific game online at a time. Often MMOGs are played on computers, cell phones and with video game units like the Xbox, Wii and PlayStation.

Johnnie says she didn't realize at first that when her kids started to play online video games, they were also "chatting" with other players. That "chat" led to her niece talking (on her cell phone) to a person claiming to be a 24-year-old man in Texas (or possibly a 45-year-old woman in Arizona since no one really knows anything about anyone online). This

person ultimately told Johnnie to butt out—he was going to marry her niece as soon as she turned 18. "And this," says Johnnie, "is how today's world is not at *all* like the world I grew up in as a teen!"

Instant Messaging (IMing) is a way to communicate with others online. The cool thing about IMing is that you can have online real time text chats (private conversations) with one or more people. IMing can be done within browsers such as Yahoo or with services like Twitter or AOL.

Certain websites like *Skype* let users have conversations using video calling technology, as well, if you have a video camera. There is a specific IM text language known as SMS language, which stands for Short Message Service. If you understand what LOL means, then you've already encountered this language. BTW (by the way) LOL means "laughing out loud."

Text messaging or texting is a form of communication between cell phones over cell phone networks. Texting also uses SMS language and is extremely popular. Many people find texting quicker and more effective than talking.

Video and picture sharing websites like YouTube, Flickr and Photobucket let account users upload videos and pictures from various electronic devices like cell phones, cameras and video recorders. *YouTube* is a public website, and users are allowed to watch videos without having an account. To post something on *YouTube*, however you need to set up an account, and that allows you to control privacy settings. *YouTube* videos can also be shared and cross-posted on other websites.

Twitter is a social networking service that allows users to provide small updates, messages or entries using less than 140 characters using the SMS text language. The messages, once posted, are called "tweets." Twitter also allows users to cross-post and share on other websites.

Forums and message boards provide places on the internet for people to discuss, meet or ask questions, usually about one main subject. There are thousands of message boards and forums. Some require that you become a member and have a user name and password before joining. Forums and message boards are not done in real time, meaning users have to wait for others to read their message and respond.

One message board you might want to encourage your child to go to is <http://fyi3.com/>, which is run by FosterClub. There's also a message board on the same site for foster parents.



Pre-Placement Training for Prospective Foster Parents

Monday, February 7, 2011 6-9 PM

Monday, February 21, 2011 6-9 PM

Starting in March Prospective Foster Parents need to do Part 1 of the training on the following website:

<http://www.wcwt.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training>

We will then meet to discuss the learning points and to answer your questions.

Thursday, March 31, 2011 6-9 PM

All Classes are held in the Brookfield Room G137 in the Human Services Center located at 500 Riverview Avenue.

Please enter the building at door 6. Call Shari Rather at (262)548-7267 to register.



Jesse's Corner

Jesus Mireles
Manager of the Children and
Family Division

In this edition of our Foster Parent Newsletter, I am focusing on the impact of adoption on children and families. Over the past few months I have heard from adoptive parents with questions and concerns about adoptive children and the issues they are having. I also heard from some foster children, now adults, wanting to find out more about their adoption. In addition, I read some articles over the weekend about adoptions that did not succeed and the impact it had on everyone involved. As some of you may know there are different types of adoptions such as international adoptions, stepparent adoption and foster home conversion/special needs adoption, etc. In many cases, our Department is not involved in these adoptions so we are not familiar with the individual child or adoptive families. When those families come to our attention, our first priority is to get some background information and find out what has been happening since the adoption took place. In some cases, the adoptive parents are frustrated and upset with the child's behavior and are on the verge of giving up and wanting the child removed. In those situations, we try to "take a step back" and identify immediate interventions that will reduce the stress on the adoptive child and their parents. Like any family we work with, our efforts are to maintain the child safely at home. In those situations, we try to work with the entire family to give them strategies, services, support and more importantly "hope" that things will improve and get better. For some this is too late and they are unwilling or unable to work on the issues. I think these families have reached the breaking point and feel their only option is to have their adoptive child removed from the home. When that occurs, we get involved in the Juvenile Court process and pursuing another permanency plan for the child. As you can imagine, this is difficult to do, especially if the child has a strong bond and connection to the adoptive family and their community. Before any of this occurs, I would strongly encourage you and anyone interested in adopting to seek counseling and support prior, during and after an adoption. Many agencies provide counseling and support in the community. A resource that is valuable and would be helpful is the Adoption Resources of Wisconsin | 6682 W. Greenfield Avenue | Suite 310 | Milwaukee | WI | 53214. Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Inc. *Creating Families, Changing Lives* Office: 414-475-1246; 1-800-947-8074. I think they are willing to listen and provide information that might be helpful. Please consider contacting them as needed. My hope is that adoptive parents can get the assistance and support they need in order to have a successful adoption.

In closing I would like to THANK GE Medical Systems, Menomonee Falls Garden Club, Quad Graphics, Queen of Apostles Catholic Church in Pewaukee (St. Vincent De Paul Committee) Oconomowoc Junior Women's Club and the Cardiology Association of Waukesha for their generosity to the children that were in out of home care over the holidays. I would also like to THANK the Christmas Clearing Council of Waukesha County for the gifts they collected and gave to the children in foster care.

Jesse



Save the Date Shared Parenting Training

March 12, 2011

This is required for all foster parents who were licensed in 2010 and beyond.

Parent Cafés

March 15, 2011

May 17, 2011

July 21, 2011

September 22, 2011

November 17, 2011

Time: 5:30 to 8:30 PM

Location: Center for Excellence, N4W22000 Bluemound Rd, Waukesha
We provide FREE dinner and childcare.

Sponsored by: Waukesha County Health and Human Services & Waukesha Head Start

To register for childcare, RSVP, or for questions call, 262-548-8080.

Just a reminder that when attending Parent Cafés it counts as 2 hours of ongoing training.



Training Offered By Waukesha County



Foundation Training Winter 2011

Saturday, February 5, 2011

Impact of Trauma on Child Development 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Attachment 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Thursday, February 10, 2011

Placement and Separation 6:15 PM - 9:15 PM

Saturday, February 19, 2011

Positive Guidance and Discipline 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Effects of Fostering on the Family 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM

All classes are held at:

Waukesha County Human Service Center
Brookfield Room (Enter the Agency through Door #6)
500 Riverview Avenue, Waukesha, WI
Full day classes - lunch will be served

Register online at: southernpartnership.wisc.edu

Training

Parents Place Programs
262-549-5575
www.ppacinc.org

Prices for some classes may apply. Call 262-549-5575 to register. Free pre-registered childcare is available while attending most classes. Space is limited.

The Argumentative Child (Separate parent and child classes)

Tuesdays, February 1 - 22

6 - 7:30 p.m.

When parents get caught up in arguments with their children, they give away their power and expose that they don't know a better way to handle the situation. Put an end to parent-child arguments with these effective problem-solving techniques.

Kids Managing Anger (Separate parent and child care)

Mondays, February 7 - 28

5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Parents learn to deal with their children's anger and frustrations while children learn the tools to curb their anger as well. Parents will meet with a facilitator while the children are in their sessions.

Co-Creative Discipline: Teaching Children to Cooperate

Mondays, February 7 - 28

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

You may have trouble teaching children to cooperate by ordering, punishing, yelling, or lecturing. This course presents five key aspects of disciplining to replace methods you learned from your own parents that may not be working well with your kids.

Love and Logic®

Mondays, March 1 - 29

6:00 - 7:30 PM

Love and Logic is a philosophy founded by Jim Fay and Foster W. Cline, M.D., and provides simple and practical techniques to help parents have less stress and more fun while raising responsible kids. This curriculum provides immediate results with techniques like: setting limits with enforceable statements, sharing control through lots of small choices, and many more.

Positive Outlooks for Parents and Teens (Separate parent and teen classes)

Mondays, March 7 - 28

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Teenagers often present parents with extraordinary challenges. This program helps to improve the quality of parent-teen interaction, giving parents sufficient skills to manage disruptive, defiant and noncompliant behaviors. In separate groups parents and teens will learn how to negotiate conflicts, resolve problems and develop more effective communication skills.

The 411 on Social Media, Networking and Texting! Continued from Page 1

Safety

When talking about social technology or media, safety is a valid concern. Check out our tipsheet, *Internet Safety Tips for Caregivers*, that addresses safety-related issues and discusses *Family Internet Agreements*. <http://wifostercareandadoption.org/site/indexer/561/library/392/internetsafety.pdf>

Social Media Agreements

Social media agreements are a great way for foster families, social workers, birth families and youth to talk about how youth will use social media. Here are links to media agreements for certain ages.

Kindergarten to 5th Grade:

<http://commonsensemedia.org/common-sense-family-media-agreement-grades-k-5>

6th to 8th Grade:

<http://commonsensemedia.org/common-sense-family-media-agreement-grades-6-8>

High School

<http://commonsensemedia.org/common-sense-family-media-agreement-high-school>

Foster Care and Social Media Questions

Many foster parents have asked if there are any specific things that they should know about social media, networking and texting. While these topics are not specifically written in the Wisconsin Foster Care Handbook or Chapter 56 Foster Home Care for Children, there are a few basic principles that foster families should apply. Here are a few frequently asked questions:

How should I maintain confidentiality about the youth placed in my home on social networking websites like Facebook?

As a licensed foster parent, you must always maintain confidentiality about any youth placed in your home and their family. This means that pictures and any information about the youth placed in your home and their family should never be posted or written anywhere others have access to that information. This is especially important online for social media and social networking sites like Facebook. (For more about confidentiality, refer to the Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook in Chapter 2 page 8 at: <http://wifostercareandadoption.org/library/511/chapter2.pdf>)

If a youth in care owns a cell phone and/or portable gaming device before they came to my home, can they use those items all the time in my home?

If a youth in care owns a cell phone and/or portable gaming device before they came to my home, can they use those items belong to the youth and may not be damaged or destroyed.

The Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook (<http://wifostercareandadoption.org/library/511/chapter3.pdf>) says, "If foster parents have concerns about a child's choice in music, clothing or other recreational or personal items, they should discuss the situation with the child's caseworker."

Are youth in care allowed to have e-mail, Facebook accounts, blogs or YouTube accounts?

Yes, youth in care are able to have online accounts as long as they meet the minimum guidelines for the website. However, foster parents don't have to provide accessibility to the internet in their home. Many parents have opted to set up specific rules and guidelines about internet access for youth in their home.

A youth placed in my home is posting pictures and information about himself on a social networking website. Is this allowed?

Yes, youth in care are allowed to post pictures and information about themselves anywhere and anytime they want. Youth in care do not have to follow the confidentiality guidelines that licensed foster parents need to, except when it pertains to other youth in care in the home.

Am I allowed to develop or use a "Family Internet Safety Agreement" as a foster parent?

Yes! Parents need to stay educated about social media and have some household rules or guidelines for family members. Ideally, members of the youth's team will be part of the agreement, so that everyone is clear about

what's allowed and what isn't.

The Advantage of Social Technology

Social technology has provided many of us the ability to be more connected to each other than ever before. For most of our youth, this technology has become a part of their daily culture, and social media plays a big role in their life as they learn how to develop relationships and their identity.

Johnnie says, "When my niece got into some mischief while on *CrossFire*, my gut reaction was to restrict all internet and cell phone use. But her social skills aren't very good, and I actually found myself encouraging her to go on Facebook so that she could be 'friends' with the people at school and not be so isolated. They tend to ignore her at school, but Facebook is a kinder environment in some respects."

Johnnie goes on to say that she was able to use the *CrossFire* incident as a "teachable moment."

Some foster parents say a surprising bonus is being able to connect with their kids' birth parents. "It's been great!" says one parent. "They didn't respond to voice mail and e-mails, but they always text me right back. I use AOL's instant messenger for my computer to text their phones, and I get the texts back on my computer."

Even though we adults may not "get it," the technology available today will be the building blocks for future applications and social media interfaces.

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Books on the Nightstand Book reviews by Becky Burmester

I am still reading, but much more slowly. At age 60, I have decided what I want to be when I grow up, and so have started back to school. I've read that students in the community college system tend to be older than just out of high school, but you sure couldn't prove it to me looking at the students in my classes! I am the class great-grandparent. Textbooks are just as heavy both to carry and to read as they were 40 years ago.

Recently I have read a couple books that should be required reading for foster parents and for foster youth. Let me tell you about them.

Surviving the Storm

Surviving the Storm: the Life of a Child in Foster Care by Julia S. Charles is a wonderful book in a small package. Tipping the book scales at fewer than 100 pages, one might think it was a lightweight. To dismiss this book because of its brevity would be to squander the opportunity to really see things through the eyes of someone who has been part of the "system" and triumphed. Julia Charles carries the storm analogy throughout the book, including the dedication. Joe and I have been foster parents to several young people who are now out on their own, making it, but just barely. The "girls" are all getting a copy of this book in their Christmas stocking this year. It is short enough that they will read it (perhaps more than once), real enough that they will know that the author has "been there," and inspiring enough that they may think of Julia Charles at one of those times when everything seems just too hard.

The Women Who Raised Me

This work by Victoria Rowell differs from most of the books that I recommend in that it is a book that truly is about the women who raised her. My book club, which reads books by African American authors, chose this book for our August book discussion. This is the book to read if you are asking yourself whether you are making a difference. I like to think that I am a strong advocate for young people sharing our home, but Agatha Wooten Armstead was a force to be reckoned with. There were many important women in Victoria Rowell's life but none as determined as Agatha Wooten Armstead.

Rowell's memoir contains more information about the women in her life than about her own life. Members of my book club speculated that the author had not yet dealt with some of the issues in her past. Two members flatly stated that this book was a fairy tale. They simply could not relate to Victoria Rowell and the life she described. Only three of our eight members finished the book. Following the discussion one member said that she was going to finish the book; the others were turning it in and starting on something else.

People in this group know me as a foster parent. Claudia said that, except for this book and knowing Becky, she had never heard or read anything good about foster parents. For me, that moves it into the category of books my non-fostering friends ought to read.

I need to end this and hit those textbooks. What's on your night stand?

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February 2011 Foster Parent Spotlight

Amy and Eric Gruetzmacher



Amy and Eric met when they both played in the orchestra at their church. They dated for a little over a year before Eric proposed in March and they married in October 2001. Amy was a science teacher in high school and middle school for nine years and is currently a stay at home mom. Eric is a computer programmer. After

forward to fostering again.

Amy's advice to other foster parents is to know your limits, know what you and your family can handle it in a healthy way.

trying to have baby for a long time and through many different avenues, they adopted their son Isaac in 2008 from Bethany Christian Services. The family's open adoption with Isaac and their open relationship with his birthmother led to their interest in becoming foster parents.

On August 5, just three days after becoming a licensed foster home, Amy and Eric received their first foster care placement: a baby girl. Now six months old, Amy says her heart has bonded with this child while Eric is wrapped around the baby girl's finger. According to Amy, it is great that they are foster parents because Eric is such an amazing dad that children can benefit from him significantly. For their first fostering experience, Amy describes the situation as unique. She has become good friends with their foster child's birth mom who has been extremely cooperative. Their foster child currently visits her biological mom every weekend and most likely will be reunified with her in the near future. The Gruetzmacher's plan to stay in contact with their foster daughter and her family after she is reunited with her birth mother. Amy states that she would love to stay in touch with her foster daughter and be able to see her grow up.

Amy loves the feeling of giving back and making a difference that she receives from being a foster mom. She also enjoys the relationships she has made throughout the process. One of the most difficult aspects of being a foster parent, according to Amy, is how time consuming it can be. "You don't just foster a child, you also get their social calendar," Amy says, referring to court hearings, medical appointments and visitations. Even though fostering can be time consuming, Amy and her family love the experience of being a foster family and look



The **Milwaukee Bucks** have donated to us 100 tickets to the **Boston Celtics Game** on **March 6, 2011 at 8 PM** at the **Bradley Center**.

If you would like to attend please call or email Shari at either 548-7267 or srather@waukeshacounty.gov and she will send your tickets to you.

If you take tickets please use them, we will not get donations like this if people do not attend.

Special Thanks to:

- **GE Medical Systems**
- **Queen of Apostles/St. Vincent De Paul Committee**
- **Menomonee Falls Garden Club**
- **Quad Graphics**
- **Oconomowoc Junior Women's Club**
- **Pam Martin and the students in her class at Kettle Moraine High School**
- **Cardiology Associates of Waukesha**
- **And Christmas Clearing Council**

for the generous holiday gifts we received for the foster children of Waukesha County.

Contact Numbers:

Waukesha H & HS
262-548-7212

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911
Family Emergency: 211

Foster Parent Mentor
Jen Barcus..... 262-542-2926
Judy David..... 414-461-5403
David Mersfelder 262-542-2926
Nikki Mertens..... 262-246-6180

Lisa Roberts, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Mary Alice Grosser, Supervisor
Relative Licensing
262-548-7272

Shari Rather, Foster Care Coordinator
262-548-7267

Libby Sinclair
Relative Licensing
262-548-7277

December 2010 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
37 Children

Treatment Foster Care:
17 Children

Group Homes:
6 Children

Residential Care Facilities:
10 Children

Relative Placements:
44 Children

Relative Foster Homes:
19 Homes

Regular Foster Homes:
111 Homes

Total Homes Assisting Other Counties
17 Homes

For Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Support, please call:

FASPP
Norma Schoenberg
920-922-9627

Social Workers:

Jennifer Adler 262-548-7265

Bob Alioto 262-548-7262

Suzanne Arnold 262-548-7348

Angie Briggs 262-548-7275

Maria Maurer 262-548-7345

Susan Peck..... 262-548-7348

Janis Ramos..... 262-896-8069

Michael Reed..... 262-548-7347

Cindie Remshek 262-548-7639

Greg Rewolinski 262-548-7270

Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson 262-548-7273

Mark Sasso 262-548-7346

Linda Senger 262-548-7698

Deanna Stevlingson . 262-896-8570

Rick Wimmer..... 262-548-7359

We Need You!

For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov

262-548-7267

Or visit our website at www.waukeshacounty.gov
And follow the links to foster care.



Jack Saftro
Toyota•Ford•Lincoln•Mercury
Lexus•Infiniti•Scion