



Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
April 2009



Life Books: A Creative and Fun Way to Express Yourself From the Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center

Everyone has a personal story to share. Life books give you the opportunity to tell your story (for your own sake) and share your story with others (if you want to). A life book is all about you, and life books help you express who you are by documenting your history. They connect you with your past.

Regardless of how much or how little information you have; the goal remains the same: document as much as you can about your life and your history in your own personal life book. Your story is important. You are important!

Getting Started

A life book can begin with just a few items and can expand as you continue to collect items. Gather as much information as you can. You will not need stacks of photo albums or piles of personal documents in order to start creating your life book.

Talk with your social worker, your foster or adoptive parents, your birth family, extended family, friends, neighbors, mentors, teachers, tutors, therapists and anyone else who played a role in your life. Sometimes even people who only knew you casually might have some unexpected insight for you.

Let's call this group of people your support network. We all need people to support and encourage us. Talking with your support network about your past and present situation is the perfect place to discover information about yourself. Creating a life book is a team project, so make sure to get as many people involved that you can.

Life Book Pages

Now that you are ready to start your life book, the next step is to decide what items that you would like to include in your life book. Remember, this is your life book and you get to decide what you would like to include. Be creative, be expressive, and be committed to starting and completing your life book. Below are some suggestions that you can consider.

- **Pictures, pictures, pictures!** The old saying is, "A picture is worth a thousand words." This is absolutely true. Gather as many pictures as you can. Ask your support network for pictures of you, your family, siblings, your extended family, your pet(s), your friends, your school, your house, and any other people or places that are important to you.
 - If you aren't able to find a lot of pictures, then ask your friends and family to start taking pictures of you and you in turn, can take pictures of them for your book.
- **Search.** Think of this as a scavenger hunt and look for awards, certificates, report cards, diplomas, artwork, poems, writing assignments, school projects, honors, or any other important items from your past and present that you would like to include in your life book.
- **Express Yourself.** Life books are a way to express who you are and how you're feeling. When you enter information into your life book, remember that this is your personal book and you should be able to include whatever feelings or experiences that you



would like to add. You may be feeling sad, happy, frustrated, excited, angry, silly, no matter what feeling you are experiencing, this is your chance to express yourself! Think about answering some of these questions:

- What talents you possess?
 - What do you do well?
 - What are your interests?
 - What would your friends say about you?
 - What are you most proud of about yourself?
- **Time to express yourself!** Are you artistic? Do you have any hidden talents? If so, you could include poems, stories, artwork, website links, doodles, graphic designs, songs, letters, or any other creative expressive ideas that describe who you are and what is important to you.
 - **Capture your past.** Your history is important because your history is who you were and impacted who you have become. Sometimes it's helpful to make a timeline of when things happened in your life. You can consider adding some of these items into your life book, although there will also be many things you don't know from the list below:
 - Where you lived throughout the years?
 - Who were you living with?
 - What schools did you attend?
 - What were some of your first words?
 - When did you first walk?
 - What was your favorite toy?
 - Who were your neighbors?
 - Who were your friends?
 - What were your favorite activities?
 - What were your favorite classes?
 - Who were your favorite teachers?
 - What was your favorite family vacation?
 - What is your earliest memory?
 - What were the names of your pets?
 - What are some of your silliest childhood memories?
 - What is your favorite kid's song?
 - What was your favorite kid's game?
 - What are some of your favorite holiday memories?
 - What were some of your family traditions?
 - What were some of your special days and celebrations?
 - Who are some people that you are thankful for?



These are but a few examples of questions you can ask your support network and include in your life book. Make sure to capture you past milestones and special events in your life book.

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Jesse's Corner

Jesus Mireles
Manager of the Children and
Family Division

Noticing Acts of HONESTY

"We're home!" your teenager and his best friend say. When you ask how the movie was, they both say great. When you ask what they saw, they each give you different answers.

"You know, I'd never cheat," your daughter once told you. But you noticed that she brought home a test with a perfect score and you know that she didn't study or know the material well.

Unfortunately, cheating and dishonesty are more prevalent in our children than we would like. In a survey of 3,370 high school students, about 9 out of 10 said that cheating is common at their school. The number one reason for cheating; it's not a big deal.

Yet according to the Search Institute, honesty is a big deal, 63% of youth surveyed say they tell the truth even when it is not easy. And there's a difference between girls and boys, 69% of girls say they value honesty, whereas only 56% of boys do.

Modeling Honesty

Tips for modeling honesty for you child

- Correct the situation immediately when clerks give you too much money.
- Be honest in talking to telemarketers. Instead of just hanging up or making an excuse, just say, "No thank you. We're not interested." Then hang up.
- Admit when you've fudged the truth and apologize.

To instill the value of honesty, we need to talk about it, model it, and explain why honesty is an important value. Honest people are trustworthy, sincere, and genuine people. Honesty is a value worth having.

Three Ways to Help Your Child Value Honesty

1. Encourage family members to be honest with themselves. Honestly acknowledge feelings. Honestly admit successes and mistakes.
2. Don't overreact when your child lies to you. Children will lie if they fear your reaction.
3. Have family members discuss situations they observe at work, school, and on television where people act honestly and dishonestly.

When You Suspect Your Child Is Lying

Don't accuse your child. Instead, ask: "Do you think I believe you right now? Or do you think I might be struggling with believing you right now?" Give your child the opportunity to tell the truth.

Questions to Discuss With Your Child

- When do you find it hard to tell the truth? Why?
- What happened the last time you were honest when it would have been easier to lie?
- How can we make honesty our family policy?
— Reprinted in part from *ideas for parents*, Newsletter #36

I want to thank everyone who attended our annual Foster Care Roundtable Discussion in April. About 30 foster parents were in attendance as well as Shari Rather, Lisa Roberts and several Permanency Services staff. I provided some information about the "State of Foster Care in Waukesha County and Wisconsin" highlighting the budget challenges we currently face and anticipate in the future. As I mentioned, we've had budget reductions at the State and Federal level for the past several years and we anticipate future funding reductions. **The size of the State and Federal reductions have been so significant that the considerable support provided by Waukesha County officials cannot totally overcome the state and federal shortfalls.** As I shared with our foster parents, our primary responsibilities include ensuring the child's safety, permanency planning and child well-being. So how can a foster parent assist us during these challenging times? You can consider taking a child that may be outside your "comfort zone" such as a older child, teenager, sibling group or a child with special needs. Don't be surprised if our foster care coordinator, Shari Rather contacts you and asks if you'd be willing to take one of these placements. We will provide whatever additional support or services you may need to make this type of placement work so don't hesitate to ask your social worker. Another issues that I was asked to follow up with is "Shared Parenting" for the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare placements. As some of our foster parents mentioned they would like to provide shared parenting to children placed by the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW). We currently have fifteen (15) Waukesha County licensed foster homes providing foster care for BMCW. We will be communicating with BMCW staff about individual cases and determining how we can utilize your shared parenting skills to work collaboratively with the birth parent. We'll keep you posted on this issue. There were some other issues discussed so please contact your social worker or Shari Rather for an update.

Finally, with the increase use of computers, some parents and foster parents are emailing their social workers. I think we have over 90% of our foster parents with computers. Since we are a HIPAA covered entity, we need to protect the health records of our clients. As a result, if we send or reply to your email we cannot include any information that would identify the child or family. Just a reminder, all email about a specific child or family is part of the child or family record. So any thing you write will be put in the record and be available for "discovery" by the attorney's. If you have any specific questions about either of these issues please contact Shari Rather or your social worker.

Once again, thank you for you dedication and support of our foster care program!

Jesse

Pre-Placement Training for Prospective Foster Parents

April 2, 2009	6-9 PM
April 16, 2009	6-9 PM
May ?, 2009	6-9 PM
May ??, 2009	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.

Milwaukee Brewers Tickets Available April 30th vs. the Arizona Diamondbacks 7:05 PM

If you are interested in tickets, please contact Shari Rather at (262) 548-7267. Remember if you take tickets you are committing to attend the game. Last year several people took tickets and did not attend causing the Brewers Office to call us to let us know they could have sold the tickets that were not used and they were displeased with us. If we want to continue to receive these opportunities we need to go to the events we sign up for. If you take tickets it would be great to send a quick thank you note to the Brewers Office.



Life Books: A Creative and Fun Way to Express Yourself—Continued

- **Add your own personal flare.** You can liven up your life book by adding stickers, colored paper, decorative borders, stamps; as well as other scrapbooking supplies. Talk with your support network to discover if there are any scrapbooking or life book classes that you could attend to get more ideas or suggestions.
- **Cards and letters.** Do you have a collection of letters or cards from family members and friends? Have you ever written letters to important people in your life that you have never sent? These are examples of sentimental items that you could add to your life book.
- **Special keepsakes.** Personal mementos are items that you have saved that mean the world to you. Including things like ticket stubs (from a favorite movie, play, sporting event, musical, or concert), bits and pieces of a flower from a corsage; a program from a wedding; a special note from your mentor, a birthday card, or any other special keepsake that you would like to preserve in your life book. If it's too big to put in your life book — like a special teddy bear, Christmas ornament, necklace, quilt, etc. — then take a picture of it and put that in instead.
- **Are you a Techie?** If you or someone you know has computer skills, you might want to consider creating your life book on your computer. You could make a video recording of your life or a slide presentation.

Saving Your Life Book

However you decide to create your life book, be sure to make at least one copy of your life book. This is your history and you will work hard to create it and you have to take the extra steps to preserve your history.

Consider saving a copy on a computer and making extra paper copies to keep your copy in a safe and secure place. Remember that whatever you include in your life book will instantly become a masterpiece!

Time is on Your Side

Creating your life book will take time, energy, creativity and effort. A life book is more like a journey than a destination. As a result, take the time to gather information from your past to create a life book that you will cherish for years to come.

Remember that your life book is just that, yours. You can choose if and when you want to share your life book with others. Your life book will likely contain private information that you may not feel comfortable sharing with other people. This is perfectly fine. You have control over whether or not you will share your life book with others.

Free Online Life Book Resources

Time Capsule Website: <http://wmarie.com/timecap/step1.asp> On this site, you can enter in your date of birth and discover important events that occurred when you were born; such as famous headlines, toys, movies, famous people born on and around your birth date, the academy award winners, the UW president at the time of your birth and so much more.

Behind the Name: <http://www.dayofbirth.co.uk/> This site will inform you of what day of the week you were born. You will discover how many days until your next birthday, how many seconds old you are plus many other interesting facts.

Free Life Book Pages: <http://www.ifapa.org/resources/publications.asp> The Iowa Foster Care and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA) provides free life book pages that you can download from their website.

FosterClub: <http://www.fyi3.com/funstuff/lifebooks.cfm> This website has free life book downloadable pages that you could add to your life book.

We will be offering a Life Book Training Session May 5, 2009

6:00 PM

Waukesha County Department of Health & Human Service
Brookfield Room

This will follow the **Ribbons of Hope Ceremony**
in front of Health & Human Services.

Ribbons of Hope

May is National Foster Care Month

and we wanted to remind all of you that our ribbons of hope event is coming up this may! This year will be a little different than the last. Following the ribbon tying at 5pm there will be a light dinner and the class on **Life Books from 6:00 to 8:00!** We look forward to seeing you there!

RSVP to Shari Rather @
262-548-7267 or
srather@waukeshacounty.gov



Where: Meet in the lobby at Waukesha County Health and Human Services 500 Riverview Avenue

When: May 5th 2008 at 5:00pm–8:00 pm

Waukesha County Technical College Presents The Real World of Internet Predators A Free Must See Presentation for Parents

April 29, 2009
6:30—8:00 PM

WCTC Business Building B-130/B-140
800 Main Street
Pewaukee, Wisconsin

Guest Speaker
Special Agent Eric J. Szatkowski
Dept. of Criminal Investigation
Department of Justice

RSVP to www.wctc.edu/cj_training.
Go to Internet Safety for Parents.



Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services and the Southern Child Welfare Training Partnership Presents

Sexual Behavior in Children a Caregivers Guide

May 16, 2008

9:00 am to 4:00 pm



Trainers:
Debbie Kuehn
A foster parent with 20 years of experience
And
Howard Harrington
Social Worker with

Foster Parents are frequently asked to care for children who are at high risk for sexual behavior because they are victims of sexual abuse. Although these children may at times present perplexing behavior problems, foster parents with self awareness, knowledge and specific behavior management skills are capable to provide stable, positive placement for most of these children. This training provides tools to give caregivers the confidence needed to parent sexually abused children.

To register: Call [Shari Rather@262-548-7267](mailto:Shari.Rather@262-548-7267) Class size is limited to 28 due to room size.

April 2009 Foster Parent Spotlight

Jim & Terra Root



Jim is originally from Southern California and Terra is from Oregon. They absolutely love the West Coast but work brought them to Wisconsin just 4 years ago. They currently reside in Brookfield. They met each other through a mutual friend who thought the two had a lot in common. Their first contact was through a phone call. Even though they lived in different states, Jim called Terra and they instantly connected, and soon made plans to meet in person. After just six short weeks from their first initial phone call, Jim flew to Oregon by Terra and stayed with her for a week. By the end of the visit, they were already making plans for a wedding in the future.

They met each other in 2001 and that same year they married. They will be celebrating "8 incredible years of marriage this year."

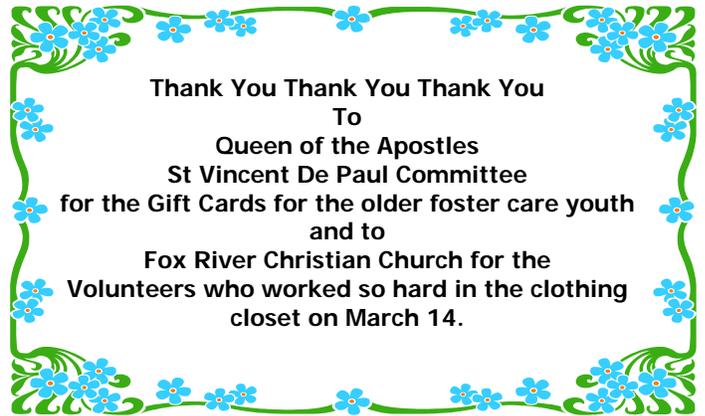
Jim has worked as an art director at Cramer Krasselt Ad Agency for just over 4 years. Terra most recently worked part time as an RN at Froedtert, but resigned last summer with all the additional responsibilities of fostering. They have three children, 5 1/2 year old daughter and 4 year old twin boys. As a family, they like to enjoy the outdoors as often as possible, camping, hiking, swimming, bike riding and sledding are some of the activities they often do together. They love having their friends over and are quite involved in their church. As a family, they often fly back to the West Coast to visit family "we love spending time with them!"

Even though their families are thousands of miles apart, they have wonderful relationships with both sides and keep in touch with them as much as possible. They are supportive and there for them if needed. Here in Wisconsin they also receive a lot of support through their "wonderful church family, friends, and neighbors." Before meeting each other both of them felt in their hearts that they someday would like to care for displaced children. They originally thought it would lead them towards adoption, but when they heard of the great need for foster parents, they felt like it would be a great fit for

their family. Their children are very good with small children and when talking with them about the idea of having foster children come live with them they were very excited and could not wait for the first child to arrive.

The Roots were licensed in March of 2008 and received their first placement that April. They have only had one placement since being licensed and he still resides in their home. "He is an absolute joy!" They describe their experience thus far as both challenging and rewarding. "We feel extremely blessed to have had the opportunity to love this boy and to watch him grow and learn in so many ways." "We also love to see how our family has pulled together in caring for him." "The hardest thing is all "the additional demands of time and energy that is placed upon us, especially when it involves are kiddos." "There are moments where we start to feel exhausted or emotionally drained but we wouldn't change it for the world."

Some advice Jim and Terra would like to give to all other foster parents is, "keep good communication with all family members and make sure you're all on the same page." "Working as a team makes the task much more feasible and more enjoyable in the process as well."



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
Nikki Mertens
(12 and under)
262-246-6180

Lisa Roberts, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Shari Rather, Foster Care Coordinator
262-548-7267

February 2009 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
44 Children
0 Admitted
6 Discharged

Treatment Foster Care:
19 Children
0 Admitted
3 Discharged

Group Homes:
3 Children
0 Admitted
0 Discharged

Residential Care Facilities:
9 Children
0 Admitted
0 Discharged

Relative Placements:
35 Children
2 Admitted
0 Discharged

Social Workers:

Suzanne Arnold
262-548-7348

Peggy Beisser
262-548-7261

Angie Briggs
262-548-7275

Jeannine Eng
262-548-7268

Margaret Johnson
262-548-7265

Elizabeth Russo
262-548-7349

Kim Sampson
262-548-7273

Linda Senger
262-548-7698

Ted Wuerslin
262-548-7269

Jennifer Wygle
262-548-7260

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.

