

February 2009 Foster Parent Spotlight

Pete & Kathy Hans



Peter is originally from Jefferson, WI and Kathy is from Brookfield, WI. They met each other at Brookfield's Lions Days. Kathy was serving concessions with her

father, who is a member of the Brookfield Lions. They have been together now for over 14 years. Peter has worked for Waukesha County Department of Administration for 24 years and Kathy has worked for Express News for 9 years. Pete has two adult daughters. The Hans became foster parents because they wanted to fill a void in their lives when they became empty nesters. They felt foster care was a good choice and a way to give back to the community.

As a family the Pete and Kathy enjoy swimming and summer vacations, tobogganing, walking the dog, reading, and watching old holiday movies during the holidays. Since becoming foster parents the Hans have had 3 placements. They currently have two girls age 10 and 3, to Peter and Kathy having foster children "is a win-win situation." "We can help out families in need, help children to grow and prosper and keep our house full." "Having a foster child is rewarding, being able to develop a relationship and keep that relationship after the child is

returned home is a wonderful feeling knowing you were able to provide a child a safe and loving home while their parent/s are getting their life back on track." On the other hand "saying farewell to a child that has lived with us for an extended period is the most difficult thing about being a foster parent." "Foster parenting classes really helped us out a lot, it helped us understand the unique perspectives of each party involved in this very dynamic relationship." The advice the Hans would like to give to all foster parents is "children are remarkably resilient and adaptable. Provide plenty of love, but don't waiver from keeping the rules and expectations of your household in place. The reward is watching your child thrive."



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

December 2008 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
49 Children
1 Admitted
1 Discharged

Treatment Foster Care:
22 Children
0 Admitted
1 Discharged

Group Homes:
6 Children
0 Admitted
0 Discharged

Residential Care Facilities:
9 Children
4 Admitted
0 Discharged

Relative Placements:
29 Children
0 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

Steve Handrich 262-548-7262

Margaret Johnson 262-548-7265

Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson 262-548-7273

Linda Senger 262-548-7698

Ted Wuerstin 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

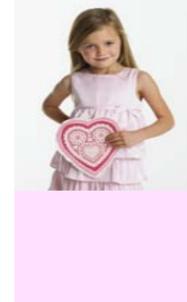
Or visit our website at www.waukeshacounty.gov And follow the links to foster care.



On January 5th, we lost a great supporter of our foster care program. Our Deepest Sympathy to the family and employees of Jack Safo Toyota.

Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
February 2009



Family Secrets: Sexual Abuse Is Common but Often Hidden

While few children enter foster care solely because of sexual abuse, studies suggest that foster youth are twice as likely as other children to have experienced sexual abuse, whether at home or since entering the system. Lisa Lubell, director of the Child Sexual Abuse Education, Evaluation and Treatment Project at Lawyers for Children, talks about why.

The number of children in foster care who have been sexually abused is high. There are many reasons for that. But basically, children whose parents are unable to care for them, or who are not living with their biological family, are vulnerable to being preyed upon.

Alone and Afraid

In biological homes where there's neglect, the parents may not be too focused on the child because they're so involved in their own struggles, whether it's with mental illness, substance abuse, or sometimes just survival. A parent's lack of focus on the child, or lack of connection, can make the child more vulnerable to sexual abuse because an abuser sees that the child is not protected. The parents may also not pick up the signs that something is wrong.

Older kids sometimes come into care because of acting out behaviors that their parents can't handle, and underlying those behaviors is sexual abuse that the kids haven't told their parents about. Common behaviors are running away and symptoms of trauma that look like acting out, such as suicidal behaviors, self-cutting, aggression, fire setting, sexual behaviors (such as excessive masturbation or sexual play in younger children, or having many partners in older children) that are considered too advanced for their age or unacceptable to a parent.

Usually the abuse was by a relative or someone who lives in the home — abuse is most commonly committed by people the kids know — and the kids have a real fear of disclosing the abuse to their parent. Kids fear that their parent's loyalty will be to the person who abused them, or they feel ashamed, or they've gotten a silent message from their parent not to talk about this kind of thing. They also fear the consequences to the rest of the family if they were to tell, and they feel they need to protect their family. But their behaviors show the abuse.

Kids can also be abused in their foster homes, where they become accessible to a variety of adults — including group home staff or older children in the home — who sometimes will take advantage of a kid they think is powerless. Many times children in foster care really do feel powerless and isolated, so they don't speak up. Some are so desperate for connection and relationship that sexual abuse seems to give them the attention and nurturance they crave, even though it is actually abusive. It's a tragic consequence of the system that doesn't make them safer.

Teen girls in care also are particularly vulnerable to getting into relationships with older men or getting drawn into prostitution or

other kinds of sexual exploitation. That can happen because of early sexual abuse puts them at risk of developing sexually inappropriate relationships, and also because in care they may live in environments, like group homes or residential centers, where it seems that girls are really preyed upon by older males.

Once in care, kids with sexual abuse histories also are more likely to be moved from placement to placement, because foster parents and caseworkers often misinterpret behaviors that are the result of the trauma, and become punitive towards kids for behaviors that the kids may not have control over.

A Family History

Finally, many birth parents of children in foster care have experienced sexual abuse in their own lives. That can be an underlying reason why birth parents might get depressed or turn to drugs. When parents have never opened up about their abuse, or weren't believed if they did, they learn a pattern of not allowing themselves to believe that it happened and could happen again. They also learn a pattern of protecting the family from the system or from looking bad, instead of responding to the child's needs.

Sexual abuse is devastating, and has painful, traumatic effects on children and their families. It can seem too painful and shameful to believe. So it's natural to react by saying, "This can't be happening," and shut down against believing it, even when you know the truth. As difficult as it can be to support a child when she comes forward, it's so important for parents to validate a child's experience, report the abuse to a professional and help the child recover.

Copyright © 2008 Jordan Institute for Families

Foundation Training for Foster Parents

February 12
6:15 to 9:15pm Sexual Abuse

February 21
9:00 to 12:00 Family Connectiveness
1:00 to 4:00 Cultural Issues in Placement

All classes held at Waukesha County Dept. of Health & Human Services, 500 Riverview Avenue. Please enter the building at Door #6 and proceed to G137. To confirm your attendance call Shari Rather at 262-548-7267.

This is required training during the first two years of your license.



Jesse's Corner

Jesus Mireles
Manager of the Children and
Family Division

I would like to thank several people for their support of the Waukesha County foster care program over the holidays. Jena Mielke and Amy Reese initiated and coordinated the first "The Holiday Charity Drive 2008". As I understand it, Jena Mielke came up with the idea from watching an Oprah Winfrey show. On the show, a woman was talking about foster children and when they come into care, they often have nothing. The show was in June of 2008 and focused on getting pajamas for foster children. As the holidays approached, Jena asked her mother what she wanted for Christmas. Her mother said she really does not need a thing and suggested that she give the money to someone who does. While one of our social workers was on maternity leave, she called Jena and told her about the need that exists for children coming into foster care. Jena was on a walk with her friend, Amy Reese, who works in the field of marketing, and the idea to do the event was born. Jena and Amy sent flyers and made contact with a number of different vendors and retailers to help them collect items for foster children. They contacted the Waukesha State Bank who agreed to allow their twelve (12) locations to be the drop off sites for donations. In addition, they contacted Channel 4 and were able to appear on The Morning Blend promoting this event. I would like to thank Jena, Steve and Karen Vacek for their appearance on this program and to promote this charity event. They did a tremendous job! Because of this fundraiser, our foster care program received significant donations from the Waukesha community including pajamas, underwear, socks, hats, mitten, blankets and gift cards the Department can use as needed.

In addition to this wonderful charity, we had Sarah Radke, the birth daughter of Melissa and Ron Radke initiate her own fundraiser. Sarah was able to raise over \$500.00 in gift cards along with donations of new socks, mittens, hats and underwear for children in foster care. We are proud to have Sarah and her parents fostering for Waukesha County. I would like to thank Sarah, for bringing the "spirit of the holidays" to our foster children!

In December of last year, the Waukesha County Bar Association sponsored the Waukesha County Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Seminar. I would like to thank Attorney Marjorie Wendt for offering this training and moderating the seminar. In addition, I would like to thank the Honorable Judge Patrick Haughney, Kelly Haag, Clerk of Juvenile Court, Assistant Corporation Counsel Attorney Molly Jasmer, Attorney Michael Kaiser and Linda Coyle for their participation. In addition, I would like to thank one of our social workers, Kim Sampson and one of our foster parents, Dr. Steve Vacek for sharing their perspective on foster care. I think the training reinforced the importance of the Guardian ad Litem's role in representing the best interest of the child.

Just a reminder that as of January 1st foster parents are now required to have ten hours each of additional on going training. On February 7, 2009, the Strengthening Families training will be offered from 9 am to 4 pm at the Center for Learning Excellence (child care will be provided). It's not too early to make plans to attend Shared Parenting on March 24th and March 26th here at Health and Human Services. The class will be from 6:00 to 9:00 both evenings. This class is highly recommended for all foster parents. Please call Shari Rather to register at (262) 548-7267.

The Annual Foster Parent Pot Luck has also been scheduled and will be on March 12th from 5:45 pm to 8:30 pm. Please bring a dish to pass and learn what is up and coming in foster care. This is your chance to ask any questions and share any of your concerns. As this date gets closer, we will provide you with more information via email.



The **Milwaukee Bucks** have donated to us 100 tickets to the **Detroit Piston Game** on **February 7 at 7:30** at the **Bradley Center**. **We still have some tickets available.**

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.

Building Self-Esteem By Jeanne Preisler of Fostering Prospectives

It is never too late to build a child's confidence and self-esteem. Here are ten ideas for you to try this month.

1. Spend quality time with your children. This sends the message that they are important and worthy. Each child must feel special, loved, and accepted.
2. Help them develop problem solving and decision making skills. This increases their sense of control and is an important part of developing self-motivation.
3. Avoid interrupting them when they are talking. Allowing them to complete their thought will help them feel that what they are saying is worth listening to.
4. Ask for their help. This could be helping around the house or giving back to the community. By allowing them to make a positive difference in the lives of others, we boost their own self-worth and confirm they have something valuable to offer.
5. Look at how you handle your mistakes. The way you deal with your mistakes serves as a model for how your children will respond to theirs. Do you get angry, yell or depressed when you make a mistake? Or do you discuss what you learned or how you might do things differently next time?
6. Praise is a very important motivator and will increase the child's confidence. Never underestimate this simple tool—it can have a lifelong impact.
7. It is never too late to start a Life Book for a child. Life Books are an effective way to build self-esteem and help children cope with their past and current circumstances.
8. Frame your requests in the positive. Rather than saying, "Don't leave the lights on!" say, "Can you help us save money on the electric bill by turning off your radio and lights before school?"
9. Help them use good eye contact when interacting with someone. When you model this behavior it shows them they have your full attention.
10. When correcting behavior, do it in private and be sure to focus on the behavior rather than attacking the child's character. This demonstrated and teaches the child respect.



Join Us

Waukesha County Human Services
Presents: Strengthening Families
Training for Foster Parents
February 7, 2009
Center for Learning Excellence
N4W22000 West Bluemound Rd
9-4
Child Care is available to register:
Call Shari @ 262-548-7267

Families that are strong and healthy share similar characteristics. Families in the child welfare system often need help to develop or build on these strengths. This training will focus on 6 of these Protective Factors and how you as a foster parent can help the families of the children you foster be better able to protect and care for their children when they return home.

Pre-Placement Training for Prospective Foster Parents

February 5, 2009	6-9 PM
February 19, 2009	6-9 PM
March 5, 2009	6-9 PM
March 19, 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.

Helping Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused

It is not uncommon for children placed in foster care to have been sexually abused. Often social workers placing these children are not aware of the sexual abuse.

In many cases, this abuse is first discovered by the child's foster family. Night time and bath time are scary for many children who have experienced sexual abuse. Having a caregiver there to console them and listen to them may bring forth birth family secrets. As children feel more secure, they may gradually share details of things that have happened to them.

Given this, foster and adoptive parents must learn all they can about the needs of the child in care.

Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is the interaction, including non-physical contact (such as verbal abuse, exposure, or pornographic photos) and physical contact between a child and a person in a power position, in which the child is used for sexual gratification of the abuser and/or others. Child sexual abuse can be perpetrated by anyone, but we will focus on family abuse (incest).

Children who have been sexually abused by a family member are often enveloped into a secret life. There are many reasons these children don't tell, including:

1. They don't understand that it is wrong. It is a family cycle. Children are kept in seclusion without outside interactions to sustain the secret.
2. The child may not have the verbal capacity to tell. Words like "vagina" could have been replaced by the offender with "knee" to disguise sexual abuse if disclosed by the young child.
3. Children are taught to respect and obey adults. Adults forget to explain that there are limits to this obedience.
4. Children feel guilty if telling could cause their loved one (abuser) to go to jail or their family to be broken apart.
5. Boys feel ashamed because they are taught to fight and take control. They may worry the abuse will "make them" homosexual. Society makes it hard for boys to tell.

Sometimes there is a parent in the home who did not know about the abuse. Abusers work very hard to keep the incest a secret, setting up private time with the child and pressuring them with words or actions not to tell anyone. If the non-offending parent did know about or suspect the sexual abuse, she or he may have been too ashamed to seek help. Or, the parent may have feared the break-up of the family or the loss of the abuser's love or support.

Women sexually abuse children, too. We seldom catch them because we openly accept their "nurturing behaviors." A woman bathing, sleeping with, dressing, and touching children seems normal to society. We do not easily suspect a woman may be crossing the line from nurturing to sexual abuse. In other cases, a woman may not abuse the child herself, but may allow or set up access to the child.

Addressing Behaviors

How can caregivers help a child feel safe, not over-controlled and not guilty? There are common behaviors of sexually abused children that challenge caregivers. Excessive masturbating in public, lack of boundaries, and sexually playing with toys are a few examples. These are "learned" behaviors and can be replaced with more appropriate ones if patiently taught by caring foster or

adoptive parents. But this isn't one person's job: it is the treatment team's responsibility to do this together.

In the box below you will find some suggestions for ways to address certain behaviors and make children who have been sexually abused feel safe.

Ways to Help Sexually Abused Children

1. **Be friendly but clear with your household rules.** Develop a plan that spells out how to live in your home. Don't assume children know these things. Write it down and give a copy to your social worker so he or she is aware how your family functions. This can be helpful if anyone questions your life-style.

Note: Rules are developed only when there is a need. For example, masturbation is a common and normal way for children to soothe themselves. It can become an excessive need for a child who has been sexually stimulated over a long time period. It can show up when the child is insecure, deep in thought, etc. Many times, the child isn't aware of what he or she is doing. Instead of shaming the child, establish guidelines for what children should do if they find they need to "touch themselves." Suggested Guidelines: Must be alone with door shut and shades closed, don't cause pain or bleeding, no objects can be used, time alone is limited to 15 minutes. Add the guidelines you feel are important. Then give children the opportunity to develop self-esteem and other interests. Their need to masturbate will usually lessen.

2. **Listen to the child when he or she is disclosing; don't tell the child how to feel or what to say.** Children don't always need advice, but they do need to vent. Let them use their own words, even if they are offensive to you. You can help them replace their offensive words with more acceptable ones later when they aren't opening their souls up to you. Build trust. Do not promise not to tell anyone what is shared. Rather, say, "I won't share the information unless I feel there is someone who can help. I will tell you who I feel we need to share this information with."
3. **Don't talk badly about the child's birth family.** A child's family is part of her identity; these connections are vital to the outcome of her life. If she is currently separated from the non-offender and her siblings, she may feel isolated and afraid. Helping the child to visit with her family will help build the child's trust in you.
4. **Record any information**, such as birth parents' behavior with child, signals of sexual abuse of the child, and disclosures from the child or family. Report these to the child's social worker immediately. Report your reactions to what you observed. Keep a copy of everything you submit.
5. **Let the child talk about his feelings about his family, including the offender.** Regardless of how we feel about them, incest perpetrators are still very important to the families they betrayed. In psychological terms they are still central attachments for the family. You might want to tell the child, "There are safe ways parents can show children 'love' and that is what the social workers and doctors are trying to teach your parents."
6. **Teach the child some of the other ways parents can show children caring and love.** This is another reason why foster and adoptive parents have to be friendly and clear with boundaries: so the child can learn. Remember, repeating the rules and expectations will be necessary until the child can create new, positive habits. This is an opportunity to work on enhancing the child's self-esteem by spending quality time with him. Show the child how to have fun, laugh, and play. This may be the first time the child has freely experienced this type of interaction.
7. **Create a "life book" with the child** to help her put her past, present, and future into perspective. It will help lessen her confusion. Social workers and therapists can use the life book as a tool in counseling the child.
8. **Make it clear that adults are responsible for keeping kids safe.** Children often feel they caused the abuse and are to blame for all that's happened in their family. It is very healing for a child simply to be in a home with clear rules and expectations, enforced consistently and fairly by the adults. This helps children understand they are responsible for their own actions, but not the actions of adults.
9. **Ask for help when needed.** If a child continues to show sexualized behavior that cannot be redirected, he or she may need help from a therapist experienced in working with children who have been sexually abused. Children might also have problems with depression, anxiety, and other disorders. Talk with the child's treatment team about any signs that the child is distressed or having difficulty functioning.