



# Resource Family Connection

News, Events and Information Benefiting  
the Children of Waukesha County

May 2015



## May is Foster Care Appreciation Month!

We would like to thank all of you for your hard work and dedication in caring for our foster children.

**THANK YOU** for all that you do to care for and grow the children of Waukesha County.

**THANK YOU** for your ability to see the potential in every child — your commitment to being there through thick and thin — for a year or a lifetime.

**THANK YOU** for your partnership with our social workers who depend so much on your tireless energy!



We appreciate each and every one of you. An important part of fostering is taking care of yourself because **YOU MATTER!**

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## The Importance of Taking Time for Yourself

By: Dr. John DeGarmo

For the first time in about nine months, I was able to get outside and do some work in the yard. I have been a lifelong gardener, and I often found refuge while gardening; time for myself to reflect, think, and relax. Of late, I had neglected my gardening chores, due in large part to having nine children in the home. I was not making time for the garden, and thus not taking time for myself. As a result, I was becoming worn out, exhausted, and was approaching a burn out that I did not want or need.

As I tackled the job of pruning back the many butterfly bushes in my yard, I felt the stresses and tension that had been in my shoulders the past months quickly slip away. Indeed, it had been a difficult time the past six months, with a house full of children. The latest children in foster care in our home had come with a variety of challenges and needs that were all too demanding of my wife and me. We had both grieved when the two youngest foster children were placed into another home; a home with no children and where the foster parents could completely focus on their many needs. With nine children in our home, my wife and I were spending all our time trying to meet the needs of these two, while almost ignoring the other seven. Perhaps it was best for all if these two were placed into another home; a home that could give them all the support and resources they needed. The oldest foster child stayed with us; a decision that the courts, the case workers, and the teen all felt was best, and one that we so very wanted, as well.

Pruning back the branches and spent flowers from the previous season, I allowed myself the first opportunity in a long time to take some time for myself, doing something I enjoyed. I needed this time alone, and I could tell right away that I would be better for it, and my family would benefit from it, as well. In an almost humorous light, I laughed to myself, thinking that seven children seemed much easier than nine. Foster parents certainly have a different perspective of things in life.

Without a doubt, foster parenting is hard work! It may just be the hardest work you ever do. You will often find yourself exhausted, both mentally and physically, and feel drained. There is very little money available to help you, and you will not be reimbursed for all

the money you spend on your foster child. The job will require you to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with no time off. You will probably feel overworked and under-appreciated. You will work with children who are most likely coming from difficult and harmful environments. Some of these children will have health issues, some will come with behavioral issues, and some will struggle with learning disabilities. Many times, the children you work with will try your patience, and leave you with headaches, frustrations,

disappointments, and even heartbreaks. There is a reason why many people are not foster parents, as it is often too difficult. The turnover rate for foster parents in the United States is between 30% and 50% each year.

When foster parenting becomes too stressful, you, your family, and your foster child will all feel the effects. Thus, one of the most important reminders for you, as a foster parent, is the fact that you need to take care of yourself, physically, mentally, and

emotionally. If you neglect yourself, your family will suffer as a result. Finding time for you will not be easy, but it is very essential. Make time to do something you enjoy, and that you find relaxing. Spend time with some friends, perhaps over lunch or dinner. Do not neglect your own personal health; make sure you get plenty of exercise regularly and eat healthy. If you take time for yourself, you will help to ensure your well being, as you care for others in your own home.



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Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for 13 years, now, and he and his wife have had over 45 children come through their home. He is a speaker and trainer on many topics about the foster care system, and travels around the nation delivering passionate, dynamic, energetic, and informative presentations. Dr. DeGarmo is the author of several foster care books, including the brand new book *Love and Mayhem: One Big Family's Uplifting Story of Fostering and Adoption*. Dr. DeGarmo is the host of the weekly radio program **Foster Talk with Dr. John**. He can be contacted at [drjohndegarmo@gmail.com](mailto:drjohndegarmo@gmail.com), through his Facebook page, Dr. John DeGarmo, or at his website, <http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com>.

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# FAMILY HIGHLIGHT

## The Braam Family

“Anyone who does anything to help a child in his life is a hero to me.” ~Fred Rogers

Richard and Ginger Braam are Waukesha County foster parents for children with significant medical and developmental delays. Their journey into fostering children with special needs began 25 years ago. Since then, they have adopted five children and are legal guardians to one. Three of the children are minors and the other three have reached adulthood. They have conditions that include downs syndrome, profound cerebral palsy, autism, scoliosis, blindness, spina bifida, paraplegia and quadriplegia, severe cognitive impairment due to brain injuries and encephalitis. For the Braam's, the children are not defined by their condition or diagnosis, but rather by their unique personalities. There is the creative child, the party planner and the boss. Most of the children came to stay with them at infancy and were ultimately adopted by them.

Ginger and Richard maintain contact with the biological family whenever possible, recognizing that they remain an important part of the children's lives and have much to offer. They do not make judgments about parents' inability to care for their children, recognizing the multitude of challenges that exist in caring for children with significant special needs. They have experienced these struggles, including navigating through the health care system to meet the needs of the children. In speaking about the obstacles, Ginger stated, “It's not easy, but it is rewarding.” This sentiment is shared by their adult children who assist with the care of the children. Growing up being surrounded by foster children has had a profound impact, resulting in three of them pursuing the nursing field. They are now employed to care for the children who still live with their parents. Ginger's sister also provides supportive home care for the family and even the grandchildren do what they can to help. The family receives ongoing support from their nursing staff whom they consider family and from their friends, including those from their church.

Because most of their children are unable to go into the community, every effort is made to bring the community to them through ongoing events and activities. Their daughter Jennifer, known as “the party planner” organizes events and sends invitations to extended family members, neighbors and caregivers along with their children to attend. For Easter, their son Eric donned an Easter Bunny costume and sat in the yard with flower pots surrounding him so all the other children could have their photos taken with him! If any of the children are sick and unable to participate during these events, there is always one person who stays with them so they don't feel left out.

Throughout the years, the Braam's have experienced the loss of children who have had terminal medical conditions. There is also the grief and loss associated with children being reunited with their parents and while they strongly support this, it creates a void in their lives. While acknowledging how painful this can be, they view their time together as a treasured gift and feel privileged to have been touched by them. Ginger stated, “It is better to have had them for a little time than not at all.” She seizes the opportunity to share with her children that loss is a part of the life process. They maintain ongoing relationships with many of the family members of the children they have lost. Ginger and Richard rely on their faith to help them get through these difficult times.

Ginger and Richard often discuss how ironic it is that they are complimented by others for their care of children with special needs, when it is they who reap the rewards of having such wonderful children in their lives. They believe the gifts they receive far exceed

those they give. Being in their presence can best be summed up by one word – love.

We are so fortunate for such amazing foster parents who give of themselves every day. Our goal is to highlight one foster family each month. Because the selection process is a difficult one, we are starting with those who have licensed for the longest period of time. Please send us your thoughts and comments.



### 7 Tips For Self Care

1. **Take a Bubble Bath** — After the kids are in bed, spend 15 minutes soaking in a warm bubble bath.
2. **Go For A Walk** — Whether you take a walk over your lunch hour at work or sneak one in between your appointments, nature is good for the soul.
3. **Read A Book** — Take a break from reality and lose yourself in a good book.
4. **Practice a Hobby** — Whether it is knitting, sewing, drawing or painting...do something fun & creative for you!
5. **Gardening** — You are never too old to play in the dirt
6. **Aromatherapy** — Pick up some uplifting scents from your local health food store.
7. **Laugh** — Rent a funny movie and laugh out loud.

Thank you for everything that you do and remember to take some time for you this month!

### 2-1-1

If you experience a crisis during non-business hours and need to contact a social worker, there is an on-call crisis worker available 24 hours a day. Call 2-1-1 and ask for the Waukesha County on-call crisis worker.

### Clothing Closet Corner

We need the following items for the Clothing Closet:

- Gift Cards for Teens

The Clothing Closet is open to all providers.

Clothing Closet donation hours will be scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 AM to Noon or contact Susan Peck at 262-896-8574 to arrange a donation time outside of those hours.



## Memorial Day Events in Waukesha County

### CITIES

- Brookfield** Service by Behling-Kutchera American Legion Post 296. 10 a.m. Monday at Oak Hill Cemetery, 3500 N. Brookfield Road. A wreath will be placed on the grave of Revolutionary War soldier Nathan Hatch. Call Betty Hoffmann at 782-5848.
- Delafield** Memorial Day/Post Everlasting Service, 9 a.m. Monday at the American Legion Post 196, 333 N. Lapham Peak Road, Delafield.
- New Berlin** Hare and Tortoise Run and Walk. Two- or 5- mile run or walk. 9 a.m. Monday at Wells Fargo Bank, 16000 W. Cleveland Ave. Race-day registration until 8:30 a.m. \$20 per person; \$50 for a family up to four members. To register, call 785-4980 or visit [www.wcfls.lib.wi.us/newberlin](http://www.wcfls.lib.wi.us/newberlin).
- Oconomowoc** 10 a.m. ceremony Monday at City Band Shell at City Beach. Iraq veteran Dave Pelis will speak. Parade to follow. Sponsored by the Oconomowoc Area Veterans Committee. Call (920) 474-4017.
- Pewaukee** See Village of Pewaukee.
- Waukesha** River service. Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 425 Auxiliary. 9 a.m. Monday in front of the Lee Sherman Dreyfus State Office Building, 141 NW. Barstow St. Parade begins at 10:15 a.m. Program begins at 11 a.m. at Cutler Park. Call Wally Hahn of Soat-Vergenz Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 721 at 547-1004.  
 • Flag-raising ceremony, 11 a.m. Monday at Prairie Home Cemetery, 605 S. Prairie Ave. Call 524-3540.

### VILLAGES

- Dousman** Parade, 10 a.m. Monday followed by ceremony at the flag pole at Cory Park.
- Elm Grove** Parade, 10:30 a.m. Monday Sponsored by the Elm Grove Junior Guild.
- Hartland** Parade, 10:15 a.m. Monday. Ceremony, 10:30 a.m. James Olson, commander of the American Legion Post 294 and a Vietnam veteran, will be a featured speaker.
- Menomonee Fls** Parade, 10 a.m. Monday. Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. Free ice cream for kids after parade.
- Merton** Parade, 10 a.m. Monday. Begins on Main St. and ends at Merton Village Hall/Fire House. Ceremony to follow.
- Mukwonago** Parade, 9:30 a.m. Monday. The parade will pause for a short ceremony along the parade route at Oak Knoll Cemetery. Service will follow at the Mukwonago Community Library.
- Pewaukee** Spring Fling Festival, noon to 11 p.m. Sunday; Noon to 5 p.m. Monday at Village Park, 325 Capitol Drive. Parade, 10 a.m. Monday with a short service along the parade route. Sponsored by Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9537.
- Sussex** Veterans of Foreign Wars Horne-Mudlitz Post 6377. Parade, 1 p.m. Monday. Ceremony at post follows. Hot dogs and soda will be served. Call 820-9704.



### TOWNS

- Genesee** Veterans of Foreign Wars Bralick-Miller Post 5270. Service, 1 p.m. Sunday at Genesee Town Park on Depot Road. Followed by a free picnic lunch.

## Outdoor Farmers Markets Are Now Open!



### Saturdays, 05/02/15-10/31/15 Waukesha Farmers' Market

Located along the Fox River, over 70 vendors provide products that are homegrown, raised or handmade in Wisconsin; products include in-season fruits, vegetables, meats, cheeses, baked goods and arts and crafts | Riverfront Plaza | 8am-12pm | 262-547-2354 | [waukeshafarmersmarket.com](http://waukeshafarmersmarket.com)

### Saturdays, 05/02/15-10/31/15 Delafield Farmers' Market

Producer-only upscale market featuring locally grown vegetables and fruits, herbs, eggs, honey, soap, fresh and dried flowers, perennials, annual bedding and vegetable starter plants, alpaca yarns and variety of handcrafts by local artisans. | downtown Delafield | 8am-1pm | [delafielddfarmersmarket.com](http://delafielddfarmersmarket.com)



### Save The Date For These Events!

**Annual Foster Parent Appreciation Meeting**  
 Wednesday, May 13, 2015  
 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM

**Resource Family Recognition Picnic**  
 Saturday, July 25, 2015  
 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM  
 Minooka Park



# Training and Events



## Training Offered By Waukesha County

### The Court Process

May 5, 2015  
 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
 The Children's Center  
 Juvenile Court, Room 124  
 521 Riverview Ave, Waukesha, WI

Please RSVP to Janis (262-548-7267)

### Parent Café

Parent Café's are an educational opportunity for parents to come together and deal with the stressors, worries and challenges of parenting in a supportive environment.

June 2, 2015; August 4, 2015; October 6, 2015; and December 1, 2015

5:30 PM to 8:00 PM  
 Center for Excellence, N4W22000 Bluemound Road, Waukesha  
 To register for childcare, RSVP or for questions call, 262-521-0317.

### Waukesha County Foster Parent Orientation

Waukesha Department of Health and Human Services invites you to attend a foster parent orientation meeting. These meetings are open to anyone who is interested in learning about our foster care program. **If you are currently in the process of becoming a licensed foster parent, you are required to attend an orientation session prior to approval of your foster care license.**

We encourage you to complete the online foster parent pre-placement training prior to attending this information session. The training can be found online at <http://wcwpds.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training/>. Please save the certificates after you have completed each module. These are required to become licensed.

#### When:

May 12, 2015; June 9, 2015; July 14, 2015; August 11, 2015; September 8, 2015; October 13, 2015; November 10, 2015; and December 8, 2015  
 All orientation sessions occur from 6:00 - 8:00 PM

**Where:** Human Services Center, 514 Riverview Ave., Waukesha, WI 53188

To register for an orientation session, contact your foster care coordinator.

### Relative Caregivers Support/Education Group

Third Tuesday of each month  
 May 19, 2015  
 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM  
 Parents Place  
 1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI  
 262-549-5575

Free childcare available. Please call Parents Place to reserve your spot.  
 Waukesha County Relative Resource Families  
 Please RSVP to Janis (262-548-7267) or Libby (262-548-7277)

### Foster Parent Support Group

First Wednesday of each month, beginning August 5, 2015  
 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM  
 Parents Place  
 1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI  
 262-549-5575

On-sight daycare is available, but you must register in advance to secure a slot as there may be a cut-off depending on the number of children.

## Training

Parents Place Programs  
 262-549-5575 [www.ppacinc.org](http://www.ppacinc.org)

- **Kids Managing Anger**  
 Mondays, May 4 - 18 from 5:30 - 7:30 PM
- **Wednesday Night Out: Playing - Fun While Learning**  
 Wednesday, May 13 from 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Coalition for Children  
[www.coalitionforcyf.org](http://www.coalitionforcyf.org)

For other training opportunities, see the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families website: [www.coalitionforcyf.org](http://www.coalitionforcyf.org). They offer interactive webinars that count toward the required face to face training hours.



## Contact Numbers:

Waukesha County  
 Health & Human Services  
 262-548-7212

Eve Altizer, Supervisor  
 262-548-7272

Rebecca Hollister, Supervisor  
 262-548-7271

Kathy Mullooly, Supervisor  
 262-896-6832

Janis Ramos, Foster Care Coord.  
 262-548-7267

Susan Peck, Foster Care Coord.  
 262-896-8574

Libby Sinclair, Relative Licensing  
 262-548-7277

## Social Workers:

Jennifer Adler..... 262-548-7265

Tracy Clark..... 262-548-7270

Megan Fishler ..... 262-896-8570

Laura Jahnke..... 262-548-7359

Becca Kuester..... 262-896-6857

Jessica Larsen..... 262-548-7346

Melissa Lipovsek..... 262-548-7348

Maria Maurer ..... 262-548-7345

Chelsey Nisbet..... 262-896-6896

Stacy Pawlak ..... 262-548-7262

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

Elizabeth Russo ..... 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson..... 262-548-7273

Linda Senger ..... 262-548-7698

## Kinship Workers:

Linda Finn..... 262-548-7254

Jessica Morris..... 262-548-7256

Children's Mental Health Outreach  
 262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911  
 Family Emergency: 211

Foster Parent Mentor  
 Jen Mersfelder..... 262-542-2926  
 David Mersfelder..... 262-542-2926

If an Allegation of Abuse or Neglect has been made against you, please call:

FASPP  
 Norma Schoenberg  
 920-922-9627

## March 2015 Placements

Level 2 Placements: 33 Children	Juvenile Corrections: 2 Children	Group Homes: 1 Child	Residential Care Facilities: 10 Children
Level 1 Placements: 40 Children	Level 2 Foster Homes: 99 Homes	Level 1 Foster Homes: 50 Homes	Total Children in OHC: 96 Children

