

September 2008 Foster Parent Spotlight

Jenifer Barcus & David Mersfelder



Jenifer Barcus and David Mersfelder met while working at GE in Cincinnati during college. Jenifer is originally from Whitehall, Ohio and graduated from Ohio State University. David is originally from Shaker Heights, Ohio and graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology. They moved to Wisconsin and were married in 1995 after

graduating from college. They have no biological children. Jenifer has a younger sister, Beth, who is married and has a 2-year-old son. David has two older sisters.

Jenifer enjoys cycling at the YMCA where she teaches part time. She also enjoys various crafts, movies, music, reading, and especially crossword puzzles. David likes to shoot trap, sporting clays, bulls eye league and other match events. David also enjoys driving his cars and participating in SCCA autocross events.

Jenifer and David chose to become foster parents because David's family had foster children while he was growing up and it is something that the couple had discussed previously but had not pursued. The spark to action came to them in the form of a child born into an unfortunate situation in their extended family. They initially pursued a license with the intent of taking a relative placement. However, over the

course of the licensing process, they decided to commit to fostering other children.

David and Jenifer have had two placements since getting their license in 2007, a teenage girl and a young boy. They currently have one child in their home.

Although fostering is one of the most difficult and most fulfilling things they have ever done, just knowing that they are providing a safe place for children is rewarding by itself. They have seen the children in their home grow and develop wonderfully. Even more than the great time they have with the children, fostering has brought Jenifer and David together as a couple on a whole new level. Seeing each other with the children and growing into the new role as parents together has been great. David and Jenifer have found that one of the most difficult things about fostering is learning what their shortcomings are as parents and working to overcome them.

David and Jenifer give the following advice to new foster parents, "get ready for the best time (and biggest rollercoaster) of your life. Also, don't be afraid to ASK questions. No question is too small when a child is involved."

In regards to PACE training, David stated it was very good and he gained many insights. Jenifer stated, "We completed PACE training which I found to be very helpful. However, the biggest source of help has been networking with other foster parents. No one else gets it like another foster parent."

Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
September 2008



Section 504 Federal Checklist for Children with Disabilities

If you have a child that does not qualify for special education but has a mental or physical impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, including learning, that child may qualify for special help in a regular classroom setting under section 504 of IDEA.

The following is a list of accommodations that may help your child succeed in the classroom. The list can be used as a reference for parents and school personnel.

PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT OF ROOM:

- Seating student near the teacher
- Seating student near a positive role model
- Standing near the student when giving directions or presenting lessons
- Avoiding distracting stimuli (air conditioner, high traffic area, etc.)
- Increasing distance between desks

LESSON PRESENTATION:

- Pairing students to check work
- Writing key points on the board
- Providing peer tutoring
- Providing visual aids, large print, films
- Providing peer note taker
- Making sure directions are understood
- Including a variety of activities during each lesson
- Repeating directions to the student after they have been given to the class: then have him/her repeat and explain directions to teacher
- Providing written outline
- Allowing student to tape record lessons
- Having child review key points orally
- Teaching through multi-sensory modes, visual, auditory, kinesthetics, olfactory
- Using computer-assisted instruction
- Accompany oral directions with written directions for child to refer to blackboard or paper
- Provide a model to help students, post the model and refer to it often
- Provide cross age peer tutoring
- To assist the student in finding the main idea underlying, highlighting, cue cards, etc.
- Breaking longer presentations into shorter segments

ASSIGNMENTS/WORKSHEETS:

- Giving extra time to complete tasks
- Simplifying complex directions
- Handing worksheets out one at a time
- Reducing the reading level of the assignments
- Requiring fewer correct responses to achieve grade (quality vs. quantity)
- Allowing student to tape record assignments/homework
- Providing a structured routine in written form
- Providing study skills training/learning strategies
- Giving frequent short quizzes and avoiding long tests
- Shortening assignments; breaking work into smaller segments
- Allowing typewritten or computer printed assignments prepared by the student or dictated by the student and recorded by someone

else if needed

- Using self-monitoring devices
- Reducing homework assignments
- Not grading handwriting
- Student should not be allowed to use cursive or manuscript writing
- Reversals and transpositions of letters and numbers should not be marked wrong, reversals or transpositions should be pointed out for corrections
- Do not require lengthy outside reading assignments
- Teacher monitor students self-paced assignments (daily, weekly, bi-weekly)
- Arrangements for homework assignments to reach home with clear, concise directions
- Recognize and give credit for student's oral participation in class

TEST TAKING:

- Allowing open book exams
- Giving exam orally
- Giving take home tests
- Using more objective items (fewer essay responses)
- Allowing student to give test answers on tape recorder
- Giving frequent short quizzes, not long exams
- Allowing extra time for exam
- Reading test item to student
- Avoid placing student under pressure of time or competition

ORGANIZATION:

- Providing peer assistance with organizational skills
- Assigning volunteer homework buddy
- Allowing student to have an extra set of books at home
- Sending daily/weekly progress reports home
- Developing a reward system for in-schoolwork and homework completion
- Providing student with a homework assignment notebook

BEHAVIORS:

- Use of timers to facilitate task completion
- Structure transitional and unstructured times (recess, hallways, lunchroom, locker room, library, assembly, field trips, etc.)
- Praising specific behaviors
- Using self-monitoring strategies
- Giving extra privileges and rewards
- Keeping classroom rules simple and clear
- Making "prudent use" of negative consequences
- Allowing for short breaks between assignments
- Cuing student to stay on task (nonverbal signal)
- Marking student's correct answers, not his mistakes
- Implementing a classroom behavior management system
- Allowing student time out of seat to run errands, etc.
- Ignoring inappropriate behaviors not drastically outside classroom limits
- Allowing legitimate movement
- Contracting with the student
- Increasing the immediacy of rewards



Happy Labor Day!

Contact Numbers:

Waukesha H & HS
262-548-7212

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911
Family Emergency: 211

Foster Parent Mentors
Nikki Mertens
(12 and under)
262-246-6180

Bette Winkler
(over 12)
262-679-9634

Lisa Roberts, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Shari Rather, Foster Care Coordinator
262-548-7267

Michelle Cornwell, Visitation Coordinator
262-548-7370

July 2008 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
53 Children
2 Admitted
0 Discharged

Treatment Foster Care:
20 Children
1 Admitted
1 Discharged

Group Homes:
6 Children
1 Admitted
0 Discharged

Residential Care Facilities:
7 Children
0 Admitted
2 Discharged

Relative Placements:
29 Children
0 Admitted
2 Discharged

Social Workers:

Suzanne Arnold
262-548-7348

Peggy Beisser
262-548-7261

Kathe Blum
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.





Jesse's Corner

Jesus Mireles
Manager of the Children and Family Division

Hi everyone,

As most of you know, Waukesha County is piloting foster parent training for the State of Wisconsin. We have changed from P.A.C.E. (Partners in Alternative Care Education) to Pre-Placement, Foundation and Ongoing training for foster parents. We think this change in format will enable new foster parents to obtain and utilize the information they learn in training, with Pre-Placement training being provided before you have a foster care placement, Foundation training provided when you have a foster care placement and Ongoing training provided after you have a foster home license and will be provided annually. I would consider this training as "on the job training" as it will give you an opportunity to implement what you learn during training.

One of the challenges we are having is ensuring all licensed foster parents meet their "Ongoing training" requirements. We are in the process of implementing and mandating ten (10) hours of "Ongoing Training" annually (from January 1 to December 31) for all licensed foster parents. Licensed foster parents will need to complete this training requirement within two years of their initial foster care license and every two years afterwards. We will need to track your training and enter it into our eWISACWIS system. In order to give you as many opportunities to attend training we plan on offering as many trainings as possible including but not limited to, Shared Parenting, Strengthening Families, Ethics and Boundaries, Juvenile Court Process/Panel and Sexual Abuse. As with previous foster care training requirements, any training not provided or recommended by our Department will need the prior approval of Lisa Roberts, Permanency Services Supervisor. Please feel free to contact her or Shari Rather if you have any specific requests. My hope is that the training we offered during days/times when you are available.

I would like to thank several of our foster parents including Amy Hansen, Karen Vacek and Tammy Gray whom assisted us in co-facilitating our foster parent training for the last several years. We would like to expand the number of foster parents who can co-facilitate foster parent training in the future. We have been informed that there will be training later this year. If you are interested, please contact Shari at 262-548-7267.

I would also like to thank Bette Winkler, Judy David and Nikki Mertens for providing mentoring and phone support to our new foster parents. I think this has been invaluable in assisting them with their foster care placement.

The ongoing training and support available to our foster parents enables us to have competent foster parents who can provide a safe, stable and nurturing home for children during their time of need. Thank you very much for making the time and commitment to fostering our most precious resource, our children!

Jesse

FACING THE CONSEQUENCES

How to help your children learn self-discipline

Her alarm is ringing, but your daughter is still in bed. She's going to be late for school—again. What do you do?

- Yell, "I'm sick of calling you. Get up!"
- Explain to her how important a good education is.
- Let her decide when to get up and face the consequences if she is late for school.

If you yell, you'll probably face the same problem again tomorrow. Explaining may not be much more helpful.

Letting her get up on her own is the best choice, even though it is the most difficult one. It will teach her to accept responsibility and that's what you want in the long run.

Consequences

One part of teaching children to discipline themselves is to let them experience the consequences of their actions.

It's easy to teach a child about positive consequences. Your child comes to dinner when he's called and he gets a hot meal.

Letting him experience negative consequences is harder. If he doesn't come, you feel guilty if he eats cold food or misses dinner. But next time he's likely to come to the table on time.

The most effective consequences are natural. But you can't let your child play in the middle of the road so she'll learn to avoid getting hit by a car, so you also need planned consequences.

Many parents find time-outs effective. When a child is defiant or out of control, make her sit quietly for a few minutes. Some parents make it a minute for each year of a child's age and personality.

Punishment

You might be uncomfortable setting consequences if you don't like the idea of punishment. But you aren't trying to get even with your child. You want to teach him to improve his behavior.

"Punishment lets kids know you mean what you say," said Stephen Small, professor of child and family studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "To stop unwanted behavior, punishment plus an explanation is more effective than an explanation alone."

When punishment is necessary, Small offers this advice:

- Use the least aversive technique.
- Use it to enforce previous warnings.
- Use it to communicate limits, not for retribution.
- Don't use it impulsively.
- Use it in combination with other strategies.

Some parents believe spanking is an appropriate punishment. Others strongly oppose it. (It is not an option for foster parents, however. By law, they cannot spank the children in their care.)

"Nobody is neutral when it comes to spanking—there are strong feelings about whether it's right or wrong," said Small. Besides moral objections, those opposed to it say it doesn't work.

So did he, but research shows that with some children spanking is effective and not harmful.

Small defines spanking as slapping the child once or twice on the buttocks with a bare hand. Anything more is abuse, he said, and abuse always makes bad behavior worse.

He doesn't spank his children. He believes there are more effective means of discipline.

"Spanking is a small part of punishment," he said, "and punishment is a small part of discipline. Your final goal is to get kids to set limits for themselves.

Instead of Spanking

At the Special Needs Adoption Network, they don't recommend spanking children. They suggest these alternatives:

- Give a firm reprimand.
- Remove them from the situation.
- Use consequences.
- Give a time-out.
- Take away a privilege
- Ground them.
- Expect them to fix it or pay for it.



Autumn Begins September 22nd

How Foster Parents Can Support the Schooling of Kids in Care

- Set Positive Expectations. If we expect children to perform poorly, they will often fulfill this expectation. Therefore, express positive expectations at all times.
- Take an Active Interest. Attend parent-teacher conferences and other school-related functions or meetings. Monitor homework, classroom assignments and behavior. Talk openly with the youth to help her identify roadblocks and educational needs. Encourage the child to develop independent learning and self-advocacy.
- Talk with Your Child's Teacher. Explain your role and limitations as a foster parent. Ask the teacher about his expectations of the youth. Discuss resources, needs and any identified obstacles for the child.
- Talk with Your Child's Social Worker. Clarify your role, responsibilities, and expectations related to the child's education. Specifically, talk about school-related decisions such as enrollment and signing permission slips for field trips or sports and shared parenting techniques. Ultimately, the educational needs of children in care should be addressed collaboratively by all the adults involved in the child's life. This information should also be shared with the schools since schools are not always clear on who is responsible for the child in regards to these matters. Your child's foster care worker or your licensing worker can also let you know about any trainings or support groups related to education.
- Be an Advocate. Educational advocates should develop relationships with school staff and other relevant partners. Be persistent but flexible. As an advocate, you should be committed to what is in the best interest of the child.

By Beverley Smith, Director, NC Kids Adoption & Foster Care Network
Copyright © 2007 Jordan Institute for Families

Three Ways To Help Your Child Bond To School

1. Set up a school bulletin board in a prominent place in your home. Hang up the school calendar and school notices. Meet once a month to choose which school activities to attend as a family.
2. Encourage school pride by buying T-shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, caps, or other clothing with the school's logo or mascot for your child to wear.
3. Call the school and see if you can subscribe to the school newspaper through the mail. When it arrives, read and discuss it with your child.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Chapter 115 and PI 11

Chapter 115 is the Wisconsin law and PI 11 is the implementing regulations which were passed in 1973 to ensure that school-aged children with disabilities received, free, appropriate public education to meet their individual needs. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has the responsibility to monitor, supervise, and enforce PI 11 in each local school district.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

According to state law, each child who has been tested and found to have exceptional needs by a multi-disciplinary team (M-Team), will receive an IEP that outlines the least restrictive individualized learning plan to meet the child's needs.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

This is a federal law that mandates free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities. It used to be called Education for All Handicapped Children, PI 101-476. FAPE has two parts—special education and related services. Special education is defined as specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Related services are those specially designed services needed by a child in order to benefit from special education. Examples of related services include transportation, physical therapy, assistive technology, etc.

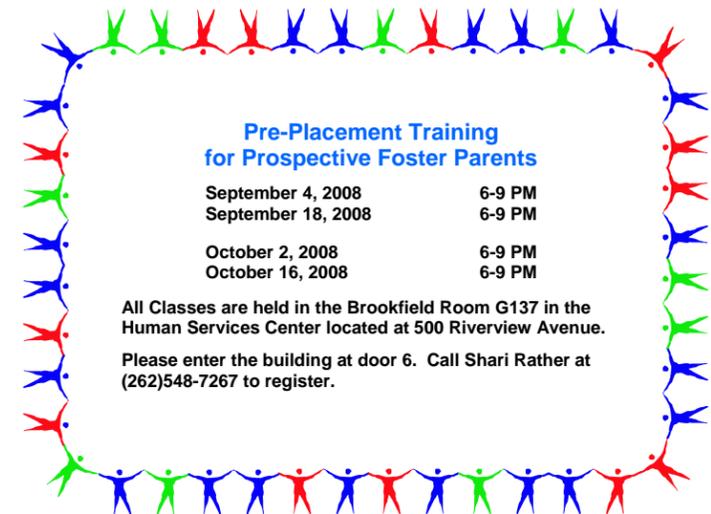
IDEA has specific conditions identified. They are: Cognitive Disability, Orthopedically Impaired, Other Health Impaired, Visually Handicapped, Hearing Handicapped, Speech and Language Handicap, Learning Disability, Emotional Disturbance, Autism, and Traumatic Brain Injury. Each state is allowed to set the criteria for each of these categories.

Multidisciplinary Team (M-Team)

An M-team is a group of educational professionals who, based on their evaluations, determine if a child has a disability and needs special education. The school district will appoint people to the M-Team based on information in the referral. All members of the M-Team must be employees of the school district, and at least one member of the M-Team is to be a teacher who is licensed to teach in the specific disability condition the child is suspected to have.

Present Level of Performance (PLOP)

This is one of the required components to an IEP. This should be a clear, descriptive statement of how your child is performing in a specific area of need found by the M-Team. A good PLOP will include your child's strengths, interests, and needs. Test scores can be used, but educational jargon should be avoided. Anyone should be able to read the PLOP and understand what your child's current level of performance is. This is what DPI calls "passing the stranger test." So if you do not understand something, or you feel there should be more information, speak up!



Pre-Placement Training for Prospective Foster Parents

September 4, 2008	6-9 PM
September 18, 2008	6-9 PM
October 2, 2008	6-9 PM
October 16, 2008	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.

Parenting With Love & Logic

Put the fun Back into Parenting!

Fall Class Schedule

Elm Grove—West Grove Clinic
12425 Knoll Road, Elm Grove 53122
7 Mondays—October 6th thru November 17th, 6:30—8:30 PM

Oconomowoc—First Congregational UCC
815 S. Concord Road, Oconomowoc 53066
7 Sundays—October 5th thru November 16th, 6:00—8:00 PM
(Childcare provided)

Registration is due one week before class starts
262-780-9788 ext. 102 or 262-893-3331
www.westgroveclinic.com

Shared Parenting Training

October 25, 2008
9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Center for Learning Excellence across
From Sam's Club
Waukesha, WI

Highly Recommended for All Waukesha County Foster Parents to register call Shari Rather 262-548-7267 by October 23, 2008

