



# Resource Family Connection

News, Events and Information Benefiting  
the Children of Waukesha County  
January / February, 2016



## My Top 10 Foster Care Wishes for 2016

By: Dr. John DeGarmo

A new year.  
A time to reflect.  
A time to look ahead.

The past year has seen me travel across the United States, visiting several states, and speaking to thousands of foster parents, case workers, educators, and at many churches. I am often asked what I would like to see happen differently in the foster care system. With that in mind, I thought I might share my top 10 changes I would like to see happen in the foster care world in the new year. Now, please keep in mind, these are brief and are in no particular order.

### 1. School

Our schools are often a place of failure for children in foster care. Children in care are often placed in the wrong classes, never getting the resources they need to succeed. 55% of children in foster care will drop out of school at some point. Teachers, caseworkers, and foster parents need to come together to help.

### 2. Adoption

When a child is placed into foster care, the initial goal is to have the child reunified with his birth parents, or a member of his biological family. To be sure, the initial intent of placing a child into care is that the placement be a temporary, with unification the main objective. Yet, there are those instances when reunification is not possible, and the child is placed through the court system for adoption. Sadly, each year there are thousands of children who are never adopted. May this be the year that more children find that family, find the forever family they deserve.

### 3. Vacation

There have been those times when I have wished to take a foster child on vacation with my family, but were prevented, for a number of reasons. To be sure, there are times when it truly is not possible. Yet, those times when the children have accompanied us, healing often happens within the child due to family closeness, fun, and new experiences.

### 4. Therapy

Paperwork. It often interrupts services many walks of life. It is no different in the foster care world. I am still waiting on therapeutical services for children who have been in my home for 6 months, now. There needs to be less paperwork, less "red tape" and more action on behalf of the child.

### 5. Working With Case Workers

One thing I often tell the thousands of foster parents I speak to across the nation is that today's case workers are under-resourced, underpaid, overworked, and overwhelmed. They simply have too much paperwork, caseloads, responsibilities, and paperwork accountable to them, with less and less time and resources given to make it all work. Our caseworkers need to be given more time, more money, more resources, and more understanding from the public, from the courts, and from foster parents.

### 6. Working With Birth Parents

For birth parents and family members of the children in foster care placed in your home, though, you might be the best example of what a good parent is. For many children in foster care, they come from a long cycle of family members placed in foster care. Think of it as a generational cycle. With this in mind, it is important to remember that we are being watched. To be sure, we might be the first example of how to take care of a child, and how to be a healthy and loving parent. Everything we do as a foster parent will send signals to the biological parents on how a parent should act, as well as how to treat their own children. Everything we say will speak volumes to the child's birth family members. This is indeed a big responsibility, and should not be taken lightly. Therefore, as a foster parent, it is important that we embrace this role, as it will surely affect the child in your home if and when they go back to the birth family members in the future. We are planting seeds

in the biological parents' lives; seeds which will hopefully blossom into something better. We are to help them heal, as well.

### 7. Leaving My Home

If you read my books *Fostering Love*, or the sequel *Love and Mayhem*, you know then that the hardest part for my wife is when the children leave our home. Our hearts break, because it is like a member of our family is leaving. Indeed, that is the truth. A child we have given all of our unconditional love has left our home, and the grief can be overwhelming at times. More training, understanding, and time to heal from the grief and loss is needed for foster parents.

### 8. Child sex trafficking

The world is now starting to wake up to the fact that there is a tremendous and horrific epidemic of child sex trafficking, across the globe. Indeed, it is a business that is growing substantially, mainly due to the world of online technology. What society does not recognize, though, is that many of these children come from the foster care world. This is one area that I am devoting this next year to in both my writing and speaking. Far too many of our children are at risk, and society does not seem to truly recognize or appreciate the danger.

### 9. Prayer

For me, prayer is a powerful tool. I simply could not be a foster parent without the use of prayer. In truth, it is what gets me through many a day, and many a challenge. Yet, personally, I often get too busy with everyday "demands" that I do not devote enough time to my own prayer life for my foster children. This needs to change, for their sake. This year, I will take more time to pray for the children, their safety, their birth family, and their future.

### 10. Awareness

Like me, I imagine many of your friends and family do not really understand what it is that you do as a foster parent, nor the significant challenges that the children in your home face. To be sure, society as a whole does not understand the foster care world. Week after week, I am interviewed by others on various radio shows, and the hosts always inform me that they didn't really understand what it was like being a foster parent. As foster parents, we need to reshape this conversation, showing and educating all around us what foster parenting is truly like, what the challenges the children face, and how others can help through a number of methods.

Without a doubt, this is a very abbreviated list of the changes that need to be made in the foster care world. There are just my own personal top ten. Now, I would love to see yours. What are your top concerns? What are the problems that you believe need to be changed? How can we best help the children in care? How can YOU be a better advocate this coming year for our children in need?

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<http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com>

## Clothing Closet Corner



The Foster Care Clothing Closet is a resource established to help meet the clothing needs of children placed in foster care and is available to all resource families. If you have a child placed in your home, please contact your social worker to make arrangements to visit the clothing closet.

We have had a steady stream of donations coming in particularly for younger children and are running out of room. We are currently looking for donations of clothing for older children/teens. If you have a donation you would like to make for this population, please contact Susan Peck at 262-896-8574.

## Foundation Training - Level 2 Only

A new session of Foster Parent foundation Training will be gin in February. If you need to complete this training, please sign up as soon as possible.

To register for the training, go to <https://pdsonline.csod.com/client/pdsonline/default.aspx>.

If you have not signed up for a training in PDS Online before, please go to <http://wcpds.wisc.edu/pdsonline/fosterparents.aspx>.

### When:

**Mondays, February 15 - April 18, 2016**  
**5:30 PM to 8:30 PM**

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

## Thank You From Dayspring Baptist Church

The following letter was sent from Pastor Daniel Reehoff of Dayspring Baptist Church.

Dear Janice Mantel Ramos,

Thank you so much for helping us promote and advertise our Christmas Foster party. It was a huge success this year nearly doubling last years attendance. The Foster families got to enjoy a FREE barbeque dinner as well as a wonderful dessert table. After dinner the children got to pick a selection of candy from our Candy buffet.

I think the highlight for the night was the childrens puppet play titled "Hark, the Herald Angel". After the puppet play each child received a present with their own name on it. These presents were graciously given by the people of Dayspring Baptist Church.



We truly hope that we were able to be a blessing to the foster children of Waukesha County during this Christmas Season. We are blessed to share with them the real meaning of Christmas.

Dayspring Baptist Church is looking forward to next years Foster Families Christmas party. Be sure to join us again!

## Random Act of Kindness

We wish to extend our appreciation to Pastor Daniel Reehoff and Nicole Tanney and others at Dayspring Baptist Church for all their planning and hard work to offer another wonderful Foster Families Christmas Party! It was a huge success this year, nearly doubling last year's attendance. The foster families enjoyed a free barbeque dinner as well as delicious dessert table. Children selected candy from the "candy buffet," watched the puppet play titled "Hark the Herald Angel" and received Christmas presents. A joyous time was had by all!



## We Will Miss You, Janis Ramos!

I wish you all a 2016 filled with happiness, health and fulfillment. This year shall bring a new and exciting chapter in my life, as I look toward retiring from Waukesha County in February to pursue other ventures. With my anticipated departure comes reflection on the past 20 years I have spent working in child welfare. After working for many years with struggling and fractured families whose children experienced significant traumatic events in their young lives, my soul needed to be replenished. This occurred gradually as I began to work directly with foster parents and heard your stories, recognizing that you are the ones who are providing the security, love and protection for so many children while trying to cope with their trauma. You are the ones dealing first-hand with the painful experiences of children in your care. You bring hope and healing to them when they are most vulnerable and have the greatest need to be nurtured. And, you have been my greatest teachers.

You have taught me the true meaning of qualities such as patience, sacrifice, generosity, unconditional love and forgiveness. Through sharing your experiences, I have witnessed your selflessness and devotion to the children whose lives you touch. You have also taught me about sorrow, grief and loss and the ability to channel these feelings into action by continuing to help other children. Each time a child leaves your home, no matter what the reason, it is a traumatic loss. Yet, you continue to move forward to take in more children. Sadly, we have had a surge in out-of-home placements in 2015. When those phone calls are made, often in the middle of the night or while you are at work, it is a marvel to witness your ability to shift gears and immediately begin processing what the needs of the child are and how you can accommodate them.

Through all of the challenges and hardship, you recognize and celebrate the many joys that children bring. You are their advocates, their encouragers and their foundation. Many of you have become their parents and many maintain ongoing relationships with past foster kids, parents and extended family. By doing this, you widen the circle of love that surrounds children. I feel genuinely privileged for the enriching opportunities I have had through getting to know each of you. You have restored my sense of optimism in the goodness of humanity. You are truly my heroes!

Fondly,

Janis

\*I am delighted that Susan Peck will be taking over the position of Foster Care Coordinator. Some of you already know Susan who has worked at Waukesha County DHHS as a social worker for 15 years. She will be a wonderful asset to the program! In addition to her extensive experience and knowledge of children, families and foster parents, she is the mother of two lovely daughters, Ashtin, age 14 and Lauren, age 11. She can be reached at 262-896-8574; [speck@waukeshacounty.gov](mailto:speck@waukeshacounty.gov).

## Thank You!

We wish to extend a huge THANK YOU to Queen of Apostles Church and School and St. Vincent DePaul for their generous donation of holiday gift cards and adorable ornaments for children!! This was a collaborative effort by the church, school children in K-3 to 8th grade who made the ornaments and St. Vincent DePaul who identified children in foster care as the recipients of this generous donation.



## Waukesha Janboree

When: January 15, 16, and 17, 2016

Get ready to jam out at the 31st Annual Waukesha JanBoree! The Jammin' JanBoree has more than 35 events taking place all weekend long and most are FREE!

### Friday Events:

Opening Ceremonies  
Arctic Avalanche  
Ice Sculpting Demo  
Jammin' JanBoree Jam  
Special Edition Friday Night Live  
Fireworks Extravaganza



### Saturday Events:

Pancake Breakfast  
Frosty 5K Walk/Run  
Les Paul Sound Lab, Waukesha County Museum  
Geocaching Event  
Trolley Rides  
Jammin' in the Snow - FootGolf  
Drummin' with Tom Gill, Waukesha Public Library  
ACT Live  
Ice Sculpting Contest  
Come Fly With Me  
4k Make It - Take It Crafts  
Ice Bocce Ball Tourney  
Arctic Avalanche  
Hit the Ice Hockey Expo  
WCAP Bob-n-Weave to Tunes  
Penguin Egg Hunt  
JanBoree Kickball Tournament  
Pickleball Tournament  
Paw Jammin' Party & Chili Night Luminary Walk  
Party Like a Rockstar!, Waukesha Public Library  
Indoor Ice Skating, Eble  
Winter Fun at the YMCA!  
Cowboy Up at the Elks Lodge!  
JanBoree Trivia Night



### Sunday Events:

Wisconsin Winter Trail Assail - Ski/Snowshoe/Bike Races  
"Space Dreams" at Charles Horwitz Planetarium Show  
Retzer Nature Center Activities  
Alaskan Malamute Dog Pull Event - Minooka Park  
Horse Drawn Wagon Rides - Minooka Park  
Arctic Avalanche  
Closing Ceremonies - Schuetze Recreation Center  
Free Indoor Ice Skating - Nagawaukee Park Ice Arena

For additional information on all of these fun activities, as well as times and locations, please go to <http://www.janboree.org>

### Is 2016 the Year That YOU Make a Difference?

What if this were the year?

What if this were the year that you made a difference?

What if 2016 were the year that you finally decided to put good thoughts into action, instead of just thinking about it?

In this year of 2016, you are given the gift of 365 opportunities to make a difference. 365 opportunities to change a life. 365 opportunities to help a child in need.

For you see, this year of 2016 is not just one opportunity, it is 365 different opportunities to bring good unto our early, to bring change in a world that needs it, to bring hope and healing to children who

are suffering so very tragically and in so many ways. It is not just one chance to make difference in this world, but 365 different days to do so.

Imagine if you chose to embrace this opportunity; these opportunities. Imagine if you decided to become an advocate for children who are suffering, and who are in need.

On any given day this year, there will be roughly 400,000 children placed into the foster care system. Sadly, there are not enough people willing to fight for these children, willing to be their advocated, willing to make a difference in their lives.

Some say they are too busy. Others say they don't have enough resources. There are those who say that they don't know how to help. Far too many say what they want to do won't matter in the long run.

But, there is enough time to help. You do have enough resources. There are ways. What you do each day WILL matter.

Two days before Christmas, my home saw 22 children in it, at one time or another. From former foster children of ours to some homeless teens near where we live, to current children in foster care living with our family, to our own children; it was one busy and crowded day. My wife and I hosted a large Christmas meal, complete with stockings for many of these children; these children who were unable to have a true Christmas celebration. Could my wife and I do it all by ourselves? Possibly. By grace, though, there were some in the community who reached out by helping us with meals, helping us with gifts, and helping us with transportation. These people took the opportunity to make a difference, and chose to help change lives. Not only did their actions touch the lives of those children in need, they touched the hearts of my family.

There are plenty of excuses you can find, each day. There are plenty of valid reasons you can use to justify why you will not use 2016 as the year you make a difference. Indeed, society will most likely not fault you in not helping. After all, you are too busy, you have too much on your plate, too many responsibilities, and there is nothing that you can really do, anyways, to help.

You can continue to believe that in 2016. You can continue to live that lifestyle for the next 265 days. On the other hand, you can decide, right now, to make this the year that YOU change the world; that YOU make a difference; that what YOU do helps make the lives of children in need better. You have it within you to change the future of a child, to bring joy and happiness to a child who is hurting, to save a life.

There is a child out there, right now, who is hoping that you will help them.

Will this be the year?

Now, I need your help in helping other children in need. Please join me. Together we can provide a home for more children. I need your help. They need your help. It is Never Too Late for a happy childhood. It is never too late for a child to start healing and find love.

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# Training and Events



## Training Offered By Waukesha County

### 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.

**February 2, April 5, June 7, October 4, December 6, 2016**

**5:30 PM to 8:00 PM**

**Center for Excellence**

N4W2200 Bluemound Road, Waukesha

To register for childcare, RSVP or for questions call, 262-521-0317.

### Relative Caregivers Support/Education Group

**January 19, March 15, May 17, July 19, September 20, November 15, 2016**

**6:00 PM to 7:00 PM**

**Parents Place**

1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI

Free childcare available. Please call Parents Place to reserve your spot at 262-549-5575.

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**

**January 6, February 3, 2016**

**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.

### Support Group For Dads

This is a new group to enhance group members' experience as fathers. Topics of discussion will include coping with stress; developing a better relationship with partner/spouse/child's mother; identifying positive role models in your life; identifying how you are a positive role model for your child(ren); discussing your role as a father and what you would like to change or improve.

**Fourth Tuesday of each month**

**January 26, February 23, 2016**

**6:00PM - 7:30PM**

**Parents Place**

1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI

262-549-5575

### 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://wcpwps.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training/>. Please save the certificates after you have completed each module. These are required to become licensed.

**When:**

**Second Tuesday of each month**

**January 12, 2016**

**February 9, 2016**

**6:00 PM to 8:00 PM**

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

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

## Training

### Parents Place Programs

**262-549-5575 www.ppacinc.org**

- **Strong Willed Child**  
Tuesdays, January 5-26; 6:00 - 7:30 PM
- **Social Skills / Self Esteem (Parent and Child Class)**  
Wednesdays, January 13 & 20; 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- **Understanding Your Teen's Anger (Parent and Teen Class)**  
Mondays January 18 & 25; 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- **Love and Logic®**  
Mondays, February 1 - 22; 6:00 - 7:30 PM
- **Having Fun With Your Kids In The Kitchen (Parent and Child Class)**  
Thursdays, February 4 - March 17; 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- **Mindful Parent / Happy Child**  
Mondays, February 15 & 22; 5:30-7:00 PM

### Coalition for Children

**[www.coalitionforfcyf.org](http://www.coalitionforfcyf.org)**

For other training opportunities, see the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families website: [www.coalitionforfcyf.org](http://www.coalitionforfcyf.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

Vickie Smith, Supervisor  
262-970-4761

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:

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

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

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

Jamie Kasten ..... 262-548-7265

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

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

Danita Graham ..... 262-548-7341

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

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

Rachel O'Sullivan ..... 262-548-7639

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

Eugenio

Quantro-Plaga ..... 262-548-7684

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

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

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

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

### Kinship Workers:

Megan Quandt ..... 262-548-7373

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

### Placements As Of The Printing Of This Newsletter

Waukesha County Licensed Homes

Relative/Kinship/Level 1 Placements:  
47 Children

Level 2 Placements:

35 Children

Waukesha County Children in Out of Home Placement

Juvenile Corrections:

Residential Care Facilities:

Relative/Kinship Level 1

Foster Homes:

Level 2 Foster Homes:

1 Child

12 Children

50 Children

90 Children

Group Homes:

Shelter Care

Treatment Foster

Homes:

Inpatient Hospital:

Total Children in OHC:

1 Child

0 Children

1 Child

0 Children

104 Children

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

**FASPP**

Norma Schoenberg  
920-922-9627