



Resource Family Connection

News, Events, and Information Benefiting
the Children of Waukesha County
November and December, 2017



8 Things All Kids In Foster Care Want People To Know

By: Amma Mante

Every year during National Foster month, the president issues an annual proclamation praising the contributions of the child welfare professionals, and foster parents looking after the 400,000 children who are in the US foster care system.

No doubt some of these adults are pretty awesome, but for me, the real heroes are the brave young people who pack up their whole world in a trash bag to go and live with people who are, in most cases, complete strangers.

They are placed in foster families, institutions, or group homes. More than a quarter of all foster care placements are in kinship placements, where a child is placed with relatives.

I had the privilege of working with children in foster care for over three years. I was involved with a committee consisting of children in foster care and former foster youth transitioning out of the system. These incredibly insightful and astute young people, were advocates for foster care rights and reform.

I heard how their voices were often given the least value or weight when important decisions about their life were being made, and how frequently their input was entirely bypassed. They spoke of feeling like extraneous cogs in a big wheel that went on around them. Some hid the fact they were in foster care for as long as they could from their peers, because people treated them differently once they knew they were "foster kids."

Despite all the academic and professional training I had, I learned the most about children in foster care through those young people.

Here are eight things I learned that young people in foster care really want you to know.

1. "We come from diverse family backgrounds."

Over half the children in care are minorities. Although a disproportionate amount come from impoverished families, many have middle class backgrounds.

Some of these young people who come from well-respected communities and suffer abuse from their parents, are made to feel like their struggles are not as "important" as those children who came from less well-off families.

Every 47 seconds, a child in the US suffers from neglect or abuse, and it cuts across every social and racial barrier. No community is immune or free from this social ill.

2. "Our parents aren't perfect, but they're ours."

Sure, there are some unashamedly monstrous parents who abuse and intentionally inflict harm upon their children in unimaginable ways. However many more are simply broken adults.

They are poorly equipped to take care of themselves, let alone their children. They are individuals battling demons of mental ill health, drug and alcohol addiction. Very often, they were struggling to

break free from the cycle of abusive relationships or the lingering effects of their own traumatic childhoods.

The thing you need to remember is that to you they may just look like a screwed up, terrible excuse for a parent; but to those kids, that person means the world. Despite the anger that a lot of them felt, they didn't stop loving their parents.

3. "The adults messed up, we didn't."

I've lost count of the times teachers and parents of other kids formed fears or prejudices of a child, predicated on a perennial assumption that they had done something pretty terrible to wind up in care.

Around 75 percent of children come into care due to parental neglect. These young people often carry around a whole lot of guilt at the failure to hide the signs of their neglect from the authorities or not being able to make their primary caregiver "better." The last thing they need is for other people to add to this, by assuming they're in care as a result of their own actions.

4. "We have dreams and ambitions."

The negative impact frequent school moves has on their education is rarely factored in to decisions about placement changes. It comes as no surprise that only half of all foster care children fail to graduate from high school, and only 3 percent will graduate from college.

Most states do not provide job training, counseling, or any type of continuing support for foster care kids when they turn 18. A lot of child welfare professionals and foster carers are satisfied if they simply show up to classes and make their curfew.

They are failed by a lukewarm system with low expectations that doesn't even believe in itself. Some of the most bright and talented young people will not fulfill their potential, because no one cared enough to push them to do better.

What's crazy is that we take these children from parents who we deem incompetent. Then when young people age out the system, we expect them to fall back on those same parents for support and guidance.

It's time we stop labeling and limiting our youth, and start uplifting and supporting them instead. Most loving parents don't withdraw all support from their children the minute they reach 18, so why do we do that to the ones in care?



8 Things All Kids In Foster Care Want People To Know Continued from Page 1

5. "The system isn't working for us."

The whole legitimacy of the system is rooted in the belief that the alternative, letting them carry on in unhealthy families, would be cruel.

We have this idea that by removing children from their inept parents, we are rescuing them. In some cases, that's totally correct. 450 children are killed by their parents each year, and the number of these tragedies would most likely be higher if it weren't for the foster care system. So we can all sleep easy knowing that we are always doing the right thing by removing these children, right?

Well yeah, except for one huge problem: Children who have been in foster report significantly worse mental health, employment, housing, and education outcomes than those who suffered a similar level of neglect or abuse that remained within the home.

The broken foster care system is traumatizing to our children, who are 12 times more likely to be prescribed psychotropic drugs than children not in care. While the scrutiny is directed at the natural parents, a research by the Casey Family found one in three children in their study had been abused while in foster care, and the system has long been criticized as a pipeline to human trafficking and incarceration.

6. "Sometimes we just have regular kid problems."

As huge of a deal as being in foster care is, it doesn't eclipse who they are. Being in foster care doesn't mean they get a pass on the everyday issues that bother other children. They will still have exam anxiety, fights with friends, broken hearts and first crushes, insecurities and weaknesses, good days and bad days, and of course, puberty.

And yeah, will be moments when being foster care will affect the their relationships and everyday handling of normal life but you know what? Sometimes, it's not all about being a foster kid.

7. "Adoption does not equal goals."

Foster care is often viewed as the wilderness that some unlucky children are destined to trail through until they reach the promised land of Adoption. Only one-fifth will go on to be adopted, while over half will return to their homes. That's sad, right?

Wrong.

This may come as a surprise to you, but not every young person wants to be adopted. Many live with the hope of being reunified with their family, and if that is not possible, they desire a long term stay with their foster family.

I once attended a party held by an effervescent trio of siblings and their foster mother to celebrate when the state agreed they could remain with her indefinitely.

They were old enough to remember their real parents, and the thought of having to start again with another family, changing their last names, calling another adult mom or dad, was less than appealing. Stability with one loving and secure foster care family was often valued by young people, as much, if not more than adoption.

Too many children are languishing in foster care, but they don't need to be. They can thrive in foster care. For all the glaring faults of the system, I have witnessed remarkable transformations in children who were placed with caring and compassionate competent foster families. Where family reunification is simply not possible, foster care *can* work.

We need to stop seeing foster care as the red headed stepchild of the child welfare system, and realize the important role that long term foster placement can play in enriching, rebuilding, and bettering the lives of children in crisis.

8. "We're not 'just' foster kids."

Perhaps this is the most important thing they need you to know. Foster kids aren't actually "foster kids." They are young people who happen to have experienced foster care. What they are not, is a monolith with uniform feelings or responses on every issue. The experience of being in foster care will undoubtedly leave an indelible imprint on their lives, but the way in which every young person's journey and future will be shaped by will vary.

Their case notes only provide a snapshot of their lives and background. It will never tell the whole story. The largeness of who they are, cannot be contained within those files.

At the beginning, it was easy to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges that faced them, and underwhelmed by the tepidity of the system.

However, I was inspired by their resilience, fortitude, and tenacity amidst constant changes and upheavals and their immense capacity to adapt to new situation. They are all uniquely sentient, nuanced, and complex young people with their special set of quirks and habits, weaknesses and strengths, gifts and talents, and fears and aspirations.

Each and every single young person in foster care is a courageous individual with something to say.

Listen to them.

Foster Care Recruitment Effort

In an effort to raise awareness for the need of additional foster parents in Waukesha County, we have been participating in indoor and outdoor events across the County. Our booth includes information on how to become a foster parent, frequently asked questions, steps to become a foster parent, and promotional materials. We also give PowerPoint presentations, followed by a question and answer session. If you know of an event where we can have our booth, or would like us to come and speak for an organization, please contact Libby Sinclair at esinclair@waukeshacounty.gov.

The Clothing Closet is Busting at the Seams!

The Clothing Closet is running out of room with donations of infant and toddler clothing. All of the clothing is in good condition with no stains or imperfections. We have some really nice things in there, and many items still have store tags on them!! We are hoping that Kinship and Foster Families will use this resource. Please contact Linda Finn, one of our Human Services Support Specialists, at 262-548-7254, to arrange a personal appointment to come in and "shop" in the clothing closet!



Booster and Car Seat Fitting Stations

Waukesha County booster and car seat fitting stations are located at the following locations. Appointments are required.

Visit <http://www.safekidswi.org> for additional information.

- Aurora Medical Center Summit
- Fields Jaguar Land Rover Volvo Waukesha
- ProHealth Care in Mukwonago, Waukesha, and Oconomowoc
- City of Pewaukee Police Department

Quick Tips: Reducing Holiday Stress

By: Kathleen Romito, MD and Steven Locke, MD

The holidays can be a joyful time, offering a chance to reconnect with friends and family. But they can also be stressful. You may feel pressure to buy and give gifts. Maybe you are worried about money. The holidays can also be hectic. There never seems to be enough time to get things done.

Think about the kind of events that trigger stress for you during the holidays. Then you can focus on one or two things you can do that will help the most to reduce stress.

Here are some ideas:

- ❄️ **Know your spending limit.** Lack of money is one of the biggest causes of stress during the holiday season. This year, set a budget, and don't spend more than you've planned. It's okay to tell your child that a certain toy costs too much. Don't buy gifts that you'll spend the rest of the year trying to pay off.
- ❄️ **Give something personal.** You can show love and caring with any gift that is meaningful and personal. It doesn't have to cost a lot. Or use words instead of an expensive gift to let people know how important they are to you. Make a phone call or write a note and share your feelings.
- ❄️ **Get organized.** Make lists or use an appointment book to keep track of tasks to do and events to attend.
- ❄️ **Share the tasks.** You don't have to do everything yourself. Share your "to do" list with others. Spend time with friends and family while you share tasks like decorating, wrapping gifts, and preparing the holiday meal.
- ❄️ **Learn to say "No."** It's okay to say "no" to events that aren't important to you. This will give you more time to say "yes" to events that you do want to attend.
- ❄️ **Be realistic.** Try not to put pressure on yourself to create the perfect holiday for your family. Focus instead on the traditions that make holidays special for you. And remember that just because it's a holiday, family problems don't go away. If you have a hard time being around your relatives, it's okay to set limits on your time at events and visits.

You may not be able to avoid stressful situations during the holidays, but you can plan to respond to them in a healthy way.

Holiday Parades

Milwaukee Holiday Parade

Saturday, November 18, 2017 at 9:30 a.m.

<https://milwaukeeparade.com>

Waukesha Christmas Parade

Sunday, November 19, 2017 at 4:00 p.m.

<http://www.waukeshasilverbells.com/christmas-parade>

(Note that at the time of publishing, the website has not been updated yet)

Oconomowoc Christmas Parade

Saturday, December 2, 2017 at 5:00 p.m.

<http://www.oconomowockiwanis.org>



Monica and Travis Begley

Monica and Travis Begley have been licensed foster parents with Waukesha County since November 4, 2016; prior to that, being licensed through Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. Since transferring their license to Waukesha County, the family has taken on three placements including a sibling group with an older teen. Monica and Travis have gone above and beyond taking in an older youth as initially, they had concerns about the impact the placement of an older youth might have on their three year old daughter. The family recognized the importance in maintain sibling connections and the need to keep these children together. The Begley's report that this was a positive experience for both the family and the children who have since reunified with their birth family.



In addition to fostering, Monica recently spoke at the Speakers Task Force on Foster Care and is the mediator of our new foster care Facebook page. Monica is also attending a training in Wisconsin Dells in November, 2017 to learn more about foster parent recruitment as one of our "foster care champions."

The Waukesha County foster care program and staff would like to recognize the Begley family for their support and commitment. You are truly amazing!

Holiday Activities

Photos with Santa

Free photos with Santa, along with cookies and punch! Kids can make an ornament with local girl scouts! Story time with Quincy the Christmas Quail!

Fruits of the Spirit Candles, 349 W. Broadway St, Waukesha, WI
For dates, times, and additional information:

<https://lakecountryfamilyfun.com/event/free-photos-santa-waukesha/all/>

German Christmas Market

Take your own pictures of Santa with your own camera! Shopping! Hot drinks! Gingerbread decorating for kids!

November 24 - November 26, 2017

Corner of Main Street and Wisconsin Avenue, Oconomowoc
(For GPS, use 100 E. Wisconsin Avenue, Oconomowoc, WI)

<http://www.germanchristmasmarket.org>

Breakfast with Reindeer

Bring your own camera to take pictures with Santa, live reindeer, and a magical elf or two!

December 2, 2017 from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Kettle Moraine High School, Delafield

<https://lakecountryfamilyfun.com/event/breakfast-with-the-reindeer-delafield/>

Canadian Pacific Holiday Train

You will not want to miss this fun experience!

December 3, 2017

Hartland:

Level Crossing at Cottonwood Avenue

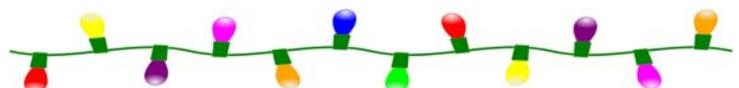
Arrival 5:45 p.m.; Event 6:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Oconomowoc:

South Main Street railway crossing

Arrival 6:55 p.m.; Event 6:55 p.m. - 7:25 pm.

<http://www.cpr.ca/holiday-train/united-states>



Additional Training and Events



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.

A light dinner and daycare will be provided.

December 5, 2017

6:00 PM - 7:45 PM

Waukesha County Human Services

514 Riverview Ave., Waukesha, WI

RSVP for this training:

<http://parentcafe2017.eventbrite.com>

Support Group For Dads

A 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

November 7, 2017

December 5, 2017

6:00PM - 7:30PM

Parents Place

1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI

262-549-5575

Foster Parent Support Group

Our foster parent support group will now be facilitated by Allison Curtiss-Jaworski, our contracted Foster Parent Support Specialist, as requested by the Foster Parent Advisory Committee. This is a valuable opportunity for you to connect with other providers in order to have an open and candid discussion regarding the rewards and challenges of the critically important work you do. In order to receive ongoing training credit, an educational topic or article will be discussed.

On-site daycare is available, but you must register in advance by contacting Parents Place.

First Thursday of each month

November 9, 2017

December 7, 2017

6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Parents Place

1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI

262-549-5575



Required Training

Required Training For All Relative Care Providers, Level 1 and Level 2 Foster Homes

Foster Parent Orientation – The Foster Parent Orientation is open to anyone interested in becoming a foster parent. **If you are currently in the process of becoming a licensed foster parent, you are required to attend this Orientation class prior to the approval of your foster care license.** Please complete the on-line Pre-Placement training prior to attending the Orientation session. The online Pre-Placement training is located at <http://wcpds.wisc.edu/Pre-Placement.htm> Please save the certificates after you have completed each Module. These are required to become licensed.

WHEN: November 14, and December 12, 2017

TIME: 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

WHERE: Waukesha County Human Services, 514 Riverview Ave., Waukesha, WI

RSVP to Libby Sinclair at

esinclair@waukeshacounty.gov or 262-548-7277

(There is no childcare available.)



On-going Trainings

DATE: See below

TIME: 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

WHERE: Waukesha County Human Services, 514 Riverview Ave., Waukesha, WI

A light dinner and daycare will be provided.

You must register for each individual session at:

<http://waukeshafostercaretraining.eventbrite.com>

Stories of Hope

November 16, 2017

Stories of Hope is a live, 40-minute public education program, in which one or two trained speakers share compelling personal stories about living with mental health conditions and achieving recovery. The presentation takes the attendees through the speaker's journey from the time they began experiencing symptoms to the present. After the presentations, the speakers engage in a dialogue with the audience to answer any questions they may have.



Contact Numbers:

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
262-548-7212

Vickie Smith, Foster Care
Licensing Supervisor
262-970-4761

Susan Peck, Foster Care Level 2
Coordinator
262-896-8574

Libby Sinclair, Relative Foster
Care Level 1 Coordinator
262-548-7277

Megan Quandt, Kinship & Foster
Care Coordinator
262-548-7373

Jessica Morris, Kinship & Foster
Care Coordinator
262-548-7256

Eve Altizer, Ongoing Social Work
Supervisor
262-548-7272

Eric Calvino, Ongoing Social Work
Supervisor
262-548-7271

Social Workers:

Kimberly Dudzik 262-548-7347

Megan Fishler 262-896-8570

Abbey Girman 262-548-7695

Sharon Godwin 262-548-7684

Mallorie Hebeker 262-896-6857

Laura Jahnke 262-548-7359

Jamie Kasten 262-548-7265

Jessica Larsen 262-548-7346

Maria Maurer 262-548-7345

Chelsey Nisbet 262-896-6896

Rachel O'Sullivan 262-548-7639

Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson 262-548-7273

Linda Senger 262-548-7698

Brittany Sutton 262-548-7262

Sara Waldron 262-548-7371

Jamie West 262-548-7264

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911
Family Emergency: 211 or
262-547-3388

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

FASPP
Norma Schoenberg
920-922-9627