

Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

# Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

August/September 2014

N F A P A



## Online Activities

By: Dr. John DeGarmo

While you are monitoring your foster child's online activities closer, you may wish to consider at the same time giving him a little more freedom. This may depend upon a number of factors.

To begin with, you may find that your foster child is particularly vulnerable to falling victim to hoaxes, scams, and false claims by others. If so, your foster child is certainly not ready to have such freedom online. Along with this, you may have a child placed in your home who is unable or unwilling to follow house rules that you have in place.

Furthermore, perhaps your foster child is one who is unwilling to share problems or concerns with you.

In either event, such freedom online is not appropriate, as the child is simply not responsible enough to be allowed access to social networking or online technology. If you feel that a foster child who is older than 12 years of age is mature, responsible, and trustworthy enough to have his own computer, cell phone,

or online device, discuss this with the child welfare agent beforehand, as the agency may have some policies and regulations already in place. Your foster child's case worker should certainly be made aware that the child has regular and consistent access online.

When giving this kind of freedom, it is also most important to stress with your foster child the house rules and the consequences involved in breaking any rules.

The ages from 12-15 can be tough for both child and adult. It is an age where children often begin to find their own identity, one separate from their parents. It is an age where children are becoming more curious about the world around them, leading sometimes to poor decision making when the child experiments with things outside of parental guidance.

For many parents, it is a difficult time, as their children undergo the awkward hormonal stage. It is at this age where foster children begin to have experiences with cyberbullying, sexting, gaming, as they generally begin to spend more time on a computer or digital device.

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It is also this stage where foster parents must truly begin to watch what their foster children are accessing on the computer. Foster parents need to ensure that the child is not accessing inappropriate content, games, and apps, or visiting sites that encourage communication with strangers. To be sure, you should not depend on filters alone to keep your foster child safe. Even the best filters can fail, as technology savvy users find ways to get around the safety nets you have set in place. By checking your foster child's online devices and cell phones on a daily basis, you are better able to ensure that the online device is not being abused or used for the wrong purpose.

One way to do this is to check your foster child's browser on the computer on a regular basis. By clicking on the arrow next to the address bar at the top of the screen, or by accessing the computer's menus and then clicking on "history", you will be able to see what sites the foster child has recently visited. Though your child might consider this "spying", you are instead ensuring their safety, and that they have not visited sites that both break your family rules as well as sites that may endanger both the foster child and yourself. Indeed, there are those children who wish to avoid being "spied on," and will attempt to use a secure browser in one of the various forms of "incognito mode". These can be disabled, though, with a few simple steps.

For much more on how to protect your child, and yourself from online dangers, see Dr. DeGarmo's new book *Keeping Foster Children Safe Online*.

Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for 12 years; 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 books, including the new book *Keeping Foster Children Safe Online*, *The Foster Parenting Manual: A Practical Guide to Creating a Loving, Safe and Stable Home*, and the foster care children's book *A Different Home: A New Foster Child's Story*. Dr. DeGarmo is the host of the weekly radio program **Foster Talk with Dr. John**. He can be contacted at drjohndegarmo@gmail, through his Facebook page, Dr. John DeGarmo, or at his website, <http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com>.

## ATTENTION FOSTER PARENTS! *Earn your foster parent credits while getting the chance to win GREAT Prizes!*

Answer these 10 questions from this newsletter correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a sleeping bag and small tent. Just answer the following 10 questions and email the information to [Felicia@nfapa.org](mailto:Felicia@nfapa.org) or send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 2431 Fairfield Street, Suite C, Lincoln, NE. For your convenience, this questionnaire will be available on our website (under newsletters) for you to print off, fill out and send in by email or mail. We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. What are seven signs a child or teen may need counseling?
2. T or F: Foster children typically perform poorly in school.
3. What is the difference between ODD and CD?
4. Give two reasons youth may be eligible for Medicaid to age 26.
5. What are three behaviors that are a normal part of childhood?
6. When do foster children begin to experience cyberbullying, sexting and gaming?
7. Name three reasons why a foster child may not place school work at a high priority
8. When is National Adoption Awareness Month?
9. What type of child usually feels a sense of responsibility or guilt?
10. Where can you go to learn more about how to help children in your care that has a sibling receiving residential interventions?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Issue: Families First Newsletter: Aug./Sept. 2014

# Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

## 2014 Guardianship Training Classes

Education for Guardians of Nebraska State Wards  
Guardians of children who are in the custody of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services due to abuse and/ or neglect face many issues that normally are not addressed in the probate code or in probate court proceedings. Foster parents (prospective guardians) or guardians of former state wards should fully understand the permanency options of adoption and guardianship, including the rights, responsibilities, and commitments necessary for each.

The Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association facilitates a 3 hour Guardianship training that provides participants with detailed information on the duties of the guardian, rights of the ward, annual reporting requirements, and instruction on the forms required for guardianships of this population of minors.

This class fulfills Guardianship education requirements set by the Nebraska Probate Code Educational requirements for guardians must be met within 3 months of appointment. Note: Foster Parents may attend the Guardianship training for continuing credit hours.

**Pre-registration is required for the class by phone or email**  
The Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association  
1-877-257-0176 or felicia@nfapa.org

**A registration fee of \$30 per participant is due upon arrival at the class. A full list of Guardianship class are available on our website at [www.nfapa.org](http://www.nfapa.org). Below is a list of trainings available in the next three months. Registration is required at least one week ahead of the training date.**

- \***Kearney** Oct 6, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist Church 4500 Linden
- \***Beatrice** Oct 7, 2014 9 to 12 p.m. Southeast Community College 4771 W Scott Road
- \***Lincoln** Oct 8, 2014 9 to 12 p.m. NFAPA Office 2431 Fairfield Ste. C
- \***Grand Island** Oct 11, 2014 1 to 4 p.m St. Francis Medical Center Room A  
2116 W. Faidley Ave \*Spanish Class
- \***Seward** Oct 16, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. Seward Civic Center 616 Bradford st
- \* **Hastings** Oct 16, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. Public Library 517 West 4<sup>th</sup>
- \* **Sidney** Oct 17, 2014 6 to 9 p.m. Memorial Health Center Ray Cruise Room

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Families First is published bimonthly.

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Questions? Call NFAPA at 877-257-0176 or 402-476-2273.  
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## Teach Your Child not to Interrupt in One Simple Step

Posted on July 7, 2014 at <http://www.aneverydaystory.com/2014/07/07/how-to-teach-your-child-not-to-interrupt/> by [Kate Gribble](#)

See these two? Boy do they have a lot going on. Often times they are just BURSTING to tell me something and will come straight up to me and tell me what's on their mind, regardless of whether I am already talking to someone.

Well they used to. That was before I saw this truly genius little technique from a friend. I was chatting with her one day when her (then 3-year-old) son wanted to say something. Instead of interrupting though, he simply placed his hand on her wrist and waited. My friend placed her hand over his to acknowledge him and we continued chatting.

After she had finished what she was saying, she turned to him. I was in awe! So simple. So gentle. So respectful of both the child and the adult.

My husband and I started implementing this straight away. We explained to Jack and Sarah that if they want to talk and someone is already speaking they need to place their hand on our wrist and wait. It took some practice and a few light taps on our own wrists as gentle reminders but I am so happy to report that the interrupting has all but stopped!!

No more, 'wait'. No more, 'Please don't interrupt'. Just a simple visual gesture; a little touch of the wrist. That's all. Give it a try. It works!



The Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association (NFAPA) is collaborating with the FCRO, CASA, DHHS and others to provide statewide in-service trainings. Registration is required so we can plan for number of meals and materials needed. Registration will close

several days before the training so make sure you register ASAP! Please register on line at [www.fcro.nebraska.gov](http://www.fcro.nebraska.gov). Workshops begin at 8:00 a.m. for Networking and Resources and finish around 4:30 p.m. Foster Parents will receive up to 6 hours of training for attending.

For these Fall Workshops, Stan Waddell is returning from Texas to provide workshops on:

- Whole Brain: The Link Between Brain Functioning and Attachment
- Resilience: The Art of Science of Healing from Trauma

During lunch, we will have a panel of people to discuss "Bridge to Independence" and other programs for young people ages 16-19 and 19-21 who are in or transitioning from foster care.

**September 22, 2014: Kearney  
United Methodist Church, 4500 Linden Dr.**

**September 23, 2014: Grand Island  
St. Paul's Church, 1515 South Harrison Street**

**September 24, 2014: York  
York College, 1125 E 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Miller Room**

**October 4, 2014: North Platte  
Holiday Inn & Conference Center,  
300 Holiday Frontage Road**

\*\* There is an evening training option available in North Platte. Be sure to register for the day and/or evening training online! Western Foster Parents can attend the North Platte day and evening training on a scholarship so register today!

## 10 Things Foster Parents Wish Their Case Managers Knew

by Mike Berry

Last night my wife and I had the honor of hosting our monthly adoption support group in our home. We do this once a month and it's always refreshing. While the group is made up of adoptive parents, most have been, or currently are, active foster parents. As we sat around our dining room table, enjoying one another's company, I posed this question to the group- "What are some things you wish your case managers knew?" If you are unfamiliar with how the foster care system works, each child who enters into care is assigned a case manager and that person is the liaison between the state and the foster family the child is placed with. In the decade that we have been foster parents we have had the joy of working with some phenomenal case managers and the frustration of working with some very bad case managers.

### Here are 10 things the support group said last night:

1. We know the children the best.

We spend every waking moment with the children you placed in our homes. Some of us have had, and will have, placements for months, even years. They bond to us and that's a good thing. Please trust us when we tell you things about them and we make observations. We know them really really well because we're doing life with them. That's not to say that you don't know them because we know you do. But when you have the role of first responder to strong emotional outbreaks, meltdowns and fear, it gives unique insight.

2. We actually live by a schedule.

Although it seems like we're available at the drop of a hat, we are not. Many of us have jobs outside of our home. Please show up on time for visits & follow-ups in our home. We can't always adjust our schedule because you got out of court later than you thought and now you're over an hour late. Many of us have other children and they are involved in other activities. Please be respectful of that.

3. This is NOT a job, it's a way of life.

It's our family. We do not get holidays off, there are no financial gains, and no one is rolling out the red carpet for us. In fact, they're staring at us and they think we're weird. They don't get us. We're okay with that but we need you to understand this. This is our life, 24/7, and sometimes it is so difficult that we don't know if we can make it another day.

4. Point us toward good resources.

We need support groups, literature, and a listening ear. If there are any good conferences that you know of, don't let us stumble upon them, give us a call or send us an email and give us the scoop. This helps us know that you are there for us.

5. Communicate with us.

There are certain things we need to know. Please do not withhold important information about the child from us. Especially if there was extreme trauma or abuse. Having this type of information helps us navigate tough situations

or meltdowns. We need to hear from you, and we need you to return our calls. We feel alone in this more than you know. We are looking to you for support.

6. Be honest with us.

If you don't know the answer, that's okay. We're fine if you tell us that you have to find out and that you'll get back to us. It's really frustrating when you try to give us an answer that may not be the truth or you make something up just to satisfy us.

7. We're foster parents by choice.

We do this because we want to better the lives of children from difficult places. This is a thankless endeavor and we know that. But we entered into it willingly.

8. Paint a realistic picture of our current situation.

If there's a chance the child will be staying longer, please do not tell us that it "Will only be a few days and then he'll be moved to a family member's house," or "She's only staying for the weekend," or "This will only be a 48-hour deal," or "This is an overnight placement." We're okay with an "I don't know," answer. Remember, we chose to do this, so we can handle vagueness or the unknown.

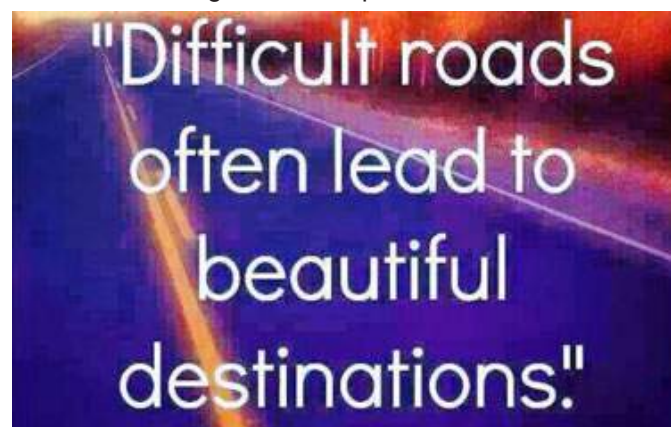
9. We're doing you a service.

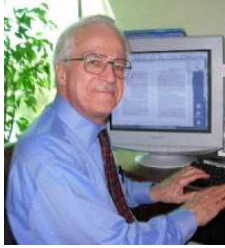
You are lucky you have us. So please treat us with respect. That goes for our time too. When we ask you for assistance or send you emails, please do not act like we're an inconvenience. We know your job is hard and we are not downplaying that. It's just that we are on the front lines of this whole ordeal and we have to handle emotions and fear that children in our placement experience regularly.

10. We have a lot of fears.

We fear someone walking in and taking our kids. We fear the power you have over us. We fear one of our children accusing us of something untrue and you believing it. We know this is just fear and not really true but it sure feels like it's true at times!

We collectively recognize that many case managers do know these things. In fact, we agreed that we have all had the pleasure of working with some truly amazing people in the foster care system. However, there are many days where we've felt alone, and as if no one understands the struggles we have. The heart of this post is NOT to criticize but to enlighten and help.





**Dr. Thomas Phelan,**  
Guest Specialist  
**PARENTING: THE DREAM vs. THE REALITY**

# Tips for Parents

*What's the matter with you!?*  
*How many times do I have to tell you!?*  
*When are you going to learn!?*  
*That's it! THAT'S IT! I've had it!*  
*Are you trying to drive me crazy!?*  
*What is your problem!?*

Dealing successfully with your own children and being a good parent involves praising your children, listening to them and having fun with them. It also involves managing kids' difficult behavior ... gently but effectively.

Reading a story at bedtime is easy; so is taking the kids to a movie or teaching them how to ride a bike. Those activities are part of the reality of parenting. What's not so easy is managing sibling rivalry, deciding what to do with the child who gets out of bed 30 times or handling the youngster who whines incessantly with very little provocation. These aggravations and dilemmas are also part of the reality of parenting.

*A lot of bad parenting, as well as abusive parenting, starts with frustrated expectations.* Ironically, those parents who have the most trouble managing their anger toward their children stubbornly hang on to pleasant images about raising kids. In their minds, kids should *always* be cooperative and enjoyable. Anything else just isn't right. There's no room for the many anticipated negatives that come along with having children.

Parents who have not successfully made the transition from enjoying their parenting dream to accepting the parenting reality sound like this when they talk to their kids:

### Kids are Just Kids

Statements like these indicate expectations that are off-base ... way off-base. Underlying these angry verbal blasts are thoughts such as "No other parents have to put up with this. Something's wrong with my kids. Something's wrong with me. This isn't right, and it's not fair. Parenting young children is not supposed to be like this."

*Yes, it IS supposed to be like this.* Kids are just kids. They don't always cooperate and they're not always fun. Behaviors like whining, tantrums and sibling rivalry certainly aren't fun, but they are a normal part of childhood. And learning how to manage them well, without excessive anger or abusiveness, is part of the reality of being a parent.

Clinical psychologist **Dr. Thomas Phelan** is an internationally recognized expert and lecturer on child discipline. He's the author of the landmark book, *1-2-3 Magic!* [<http://www.123magic.com/>].

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*Parenting requires love,  
not DNA.*

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## Building Bridges Initiative

Many families have siblings that have a brother or sister receiving residential interventions. Please look over the "Tip Sheet" to see some common issues siblings experience and help family members.

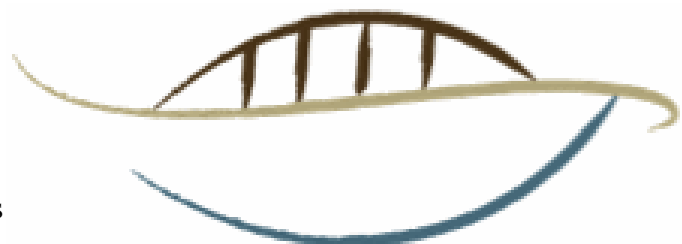
Building Bridges is a national initiative working to identify and promote practice and policy that will create strong and closely coordinated partnerships and collaborations between families, youth, community - and residentially - based treatment and service providers, advocates and policy makers to ensure that comprehensive mental health services and supports are available to improve the lives of young people and their families.

In all that we do, we strive to advance partnerships

among residential and community-based service providers, youth, and families to improve lives.

**The Building Bridges Initiative is pleased to share a new document on sibling support: *Supporting Siblings When a Brother or Sister is Receiving Residential Interventions: Key Issues and Tips for Providers and Families.* To download the document, please go to the following link: <http://www.buildingbridges4youth.org/sites/default/files/BBI%20Sibling%20Tip%20Sheet.pdf>**

This link is also available at: [www.buildingbridges4youth.org](http://www.buildingbridges4youth.org)



## 10 SIGNS A YOUNGSTER NEEDS COUNSELING:

### The Counselor's Corner:

**Morrisa Drobnick**, Guest Specialist

Many think of childhood and adolescence as a carefree time. For some, it is. Others, however, do not seem to go through childhood and adolescence carefree at all. Below are some guidelines on when a child or teen may need counseling and a referral to a counselor or therapist.

**Long Periods of Sadness**—The youngster may seem to be sad for several days or weeks. Nothing helps them feel better. Even if you try to entertain or distract them, nothing works. The child may cry over both little and big things and not be able to stop. Children and adolescents do not normally talk about being sad; they show sadness through their actions. They may get into trouble and break rules to show they are sad.

**Withdrawn Behavior**—Withdrawn kids have little or no interest in playing or being with friends. They want to be by themselves instead of being with friends or family.

**Feeling Angry**—Some youngsters may be angry all the time. They may get into fights with other kids. They may take their anger out on adults in authority. It is often tantrum-like behavior. These kids are disruptive in the household.

**Feeling Anxious and Worried**—Some youngsters worry a lot. They worry about their parents when they are away from home. They worry about their parents getting physically hurt. They worry that another death will occur or that they will have to move again. They create things to worry about all the time.

### **Feeling a Sense of Responsibility or Guilt**—

This is sometimes a problem with older school-aged children. This is often a problem with children who have experienced divorce or a death in the family. They may think it is their fault. They may also feel responsible for taking care of other family members.

**Problems with Separating**—A child or teen may not want a parent to leave to do their normal routine of the day. A young child may cry in school to get in touch with his or her parent. A teen may call or text a parent several times a day to be in contact. This is a problem.

**Cannot Concentrate**—Some youngsters may have a hard time getting things done. They may be easily distracted. Maybe they cannot settle on any one activity or job you give them. They may not follow instructions well.

**Living in the Past**—The child or adolescent may seem to think more about the past than the present. Many will talk about the past when their family was together, when their loved one was still alive, or when times were different.

**Changes in Daily Habits**—Kids and teens may change what they normally do. Some may wake up in the morning, but have difficulty getting out of bed. Or they may start having problems going to sleep or have nightmares while sleeping. Eating habits may also change, where they eat much more or much less than before.

**The Parents Cannot Help the Child**—Methods that have worked previously are not currently effective. At this point, the parents are having difficulties with their own feelings and feel that helping their child is beyond their control.

**Morrisa Drobnick** is the co-director of the Mars & Venus Counseling Center in Bergen County and Northern New Jersey. She has been in private practice as a counselor for over 20 years, with expertise in working with children and adolescents. [<http://richard-drobnick.com/>]

# Waiting Children

## Jaisean, Nathaniel, Chakara

Names: Jaisean, Nathaniel & Chakara

Is Contact with Siblings Requested: Adopted together and maintain contact with former foster family

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Jaisean is an eager kindergartener. He is tender, caring, and affectionate towards his family and friends. His favorite activities seem to be whatever his big brother Nate is doing. Jaisean is a fan of superheroes and really likes Batman. Jaisean, along with his siblings, loves listening to music and can sing along to most Kidz Bop songs.

Nathaniel, or Nate as he's been nicknamed, is an artistic, insightful, and intelligent young child. He doesn't miss a beat and absorbs information very quickly. Nate enjoys creating, building, and coloring; he can transform simple papers and cardboard into basketball hoops, robots, cars, and more. Nate takes great pride in his siblings, Jaisean and Chakara, and is very protective of and helpful with them. A perfect home for these siblings is one that could provide permanency for all three of them.

Chakara is the youngest of the siblings, but that doesn't stop her from letting her voice be heard. She is animated and enthusiastic and is often seen playing with dolls or joining her brothers as superheroes. It is obvious that Chakara adores her older brothers.

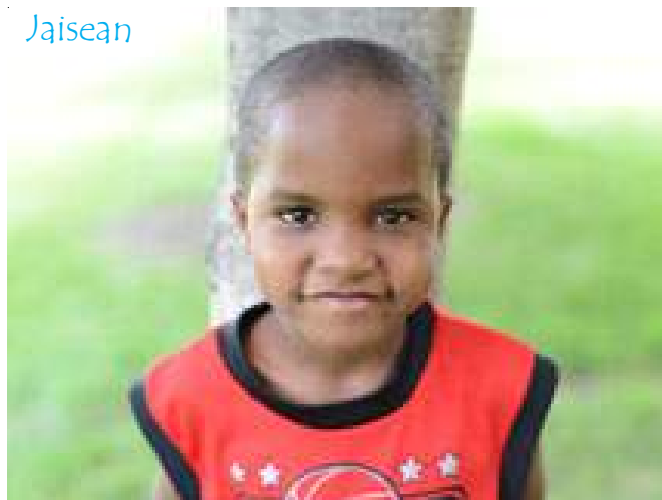
For more information:

Email: [jkroeker@childsaving.org](mailto:jkroeker@childsaving.org)

Phone: 402-553-6000



Jaisean



Nate



Chakara





## Medicaid to 26 for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

If you'd like more information about Medicaid to age 26 or the Bridge to Independence program, check out our fact sheets or contact Nebraska Appleseed at 402-438-8853.

As of January 1, 2014, youth who "age out" of foster care\* may be eligible for Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) until age 26. Young adults who already aged out of foster care and are under the age of 26 may also be eligible. Over 1,200 young people across the state could be impacted by this.

Please help us spread the word by sharing this information - and our fact sheet - with all potentially eligible young people and those who may come into contact with them.

Youth may be eligible if they:

- Aged out of foster care\*
- Were enrolled in Medicaid while in foster care

\*At this time, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has decided that youth must have aged out at 19 in Nebraska in order to get coverage. Thus, youth whose cases are closed between ages 18 and 19 may not be covered. Contact Nebraska Appleseed at 402-

438-8853 with questions about this. Youth whose cases are closed at age 17 or younger will not be eligible for this category of Medicaid.

To Sign Up:

Youth can download a Medicaid application (make sure they answer Question 16, which asks whether they were in foster care at age 18 or older). They can also contact the DHHS Medicaid Division at 1-855-632-7633, 402-473-7000 (in Lincoln), or 402-595-1178 (in Omaha).

For More Information:

For additional details about this provision of the ACA, including several FAQs, check out our fact sheet here. Be sure to also check out our fact sheet about Bridge to Independence, a program providing voluntary extended services and support for youth aging out of foster care until age 21, which will be implemented in the upcoming months after approval from the Federal Government. You may also contact Nebraska Appleseed or your local DHHS office.

Thank you for your partnership in serving youth across the state of Nebraska!

## L5 Youth Ranch

The L5 Youth Ranch sits on 112 acres of scenic rolling wooded countryside east of Sprague. It is operated by Matt and Daisy Langston and was opened the summer of 2006. The ranch provides a sanctuary for rescued horses and kids that are struggling with a variety of personal issues. Children are given the opportunity to ride the horses once a week to help them learn responsibility and give them a safe and supportive place to spend their time. Many of the horses at L5 Youth Ranch have been rescued from abusive situations. Some were seized with help of law enforcement personnel, others by simply approaching the negligent owners directly and others that simply needed a new home.

The ranch is open from May through October. Kids typically come out once a week and spend two hours at the ranch each time they visit. The ranch tries to have one adult counselor matched up with each child when they arrive. They pair up and do 15 minutes of chores before they start working with the horses. The chores may include grooming and brushing the horses, cleaning tack or mucking stalls. Eventually, the youth learn to bridle and saddle the horses before they are able to begin riding. L5 Youth Ranch lets the children decide when they are finally ready to ride the horses. They begin working in a round pen where they learn non-verbal cues and how to control the horses using body language. It takes on average about two months for them to learn to direct the horse from the saddle. Most parents note that for many kids, the ranch offers therapy that surpasses any other available options. The kids seem more relaxed, less anxious and more content and confident when they are at the ranch. When working with a horse, kids are focused on helping the horse and it makes it easy for them to open up and talk about school, talk about struggles, talk about life. One of the main benefits the ranch can offer families is that it's free for children to attend. There's no cost to the kids or their families. The only requirement to be welcomed at the L5 Youth Ranch is a willingness to learn.

Sessions with Matt, Daisy, or one of our wonderful volunteers are available by appointment; simply call Matt at 402.525.9963 or Daisy at 402.525.9964. To learn more about the Ranch visit us online at [www.L5YouthRanch.org](http://www.L5YouthRanch.org).

# It's a Whole New World

By: Dr. John DeGarmo

The moment a foster child is placed into a new home and a new school, his whole world has changed. There are now different rules and different expectations to follow for him. His foster home and school are new environments for him. There is even a set of new parents for him, as well as a school full of new teachers and fellow classmates. Everything he has known to be true is now different. These are significant changes in the child's lifestyle. All decision making has been taken away from them. They are in their new foster home and new school against their own will, against their own choice.

Foster children typically perform poorly in school for a variety of reasons. Multiple displacements from home to home often results in foster children becoming dissatisfied with school, and quickly losing interest. Transcripts and school records are often missing or incomplete when a student enrolls into a new school, many times resulting in the children not being enrolled in classes designed to best help them, nor the resources they need to succeed. Along with this, many times, teachers and administrators are not aware that the student is a foster child, nor aware of the many emotional difficulties and traumas that foster children face, in general. Along with these are the difficulties they may have faced while living with their birth family members. They may never have had rules of any kind in their home. The foster child may not have had the responsibility of doing chores. Homework may be something completely foreign to them, as it may not have been expected or enforced. Manners may not have been taught or modeled in their family. Even personal hygiene may not have been established before they came to live with their new foster family. Without a doubt, children in foster care are going to likely struggle in school, whether it is with academics, behavior, socially, or a combination of the three.

Teachers, foster parents, and case workers should place reasonable expectations on a foster child, not only in the student's academics, but also his behavior and social

skills. After determining where the child's academic level of performance is at, and what he is capable of, adults need to ensure that they do not demand more than he is capable of. These reasonable expectations must be realistic ones. After all, each child is different, every child learns differently, and every child is not bound for Harvard or Oxford after high school. Children in foster care, as we have seen, perform at a lower academic level than their peers, for a variety of reasons. This fact alone needs to be remembered by those who care for them. Indeed, these caretakers should not expect school to be the focus of their young lives, as it is not. This is important to bear in mind with students in foster care, as they are likely not going to strive for academic excellence.

Furthermore, many foster children are not going to place school work as a priority in their lives. More so, a large number of these students just may not care about their school work, their grades, or how they behave in school. This will not change magically overnight once a child is placed into a foster home. To be sure, it may take a very large length of time for a student in foster care to change his attitude towards school after he is placed into a foster home. Indeed, he may not change his attitude towards school at all while under the supervision of foster care, or even for the rest of his life, for that matter. This may be due to the fact that the child had lived in an environment or home for many years where school was not stressed as important. To that end, teachers, caseworkers, and foster parents need to be aware of this possibility.



## AdoptUSKids

“Currently, there are 102,000 children and youth in the U.S. foster care system in need of adoptive families.”—AdoptUSKids

I am sure many of you have heard of [AdoptUSKids.org](http://AdoptUSKids.org), and have visited the website which features pictures of children all over the country who are looking for their forever families. You may also know that AdoptUSKids is a joint project of the U.S. Children’s Bureau (which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) and the Adoption Exchange Association, a non-profit organization committed to the adoption of waiting children.

Since 2002, AdoptUSKids has worked to raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families, and to support States, Territories, and Tribes in their efforts to find families for children in foster care. The organization particularly focuses on the most challenging to place including older youth, those who are part of a sibling groups that need to be placed together, and children and youth of color, and to assist with placements across county and state boundaries.

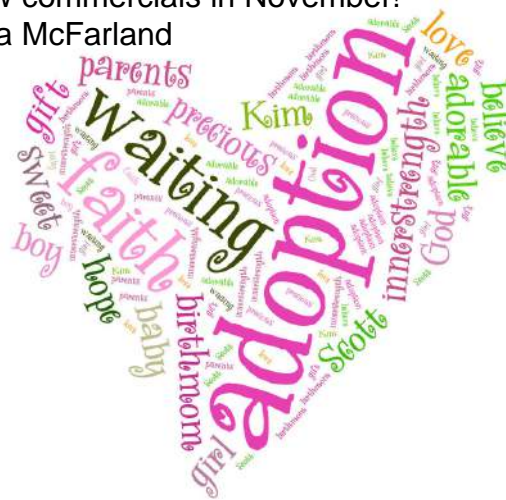
AdoptUSKids helps raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families through national multimedia public awareness outreach campaigns. Their latest campaign features the theme, “You Don’t Have to Be Perfect to Be a Perfect Parent,” illustrating to prospective parents that children and youth don’t need perfection; they need the commitment and love an adoptive family can provide.

In November of 2014, AdoptUSKids plans to air new commercials that focus on adopting siblings from foster care. AdoptUSKids relies on foster-adoptive parents to share their stories with others to help spread their messages and encourage people to be foster parents and adoptive parents. When the new commercials are launched, they will have foster-adoptive

parents available for media interviews all over the country. Because we have four children adopted from foster care, three of whom were siblings adopted at the same time, I volunteered to be a spokesperson for the campaign launch. In June, I participated in a webinar and learned the basics of media training. In July, AdoptUSKids flew me and several other foster-adoptive parents to Washington, D.C., to participate in more extensive media training at the Ad Council. We spent time learning how to give television interviews and then practiced in front of the camera. A couple of us foster-adoptive parents will fly back to Washington, D.C. in November to participate in TV interviews via live feeds all over the country! The rest of us will be referred to local media to share our stories.

I may still hate the sound of my own voice and I doubt I will ever feel comfortable being in front of a TV camera, but I will gladly endure both to share my experiences. Being a foster parent, and an adoptive parent, has changed my life for the better. I want to encourage others to take the same leap of faith as we did because I don’t want those 102,000 children to keep waiting for their forever families. Look for AdoptUSKids on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube! And be sure to watch for their new commercials in November!

Lisa McFarland



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**View Children waiting for adoption at:**  
[http://dhhs.ne.gov/children\\_family\\_services/Pages/adoption\\_children.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/Pages/adoption_children.aspx)

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## ***A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR***

*By: Pamela Allen*

Happy school year! I am not sure how each of you feel about children starting school in the fall, however, for myself, school starting causes trauma and anxiety for me. Growing up (and attending parochial school), school was really an extension of our family. Mom and dad knew all of the teachers and the families of the children we attended school with. We had a few school activities, however, we were not overwhelmed with something every night of the week and weekends too. We had supper every night as a family, and mom and dad could help us with our homework because what we needed to do was all in books that we could bring home! My how times have changed! Now, there are iPads that come home which is another stressor because we have to be concerned about all of the social media that is readily accessible at their little fingertips.

We, as foster/adoptive parents, know that our children may come to us with a variety of diagnosed (and undiagnosed) mental health issues. So, another thing that all of us as foster/adoptive families should advocate for is that the teachers at our schools are educated in working with children that come from not only trauma backgrounds but those that are fetal alcohol affected, are somewhere on the autism spectrum, or any other mental health diagnosis that our children may come to us with.

School is stressful enough these days for "normal" children (whatever that is). However, when we factor in the children in our homes that have experienced the trauma of abuse or

neglect, or the trauma of being taken away from their biological parents and placed into a home with strangers, and often times a new school as well, it is even more stressful. I think it is very important to remember to schedule in time for family and time for the children to just be children. There are many school activities that begin even before school begins. Some children could be involved in as many as five or six activities that don't allow them time to be just kids, or, possibly the time they need to do their school work appropriately. I believe that children need to be involved in extracurricular activities; however, I think it is our job as parents to make sure that they still have time to be kids, to be family, maybe even time to do....absolutely nothing at all!

Sometimes, I think that it becomes a status symbol for parents to have their children in absolutely every activity that is offered. The question then becomes, is it because the child wants to, or is it because we as parents think they should (peer pressure). Childhood is but a short time in our lives, and goes by so very quickly. Please take the time to enjoy your children. We tend to do family activities during the summer and not so much during the school year. Family time is probably, in my opinion, the most important part of a child's education. After all, if children don't learn how to be family, how are they going to know how to raise their families as adults? If we want to see change, we need to teach change. If children aren't happy at home, they aren't going to be happy anywhere!

# “LITMUS TEST” FOR ODD VS. CD

**By: Dr. James Sutton,** Psychologist and author

*Dr. Sutton: In past issues of the Digest, you've spoken to both Oppositional Defiant Disorder and the more serious condition of Conduct Disorder. Is there a quick and easy "Litmus Test" for determining which of these conditions a youngster might present?*

Yes; I believe there is, and it's generally pretty reliable. Bear in mind, however, that no short answer is accurate all the time and in every case.

We all live in environments we can call "biospheres." There can be many biospheres, but for the sake of example, let's hold it to three as they would apply to a school-aged youngster: SCHOOL, HOME and COMMUNITY. (Imagine them as points on a triangle.) Most typically, children and teens presenting Oppositional Defiant Disorder have difficulty with folks they know very well. Primary issues of behavior are relegated to just HOME and SCHOOL. These kids don't really kick up much dust in COMMUNITY, and they generally respond pretty well to folks they don't know at all.

For instance, if a stranger asks this youngster where the toothpaste is in the local Wal-Mart, he'll probably be escorted to it. There's no need

for conflict. These kids usually *know* how to behave; they just don't do it very well with parents and teachers. By contrast, Conduct Disordered youngsters are E.O.D.s: Equal Opportunity Deviants. They act out in all *three* biospheres. (So don't leave your car unlocked in the Wal-Mart parking lot.)

Here is the sort of question I generally ask a parent that has difficulty describing their child as one condition or the other (ODD or CD): *Has your child ever been in contact with the law as a result of his behavior, especially on more than one or two occasions?*

If the parent indicates her child is on juvenile probation and sundown curfew right now, you probably have your answer: Conduct Disorder.

On the other hand, if the parent seems shocked and taken back by the question, you're probably dealing with an ODD youngster. ("Oh, no; nothing like THAT!" one parent said to me.)

Obviously, these are situations that are not this clear, but, as a very quick "Litmus Test," this approach works surprisingly well.

Psychologist and author **Dr. James Sutton** is the founder and host of *The Changing Behavior Network*, a popular internet radio program supporting young people and their families. Every month he publishes *The Changing Behavior Digest*. Both resources, and others, are available at no cost through his [<http://www.docspeak.com/>].

*You might be temporary in their lives.*

They might be temporary in yours.

But there is **nothing** TEMPORARY about the *love* or the LESSON."

Tonia Christle

#fostercare

#nothingtemporaryaboutlove



## A Cool & Easy Fundraiser for NFAPA!

Ok friends, help support NFAPA by taking an item you are no longer using and posting it in your local exchange for sale! Please put in that the proceeds are going to the non profit organization, The Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association!

Encourage your friends to do the same.

Then, let us know how you did!

Thank you for supporting NFAPA!

## Voice for Adoption Seeks Families for Portrait Project

### Adoptive Family Portrait Project

Every November, for National Adoption Awareness Month, Voice for Adoption (VFA) hosts a signature project called the Adoptive Family Portrait Project. Each year we celebrate families who have adopted children from foster care. The primary goal of the project is to raise awareness among members of Congress about the real experiences and needs of families that have adopted children who were in the foster care system.

This November, Voice for Adoption (VFA) is providing an opportunity for members of Congress to celebrate the ways that adoption has touched the lives of their constituents. We invite you to participate in VFA's annual Adoptive Family Portrait Project.

- **Identify an adoptive family to feature —**

VFA is looking for families who adopted from foster care who are willing to have their family portraits displayed in the Washington, D.C. office of their member of Congress. VFA will also ask for families' adoption experiences to share with members of Congress. VFA will match Senators and Representatives with a family from their home state or home district.

- **Encourage your members of Congress to participate —**

Please contact your Senators and Representatives to encourage them to be part of the Adoptive Family Portrait Project. Hearing from constituents will make it more likely that members of Congress will participate.

Go to: [http://voice-for-adoption.org/special\\_projects](http://voice-for-adoption.org/special_projects) to learn more about the role of participating families and sample templates for e-mailing your member of Congress about the project.

Article from North American Council on Adoptable Children.

## A Foster Parent's Poem

There I sat, alone and afraid,  
You got a call and came right to my aid.  
You bundled me up with blankets and love.  
And, when I needed it most, you gave me a hug.  
I learned that the world was not all that  
scary and cold.  
That sometimes there is someone  
to have and to hold.  
You taught me what love is, you helped me to mend.  
You loved me and healed me  
and became my first friend.  
And just when I thought you'd done all you do,  
There came along not one new lesson, but two.  
First you said, "Sweetheart, you're ready to go.  
I've done all I can, and you've learned all I know"  
Then you bundled me up with a blanket and a kiss.  
Along came a new family, they even have kids!  
They took me to their home, forever to stay.  
At first I thought you sent me away.  
Then that second lesson became perfectly clear.  
No matter how far, you will always be near.  
And so, Foster Mom, you know I've moved on.  
I have a new home, with toys and a lawn.  
But I'll never forget what I learned that first day.  
You never really give your fosters away.  
You gave me these thoughts to remember you by.  
We may never meet again, and now I know why.  
You'll remember I lived with you for a time.  
I may not be yours, but you'll always be mine.

Author Unknown





## NFAPA Support Groups 2014

Have you ever thought about attending a support group? NFAPA offers support groups to foster, adoptive and kinship families! This is your chance to gain understanding and parenting tips through trainings, discussions, and networking with fellow foster families. This is a great way to meet other foster/adoptive families in the area! In-service training is offered at most support groups for those needing credit hours for relicensing. Up to date information with each support group location will be on our calendar page on the website. Support Groups will be cancelled for inclement weather. Contact your Resource Family Consultants for more information.

Jolie Camden (Panhandle Area):  
308-641-0624

Dee Nichelson:402-853-1090

### NFAPA has Support Groups at the following dates/times/locations.

**Alliance Support Group: Box Butte Community Hospital 6:00-7:30 p.m. Please RSVP to Jolie**

September 24, 2014

October 22,, 2014

November 12, 2014

**Scottsbluff Support Group: St. Francis Community Center (1605 2nd Ave)**

**6:00-7:30 p.m. Please RSVP to Jolie**

September 23, 2014

October 21, 2014

November 11, 2014

**North Platte Support Group: Harvest Christian Fellowship (1501 S. Dewy)**

**2:00-3:30 p.m. Childcare provided.**

October 19, 2014

November 16, 2014

December 14, 2014

**Lexington Support Group: Parkview Baptist Church (803 West 18th St.)**

**6:30-8:00 p.m. Child care provided for 10 and under with advanced notice. Contact Dee.**

October 6, 2014

November 10, 2014

December 11, 2014 (this is in Gothenburg)

**Gothenburg Support Group: American Lutheran Church (1512 Ave. G)**

**6:30-8:00 p.m. No Childcare**

September 25, 2014

October 16, 2014

November 20, 2014

December 11, 2014

**McCook Support Group: Community Hospital (1301 East H Street) 6:30-8:00 p.m.**

**No Childcare**

September 22, 2014

October 27, 2014

November 24, 2014

**Columbus Support Group: Peace Lutheran Church (2720 28<sup>th</sup> St.)**

**7:00-8:30 p.m. Childcare available**

October 14, 2014

November 11, 2014

**Gretna Support Group: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (11204 South 204th St)**

**6:30-8:00 p.m.**

September 22, 2014

October 27, 2014

November 24, 2014



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## JOIN NFAPA....your support will enable NFAPA to continue supporting foster parents state-wide!

### Benefits

- Ongoing trainings/conferences at local and state level
- Networking opportunities with other foster (resource) families, adoptive families, and relative caregivers
- Opportunity for all foster (resource) families, adoptive families and relative caregivers to be actively involved in an association by serving on committees and/or on the Executive Board
- Working to instigate changes by alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system
- An advocate on your behalf at local, state and national levels
- Alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system

### Thank you for your support!

Please mail membership form to:  
NFAPA, 2431 Fairfield Street, Suite C,  
Lincoln, NE 68521.

Questions? Please call us at 877-257-0176.

NFAPA is a 501c3 non-profit organization comprised of a volunteer Board of Directors and Mentors.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a Foster/Adoptive Parent. I have fostered for \_\_\_\_\_ years.  
(circle one)

I am with \_\_\_\_\_ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

- Single Family Membership** (a single foster or adoptive parent), \$25
- Family Membership** (married foster or adoptive parents), \$35
- Supporting Membership** (individuals wishing to support our efforts), \$75
- Organization Membership** (organizations wishing to support our efforts), \$150
- I wish to join the effort through a donation.

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

- Gold Donation, \$1,000       Silver Donation, \$750
- Platinum Donation, \$500       Bronze Donation, \$250
- Other, \$ \_\_\_\_\_