

FOSTER ROSTER

Utah's Foster Family Magazine



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Faces of Foster Care

Wednesday | May 17th | 7 pm

entrata

Honoring
National Foster Care Month
with stories of individuals connected to
foster care. Hear from parents, foster
parents, former foster youth, and
community members making a difference.



From Foster Care to Adoption: A Journey of Resilience and Belonging

By Emily N., former youth from in foster care in Utah.



The experience of being in and out of foster care can be an emotionally challenging and difficult journey for many young children. For those who have lived through it, it can leave a lasting impact on their lives, shaping who they become as adults. This is my story. I was in and out of Utah's foster care system until I was adopted at the age of 13.

I was born into a very broken family who struggled with addiction. As a result, my birth parents were unable to provide me with the care and support I needed. I was in and out of the system starting at birth, really. The first time I went into foster care, I was placed with my older brother and sister who had already been adopted, before I was eventually reunited with my biological family. However, it was not long before I was once again placed back into foster care. This time I was placed with a different family. It went on like this until I was adopted.

While in foster care, I had both good and bad experiences. I was fortunate enough to be placed with a loving and caring foster family who provided me with a stable home environment. However, I also encountered foster families who were unkind. The constant moving from one family to another made it difficult for me to establish a sense of belonging and develop long-term relationships with anyone in my life.

As I got older, I started to realize that my chances of ever being adopted were decreasing. Most families interested in adopting were looking for younger children, like my two younger sisters. As I entered my teenage years, my chances of being adopted dwindled. This realization led me to feel hopeless and unwanted. I knew that my sisters would be adopted. My greatest hope was for their safety and that their childhood could be kept intact.

Fortunately, my luck changed when a couple who had previously fostered and adopted other children came forward to foster us. ALL three of us. They thought they were done, they had already adopted 4 other children. When they got the call about us, they were skeptical. It was a hard decision for them to open up their home to 3 more kids. One being me, a pissed off, hormonal teenage girl.

Our adoption provided me with a sense of stability and belonging that I had never experienced before, and I HATED it. I definitely gave them a run for their money. I was a hard teenager. I didn't like authority figures because I had to become that for myself and my younger sisters. I was finally able to establish a permanent home and family, and I no longer had to worry about being moved from one foster family to another. I was finally able to develop some sense of identity and self-worth, knowing that I was wanted and loved, even if my brain kept telling me otherwise.

The transition to my new life was not without its challenges. I had to adjust to a new home, school, and family dynamic. I also had to work through the trauma and emotional scars that I had acquired from my experiences in foster care and with my birth family. The couple who adopted me provided me with the support and resources I needed to heal and adjust. That is still the hardest part of my journey.

I fought tooth and nail to not have to work through it. It was hard and yucky and I didn't want to have to talk about it all again.

It wasn't until I was a young adult that I understood how hard my mom and dad fought for me. I was so horrible to them and they just kept forgiving me, and showing up for me. They provided me with encouragement and love every single day. My relationship with them was rocky as a teenager but, today I couldn't live without them. They literally saved my life.

My experience highlights the importance of permanent homes for sibling groups and especially teens in foster care. While the journey was not easy, it is a reminder of the resilience of the human spirit, and the importance of providing children in foster care with the love and support they need to thrive. My parents aren't perfect. But they kept showing up and it's what made all the difference for me.

Twenty-five-year-old Emily is getting married soon. She owns a home and an amazing dog grooming and training business called Strong Houndations with her fiancé Enoch.

UTAH FOSTER CARE OFFICES

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Suite 121
Moab, UT 84532
435-261-2368 Main

St George

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W-113
St George, UT 84790
877-656-8065 Main

Richfield

201 East 500 North
Richfield, UT 84701
435-979-2233 Main

Renewing your License: Start Early!

By Office of Licensing

As you may be aware, last year our Office of Licensing merged with the Department of Health and became the Department of Health and Human Services. With this merger, there have been changes to our administration, supervisors, caseloads, and the database we utilize.

The new database, UCLAPP, requires home visits take place 60 to 90 days prior to a license expiring. This will require earlier initiation of your renewal process as licensors cannot complete a visit until after the relicensing documents are received. It is now recommended that foster parents submit all required items **up to 120 days prior to expiration** so that licensors have time to review the documents and schedule the visit. Please note that your license effective dates will remain the same and you will receive the renewal prior to expiration.

The hope (tentatively May 2023) is that foster parents will be able to create an account in UCLAPP and upload their documents securely to the system, which will then notify your licensor. *Please note: until you are notified to upload required information to UCLAPP please continue to coordinate emailing/sending that information to your licensor.*

An earlier re-licensure process will not affect your timeframe for completing the annual in-service training hours. Those hours will continue to be monitored by your Resource Family Consultant and you will have the full licensing year to complete those hours. Your licensor will continue to monitor CPR and First Aid training, so please ensure that your updated CPR/1st Aid training has taken place (when needed) prior to submitting the required paperwork.

Completing this process early will hopefully reduce stress. We are working to avoid extensions by allowing for additional time to resolve any non-compliant items prior to the license expiring. This will allow us to maintain health and safety standards for children in foster care.

If you have questions regarding these changes/requirements, please contact your licensor.

Thank you!



UFCF/DCFS Insight Dinner and Panel



• May 2nd, 6:00-8:00 PM •

• Free Dinner! Free Child Care! •

• Attend at your local DCFS office •

Foster Parents • Caseworkers

The Eastern Region Utah Foster Care Foundation and DCFS are happy to announce Insight: The Whole Team. This is an opportunity where caseworkers can learn from foster families and foster families can learn from caseworkers when working toward the common goal of supporting children in care. Join us on May 2nd for food, discussion and insight!

RSVP to kobi.prettyman@utahfostercare.org by April 21st.
Foster parents should also register on Bridge

UTAH FOSTER CARE (UFC)

Eastern Region UFC Staff

Kobi Prettyman
LEAD FOSTER-ADOPTIVE CONSULTANT

McKay Esplin
TRAINER

Lauren Hoffman
RETENTION SERVICES SPECIALIST

Joel Redd
FOSTER-ADOPTIVE CONSULTANT /
RETENTION SPECIALIST

UTAH DIVISION OF CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES (DCFS)

DCFS HQ (801) 538-4100
195 NORTH 1950 WEST, SLC

Eastern Region DCFS Offices

NEED TO REACH YOUR RFC?
CALL YOUR LOCAL DCFS OFFICE ...

Blanding (435) 678-1491

522 NORTH 100 EAST

Castle Dale (435) 381-4730

1060 NORTH DESBEE DOVE ROAD

Moab (435) 261-2368

1165 SOUTH HIGHWAY 191, #1

Price (435) 636-2360

475 WEST PRICE RIVER DRIVE, #152

Roosevelt (435) 722-6550

140 WEST 425 SOUTH, #330-15

Vernal (435) 781-4250

1052 WEST MARKET DRIVE

FIND MORE RESOURCES ONLINE

utahfostercare.org/eastern

Support Groups

CLUSTERS, WHAT ARE THEY?

Clusters are peer groups for foster, adoptive, and kinship families who meet together on a monthly basis for support & required training.

Learn more, *online!*

GRAND / SAN JUAN CLUSTER

Jackie (435) 678 - 3019

CARBON/EMERY CLUSTER

Jennifer (801) 919 - 7519

UINTAH BASIN CLUSTER

Shannon (801) 656 - 7466

Statewide Online Trainings

How to Build Confidence in your Child

Denice Beacham

April 19; 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Online!

Explore ways of building confidence in your child.

Ways to Reduce the Risk of Sexual Abuse

Sabrina Trimble

April 24; 5:30pm -7:00pm

Online!

This course is an introduction to the top five things that make a difference in reducing the risk of sexual abuse & how to get started.

FIRST TIME PLACEMENT:

What Do I Need to Do

Denice Beacham

April 27; 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Online!

Popular Training to explore what I need to know to prepare for children coming into your home.

Celebrating Moms!

Denice Beacham

May 11; 10:00pm - 12:00pm

Online!

Mother's Day is a time when many moms feel guilt and judge themselves. We will explore ways to move past judgment and celebrate our role and the role of our mothers.

In-home Services

Kyla Clark, DCFS

May 18; 6:00pm - 8:00pm

Online!

DCFS provides extensive services to families whose children never enter foster care, which is a primary goal of the system--to protect and support without the trauma of separation.

Do I Try to Solve my Child's Challenges?

Denice Beacham

May 23; 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Online!

When Do I Step in as a Parent and when do I have my child solve issues and make choices?

Regional Trainings

GRAND / SAN JUAN CLUSTER
Building Relationships/Support Group
Les Harris, LCSW
April 6; 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Moab UFC / 125 W 200 S

We will discuss building relationships. We will also process grief during this Cluster.

CARBON / EMERY CLUSTER
Building Relationships/Support Group
Les Harris LCSW
April 13; 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Price CJC / 80 S Fairgrounds Rd

We will discuss building relationships. We will also process grief during this Cluster.

UINTAH BASIN CLUSTER
Managing Difficult Thoughts & Emotions
Les Harris, LCSW
April 20; 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Roosevelt DCFS / 293 N 500 E

We will discuss building relationships. We will also process grief during this Cluster.

UINTAH BASIN CLUSTER
Lauren Hoffman
April 26; 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Roosevelt DCFS / 293 N 500 E

Topic will be announced.

Partnership Parenting
McKay Esplin, LCSW & Jennifer Redd
April 26; 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Moab DCFS / 1165 S Hwy 191, #1

Learn techniques and strategies you can use to assist children with navigating the often-confusing world of emotions, giving them skills they need to manage their own feelings.

INSIGHT:
The Whole Team
DCFS & UFC Staff
May 2; 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Your Local DCFS Office

Caseworkers will learn from foster parents & foster parents from caseworkers - we will work toward the common goal of supporting children in care.

GRAND / SAN JUAN CLUSTER
Effects of Foster Care on Feelings/Support
Les Harris, LCSW
May 4; 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Moab UFC / 125 W 200 S

CARBON / EMERY CLUSTER
Effects of Foster Care on Feelings/Support
Les Harris, LCSW
May 11; 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Price CJC / 80 S Fairgrounds Rd

UINTAH BASIN CLUSTER
Effects of Foster Care on Feelings/Support
Les Harris, LCSW
May 18; 6:00pm - 8:00pm
2995 Cornstock Cir. Vernal

Vulnerability & Motherhood

By Tami Carson, Retention Services, Utah Foster Care



Being a mom is my favorite title. Mom, mum, step-mom, mother-in-law, Miss Tami, or just Tami. Our home has been a landing place for both the long and short term for several of our children’s friends over the years. As a step-mom I learned early in my parenting journey that loving means letting go. That theme has come full circle now that all of my children are adults and none of them live with us. My perspective of motherhood and what loving a child truly means has shifted over the years.

Brene Brown said, “Waking up every day and loving someone who may or may not love us back, whose safety we can’t ensure, who may stay in our lives or may leave without a moment’s notice...that’s vulnerability”. The more foster parents I meet, the more I see the truth in Brene’s words. Loving is vulnerability – something you all do beautifully. Here are some examples of foster moms in our region who show that kind of love.

One foster mom shared the decade long struggle with infertility that led them to consider foster care. Their initial conversation with Utah Foster Care was not promising, hearing how rare adoption happens and knowing that children go home to parents who have struggled to be safe for their children. Now, one year in to their current placement, this foster mom knows the needs of these children more fully than their own mom, who is struggling to maintain sobriety. Yet she said, “How can I not love and care about the outcome for this mom when I love the children she brought into this world? How can I not want the best for her so that her children get the best version of her back in their lives? No matter the outcome, we are here for them and for her.” Her willingness to love without expectation is vulnerable love.

Another foster mom reached out to advocate for gender-neutral wording to help the child in her home feel seen. She shared with me that when we label clothing and donations as boy vs girl, rather than by color and size, children can be placed in an uncomfortable position. I felt her passion for the wellbeing of the child she was caring for, even though they were only in her home for a short time. This mom saw the need to advocate not knowing the outcome. That is also vulnerable love.

Our kinship families face unique challenges in loving. They are often caring for their own grandchildren or other family members. One foster grandma shared with me that her love for her son led her to say yes to parenting his children, despite thinking her time as a mom was done. She is learning to love with new boundaries and wants the best outcome for her family.

As you celebrate Mother’s Day this year, please remember there are many ways to be a mom. Your journey with motherhood and parenting will look different than others. Here is my invitation to you this year – take time to recognize the ways you love with vulnerability. Focus on the goodness you bring to this amazing journey of parenting. Please know that you are seen and appreciated in this beloved foster community!

LGBTQ Kids in Foster Care

By Marshall Shearer-Davis, E-Learning Specialist, Utah Foster Care

With the rise in legislation aimed at LGBTQ children across the U.S., it can feel like a scary time to be the parent, or foster parent, of a queer child. Add in the alarming rate of suicide and an alarming cultural climate and it's enough to make even supportive foster parents shy away from taking in queer kids. Roughly 1 in 3 children in foster care identify as LGBTQ. This means, at some point in your foster care journey, you will most likely care for a queer child. Despite all of these factors, queer kids are not that different from their straight, cisgender* peers. Both groups of kids are struggling to secure their identities, their purpose in the world, and are developing their own beliefs and values. Viewed in this way, you don't need to have any special skills to care for a queer child; you just need to be a safe, affirming adult.

We know that there is a direct correlation between poor mental health and family rejection among queer kids. Many reading this today might feel at odds with the current cultural climate and their desire to be a safe, affirming adult. Maybe you feel like you just don't know enough to help. You may have the desire to help, but have not known how or where to start. You are not alone. In an effort to support LGBTQ children and their foster families, Utah Foster Care has partnered with another nonprofit organization, Mama Dragons, to bring you an e-learning program that gives you the knowledge and tools to be that safe, affirming adult.

MAMA DRAGONS - A HISTORY

Mama Dragons began on social media. Toward the end of 2013, one woman started a Gay-Straight Alliance at her local high school. She needed advice and turned to a group of moms she knew who had LGBTQ kids. They started a messaging thread which grew quickly as word spread. More and more moms who were navigating supporting their kids, while being part of a non-affirming religion, joined the group. At the start of 2014, the message thread became a Facebook group as conversations were becoming harder to track.

In 2018, Mama Dragons became a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization of mothers from all backgrounds with one

common purpose – to support, educate, and empower one another in raising happy and healthy LGBTQ kids. Membership has grown to include a diverse population of mothers, regardless of their faith traditions, from all over the United States and beyond. While many Mama Dragons intimately understand the disconnect between faith and having an LGBTQ child, intersectionality goes beyond faith to include many cultural, political, and geographic differences. Mama Dragons has come a long way since that initial conversation among a handful of moms ten years ago.

PARACHUTE E-LEARNING

Working with a team of industry experts, mothers of LGBTQ kids, and technology leaders, Mama Dragons developed a culturally sensitive, self-paced program called *Parachute*. It was designed specifically for parents of LGBTQ kids to be taken in the comfort of their own home.

You will have access to 4 modules with topics that include *Navigating Family Relationships, Affirming vs. Rejecting Behaviors, Terminology, Resources, Communicating with Schools, and Mental Health*. The focus of this training helps you build personal, family, and community supports. Mama Dragons believe this program will decrease suicide rates, increase general understanding of LGBTQ issues, and improve the environment for LGBTQ people everywhere.

You can access this training through our training portal on Bridge. The course takes about 2 hours to complete and is called *Intro to your LGBTQ Child*. You can earn 2 hours of relicensure credit for taking this course, as well. If you have any questions about this course or any others, please reach out to your region trainer or Marshall Shearer at marshall.shearer@utahfostercare.org.

*Cisgender - relates to a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex registered to them at birth; not transgender.



MAMA DRAGONS



PARACHUTE

National Foster Care Month/What Can I Do?

At Utah Foster Care (UFC), we view National Foster Care Month in May as a time to highlight the facts about foster care and dispel the myths. If you're wondering what you can do as a foster parent, here are a few ways to get involved.

JOIN OUR VILLAGE AT UFC EVENTS

- **Meet fellow foster parents** – We hold appreciation events in every region of the state each May. And you're invited, whether you have a placement or not! It's a chance to meet foster families who will become part of your support system. Events will be announced on the UFC Bridge app (if you're not on Bridge, contact us and we'll get you there).
- **Connect with the many Faces of Foster Care** – UFC also holds community events that give you the chance to listen to the many voices of the foster care village – like the Utah high tech executive who credits his foster dad with giving him a boost of confidence to succeed in life. Invite your friends and family!

Faces of Foster Care
Wednesday, May 17; 7:00pm-8:30pm
Entrata | 4205 Chapel Hill Rd, Lehi

Foster Family of the Year Awards!



It's time to nominate your favorite foster family for Foster Family of the Year 2023!

We are looking for five foster families - one from each region of the state - to honor on the 24th of July weekend.

The awards will be presented on Saturday July 22nd during the Chalk Art Festival at Electric Park at Thanksgiving Point. Families who must travel more than

SHORTEN YOUR LEARNING CURVE

- **Refresh your knowledge** of certain topics you learned in training to help yourself feel even more prepared www.fosterclub.com/fostercaretopics.
- **Read some of our inspiring blogs** about Utah foster parents like Tammy Nielson <https://utahfostercare.org/blog/forthekids/>. Each fostering experience is unique, and we learn from every family who fosters.

BECOME AN AMBASSADOR

- **Share our message** – Be an ambassador for children by sharing UFC memes and posts in your social media platforms <https://www.instagram.com/utahfostercare/> and <https://www.facebook.com/utahfostercare/>.
- **Ditch the label** – Children of all ages tell us they HATE being called “foster kids.” Foster care is temporary, and is only part of their life story. Each child has hopes and dreams for their future. You can make each child feel special by referring to them as “a child in foster care” or “a child/teen experiencing foster care.”

Thank you for helping us spread positive stories about foster care and good luck in your journey!

100 miles one way will have one complimentary night stay in a nearby hotel.

Nominate the foster family you love the most! Utah Foster Care will begin accepting online nominations beginning April 1, 2023 at <https://utahfostercare.org/forms/foster-family-of-the-year/>.

Please note: This form will only be accessible from April 1, 2023 - April 30, 2023.

Foster Care & Kinship Advisory Panel

By Layne Miller, Foster Parent

Efforts are underway to formally implement a statewide advisory panel, or board, to advise DCFS on how to improve the foster care and kinship placement systems. The panel has been meeting for approximately six months and has progressed to the point it is forming a permanent board, developing ruling bylaws and is also developing priorities to consider.

The board is made up of a wide array of members representing DCFS, DHHS, Utah Foster Care and foster parents with a wide array of experience.

The board is considering the following items for the near future:

- Legal representation for foster/kinship parents
- Increase Resource Family Consultant consistency
- Support for families when siblings are split
- Guidelines on familial connections
- Communication gaps in the system
- Support for biological kids in foster homes
- Resources for biological families after reunification
- Improve future for kids aging out of the system
- Children in foster care who are not US citizens
- Foster Family Support: Childcare, mentorship, resources, secondary trauma support, information readily available
- Caseworker support and recognition

“I’ve noticed something about people who make a difference in the world: They hold the unshakable conviction that individuals are extremely important, that every life matters. They get excited over one smile. They are willing to feed one stomach, educate one mind, and treat one wound. They aren’t determined to revolutionize the world all at once; they’re satisfied with small changes. Over time, though, the small changes add up. Sometimes they even transform cities and nations, and yes, the world.” - Beth Clark

Many of us became foster parents to make and see changes in our community. One small change at a time. The board wants and need eager participation from our fellow foster parents. We currently meet monthly. It is expected that members will attend most of these meetings in order to create an effective advisory board.

If you are interested in joining, have questions, or suggestions for the board please email: Brittany Griffin at bgriffin@utah.gov or myself Layne Miller at laynemiller@yahoo.com and include Foster Care and Kinship Advisory Panel in the subject line.

April, 2023 & May, 2023

WISHING WELL FUNDS

Utah Foster Care has funds available to meet the special needs of children in foster care when DCFS is unable to meet these needs. These funds are limited.

Contact Your Regional Office for More Info:

Northern Region

Anna Gibson
(801) 392 – 1114

Salt Lake Valley Region

Tina Porter
(801) 994 – 5205

Western Region

Tami Carson
(801) 373 – 3006

Eastern Region

Lauren Hoffman
(360) 320 – 4888

Southwest Region

Diane Fillmore
(877) 656 – 8065

Please Remember:

- Dispersal of funds can take up to four weeks
- Checks are mailed to the foster parent’s home address
- Funds are for children in foster care ONLY
- Items covered by the reimbursement or by Medicaid are not eligible

A Word on Vacations:

- A child in care can receive vacation funds once in their lifetime
- Vacation funds are restricted monetarily & may not cover all costs



Utah Foster Care
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Murray, UT 84107

utahfostercare.org

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