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We are pleased to announce Elsebeth Green, LCSW and co-owner of The Greenhouse for Growth and Learning is going to be the keynote speaker for our annual symposium.

Elsebeth has a Master of Social Work Degree from BYU and has worked with children and families for the last 20 years and specializes in relationships, attachment, and trauma.

She has worked at the Division of Child and Family Services as a family preservation worker and supervisor, at the Youth and Family Centered Services as their Family Services Director, and the Utah Foster Care Foundation, where she trained foster and adoptive families for Western Region, and at Family Support and Treatment as a therapist.

Finally, in 2004, along with her husband, Guerry, and business partner, Collette, she opened The Green House Center for Growth and Learning, where she serves as the Clinical Director. She uses a variety of modalities including EMDR, play therapy, sand tray and art therapy, as well as traditional CBT techniques.

Elsebeth enjoys presenting on a variety of topics professionally and as a volunteer in the community. She is the proud mother of six and the grandmother of 7. Elsebeth enjoys the outdoors, knitting, and traveling. She also loves spending time with family and friends. Her grandchildren are the light of her life.

We have other exciting speakers throughout the rest of the day. Watch Facebook for details!

Tickets will go on sale March 1st on Eventbrite with early bird pricing.
Calling all Wives, Kids, RFC's, Caseworkers, & Mothers-in-Law!

_By Darcey Wiseman, Retention Services, Utah Foster Care_

It’s time to nominate your favorite foster dad for Foster Dad of the Year 2020!

We are looking for five dads - one from each region of the state - to honor on Father’s Day week-end.

The awards will be presented on Saturday, June 20th in Salt Lake City at our annual Chalk Art Festival. There will be a luncheon to honor the dads following the ceremony. Families who must travel more than 100 miles one way will have one complimentary night stay in a nearby hotel on Friday, June 19th.

Children, wives, DCFS employees, friends, and other family members (mothers-in-law too) can nominate the foster dad they love the best! Utah Foster Care will begin accepting online nominations beginning March 1, 2020 at [http://www.utahfostercare.org/fdoy](http://www.utahfostercare.org/fdoy).

*Please note: This site will only be accessible from March 1, 2020-March 31, 2020.*
Another year and another successful Giving Tree program has been completed! Through generous donations from community members, the Northern Region Utah Foster Care Foundation office was able to support 179 children. That is 537 gifts delivered by approximately 50 United States Air Force airmen! In addition, through the 4th Annual Holiday Shindig, we were able to help approximately 66 additional foster families for the holidays! I don’t know about you, but I call that AWESOME!

A special thank you to our amazing donors who never hesitate to give of themselves! The Giving Tree and the Holiday Shindig would not exist without them. THANK YOU!

St. Olaf
1st Methodist Church Men’s Org.
Northrup Grumman
Copper Cap program
Sarah Todd
TJF Heating & Air
Weston Ence, Eagle Scout
Rebecca Rupprecht
Studio 56
Barnes & Noble- Layton
419th Fighter Wing
Miller & Associates
Gabriel Baumann, Eagle Scout
Utah Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ
Zagg, Inc.
Center Street Grill
Reeve & Associates
75 CPTs
Spencer Stephens Construction
Dewy’s Heating & Air

Carhartt
Brittney Chugg, Jazzercise
2nd District Court
Kim Weisner, Ogden APP
388th Fighter Wing
Chase Taylor
Sharon & John Cleary
Lucky Slice
Kids Town Pediatric Dentistry
LW’s Truck Stop
Gabe Garn Development
Timberland Custom Cabinetry
Scott McKay
Camille Nichols
Kaitlyn Cieply
Beverly Zimmerman-Davis
75 Air Base Wing
Air Force Life Cycle Center
Amy Setzler, Voyage Academy
Camden Beckstrand, Eagle Scout
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!

 CACHE VALLEY CLUSTER
Jessie  (801) 201-3205

 BOX ELDER CLUSTER
Holly  (435) 851-2509

 OGDEN CLUSTER
Millie  (385) 405-9057

 NORTH DAVIS CLUSTER
Jennifer  (801) 845-2260

 WEBER WEST CLUSTER
Heather  (801) 589-9839

 SOUTH CENTRAL DAVIS CLUSTER
Mandi  (801) 450-2245

 LEVEL III CLUSTER
Jill  (435) 850-0028

 SPANISH CLUSTER
Gaby  (801) 458-8121

Please Note...

You are welcome to attend any Cluster you would wish. You are not limited to the Cluster in which you live.

Learn more, online!
NO DAVIS/WEBER WEST CLUSTER

Keeping Your Relationships Strong
Brian Young, SSW
February 13; 6:30-8:30pm
Clearfield DCFS / 1350 E 1450 S

Enjoy a nice Valentines Dinner, while learning about love languages & keeping your relationships strong. Must RSVP to Jenn 801-845-2260 or Heather 801-589-9839.

NO DAVIS/WEBER WEST CLUSTER

Flora Meets A Bee & Discussion
March 12; 6:30-8:30pm
Clearfield DCFS / 1350 E 1450 S

A humorous, heartwarming tale of foster care, the importance of the hive, and the power of friendship. Popcorn, drinks and snacks provided. Parents & kids K-3rd grade invited to attend.

SOUTH/CENTRAL CLUSTER

Maintaining a Healthy Marriage
Tenille Jensen, LMFT
February 5; 6:00-8:00pm
Bountiful DCFS/57 W 200 N

Tenille will be giving us tips and activities on how to help our spouses through the stresses of fostering. Please bring your significant other!

SOUTH/CENTRAL CLUSTER

Family Movie Night: Stuart Little
Mandi Wood, Cluster Facilitator
March 6; 6:00-8:00pm
Church / 1504 S 800 W, Woods Cross

Bring the family to watch Stuart Little! Bring blankets/chairs for seating. Popcorn and water provided. Watch FB to learn how to get training hours!

LEVEL III CLUSTER

Protecting Your Kids Online
David Bowman, Director of IT
February 6; 6:00-8:00pm
Ogden High / 2828 Harrison Blvd Rm 3

This training will give you tools so that you can safely allow your children to use the internet. Please RSVP. Dinner will be provided.

LEVEL III CLUSTER

Behavior Management 101
Cami Anderson, M.Ed.,BCBA
March 19; 6:00-8:00pm
Ogden High / 2828 Harrison Blvd Rm 3

Cami is a foster mom, she will share tips for establishing routines, teaching transitions, and how to respond to challenging behaviors. Dinner is provided for those who RSVP.

RESOURCE SHED

Please don’t forget about this valuable resource! Our sheds are overflowing! All items are donated gently used to brand new and offered FREE to our state licensed foster parents and ALL of the children in their home. Please contact the following people to arrange a time to “shop!”

Davis County: Cheryl 801.660.9554
Cache County: Desiree 801.631.4454
Perry: Angie 435.553.5190
Teri 435. 787 .3427
Tremonton: Michelle 801.509.0642
Jessie 801.201.3205
Helping Our Kids Through Anxiety

By: Heidi Naylor, Retention Services, Utah Foster Care

Our youth have all suffered traumatic stress. These stresses call for a way to cope and can manifest in different ways: disconnecting from emotions; over compensating; storing in their bodies and showing in a physical response. When coping with this trauma in an unhealthy way, a pattern is created. Because they are anticipating future trauma, they become hyper vigilant in order to manage the overwhelming pain. This hypervigilance eventually sets in as anxiety.

SO HOW DO WE TEACH THEM TO COPE?

**Acknowledge the pain.** Where do they feel it in their bodies? What emotions does it bring up? How can we interrupt the pattern of unhealthy coping? Give it a name. Using reflective listening, help them learn to name it because you’ve got to name it to tame it. Educate them in a time of calm what is happening to them. Check out Mindsight, Brainstorm, or The Whole Brain Child by Dan Siegel or the Body Keeps Score by Bessel Van Der Kolk.

**Practice relaxation techniques.** There are a ton of mindfulness activities you can find on the internet and just as many apps you can add to your or their phones. Check out Moody Cow Meditates by Kerry MacLean and make a mindfulness jar.

**Help them create an “anxiety kit.”** We grab a travel soap container and include something that engages the five senses. Something they can see, something they can touch, something they can hear, something they can smell, something they can taste (bold flavor like atomic fire balls or sour candies work best). These are small enough to carry in a backpack. You can also make larger ones at home that include music, coloring, fidget toys, play dough, books, bubbles, or kinetic sand.

**Get them involved in any physical activity.** Yoga can be a powerful tool for our youth because it teaches them to be in control of their breathing and to be in touch with how their bodies work. Sometimes just having them run around the block is enough.

**Have them write it out.** Write or draw it out and then tear it up. We had a teen that loved to do this and then would put it in the fire pit in the back yard. It was extremely cathartic for them to release all that pain in a healthier way.

**Don’t allow them to avoid their emotions.** Work hard on recognizing triggers and check in with them when you notice the emotional and physical land mines.

**Help them understand they are not alone.** We all have experiences that create anxiety. Share what works for you. Commit to helping them find what will work for them.

...NOW HOW TO HELP YOU!


While you can get away with ignoring your stress for a little bit, it will catch up to you and start affecting your day-to-day life. Before you start questioning your sanity and whether you are cut out for this life, take a step back and try some of these stress-reducing tactics.

**• Breathe:** Take several deep breaths and push all thoughts out of your head. Deep breathing lowers your heart rate and sends a calming effect throughout your body.

**• Journaling:** Writing down your feelings and thoughts can be a great outlet for your stress and frustrations. Putting the situation on paper can help you see things more clearly and help you find an answer. Re-reading journals is a great way to remind yourself how much you’ve grown from previous stressful situations.

**• Find Support:** There are going to be times when the stress of foster care makes you feel like you’re alone and that no one understands what you’re going through. Finding a support system, whether it’s friends, family or other foster parents, is vital to getting through foster care’s most difficult moments.
Becoming a foster parent takes a great deal of consideration, preparation, and patience, mixed with uncertainty and family adjustments when a child in care enters a home through foster care. Families willing to open their hearts and homes to a child in care will need support once they receive that initial call for placement. We all began our foster care journey for different reasons: adoption, a need to help a family member, a desire to provide love and support. While we jump into this journey for many reasons, we go into it for the same outcome, to make a difference in the life of a child.

Do you remember sitting in your initial training classes, possibly thinking, “How hard can this really be?” Your trainer starts discussing the trauma these children may have experienced, the worst-case scenarios, self-regulation, and the ins and outs of the system. For a split second, you might have questioned yourself, but continued on this journey, full of excitement and motivation to make a difference. You finished your classes, went through the licensing process, then you waited. You get that first call and you’re nervous, excited and somewhat terrified by the reality of what is happening. You prepare and prepare and you pick that sweet child up and everything you learned in training is somehow missing, you go blank and panic sets in. Is there someone I call? What do I do next?

Do you ever think, “What did I get myself into? What was I thinking when I became a foster parent? Is this behavior normal? Can I really do this?”

Utah Foster Care’s Mentoring Program pairs seasoned foster families with newly-licensed families to help navigate the ins and outs of foster care. Offering support from the beginning of the foster care journey is necessary to empower outcomes and confidence in decision-making. Mentors will guide new foster families to understand and develop key values by instilling necessary skills to build confidence in themselves.

Mentors will encourage new parents to build and reinforce skills, using knowledge to find resources in their community, gain confidence and knowledge to care for the diverse needs of children in foster care through peer support. Mentors model through their own experience and knowledge to encourage new foster families to appreciate diversity and show respect to oneself, friends, fostering partners, children placed in their home and fellow foster parents.

The best learning does not come through lectures; it comes from experience. A seasoned foster parent who can mentor a new family through their experience can encourage them to become their own best coach.

New families are encouraged to participate in the Mentoring Program upon receiving their first placement however the program is also available for families who have had multiple placements and need support. For more information, I invite you to check out utahfostercare.org/mentors. Please don’t hesitate to contact me at Utah Foster Care by calling 1-877-505-5437 or by email michelle.ostmark@utahfostercare.org. You are not alone in this journey!
Here’s Why We Became Foster Parents, Even Though We Aren’t Looking To Adopt

By Stephanie Kaloi, Guest Writer, Huffington Post | 12/26/2019 08:30 am ET

Stephanie is a writer and editor for LittleThings living in the southern US with her family and a messy crew of adopted animals (plus fish!). She loves to talk about parenting, celebrity gossip, and politics for hours.

Our journey toward becoming foster parents began about five years ago, when we realized two truths: Having a second biological child would be nearly impossible and was not necessary for our family’s happiness, and there was a way to experience parenting many children (and for our son to have many siblings) while also doing our part in our community.

Enter foster care.

So we did what every potential foster parent does first: searched “What is foster parenting really like???” online. Unhappy with the results, which were largely a grab bag of blog posts from people who foster to minister religion to unsuspecting children and their families and people who are hoping to adopt their foster children from Day 1 of placement, I started sending a flurry of texts to a friend who also happens to be a longtime foster parent.

Her advice essentially boiled down to three things: One, the relationship you have with the biological parent(s) of your foster children is sacred and should be nurtured as much as the relationship you have with the kids. Two, foster care is unpredictable and there’s no point making plans for how it will go. And three, if you really want to do it ... stop taking up my time and sign up for a class already.

My husband and I signed up for around eight weeks of PATH classes, which are the classes that all foster parents take before becoming certified. It’s meant to be all-inclusive, but the reality is that you are in class for two to four hours each Saturday covering huge topics, like ethnic diversity and poverty and child abuse.

The path to becoming a foster parent seems bizarre in retrospect: You take the classes, complete the home study process and boom! You’re now qualified to raise someone else’s child in your home for an indeterminate amount of time.

Still, the training felt like one of the most intense, personal experiences we had shared together. We went into classes knowing we were hoping to foster children, but left classes knowing we wanted to foster children and foster their families — we wanted to support the birth parents of any children we might foster as much as we support their children.

We knew going into it that we could handle the babies and toddlers and school-aged kids of the world (we’ll get to teens ... one day), but we left class feeling reasonably certain that we could extend ourselves and support their parents, too.

Approaching foster care as fostering the entire family was a turning point for both of us. The idea gave us a phrase we could use whenever someone asked what our plans were. While the Department of Child Services and PATH leaders constantly remind you that the first goal of foster care is reunification with a child’s family, just about everyone in our classes was transparent about their desire to build their family through adoption.

As someone who wrestled with not being able to conceive a second child the easy way for years, I understood ... but as our classmates became more focused on their adoption goals and learning how to work the system in their favor, we became more focused on reunification goals, and learning how the system works against parents who lose custody of their children.

The more we learned, the more it became clear: Just as many in our society will call the cops the second there is even a hint of a perceived threat anywhere nearby, many in our society assume that having your children placed in state custody means you are a predator, a child abuser, an addict - that are you the worst of the worst, the lowest of the low.

And to be fair, there are plenty of people who are one of those things (or all of those things), and sometimes children are better off with foster and adoptive families. But in our experience ... there are just as many people who are simply poor, or uneducated, or who have no perceived alternatives to whatever struggle they are facing.

This is the idea that fed our goal to approach this experience as fostering families: If you don’t grow up with someone teaching you how to successfully pull off what many consider basic life feats, it can feel impossible to figure out how to get a job, pay rent, pay your bills, pay for childcare, provide food consistently, read to your children, play with your children, kick your addiction, etc. Without consistent, healthy support, just attempting to do so is often an insurmountable challenge.

If no one in your family has ever done those things, the odds are stacked against you. When you think about it, a lot of Americans are probably closer than they think to one mistake that could land their own children in DCS custody.
I am not saying that every parent who loses custody is an angel who just needs a leg up. I’m also not saying that every parent who adopts from foster care didn’t try to do exactly what we do. I think one truth all foster parents can agree on is that there is a lot of gray area in foster care.

We didn’t find out we were actually certified until we received a phone call asking if we would be willing to take a sibling set of two into our home. Let me tell you this straight out: I don’t know how anyone, especially first-time foster parents, says no to those calls. Our plan was to foster one child, up to age 8, and we ended up with two babies under 2 because I literally could not imagine saying no.

So what do we do, then, if we aren’t answering a higher religious calling to foster, we aren’t related to the children we foster, and we aren’t planning or secretly hoping to adopt any children? I mean, I suppose I am ministering, kind of: These kids have been introduced to a wide berth of music that we hold dear, and the youngest really enjoyed watching “Homecoming” when it came out.

But to be real, we begin by nurturing their families, their parents, from Day 1. We offer phone numbers, email addresses, Facebook Messenger access. We start the conversation by telling them our names, describing what our home is like, asking what foods their children like to eat, and telling them we aren’t trying to adopt their babies. We tell them to message us anytime, and that if they don’t hear from us within five hours or so, to message again.

We ask when we can supervise visits, when we can meet up at playgrounds and parks, way before social workers are talking about us doing so. We talk about their goals, their plans, and what they need to get from where they are to reunification of their family.

The “TL; DR” version is this: We begin each placement by treating the parents like they are human beings, like they are people who we might want to know, instead of like they are a scary Other who is standing in our way. Sometimes it doesn’t work, we don’t form a relationship and things go sour. Other times, it works but requires ongoing attention and support, and that’s an exhausting thing to give someone you have met a handful of times.

None of this is easy, and it often feels like foster care is a second full-time job. We are perpetually exhausted by the sheer emotional weight of this journey that we entered into willfully, and that’s not even including the lived reality of nurturing additional children, of loving them, holding them, waking up in the middle of the night with them, feeding them, reading to them, guiding them. Teaching them all the things we taught our son: the ABCs and 123s, who Elmo is and why we love him, the names of The Beatles because it might come in handy someday, how to sit up and how to use a fork. You know, the parenting part of foster parenting.

We have been lucky so far: We have worked with excellent social workers who are very patient, helpful, and kind. The parents we have co-parented with have been easy to talk to, love their children a lot, and a lot of the time, they just need someone in their corner. And this need is the crux of why we are fostering children and their families: For us, foster care is a kind of community service; it’s a gift that we can give.

Sure, it’s a lot more involved than donating books or cleaning a classroom on a Saturday, but it’s something that makes sense for us right now, in this season of our lives. We won’t do it forever, but we are doing it right now. One of the most important ideas our family tried to follow is that while we may not be able to effect meaningful growth and change in areas of the world that are far away, we can do work in our own community that will help people we live and work with grow.

February, 2020 & March, 2020

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
Maegen Bernardo
(801) 392 – 1114

Salt Lake Valley Region
Tina Porter
(801) 994 – 5205

Western Region
Heidi Naylor
(801) 373 – 3006

Eastern Region
Faith Spencer
(435) 724 – 0959

Southwest Region
Diane Callister
(435) 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
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UTAH DIVISION OF CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES